

ADRIAN ROGERS

# LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



R O M A N S

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.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means-electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or any other-except for brief quotations in printed reviews, without prior permission of the publisher.



PO Box 38300 | Memphis, TN 38183-0300 | 901.382.7900 | [www.LWF.org](http://www.LWF.org)

Copyright © 2022 Love Worth Finding Ministries, Inc.  
Transcripts are used by permission of the Rogers Family Trust.

# Romans

1. **The Book That Changed the World** | *Romans 1:1*
2. **Life's Greatest Adventure** | *Romans 1:14–16*
3. **The Missionary Challenge** | *Romans 1:14–16*
4. **Totally Abandoned to the Gospel** | *Romans 1:14–16*
5. **No Other Way to Heaven Except Jesus** | *Romans 1:16*
6. **The Need for Bold Believers** | *Romans 1:16*
7. **Living by Faith** | *Romans 1:17; 10:11–21*
8. **Midnight at High Noon** | *Romans 1:18–31*
9. **The Lost World** | *Romans 1:18–31*
10. **The Last Step on the Way Down** | *Romans 1:24*
11. **Does Character Count?** | *Romans 1:28–32*
12. **How God Handles Hypocrites** | *Romans 2:1–8, 16*
13. **God Versus Humanity** | *Romans 3:9–10*
14. **It's Time for Some Good News** | *Romans 4:1–5*
15. **How to Be Strong in the Faith** | *Romans 4:16–25*
16. **How to Be Strong in the Faith** | *Romans 4:16–25*
17. **Strong Faith** | *Romans 4:16–25*
18. **The Authority of the Holy Spirit** | *Romans 5:1–5; 17*
19. **The Authority of the Holy Spirit** | *Romans 5:1–5; 17*
20. **How to Have a Rock-Solid Faith** | *Romans 5:1, 3*
21. **How God Develops Christian Character** | *Romans 5:3*
22. **There Is So Much More** | *Romans 5:6–9*
23. **Our One-Man Salvation** | *Romans 5:6–21*

*(Click on any sermon title to go directly to that sermon.)*

24. **This Thing Called Sin** | *Romans 5:12*
25. **How to Live in Victory** | *Romans 6:1–2*
26. **Living Victoriously** | *Romans 6:1–13*
27. **Liberated Living** | *Romans 6:1–19*
28. **The Conquering Christian** | *Romans 6:1–22*
29. **Three Steps to Victory** | *Romans 6:3–6, 11–18*
30. **Abounding Victory Through Amazing Grace, Part 1** | *Romans 6:6–7*
31. **Abounding Victory Through Amazing Grace, Part 2** | *Romans 7:1–4*
32. **Learning to Possess Your Possessions** | *Romans 7:1–4*
33. **The Grace, the Groan, and the Glory** | *Romans 8*
34. **The Grace, the Groan, and the Glory** | *Romans 8*
35. **Turning Hurts into Hallelujahs** | *Romans 8*
36. **Your Spiritual Biography** | *Romans 8*
37. **The Agony and the Ecstasy** | *Romans 8:1–4, 22–39*
38. **Eternal Security of the Believer** | *Romans 8:1–39*
39. **Getting to Know Your Best Friend** | *Romans 8:9*
40. **The Spirit of Easter** | *Romans 8:9–11*
41. **How to Make Sense Out of Suffering** | *Romans 8:18–23*
42. **The Problem with Pain** | *Romans 8:18–23*
43. **Desert Storms and Desert Roses** | *Romans 8:18–25*
44. **The Problem of Pain** | *Romans 8:18–39*
45. **The Problem of Pain** | *Romans 8:18–39*
46. **A Biblical Response to Katrina** | *Romans 8:20–28*
47. **How to Pray in the Spirit** | *Romans 8:26–27*
48. **Praying in the Spirit** | *Romans 8:26–27*
49. **Prayer** | *Romans 8:26–28*
50. **God Works All Things Together for Good** | *Romans 8:28*
51. **The Chemistry of the Cross** | *Romans 8:28*
52. **Why Do Good Things Happen to Bad People?** | *Romans 8:28–39*
53. **The Chemistry of the Cross** | *Romans 8:28–29*
54. **A Total Makeover** | *Romans 8:28–30*

*(Click on any sermon title to go directly to that sermon.)*

55. **The Five Pillars of Salvation** | *Romans 8:28–30*
56. **Victory over Circumstances** | *Romans 8:28–30*
57. **Victory over Circumstances** | *Romans 8:28–30*
58. **Blessed Assurance** | *Romans 8:28–31*
59. **You Can Be Sure** | *Romans 8:28–31*
60. **You Can Be Sure** | *Romans 8:28–31*
61. **How to Be Sure That You Are Secure** | *Romans 8:29, 38–39*
62. **Five Questions the Devil Can't Answer** | *Romans 8:31–36*
63. **The Heartbeat of Missions** | *Romans 9:1–3*
64. **The Missionary Motive** | *Romans 9:1–3*
65. **A Report from Israel** | *Romans 9:1–4; 10:1–4; 11:1–2*
66. **Predestined for Hell? Absolutely Not!** | *Romans 9:1–23*
67. **Salvation** | *Romans 10*
68. **Man's Greatest Need** | *Romans 10:1–4*
69. **The Simplicity of Salvation** | *Romans 10:1–7*
70. **Salvation** | *Romans 10:1–13*
71. **This Thing Called Salvation** | *Romans 10:1–13*
72. **Authentic Christianity** | *Romans 10:11–17*
73. **Biblical Faith: What It Is, How to Have It** | *Romans 10:11–17*
74. **Faith: What It Is and How to Have It** | *Romans 10:17–21*
75. **Is God Through with the Jews?** | *Romans 11:1*
76. **The Power of Effectual Prayer** | *Romans 11:36*
77. **The Secret of Effectual Prayer** | *Romans 11:36*
78. **The Secret of Effectual Prayer** | *Romans 11:36*
79. **Is Capital Punishment a Sin?** | *Romans 12*
80. **Discovering Your Ministry** | *Romans 12:1–2*
81. **Five Principles for Discovering Your Ministry** | *Romans 12:1–8*
82. **Five Principles for Discovering Your Ministry** | *Romans 12:1–8*
83. **Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift** | *Romans 12:1–13*
84. **Does a Loving God Believe in Capital Punishment?** | *Romans 12:1–2, 9, 17–21; 13:1–4*

*(Click on any sermon title to go directly to that sermon.)*

85. **Humility** | *Romans 12:3*
86. **How to Discover Your Spiritual Gift** | *Romans 12:6*
87. **Freedom Is Not Free** | *Romans 12:9, 17–18; 13:1–4*
88. **Knowing the Time** | *Romans 13*
89. **The Christian and War** | *Romans 13:1–4*
90. **What the Bible Says About War** | *Romans 13:1–4*
91. **Christian Citizenship** | *Romans 13:1–7*
92. **Christian Citizenship** | *Romans 13:1–7*
93. **Freedom Is Not Free** | *Romans 13:1–7*
94. **The Bible, War, and Peace** | *Romans 13:1–7*
95. **The Wake-Up Call** | *Romans 13:11–14*
96. **When Good Men Differ** | *Romans 14*
97. **What to Do When Brethren Disagree** | *Romans 14:1–23*
98. **The Lordship of Christ** | *Romans 10:7–11*
99. **The Things That Make for Peace** | *Romans 14:19*
100. **Saved to Serve** | *Romans 15; 16*

*(Click on any sermon title to go directly to that sermon.)*

# The Book That Changed the World

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: January 4, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 1:1**

*“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.”*

ROMANS 1:1

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Table of Contents

II. The Author

III. The Hero

A. He Is the Promised One

B. He Is the Provided One

C. He Is the Powerful One

D. He Is the Pure One

IV. The Theme

A. The Source of the Gospel

B. The Subject of the Gospel

C. The Supply of the Gospel

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and find, please, the book of Romans. As you know, by The Messenger, we're beginning a brand new series of messages entitled Foundations for our Faith: A Solid Word for an Unsure Age. Now, if in your life the bottom is falling out, you'd better examine the foundation. You need a foundation. We need a sure word, a solid word, for an unsure faith. And, today, we're going to talk about the book that changed the world. I have many books in my library. I believe in books. I love books. Books are important in my life, but books have great influence. Adolf Hitler, with his twisted and warped and fevered brain, wrote a book, Mein Kampf, and in that book he espoused his Nazi philosophies. The result of the thoughts in that book was an horrendous world war, the gas ovens, the Holocaust, six million Jews exterminated, multiplied thousands in anguish and blood. A book: Mein Kampf. Hitler got his ideas

from reading another book, Nietzsche, Man and Superman. Nietzsche was a perverted atheist. He hated God. He declared blatantly, God is dead! Hitler drank from that book, imbibed that book, his mind was warped. Another man wrote a book, Karl Marx; and Karl Marx wrote a book on communism, dialectical materialism, Das Kapital. People read that book, the Russian Revolution was born, the Communist Revolution. Millions of people paid with their life's blood, others were enslaved, the world rocked and ruined by communism. A book, a powerful book. Charles Darwin wrote a book, The Origin of Species, and there he talked about blind evolutionary force, and that man is not made, created, in the image of God; he is an accident of nature; he has descended from the apes. People read that book, and try to make a monkey of themselves, believe that they are an orphan of the apes.

Books have power, but no book has the power that the book that you have open in your hand right now has—the power for good, for God, and power that has changed the world radically, dramatically, and eternally, and the book that will go on through the ages, and it is the book of Romans. It has been called the constitution of Christianity. Let me tell you the power of this book. There was a Roman Catholic monk; his name was Martin Luther. Martin Luther had tried to get right with God by ritual, by penance, by good deeds, by all of the accoutrements of the church, but his heart was empty. He took a pilgrimage to Rome. In Rome, there were some stairs, purported to have been the stairs that Jesus ascended in Pilate's judgment hall. They felt that the blood of Jesus had surely dropped on those stairs. Martin Luther went to Rome, got on his knees on the Scala Sancta, the holy stairs, and on his knees he began to pray on every step, kissing each step as he went up, asking God to bless him, trying to get closer to God. But he himself said, I was no closer to God when I got to the top than I was at the bottom. His heart was hungry, but Martin Luther had been studying the book of Romans. And Romans 1:17 burst alive in his heart and his mind—"the just shall live by faith." And he saw justification by faith, which is the theme of the book of Romans, and he was saved, converted, born again. The Protestant Reformation began; there was a Great Awakening—it swept Europe, it swept the world. We've entered into it today—the power of the book of Romans.

You go down to my home state, Florida. You'll come to a town called St. Augustine, I understand the oldest city in America. Well, that town, St. Augustine, gets its name from a man, Augustine. Augustine was a young college professor who lived a wicked, wild, lascivious life, consorted with prostitutes; but he had a burden of sin, and he tried to alleviate himself of that burden of sin. And one time he was out in the garden seeking God, and he heard a little girl singing a song over a garden wall, a little song: Take up the Book and Read, take up and read. He thought, What is this about—what is this about? He opened the book of Romans, and began to read, and there he found a verse

that stabbed him in his heart, and he found the Lord Jesus Christ, and became the man the people today call St. Augustine. Augustine, one of the great theologians of the early church.

There was a man named John Wesley. John Wesley was very religious, very well motivated, so motivated that he left England and went to America to be a missionary, to convert the American Indians. He went to the state that we call Georgia. He stayed there; he had a fruitless ministry there. He got on a ship to come back home, discouraged, dispirited, feeling a failure, and he met some Moravian missionaries, and these Moravian missionaries had the life, the beauty, the joy of Jesus, the same thing that old Greg was just singing about, Oh, Hallelujah, What a Savior! He knew they had something he didn't have. Back in the eighteenth century, he went back to London. There he was at a place called Aldersgate. He went to a little meeting, and there they were studying the book that you have open in your lap, the book of Romans. This man said, I went to America to convert the Indians, but who will convert me? Sat there as he heard this introduction to the book of Romans, this preface to the book of Romans, he said, I felt my heart strangely warmed, and I had the assurance of my salvation. Out of that experience, the great Wesleyan Revival began that swept across England, and out of that experience the Methodist church was born. John Wesley, whose hymns we read and preach and sing and enjoy, John Wesley, had an experience with the book of Romans.

Coleridge said that the book of Romans is the greatest piece of literature ever written. If I were shipwrecked on an island, and could only choose one book of the Bible to take with me, I wouldn't have to stutter, stammer, or think about it—oh yes, I would, but anyway, after I'd thought about it a lot—I'd take the book of Romans, to be very honest, because I surely wouldn't want to take Psalms. I would take the book of Romans. I would, after thought, I would want to take Romans. Oh, but thank God we don't have to take just one. Hallelujah, thank God we've got all sixty-six. Praise God for that. But what a wonderful book—what a wonderful book—a masterpiece, is the book of Romans.

Now, we're going to look at the book of Romans, and we're going to think about it as the book that changed the world, for indeed it did. And we're going to look at it like we might look at some other books.

## **I. The Table of Contents**

For example, we're going to look at the table of contents—what is in the book of Romans? Well, let me just give you a little outline here. Now, this is just the table of contents. Now, we're not really even getting in the book yet, but just the table of contents of the book. The first three chapters of the book deal with sin. Okay, chapters

one through three, they deal with sin; they tell us what's wrong with the world. And then, chapters four and five deal with salvation; thank God, God doesn't just show us our sin; he shows us a way out. And then, chapters six, seven, and eight deal with sanctification. You found out as I found out, it's one thing to get saved— isn't it?—but it's another thing to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And sanctification is just a double-jointed word which means becoming more like Jesus—that's all it means. And so, you go from sin to salvation to sanctification. And then, as you continue through the book, when you get into Romans nine, ten, and eleven, that deals with sovereignty; it shows how God is sovereign over the universe, how God from eternity past to eternity future is in charge. What comfort we're going to find when we get in this passage that deals with the sovereignty of Almighty God. And then, when you go from there, right on, beginning in chapter twelve where we present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, right on through the end of the book, it deals with service; it shows us how to serve this sovereign God, how to be in a very practical and a very real way the Christian we ought to be. So, we've got the preface to the book, that's the table of contents that tells us what this wonderful book, this constitution of Christianity, is all about.

## **II. The Author**

Now we've talked about the table of contents and the preface, let's talk about the author. Who is the author of this book? Well, we know ultimately the Holy Spirit is the author, but who is the human author? Well, let's begin in chapter 1, verse 1: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God." Now, folks, I want to tell you, we could just stay here for a week, just in this one verse. This is the man who authored the book of Romans. Now, let me tell you about him. This man named Paul was a Jew. He was a privileged Jew. He was born in a place called Tarsus. He was a very brilliant young man. He was an honors graduate of the University of Tarsus. He was fluent in many languages. He was a world traveler. He was very strict in his religion, very much a student, and very much aware of world affairs. This man was also, besides being a Jew, he was a Roman citizen. That meant that he had the privileges that Rome had in this day, so he was a free man; he was not subjugated like other Jews; he could come and go and he could travel as he wished. Beside all of that, he had the privilege of doing graduate work under a professor named Gamaliel. Gamaliel was one of the best teachers, if not the best known teacher, in all of that part of the world. Paul was his prize student. On top of that, Paul was a part of the most strict religious sect in Judaism, the Pharisees; and not only was he a Pharisee, but he said later on he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees, he was the highest of the high, he was at the very top. This man was prized and petted. This man had a pedigree a mile

long. He was a blueblood.

But now I want you to learn some things about him, what happened to him. He met the Lord Jesus, you remember, on the road to Damascus, was gloriously, wonderfully saved. And now, what do we learn about him? Well, let's just start with the very first word in the first verse: "Paul"—Paul. Do you know what the name Paul means? It means little. You see, his name wasn't always Paul. At first, his name was what? Saul—his name was Saul. And when the Lord met him on the way to Damascus, he said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" Now, who was Saul? Well, we know that he was later Paul, but who was the original Saul? King Saul of Israel. King Saul of Israel was a big guy. He was head and shoulders above everybody else. He was tall and handsome and arrogant and carnal; he was a man that was the king, strutted around—reminds me of somebody, as a matter of fact, but, about to digress again—King Saul. The very name Saul reeks with pride; it means big one, successful one—that was his name. That's the name of the guy who wrote this book. But he doesn't call himself Saul; he changed his name from big guy to small. Why? Because God cut him down to size. I mean, if there were anybody who'd had a reason to boast, if there were anybody who had a reason to strut, it would've been this man Paul. But he did not do that. He introduces himself as Paul. By the way, I like the way that he introduces himself. He starts the letter, "Paul." Have you ever gotten a long letter, don't know who's written it, you read and read and read, what are you doing? You go to the end, and say, Who is this? Who's writing? Well, the ancient people didn't do that; they put their name up front. That's a good idea; we ought to start doing that, as sort of a caller-ID. You know, look: this is Paul that's writing to you. And he gives his credentials. You need to know whom the letter is from.

I heard about a preacher who was preaching. There was a man in the congregation who didn't particularly like him, thought he'd play a little practical joke on him, and so he wrote a note to the preacher, handed it to an usher, and said, This is for the minister. The usher thought it was legitimate, brought it to the platform, the preacher unfolded it, and there was just one word on it in big block letters—F-O-O-L—fool. Preacher looked at it, came to the platform, said, A remarkable thing has happened today. He said, Many times I have received a letter from somebody who forgot to sign their name; this is the first time a man ever signed his name and forgot to write the letter.

Paul signs his name up front. He lets us know who he is: he is a man who has been cut down to size. Let me give you a couple of verses that give an indication of why he changed his name. Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 8—he says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given." Unto me, less than the least—less than the least—I'm talking about this big shot, I'm talking about this towering genius, I'm talking about this blueblood, he calls himself less than the least. And then, he says, in 1

Corinthians 15, verse 9: "For I am the least of the apostles." You know, he saw himself in the sight of God as a nobody; doesn't mean he has an inferiority complex, he just knew that he was what he was by the grace of God.

You know, do you know who Reggie White is? Reggie White is a friend of mine. He plays defensive tackle for the Green Bay Packers. Let me tell you about him, ladies. It'd be just as simple to stand in front of a moving locomotive as to stand in front of this guy when he lines up and try and block him out; it takes a couple of men to hold this dude down. He is big and he is strong. But I heard this man, who is a passionate Christian, stand in front of a group of young men, and say this: I am a nobody, telling everybody about somebody who can save anybody. I want to tell you: a nobody—a nobody—telling everybody about somebody who can save anybody, and that name is Jesus.

Now, you may be sometimes too big for God to use, but you'll never be too small for God to use you. So this man just begins with his name: the little guy—the little guy. So right away, it tells me he's saved—he's saved: "For if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature." This man even got a new name.

But not only is he saved—continue to read. It says here, "A servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle." Now, look at the word servant. You see the word servant there—well, the word servant is not as strong as perhaps as it could be, because it's the Greek word *doulos*, and that word means slave. Now, slaves were called servants in that day, but we may miss it sometimes in our English. The word means slave, and not only does it mean slave, it means a particular kind of slave; it's a word that means bond slave. Well, who were bond slaves? Well, if a man got himself in debt, and he could not pay the debt, he became the property of the man that he owed money to, in Bible times. He was what they called a bond slave, and he had to work for that individual, because he'd indebted himself to that individual. But the Bible, in mercy, set a law, and it was the law of jubilee, that after seven years, all of the bond slaves had to be set free.

Now, there would come a time when sometimes a bond slave, at the moment of his freedom, would say, Hey, wait a minute, I don't want to be set free. I'm better off under this man than I was by myself. He feeds me. He clothes me. He cares for me. He loves me. I'm like one of the family. I don't want to be free. I love my master. I want to stay under him. I want to be his bond slave. Well, if he made that decision that he wanted to do that, they called the judges of Israel; they said, This man wants to stay as a bond slave, he wants to be a willing slave, he loves his master. They would say, All right, let's put a mark on him. And they brought him to the doorpost, would take his earlobe, and would take an awl—a-w-l—and put it through his earlobe. The Bible says, "Thou hast opened mine ear"—that's what it's talking about, right here. And there'd be a hole there; it would be the mark that he was a bond slave. The apostle Paul said, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." He became a bond slave, and that means he is a

willing slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Well, you say, well then, you count me out, Pastor. I don't want to be anybody's slave. You already are. You already are. Either you're a slave of Christ, or you're a slave of sin. Everybody is in bondage somewhere. You see, here's the thing. The unsaved man said, I want to be free; I will be free; I am my own man. He goes down into the worst degradation and bondage there is, the bondage of sin, Satan and sin and self are cruel taskmasters. But when a man says, I will become the bond slave of the Lord Jesus, I love my master, then the Bible says, "If the Son shall make you free, you are free indeed." He discovers the most glorious freedom in the Lord Jesus Christ. If I had ten thousand lives, I'd give every one of my lives to the Lord Jesus Christ, because it is Christ, through that perfect bondage, that sets us free.

You see, what is a bond slave? Now, listen very carefully, or you're going to miss this. A bond slave is not somebody who says, All right, since I'm his slave, it's no longer my will; I'll do his will. No, no. That's good, but that's not good enough. A bond slave doesn't say, his will instead of my will; he says, his will is my will—his will is my will. It is not laying down arms; it is taking up arms for the one that you love. It is saying his will. You see, have you ever thought of the scripture that says, "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart" that's over in Psalm 37. That sounds like too good a promise for God to make, doesn't it? You say, Okay, Lord, I love you. I want a million bucks. No, because if you say, Lord, I love you, now give me a million dollars, what was the desire of your heart? Money—money. You say, Lord, I love you, give me the desire of my heart: fame and popularity. No, the desire of your heart is popularity. But, when you say, I delight myself in the Lord, you can have the desire of your heart, because your desires are His desires, and His desires are your desires, and, therefore, you can be a Christian and do whatever you want, be a Christian and do whatever you want!

Let me tell you something. I get drunk every time I want to. And, boy, I hope this doesn't have just a sound byte out of this message and that's all. I get drunk every time I want to. I don't want to—never been drunk, never intend to get drunk, just as soon eat dirt. I don't want to—don't want to. You see, people say, Oh, if I believed in eternal security, man, I'd get saved, and I'd sin all I want to. Well, I sin all I want to. I sin more than I want to. If you still want to, you need to get your wanter fixed. You need a brand new wanter; you need to be born again. Paul says, I am no longer big shot; my name is now Paul, not Saul. I am saved; I am surrendered.

But let's continue to read. Look at it again here. We're going to find something else out about the author. He says "called to be an apostle," literally means, "a called apostle." He didn't say, Well, I just believe I'm looking for a profession; I just believe I'll be an apostle. No, I believe in the called ministry, and he says, thanks to God who

counted me worthy of putting me in the ministry. I believe God put me in the ministry. I've sometimes thought about what I might do if I weren't in the ministry, but I can't think of anything. Sometimes it's discouraging, not often. Somebody asked a preacher, said, Do you take Mondays off? He said, No, said, I don't want to feel that bad on my own time. I really enjoy what I'm doing, but I would never choose it as a profession. I believe God put me in the ministry, I believe that. I believe God, but, you see, this same chapter says we're all called. You know, not just the apostle Paul, but we're all called. Look in verse 6: "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ." God has called every one of us to our own particular sphere. God loves you as much as He loves the apostle Paul or Jim Whitmire, Bob Sorrell, Adrian Rogers; He loves us all—or Bernie, He loves us all the same way. We're the called—God has called us and He set us apart. So now, listen. You say, Why are you telling me all this about Paul? Because Paul said, You follow me as I follow Christ. He's an example for you.

So he was saved—yes he was. And, he was surrendered—yes he was. And he was sent—yes he was. He was called of God; he had a purpose, a mission for his life. And I'll tell you something else—now, watch it very carefully: he was separated. Now, don't miss this—don't miss this. He says here, "Separated unto the gospel of God." Now, it's very important, the key word there is not separated; the key word, in my estimation, is unto the gospel of God. Now, Paul had already been separated, he was a Pharisee of the Pharisees. You talk about people who lived a—quote—separated life; that is, all of the outward sins of the flesh he abhorred, he walked the straight and narrow. The very name Pharisee implies separation. They were so careful that they paid tithe of mint, anis, and cummin; that is, when they were paying tithes, they had a little mint plant, they'd count all ten leaves, take one of them, the tithe, and give it to God—one tenth of every sprig of mint, for example. Ye pay tithe of mint, anis, and cummin. The Lord said to these Pharisees—he was already separated from sin. You see, if that's all the separation you have, you know what it's going to make you? A proud, bitter, haughty Pharisee, like the apostle Paul was when he was persecuting the church, before he met the Lord Jesus, and before he found the grace of God. Nature abhors a vacuum, and so, if you get these things out of your life, but you don't get Jesus Christ into your life, if you are separated from, but not separated unto, you're going to become nothing but an old Pharisee—that's what you're going to become. And you need to ask yourself, Is there a little Pharisee in me? Ask yourself that question, because, you see, we're to be separated unto the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, what some people have as separation is, I don't smoke, and I don't chew, and I don't go with girls who do. Okay, neither does a fence post. If you've got no more religion than a fence post—and I'm going to tell you; listen carefully—giving up things will not make you one scintilla of an iota more like Jesus Christ. It'll make you a

Pharisee, but it won't make you like Jesus Christ. You've got to be separated unto the gospel of Jesus Christ, and of course, when you're separated unto, you're separated from. But how do you get separated from? By being separated unto. But you don't get unto by being separated from. I can't say it again, but it's true. Now, listen. It is absolutely true. The word separated here, the word separated is the word we get our word horizon from. It's a Greek word that we get our English word horizon from. And it's a compound word, and it literally means separated off from unto—off horizon. Well, what does that mean? Well, let's see if I can explain it. You know what a horizon is? If you go off up to a tall building somewhere, and look around 360 degrees as far as you can see, that's what? The horizon. That's where the earth just tails off, and that's your world. Now, do you know how to change your horizon? Change your location; just change your location. Every time you change your location you change your horizon. So what determines your horizon is your center—what determines your horizon is your center. So, when Jesus Christ is your center, then that horizon is your world, you see. You see it from the center; you see it, his life is the boundary of your life. You are separated unto Him. An old boy may be dating some girls, looking for that girlfriend; he's dating Susie and Melody, and he's dating Anne, and he's dating Debbie. Then one day he meets Jane, and she becomes the center of his life, and then she's the center, and so all these other girls are just kind of out of bounds—they're out of bounds, they're off the horizon for him—because his horizon is now—as far as his dating life, his love life—he has found a new center. And, friend, when you find the Lord Jesus Christ, you will find a new center. And you're not going to be talking about what you gave up for Jesus—that's foolish. You're going to understand what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Who was the author of this book? His name is Paul, and because of the name Paul, we know he's saved; we know that this man is separated; we know that he has been surrendered; we know he's been sent. He's just the author of a book. Thank God for the apostle Paul, I believe, the greatest Christian who ever lived. One day in heaven I'm going to sit down and let Paul teach me Romans. It'd be wonderful. Won't that be great?

### **III. The Hero**

All right now, here's the third thing. Now, watch. We talked about the table of contents. We've talked about the author of the book that changed the world. Now, let's talk about the hero of the book. Every good book has a hero, and the hero of this book is the Lord Jesus Christ. We can find out what this book is about by reading verses 1 through 4: "Paul,"—watch it—"a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, which he promised before by his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David,

according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead." I mean, right up at the beginning of the book, he moves it to the front burner. He says, Folks, I'm the guy who's writing the book, but let me tell you who I'm writing about: it is concerning God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. If you don't know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, you're not going to understand the book of Romans, until God puts the light on in your soul. It is a book about the Lord Jesus Christ, and that's what Christianity is: Christianity is Christ.

Now, let's see what Paul says about Christ.

#### **A. He Is the Promised One**

He says, first of all, He's the promised one. You see that, "which he promised before by his prophets in the holy scriptures"—verse 2. Paul didn't start a new religion. What we're talking about was before the foundation of the world, and Paul is just telling us, in the book of Romans, what he learned in the Holy Scripture, in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is about Jesus. I wish our Jewish friends knew that—that the Old Testament is about the Lord Jesus. Paul was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin, he was a pedigree; but one day God turned the light on in his soul, and the Scriptures burst aflame. You remember after Paul met the Lord on the Damascus road, he went out into the desert, out into Arabia. He spent a couple of years out there studying. One wise man said he put in his knapsack the writings of Moses—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. He put in his knapsack the words of the prophets—Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel—all of these. He put in his knapsack the Psalms. And he came out of the wilderness with Galatians and Ephesians and Romans in his heart and in his mind. Where did he learn all of that? Well, he learned it from the Old Testament. He said, This is what God has promised. Jesus told those people of his day, he said, "Search the scriptures, these are they which testify of me." The Old Testament is not about the Jewish nation; it's about Jesus, the Messiah of the Jews. The New Testament is about Jesus. All the Bible is about Jesus, and He is the promised one. And one of the ways, precious friend, that we can know the authenticity of the Bible, or the authenticity of Jesus, is fulfilled prophecy. Jesus authenticates the Bible, and the Bible authenticates Jesus. He is the promised one.

#### **B. He Is the Provided One**

But not only is He the promised one; He is the provided one. He says there He comes, He's promised, He's of the seed of David—do you see that there? He is of the seed of David. The Messiah was of the house and lineage of David. He is the royal heir to Israel's throne. He is Israel's Messiah, according to the flesh—it says—that is, in His humanity. He's of the seed of David. But then, the next verse says, in verse 4, "He is declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." So, you

see, both His humanity and His deity at the same time. He is of the seed of David according to the flesh, but He's the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead. Now, listen. He is the provided one. God provided a Messiah. Jesus was not a divine man or He was not a human god. He was the God-Man—perfect humanity and perfect deity. I told you last week it's as much a heresy to deny His humanity as it is to deny His deity. Of the flesh He is the seed of David, born of a virgin, flesh and blood; but declared to be the Son of God with power. He is the provided one.

### **C. He Is the Powerful One**

Now, watch it. Jesus Christ, the promised one. Jesus Christ, the provided one. Jesus Christ, the powerful one. Look in verse 4: "Declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." How do we know He was not just another wild-eyed fanatic? How do we know He was not just another religious teacher, some guru, some person? I'll tell you how we know: He walked out of that tomb. Well, you say, How do we know He did that? It's a good question. He showed himself alive by many infallible proofs, and people with good minds far better than mine or yours have said that there is inescapable evidence that Jesus Christ came out of that grave, more evidence than that Julius Caesar ever lived. And, to say that Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead is to fly in the face of sheer reason, apart from revelation. Yes, He showed himself alive by many infallible proofs. He is declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection of the dead. We serve a mighty Savior. He has conquered death, hell, sin, and the grave. And that's what the book of Romans is about. He rose, came out of that grave.

### **D. He Is the Pure One**

He, Jesus, the promised one. He, Jesus, the provided one. He, Jesus, the powerful one. And He, the pure one. The Bible says this in verse 4: that He did this by the spirit of holiness. Never been a man like the Lord Jesus. How holy, how pure, how sinless is the Lord Jesus Christ. John Phillips, a dear member of this church, wrote some words that deeply stirred me. I want to share them with you. He's talking about our Savior. He said His life was perfectly holy. He never looked with lust. He never uttered a hasty, unkind and cruel, frivolous word. He never entertained an impure thought. He was never accused by conscience, never inflamed by wrongful passion, never out of step with the will of God. His time was never wasted, His talent never debased for selfish yens. His influence never bad; His judgment never wrong. He never had to apologize for anything that He did, or retract a single word He said. He was never too late or too soon, never upset, never insipid, shallow or afraid. He lived on earth approximately 12,000 days, and every one of them was a marvel of holiness. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. Hebrews 7:26—from the summit of the Mount of Transfiguration

He could've stepped straight into glory. He had absolute victory from the moment He first drew breath in that Bethlehem barn until the moment He closed His eyes in death on the cross of Calvary. He was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness. Don't you love that? He is the pure one. You're looking for a hero—let me suggest mine to you if you don't have one: His name is Jesus. Oh, what a Savior!

## **IV. The Theme**

Now, here's the final thing we have time for, just a couple of minutes. The author of the book—Paul; the hero of the book—Jesus; the theme of the book—the Gospel.

### **A. The Source of the Gospel**

Notice how it begins again—verse 1: "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto"—what?—"the gospel of God." And right there he tells us the source of the gospel. Paul didn't think it up. He said I didn't receive it from man, neither was I taught it by man. It is the gospel of God, so don't tamper with it; don't pervert it. Paul said to the Galatians, "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that which I've preached unto you, let him be accursed." And, Phillips translates that, let him be damned. Why? Because a false gospel will lead to a synthetic salvation that will lead to a very real hell. Now, Paul did not equivocate with the gospel. Paul is not trying to be politically correct. He's just saying it is the gospel of God. He said, if an angel comes and preaches any other gospel, let him be accursed. Paul said, if I preach any other gospel unto you than that which I've preached, I need to be accursed. It is the gospel of God.

### **B. The Subject of the Gospel**

But, the source of the gospel of God, the subject of the gospel, is Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 3: "Concerning his Son Christ our Lord." It's not a gospel that alludes to Him; it's not a gospel that mentions Him; friend, Jesus is the gospel. His death, burial, resurrection for our sins—that is the gospel. It is the gospel, the good news of Christ. The word gospel means good news! And it is good news concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, why do we have churches that are filled with moral worldlings who've never been born again? You know, church is supposed to be a sheep hold; it's more like a zoo. Why? Because people have met religion—they've not met Jesus; they've met denominations—they've not met Jesus; they've met programs—they've not met Jesus; they've met causes—but they've not met Jesus. Christianity is not a creed, not a code, not a cause; it is Christ. Did that get in? It is Jesus. To know the Lord Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior—not to know about Him, but to know Him. You can take

Confucius out of Confucianism and still have Confucianism. You could take Buddha out of Buddhism and still have Buddhism. You could take Mohammed out of Islam and still have Islam. But you cannot take Jesus out of Christianity and still have Christianity. It is not just simply some truths that a man taught; it is a viable relationship with Him. And to take Jesus Christ out of Christianity is like taking the water out of a well, the blue out of the sky, notes out of music, and numbers out of mathematics. I'm telling you, folks, Christianity is Christ.

### **C. The Supply of the Gospel**

The source of the gospel is the gospel of God. The subject of the gospel, Jesus Christ. And the supply of the gospel—let me show you what that is, and I'll be finished. Look at it—verse 5: "By whom we have received grace and apostleship." Do you know what grace is? Grace is what makes God save people like us apart from works of any kind. It is the sheer, absolute gift of God. That's what exploded in the mind of Luther on those holy stairs. The just shall live by faith; by faith, I receive the gift of God. By faith, I receive the grace of God. Folks, you're not saved by good works; you're not saved by religion; you're not saved by baptism; you're not saved by church membership; you're not saved by giving your money. You're saved by the grace of God. We're going to learn about that in the book of Romans. What a wonderful, wonderful book this is!

### **Conclusion**

A little boy came forward in a church service and wanted to be baptized, and they said, Well, son, tell us how you got saved? He said, Well, I did my part, and God did His. Well, they didn't like that. They said, Well, tell us about your part. He said, I did the sinning, and He did the saving. Friend, that's it. Oh, in my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling. When I was a teenage boy in a revival meeting, they gave an invitation, and I went forward. They said, Well, Adrian, why did you come? Did you want to be saved? Yes sir. Be seated, Adrian. A kind person whose name I cannot remember sat by me, and said, Now, how do you spell your name? A-D-R-I-A-N Rogers, is that right? Yes. And you're coming accepting Christ as your Savior. Yes sir, I am. And he checked that, and so forth. And he just sat there—that's all he told me. Later on, they said, Adrian Rogers has come forward this tonight. Adrian has come and those of you that rejoice that he's come, would you lift your hand and say Amen? Of course they rejoiced. I'd been a terror in the neighborhood. They said, we're glad that he's come. And you know, I was sincere; I meant business. But folks, I didn't have assurance. You know why? I'd still not learned about grace. And I rode a spiritual roller coaster for a couple of years. But I learned the truths that I'm sharing with you today from the book of Romans. I learned about the grace of God. And, one night, after I'd walked Joyce home, I stopped on the corner of 38th Street and Calvin Avenue in West Palm Beach, Florida,

and I said, God, I don't know whether I'm lost and the Holy Spirit has me under conviction, or whether I'm saved and the devil's trying to make me doubt. Have you ever done that? I said, But God, I want to get it settled. And I know now that I'm saved, by the grace of God. And I looked straight up into that Florida sky into those stars, and I said, Dear God, right now, with all of my heart, once and for all, now and forever, I trust you to save me. If I am saved, this can't take it away. But I'm going to nail down, stake now; I trust you; I don't look for a sign; I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on your Word; I receive the grace of God. And, friend, a river of peace started to flow through my heart and through my life that is flowing this very minute. It's the river of grace. That is the supply of the gospel. We're going to be learning about this marvelous, matchless, infinite grace. The author—Paul; the hero—Jesus; the subject—the glorious gospel of the grace of God. We're going to have a good time together as we examine the foundations of our faith.

I want you to bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. How many of you today in this building could say, Pastor Rogers, I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, and God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I'm a child of God. I've repented of my sin. I've trusted Christ. I know because of the teaching of God's Word. and the witness of the Spirit in my heart. that I am a child of God, that I am absolutely certain that if I were to die right now I would go to heaven. I wonder, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, just between you and me and the Lord, how many could give that testimony. Would you lift your hand? All right, take them down. A great number.

Now, if you couldn't lift your hand, I want to tell you some good news. The gospel is good news. You can be saved today forever, if you will trust Christ. And I want to help you to do that right now. I want to help you to pray, and I want you to pray right now—right now—to receive the gift of God. Dear God—just pray sincerely in your heart—I know that you love me. I know that you want to save me. Jesus, I believe you're the Son of God. I believe that God raised you from the dead. I believe you paid for my sin with your blood on the cross. And now, by faith, I receive the gift of salvation, right now. 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. Now, thank you for saving me. Now, Lord Jesus, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of you, because you died for me. And, if you'll just give me the strength, I will make this public; I will not be ashamed of you. Thank you for saving me. I will follow you the rest of my life. I am your bond slave. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be. In your name I pray. Amen.

# Life's Greatest Adventure

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 4, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 1:14–16**

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

ROMANS 1:16

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Paul Was Faithful to the Obligations of the Gospel
  - A. Paul Was a Debtor to Christ
  - B. Paul Was a Debtor to the Conquerors of the Past
  - C. Paul Was a Debtor to Those Around Him
- II. Paul Was Flexible for the Opportunities of the Gospel
  - A. Paul Was Ready to Live for Christ
  - B. Paul Was Ready to Die for Christ
  - C. Paul Was Ready to Go for Christ
  - D. Paul Was Ready to Stay for Christ
- III. Paul Was Fearless in the Opposition to the Gospel
  - A. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Person of the Gospel
  - B. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Purpose of the Gospel
  - C. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Power of the Gospel
  - D. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Plan of the Gospel

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you be finding in God's Holy Word the book of Romans, chapter 1? We spoke from this last week, as we were in our World Missions Conference. And again, today, I want to speak to you on Life's Greatest Adventure. Romans chapter 1, and, in just a moment, I'm going to begin reading in verse 14.

I believe, without the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, that the greatest Christian, the greatest missionary, who ever lived was the Apostle Paul. Before he was saved, he was a non-believer in Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, he was persecuting the Church of Jesus Christ, hauling Christians into prison and watching while some of them were literally put to death. He was so ashamed of what he had done that after he came to Christ he called himself *“less than the least”* and the chief of sinners.

(Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:15) But Jesus appeared to him. Jesus apprehended him. Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus in a post-resurrection appearance. And when Paul, who was then called Saul, saw Jesus, he asked Him the two greatest questions that anyone can ever ask. Question number one: *“Who [are you], Lord?”* (Acts 9:5) Question number two: *“What [would you] have me to do?”* (Acts 9:6) The two greatest questions that anyone could ever ask.

The Apostle Paul spent the rest of his life discovering the answer to those two questions: *“Who [are you], Lord?”* (Acts 9:5) *“What [would you] have me to do?”* (Acts 9:6) Paul became then the greatest missionary the world has ever known. And, after his death, there was a colony of heaven planted in every major city in the western Roman Empire. What was it that so transformed him? What was the philosophy that drove him? What was the motivation that urged him on? We’re going to read, and we’re going to find three times the Apostle Paul will use a phrase—*“I am.”*

Look, if you will now, in verse 14: *“I am the debtor, both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”* (Romans 1:14–16) Look in verse 14: *“I am debtor.”* (Romans 1:14) Look in verse 15: *“I am ready.”* (Romans 1:15) Look in verse 16: *“I am not ashamed.”* (Romans 1:16)

Now, my job as a preacher this morning is to write those three “I am’s” on your heart until you can say the same thing. If you can say those three things when I am finished, God through me will have done a good job—if you can say with the Apostle Paul, “I am a debtor, I am ready, and I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” And that will save you, my friend, from Sunday morning religion and casual Christianity. That will make you the kind of a person that God wants you to be. Three things, therefore, based around these three I am’s.

## **I. Paul Was Faithful to the Obligations of the Gospel**

First of all, I want you to see that Paul was faithful to the obligations of the gospel. Paul felt obligated. He said, “I am a debtor.” Now, what does that mean? To whom was Paul in debt? To what was Paul in debt?

### **A. Paul Was a Debtor to Christ**

Well, number one, Paul was in debt—he saw himself as a debtor—to Christ. Look, if you will—go back to verse 1: *“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ...”* (Romans 1:1) And the word *servant*, as I told you last week, means “a bond-slave”. Paul saw himself a bond-slave to the One who died for him. Question: Has Jesus died for you? Yes! All right, Jesus, with His blood, bought you. Therefore, Paul later told the Corinthians, “You’re not

your own. You are bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) “Here, Lord, I give myself away. ’Tis all that I can do.” (Isaac Watts) “Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe.” (Elvina Hall) “Love so amazing, so divine, demands”—demands—“my life, my soul, my all.” (Isaac Watts)

You say, “Adrian, are you saying we have to work for our salvation?” No! Salvation is by grace, but “oh to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be.” (Roberts Robinson)

*“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”*

Can you say that? Paul saw himself as a debtor to Christ.

### **B. Paul Was a Debtor to the Conquerors of the Past**

But not only did he see himself as a debtor to Christ; Paul saw himself as a debtor to the conquerors of the past. You see, Paul knew that he stood on the shoulders of those who had gone before him. Look in verse 8. Paul says, “*First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.*” (Romans 1:8) Paul realized that there were others who had suffered, and bled, and died that he might know the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the thing that brought the Apostle Paul to a saving faith in Christ, other than the appearance of Jesus Christ Himself to Paul, was Paul had watched a martyr die for Jesus. He had watched a man named Stephen die for Jesus.

We have two sons, one named David, as Joyce has told you, and one named Stephen. These are both named after men of God. Paul knew that the conquerors of the past had paid for the faith with their own precious blood. We sit here in this beautiful building, air-conditioned, upholstered. We sit here in comfort and safety. But friend, I want to tell you there are others who have sailed through bloody seas. And even this Apostle Paul later would have his head cut off. Peter would be crucified upside down. Christians were fed to the lions in the Colosseum. And they were clothed with animal skins, and hunted like wild beasts. They were tied to the shores at low tide and drowned. They were stripped of their clothing, covered with oil, and made human candles to light Nero’s gardens while he banqueted. They paid with their blood. And this very building that we’re in, this very fellowship that we enjoy, friend, there are those who have gone before us. Before long, as a church, we will celebrate one hundred years because Bellevue began in 1903. Who provided the seat that you’re sitting on? Who is causing the light to shine down upon you? Who put the carpet beneath your feet? Who installed the sound system that you might hear? Who erected these walls? Who sent

before us that we might enjoy what we enjoy today? Somebody did. Amen? We owe them. We owe them. We are a debtor to the conquerors of the past.

### C. Paul Was a Debtor to Those Around Him

But also, Paul saw himself as a debtor to those around him. Look, if you will, in verse 11. Paul says, *“For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift.”* (Romans 1:11) Look, if you will, in verse 14: *“I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians”* (Romans 1:14)—the Greeks and the Barbarians. The Greeks, they were the up-and-out. The Barbarians, they were the down-and-out. Paul said, “I am a debtor to the cultured. I am a debtor to the crude. I am a debtor to the intelligent. I am a debtor to the ignorant.” Men all around us need the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have the message.

¶ We’ve been hearing a lot lately about pardons. Suppose the governor of this state were to give you a pardon of a man about to be electrocuted or given a lethal injection, and you were to deliver that pardon. He said, “I’m going to give you the honor to take the pardon to the warden to see that this man is set free.” Suppose you put that pardon in your breast pocket and said, “I’m going to deliver that pardon.” But, in the meanwhile, you went shopping. In the meanwhile, you cut your grass. In the meanwhile, you went golfing. In the meanwhile, you took a family vacation. Then you pick up the newspaper and read where the man has been put to death, and you had the pardon in your pocket. How would you feel? And, friend, I tell you, there are souls dropping in hell, and you and I have the message, and if we fail to give that message, and share that message, how will we feel when we meet the Lord Jesus Christ at the judgment?¶

Paul knew that he was a debtor to those around him—to the Greeks, the intellectual Greeks; to the Barbarians, those crude and Visigothic people. Then next, Paul saw himself as a debtor to every man.

## II. Paul Was Flexible for the Opportunities of the Gospel

Now, here’s the second thing about Paul: not only did Paul see himself as a debtor, and not only was Paul faithful to the obligations of the gospel, but now watch this: Paul was flexible for the opportunities of the gospel. Do you know the problem with most of us today? We’re inflexible. We’re not ready to go, I mean, if God were to speak to us... For example, suppose there’s a businessman here, and you own a growing business. Let’s suppose that you are really banking money right now that everything is running smoothly. Could God step into your life and say, “Sell that business. I’m calling you to the mission field”? Suppose you have your career planned. Suppose you are a young executive on your way up. Are you flexible enough that God would step in and interrupt your so-called plans and change totally the course of your life? The question is this: Are

you ready to hear God speak? Big question, isn't it? You say, "Well, I have plans."

#### **A. Paul Was Ready to Live for Christ**

Notice what Paul says; look at it in verse 15: "*For as much as in me is*"—not halfheartedly—"*as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.*" (Romans 1:15) Now, Paul was ready to live for Christ. He was ready to live for Christ. Now, I hear people talk about the fact, "I would die for Jesus." I want to know, will you live for Jesus? Will you live for Jesus? Are you ready to live for Jesus? Would you say today, "As much as in me is"? When Paul said that there was life in him, there was strength in him, there was intelligence in him, there was determination in him, that was a willingness. God had given him life. And he said, "All right, Lord, you've given it to me. As much as in me is, I give it back to you." Paul was ready to live for Christ.

#### **B. Paul Was Ready to Die for Christ**

But also—now, watch this—Paul was ready to die for Christ. Paul was going to Rome. There was no friendship for Jesus in Rome. Paul was ready to preach the gospel in Rome, and I believe that Paul died in Rome. If you go to Rome sometime, you want to visit the Roman Forum. Most visitors, when they go to Rome, they want to visit Saint Peter's Cathedral. Most visitors, when they go to Rome, they want to visit the Roman Forum. And most visitors, when they go to Rome, want to visit the Catacombs and the Colosseum. But don't forget to visit, if you ever go, the Mamertine Prison, right across from the Roman Forum. Busy traffic there. But there's a prison that has been preserved called the Mamertine Prison. And you can still go there, go down into that prison—a hole in the ground. A prisoner would have to be lowered by ropes to go down there. Maybe there would be some stairs there, but no windows, no outside light. And many believe that's the prison where the Apostle Paul was kept until he was executed. And a guard comes for him and says, "Paul, let's go." Paul says, "I'm ready—I'm ready." "Well, aren't you afraid?" "Oh, no, I die daily. I am ready." And there he goes. The greatest Christian that ever lived, there he goes down to the Tiber River that would drink his blood. They cut off his head. "Before you die, Paul, are there any last words?" "Oh yes, Jesus is Lord." Jesus is Lord. Ready to live for Christ, are you? Big question: Ready to die for Christ? Are you?

I've asked myself this question. I don't know the answer, for sure. I think I know. I'll know when and if the time comes, but it is my desire to be ready to die for Christ. As a matter of fact, I believe that when man is no longer afraid to die, for the first time in his life he is ready to live. Paul said, "I am ready—I am ready to live for Christ, as much as in me is. I am ready to die for Christ. I'm going to Rome where they hate Jesus Christ, where Caesar is Emperor, and I'm going to preach there that Jesus is Lord. It may cost my life."

### C. Paul Was Ready to Go for Christ

He was ready to go for Christ. Look in verse 13—look at it: *“I purposed to come unto you”* (Romans 1:13)—that is, “I want to go. It is my purpose to go. I want to go. I’m ready to go.” Are you ready to go? If the Lord tells you to go next door, or go around the world, can you honestly, sincerely say, “I am ready to go”?

David Livingstone, a name that is in the annals of missionary service—one of the greatest missionaries of history—said this, and I want you to listen: “Send me where you will, but go with me. Lay any burden on my heart, but sustain me. Sever any tie, but the one that binds my heart to Thee.” Would you like to hear that again? Say yes. “Send me where you will, but go with me. Lay any burden on my heart, but sustain me. Sever any tie, but the one that binds my heart to Thee.”

### D. Paul Was Ready to Stay for Christ

He was ready to live, ready to die, ready to go. Now, watch this: he was ready to stay. Notice in verse 13; look at verse 13 again. He says here, *“I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto)”* (Romans 1:13)—that is, “I was kept back, I was not about to go as I often.” He said, “Many times I wanted to come, but I was restrained.” (Romans 1:13)

You see, we don’t just up and go. Sometimes God says, “Go.” Sometimes God says, “Stay.” I honestly, sincerely believe sometimes it’s harder to stay than it is to go. And my wife stood up here a few moments ago and said, “God put a sword in my heart when I saw my son and my grandson and my daughter-in-law leave the ground and take off. They were not just going for vacation to Spain. They’re going to Spain to live the rest of their lives, unless the Lord says ‘go somewhere else.’” So sometimes, God doesn’t say, “Go.” Sometimes, God says, “Stay. Stay and pray. Stay and love. Stay and give. Stay supporting.” And that may be what God is saying to you to do: to stay. Don’t go if you’re not sent, and don’t go until you are sent. But friend, we need to be ready. Can you honestly say, “Lord Jesus, I am ready to do your will, whatever it is”?

## III. Paul Was Fearless in the Opposition to the Gospel

Now, let’s move to the third thing. Paul—Paul—was faithful to the obligations of the gospel. He said, “I’m a debtor.” Paul was flexible for the opportunities of the gospel. He said, “I am ready.” Now, here’s the third thing: Paul was fearless in the opposition to the gospel. Paul is going to Rome—Rome, mighty Rome, the iron legions of Rome; Rome, that ruled the world; Rome, with her philosophers; Rome, with her gods; Rome, with her laws. And Paul is going from Jerusalem, from Judea, subjugated, ruled by the Romans. And Paul is going to mighty Rome. Friend, when you see the ruins of Rome, you’re impressed. And Paul, a little squinty-eyed, humpback Jew, is going to go into this city, and he’s going to preach the message of another publicly executed Jew, what they would call a “backwoods philosopher”. They would laugh at him. They would persecute

him. But he would say, “[I’m] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” (Romans 1:16)

I wonder where you work, mister—that high-polished office, that bank, that law office, that university? Are you ashamed of Jesus? You might even be ashamed of being a Baptist. You might be doubly ashamed being a member of Bellevue. When everybody else is saying grace, you just kind of rub your eyebrows. Paul knew that he was going into opposition. But you know what Paul thought? He said, “I’ve been other places”—I love this phrase—“*I’m ready to preach the gospel in Rome also*”—“in Rome also”. I read about David in the Bible. David, when he came against Goliath, David said to Goliath, “Look, I’ve already killed a lion, I’ve already killed a bear, and you’re next in line.” That’s what Paul is saying. “I’ve been here, I’ve been there, and I’m going to Rome also. *I am not ashamed of the gospel of [Jesus] Christ.*” (Romans 1:15–16) God, give us some men, women, boys, and girls who are not ashamed of Jesus.

Yes, there may be dangers. Yes, there may be ridicule.

*“Must I be carried to the skies  
on flowery beds of ease,  
while others bled to win the prize  
and sail through bloody seas?”*

—ISAAC WATTS

Don’t be ashamed of Jesus. Rome was a proud city. But Paul is going there with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Remember that the Christians of this day, they didn’t have money, prestige, power, but they had Jesus—they had Jesus. Now, what did Paul mean when he said, “[I’m] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”? (Romans 1:16) Let me mention several things, and we’ll be finished.

#### **A. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Person of the Gospel**

First of all, Paul was not ashamed of the Person of the gospel—not ashamed of the Person of the gospel. It is the gospel of Christ. It’s not the Baptist gospel, the Methodist gospel, the Presbyterian gospel. It’s not some creed, not some code, not some cause, not some church; it is the gospel of Jesus Christ, and you never need to be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ. About six billion people on earth today. About sixty billion have lived through all history. About fifty thousand are being added to the world’s population every day. But I’m telling you, there is one person who stands out above all of those who ever lived, or who ever will live, and His name is Jesus Christ. And there’s not a moment in time when there are not millions of people studying what that one man said and trying to arrange their lives according to what He said. Thank God for the man, the Lord Jesus Christ. And I want to tell you, you’re looking at a man who is not ashamed of his Master, and his Master’s miracles, his Master’s message, and his Master’s mission. His name is J-E-S-U-S, and I tell you Jesus is my hero, Jesus is my

friend, and Jesus is my captain. I am not ashamed of the One who stepped out of heaven, suffered and bled for me. I'm not ashamed of the Person of the gospel.

### **B. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Purpose of the Gospel**

I want to say something else. I am not ashamed of the purpose of the gospel. Look at what Paul said. Paul said, “[I’m] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation.” (Romans 1:16) What is the purpose of the gospel? It’s salvation. Man needs more than soap and soup; He needs salvation. He needs the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus did not come as a financier. Jesus did not come as a philosopher and a teacher. The Bible says, “The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which [is] lost.” (Luke 19:10)

There are some people who have substituted the saving gospel for the social gospel, which is no gospel. It’s just making the world a better place to go to hell from. Salvation is the purpose. If you want an adventure, if you want to be a part of something that really counts, then pour your life into getting men saved, and you’ll be glad when you come to the feet of Jesus with some precious soul that you lead to Jesus Christ. You can let Wall Street handle the finances, and let Washington handle the politics, and let Hollywood handle the fame. You let me be a winner of souls. The Bible says, “He that [wins] souls is wise.” (Proverbs 11:30) I am not ashamed—not ashamed—of the purpose of the gospel, which is salvation.

### **C. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Power of the Gospel**

I’ll tell you another thing: I am not ashamed of the power of the gospel. “For it is the power of God unto salvation.” (Romans 1:16) And the word *power*, as you have heard many times, is the word we get our word dynamite from—the *dunamis* of the gospel. Now, I am grateful for that divine dynamite. If you were to take an atomic bomb and somehow explode it between the lapels of your coat, they wouldn’t find any part of you to bury. But that could not blow the sin out of your heart. I tell you, there is a power that can make drunkards sober. There is a power that can make crooked men straight. There is a power that can make profane men and lascivious men pure. Many of you know that power. But the word *power* here is not only the word we get *dynamite* from; it’s the word we get *dynamo* from. And I don’t think that God just wants an explosion and then just some dust settling. God wants His life to flow through you.

Before I came out here this morning, I dropped to my knees to pray, as I do whenever I pray, because I realize that my rhetoric and my ideas and my human emotions and personality are not enough. I want the power of God in my life, and I know it will be there as long as I am a gospel preacher, depending on Him, and full of the Holy Ghost of God. “[The gospel] is the power of God unto salvation.” (Romans 1:16) And Paul says, “I am not ashamed of the power of the gospel.” (Romans 1:16) And friend, if

you're ashamed of the power of the gospel, it's because you've never experienced that gospel.

#### D. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Plan of the Gospel

Now, let me go on and say that the Apostle Paul was not ashamed of the plan of the gospel. I love this. Listen. Paul says, *"It is the power of God."* (Romans 1:16) Watch this—watch this: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that [believes]."* (Romans 1:16) Let me read that again. Could it be that simple? *"To every one that [believes]."* (Romans 1:16) That's it. That's the plan. That is incredible. All of the rest of the religions of the world are spelled D-O—"do this, do this, do this." Ours is spelled D-O-N-E—done. It is finished. *You put your faith where God has put your sins—on the Lord Jesus Christ. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you'll] be saved."* (Acts 11:17)

You say, "Well, that's easy-believism." Well, what do you want—hard-believism? Oh, I'm not talking about cheapening the gospel. The word doesn't mean mere intellectualism. It means trust. But you trust Him, and God has sent me here to tell you this morning, whoever you are, wherever you may be, if you will put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, believe on Him, trust in His finished work, God will save you instantaneously, and God will be with you continually, and God will save you and keep you eternally. I believe that. That's the plan of the gospel.

There used to be an old-time minister, an evangelist, whose name was Christmas Evans. He had a corny way of saying—he said, "You could put a man in a barrel and shout through the bung hole how to be saved, and he could be saved." Why? Because it's simply by grace. That's the plan of the gospel.

Did you know it's the only way that anybody can ever have assurance of their salvation? Let me give you a verse—put it in your margin—Romans 4, verse 16: *"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end that the promise might be sure to all."* Listen to that; now listen: *"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace."* If you could be saved by any other way than putting your faith in Jesus Christ, you'd not be saved by grace. *"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace"*—now, watch this—*"to the end that the promise might be sure to all."* The only way that you can have assurance of salvation is to understand it's by faith—by grace through faith. And *"that the promise might be sure to all"*—that's one thing that all can do, and that's the one way that we can be sure. If any part of this depends upon me, I cannot be sure, because *I wouldn't trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me saved, or to keep me saved.*

It is by faith through grace, that the promise might be sure to all. Isn't that a glorious gospel? How can we ever be ashamed of the plan of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? This gives you great boldness when you witness. Friend, everybody that

you see is either saved or lost. If they are lost, they are a prospect. If they are saved, they are a partner—either way, I mean, everybody. People race their theological motors talking about the elect. Listen, friend: the elect are the “whosoever wills”. Anybody who wants to be saved can be saved. And we’re to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to every creature, and never be ashamed of the Person of the gospel, never be ashamed of the power of the gospel, never be ashamed of the purpose of the gospel, never be ashamed of the plan of the gospel.

You know what I want to be known as? A gospel preacher—a gospel preacher. What is the gospel? Christ died for our sins. With His precious blood, He paid my sin debt. He was buried, carried my sins to the grave of God’s forgetfulness, and my sins were buried with Christ, that Christ rose from the dead. This is the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins. Do you believe that? Friend, if you believe that, He’ll save you, and that’s the gospel truth. That is the gospel truth. So what is the Apostle Paul saying? What made Paul the great man that he was? Friend, he said, “I’m a debtor.” “Oh to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be.” (Robert Robinson) And Paul said, “I’m ready. I’m ready to live. I’m ready to die. I’m ready to go. I’m ready to stay.” And then, Paul says, “*I am not ashamed of the gospel of [Jesus] Christ.*” (Romans 1:16)

Has God written those three “I am’s” on your heart? Are you ready? Can God interrupt your business plans? Can God interdict the plans that you have for your children? Can God tell you today to give something to the World Missions Offering that you had not expected to give, something that you were going to spend for something else, but God says, “Do it”?

## Conclusion

Let me just close with this—I love it. There used to be a pastor named Baldwin, lived in Troy, New York. Here’s what he said about the gospel. It’s beautiful. He said, “At thirty, after examining the philosophies and religions of the world, I said, ‘There is nothing better than the gospel of Christ’”—nothing better than the gospel. “At forty, when burdens pressed heavily and the years seemed to hasten, I said, ‘There’s nothing as good as the gospel.’ At fifty, when there were empty chairs in the home and the mound builders had done their service, I said, ‘There’s nothing to be compared to the gospel.’ At sixty, when my second sight saw through the illusions and vanity of earthly things, I said, ‘There is nothing but the gospel.’ And then, at seventy, amid many limitations and privations at hand, I said, ‘Should all the forms which men devise attack my faith with treacherous art, I had called them vanities and lies, and bind the gospel to my heart.’” Not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. I speak,

first of all, to those of you who are already saved, those of you who know the Lord Jesus Christ: could you say—say it sincerely, say it without stutter or stammer—“I am a debtor, Lord Jesus; I’ll spend the rest of my life in debt to such mighty love”? Could you say it and mean it? “I am ready.” Could you say it and mean it? “I am not ashamed, and I will not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ.” Pray about that.

Now, let me talk to those of you who may not yet be saved, those of you who have not yet given your heart to Jesus Christ. I tell you on the authority of the Word of God that Jesus will save you right now if you’ll trust Him. “[*The gospel*] is the power of God unto salvation [unto] every one that [believes],” (Romans 1:16) and you are part of that “every one”. May I lead you in a prayer? Pray this prayer: “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 you. I do trust you, Lord Jesus, right now. I open my heart. I receive you, by faith, as my Lord and Savior. I trust you to save me. And, because I trust you, I thank you for doing that. It is done. I don’t look for a sign. I don’t ask for a feeling. I stand on your Word, and you cannot lie. Thank you for saving me. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of you. Because you have saved me, I will make it public, and I will live for you, not in order to be saved, but because I have been saved. I cannot be ashamed of you. I will make this public. And I will live the rest of my life for you, my Lord and my Savior. Thank you for saving me. Amen and amen.†

# The Missionary Challenge

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 27, 1994

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 1:14–16

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

ROMANS 1:16

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Paul Was Faithful to the Missionary Obligation
  - II. Paul Was Flexible to the Missionary Opportunity
  - III. Paul Was Fearless to the Missionary Opposition
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Romans chapter 1 and verse 14, would you, please—Romans 1:14. To understand what motivates a man is to understand his life. The greatest missionary that the world has ever known was the Apostle Paul. And in the passage that I’m about to read, you’re going to find out what motivated, what moved, what drove, what impelled, and energized the life of the world’s greatest missionary. The title of the message today is a very simple title: “The Missionary Challenge.” The message itself, however, is of great, great, great importance, not just to those that we call missionaries, but to every child of God in this place. To say *missionary* and to say *Christian* is to say the same thing. If you do not have a missionary heart, you are guilty of high treason against heaven’s King. Hudson Taylor said, the great missionary to China, “That the Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed.” And if you don’t have a missionary heart, a missionary zeal, a missionary prayer, a missionary pocketbook, a missionary motivation, you have a clenched fist in the face of God and you, sir, you, ma’am, are guilty of high treason against heaven’s King.

Now, here’s the Apostle Paul, and I want you to see what motivated Paul. There are three statements in the Scripture that I’m about the read that begin with the phrase, “I am.” Now watch for them. Verse 14: *“I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew*

*first, and also to the Greeks.*” (Romans 1:14–16) Now do you see it? Verse 14: *“I am debtor...”* (Romans 1:14) Verse 15: *“I am ready...”* (Romans 1:15) Verse 16: *“I am not ashamed...”* (Romans 1:16) And in those three verses, Paul deals with three great facets of the missionary challenge. First of all, he deals with what we’re going to call the missionary obligation, and then he deals with the missionary opportunity, and then he deals with the missionary opposition. And I want you to see how he does it.

## **I. Paul Was Faithful to the Missionary Obligation**

First of all, I want you to see that Paul was here faithful to the missionary obligation. He says, *“I am debtor...”* (Romans 1:14) Now what did he mean by that? Well, he meant primarily, “I am responsible for taking the gospel to those who have not yet heard, to the Greeks and to the Barbarians.” But behind that was Paul’s life, that knew that he was a debtor to Jesus Christ. In verse 1 Paul calls himself a *servant* of Jesus Christ. And what that literally means is a “bond slave”. That is, Paul knew that when Jesus Christ died for him, Jesus Christ purchased him. And though salvation is the gift of God’s grace, the great paradox is that when we’re saved by grace, we become a slave to the Lord Jesus Christ. And in slavery to Jesus Christ is absolute freedom. But we are the bond slaves of Jesus Christ. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, *“[You] are not your own...[you] are bought with a price.”* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20) And so you today must join the Apostle Paul and say, “Lord Jesus, I owe everything to you: my life, my soul, my all.” “Jesus paid it all [and] all to Him I owe.” (Elvina Hall)

I’ll tell you something else that Paul meant when he said, “I am a debtor.” Not only did he mean that he was a debtor to Christ, but he meant he was a debtor to those who had gone before him who had suffered, bled, and died for the faith. You see, already in Paul’s time there were martyrs who had paid with their blood for the faith that we enjoy. And let me say this: we sit here today, on this beautiful Sunday morning, in this air-conditioned auditorium, on those cushioned seats, in moderate safety, listening to glorious music. It hasn’t been like this for Christians down through the years. This Apostle Paul who wrote that he was a debtor had his head cut off for Jesus Christ. Simon Peter, the apostle, they were going to martyr this apostle, Simon Peter, and they said, “He likes the cross so much, let’s crucify Peter.” Peter said, “You may crucify me if you like, but don’t crucify me right side up, like Jesus was crucified. Crucify me upside down.” And tradition tells us that Simon Peter was crucified upside down for Jesus Christ.

If you will study Foxe’s Book of Martyrs, you will find out how those people that are our predecessors lived and died for the faith of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Some of them were stripped naked and put in arenas where they were gored to death by wild bulls. Others reddened the mouths of ravenous lions with their own blood. Some of

them were tied to the beaches at low tide, and people giggled and laughed as the water came up and drowned these early believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of them were put in huge sacks, and sewed into sacks, and in those sacks were poisonous serpents. And they were sewed, put in there alive to be bitten by those serpents, and died. Nero took some of these early Christians and dipped them in oil and set them afire to light his gardens for his banquets.

This building that we're in today—it didn't just happen. It didn't just happen. The ministry that we have today—it didn't just happen. Since 1903, the witness called Bellevue has been here. And you and I stand on the shoulders and reap the legacy of those who've gone before us—those who have suffered, those who have given, those who have prayed, those who have sacrificed. I want to ask you a question: How did you get to know Jesus? Didn't somebody tell you? Didn't somebody bring the gospel to you? Did not somebody bring the message to you? Friend, we're debtors to those who've done that. We owe them.

¶ I heard of a little boy who said to his mom, he said, "Mama, do you remember that vase, that beautiful vase that you treasure so much, that vase that's been in our family from generation to generation?" She said, "Yes, darling, what about it?" He said, "This generation just dropped it." And I'm afraid that we may have a generation, that has been the recipient of the gospel, that has been handed down from saint to saint and generation to generation, and we dare not drop it.¶

But what Paul meant primarily when he said, "*I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians...the wise and the unwise,*" (Romans 1:14) what did he mean? Well, the Greeks were sophisticated; the Barbarians were not. What Paul meant was everybody needs to know Jesus—the up and out, the down and out, the wise, and the unwise, the educated, the illiterate, the rich, the poor, the young, the old. All, everybody, deserves to know about the Lord Jesus Christ. And Paul said, "I am faithful to the missionary obligation." You, if you name the name of Jesus, have an obligation to get out the gospel. Now, it may not be across the ocean that you'll go; it may be across the street. It may not be that you will go with a preaching voice; it may be that you will go with your dollars; you'll go with your prayers. But somehow, some way, you will be a part of the team that gets out the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And you must say, every one of you, "I am in debt. I am in debt. There is a debt that must be paid. Somebody gave the gospel to me, and I must, I must pass it on." Isn't that right? Now did that sink in? Would you say—listen now, this is not a sermon now, this is to you—would you say, "Pastor Rogers, I agree that I must be faithful to the missionary obligation"? Will you say that in your heart? Did you say it, or did you come to sit in church like you watch television—with no intent on being changed? Did you say, will you say, are you saying right now along with the apostle Paul, "I am faithful to the

missionary obligation”? “Yes, I am a debtor.”

## **II. Paul Was Flexible to the Missionary Opportunity**

Now, here’s a second thing he said. Not only did he say, “I am faithful,” but he said, “I am flexible to the missionary opportunity.” He said, “[*I am ready*], *I am ready to preach the gospel to [those of] you who are at Rome also.*” (Romans 1:15) He’d been in other places, and now he is ready. May I tell you what it takes to have the missionary heart? Do you want to know? Not oratorical ability, not intellectual ability, not physical or financial ability, not personality. If you have those things, well and good, use them for Christ. But the two great abilities that are needed in this congregation, needed in this city, and needed around the world are these: dependability and availability—dependability and availability. Are you available, and are you dependable? Could you say with the Apostle Paul, “I am ready. I am ready to live as a Christian ought to live. I am ready to pray. I am ready to give. I am ready to go. I’m ready to die, if need be”? Would you die for Jesus? You say, “Well, Pastor, I don’t know whether I would or not.” I don’t think you do know, but I think you ought to ask yourself that question and say, “I want to be ready to die for Jesus.” You know, I don’t think you’re ready to live until you’re ready to die. You see, if the gospel is worth anything, it’s worth everything. Are you ready? Are you available? Are you flexible? Could, could God break into your plans?

The great missionary, David Livingstone, said, “Send me where you will, but go with me. Lay any burden upon my heart, but sustain me. Sever any tie but the one that binds my heart to you. I am ready.” You see, many of us, if God were to call us, we’d say, “I can’t go.” Well, why can’t I go? Well, I’m, I’m enrolled in this course. I’m involved in this business. I’m attached to this relationship. I am committed to this cause. Well, there’s no school, no relationship, no business, and no cause that should take precedent over the call of God upon your life if God calls.

Are you a lawyer today? Your law practice is not more important than the call of God on your life. Are you a doctor today? Your medicine is not more important than the call of God upon your life. Are you a banker, or a financier, a schoolteacher? None of that is more important. Now, God may want you to be a banker, a lawyer, a doctor, a physician, right where you are. As a matter of fact, I think most of us are exactly where God wants us, but not all of us, not all of us. And God may just break in and say, “Hey, that’s what you’re doing now and you’ve been in God’s will thus far, but now here’s a new call.” If God were to reach in and break up your little party, are you flexible? Are you flexible? I mean, are you willing to change your plans? You say, “This is what my career path is, has been, it’s what it’s going to be.” Well, God might have other plans for you.

There's a man right there. God had a career path for him. Bob Sorrell had a mind, the ability, the energy, and the ambition to succeed in the world of industry and was doing a wonderful job. But God stepped in and said, "I want you in the ministry. I want you in the ministry." And he was flexible so that God could hear him, and took him out of a career path, and put him somewhere else because he was flexible. You know, we can, we can do really, we can make arrangements to do what we really want to do.

† I may have told you that I was in Washington when George Bush was the President, and was invited into the Oval Office for a conversation. He said to me, "Adrian, I'm flying to Memphis tomorrow on Air Force One. I'd like very much to have you a guest aboard that airplane." Well, that sounded pretty good to me, but I said, "Mr. President, I didn't come prepared to spend the night." I said, "I'm flying back to Memphis today." He said, "Well, if you could arrange it, I sure would like it." You know what I did? I went out and bought a toothbrush, and a little can of shaving cream, and a plastic razor. Do you know why? Because no matter what else I had to do, I was able to arrange those plans because I wanted so much to do that. I figured that's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I became flexible. You see, we can find reasons for not doing something if we really don't want to do it. And if we really want to do it, then everything else just has to take second place, doesn't it? So this is what we need to do. Paul said, "I am ready."†

Now, are you faithful to the obligation of the gospel? Are you? Are you flexible for the opportunities of the gospel? Did you know that these are days of incredible opportunity? Jesus said in John chapter 4 and verse 35, "*Lift up your eyes and look on the fields, for they are white unto harvest.*" When has been in history the greatest day of missionary advance? When? Now! You are living in it. The Christian church today—please hear this pastor's heart—is reaping and witnessing a far greater harvest of souls than in all of history and anything that the apostles ever witnessed. Around the world today there are massive victories for the Lord Jesus Christ, yet most of the people in the western world are completely unaware of what is happening.

Did you know that Christianity is growing three times faster than the world's population? Did you know that? Did you know that every day 178,000 people profess their faith in Jesus Christ? Every day, 28,000 new Christians in Communist China—every day! 20,000 come to Christ in Africa every day. 35,000 come to Jesus Christ every day in Latin America. Christianity is the fastest growing religion in the world, if you want to call it a religion, with a 6.9% rate of growth. That's compared to 2.7% for the Muslims, 2.2% for the Hindus, 1.7% for the Buddhists. Listen to this: More than 70% of the progress in world evangelization from the time of Christ unto today has occurred since 1900, more than 70%. 70% of that progress has happened since the end of World War II. And 70% of that 70% has happened in the last thirty-six months. There is an

explosion of people coming to Jesus Christ. In 1900 you could not go to Korea and find a person who claimed to be a born-again Christian unless it was the rarest of exceptions. Korea was considered an impossible land to penetrate with the gospel of Jesus Christ. By 1986, however, 20% of the population in Korea claimed to be Christian, and today it is estimated that 40% of the Koreans yield their allegiance to Jesus Christ. That's more than 12.5 million believers in Jesus Christ in Korea. Thank God for that. In 1950 it was estimated there were a million believers in China, and the doors closed, and the Chinese were put under, in, incredible repression. But by 1980 when we looked, missiologists studied. Now they found not one million as in 1950, but forty million believers in Jesus Christ—by 1972, more than 75 million. And the Communist leaders themselves are saying by the turn of the century there will be more than 100 million believers in Jesus Christ in China. They're coming to Christ by the thousands. In India there are 85 million who profess their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and there are teams that are going up and down across the land of India showing the Jesus film. They call it "The Man of Peace." And they're saying through that, 100,000 a month are coming to Jesus Christ across the land. Did you know that more people have come to know the Lord in Muslim Iran in the past ten years than the previous one thousand years combined, and thriving churches are found in almost every city and village? In Latin America in 1900 you could find about fifty thousand who would call themselves born-again. But by 1990 there were more than twenty million. And by 2000, they estimate in Latin America that number will grow to 100 million. Latinos are getting saved four times faster than the rate of population growth. God says, "If you Americans don't want it, there are plenty people who do, plenty people who do." And Jesus said, "*Look on the fields...they are white [unto] harvest.*" (John 4:35) And could you say with the Apostle Paul, "Here am I, Lord. I'm ready. I am flexible for the opportunities of the gospel"?

¶ Years ago, I read about a sales manager who got his sales force together. Took a white poster board, and in the middle of that white poster board he put one black dot, and held it up in front of his sales force, and said, "What do you see?" One said, "Well, I see a black dot." The next, "What do you see?" "A black dot." The next, "What do you see?" All saw a black dot. And then he said, "Isn't it strange that all of you saw a black dot, but none of you saw the white all around it?" Now we see the black dot of self-concern, but how many of us have lifted up our eyes to see the fields that are white already unto harvest? ¶

Are you flexible? I mean, if God were to reach in and break up your little party today? If God were to say, "Hey, you're the one He's talking to. I have a different plan for you. Yes, I know you've got it all scoped out. Yes, I know that you've planned it all, but I have a different plan for you." Now, I'm not saying that God's going to call every

one of us overseas or into the ministry, but I'm saying that every Christian is a missionary where he is, and he must be flexible. He must say, "God, whatever it is, wherever it is, Lord, I am ready." Like David Livingston, "Send me where you will, just go with me, just go with me. Lay any burden on my heart; just sustain me. Sever any tie but the one that binds my heart to you."

### **III. Paul Was Fearless to the Missionary Opposition**

Now here's the third thing he said that made him the missionary that he was. He said, "*I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ.*" (Romans 1:16) And that means he was fearless to the opposition of the gospel. He was faithful to the obligation. He, friend, was flexible for the opportunities, and he was fearless to the opposition. Here's a man who was going to Rome—the most powerful and sophisticated city on the face of the earth, the seat of power, the belly of the best, as it were—and he said, "This is where I am going."

And if you think it's difficult today, you should have lived in Paul's day. In Paul's day, the gospel had an entirely different standing. The cross was a mark of shame. People didn't wear gold crosses around their neck as jewelry. And to most people in Paul's day Jesus was a mad man at the best and a criminal at the worst. And the gospel was identified with a poor Jewish carpenter who was crucified. Now, the Romans had no special appreciation for the Jews. An execution by crucifixion was the lowest form of death. And that's what Paul was preaching, was Christ crucified. These Romans were saying, "Why should I put any faith in a Jew who was crucified?" Rome had her great intellects and her philosophers. They thought of this as a fable about some Jew who was crucified and then raised from the dead. But Paul said, "I'm not ashamed of that. I'm not ashamed. It doesn't bother me about what you think about it. I know what you think, but I'm not ashamed." And let me say that if you're a child of God, you don't have to lay your brains on a shelf in order to serve Jesus. Paul was an intellectual giant. Did you hear me? An intellectual giant. I know what he wrote. He wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, but yet you need to see the mind that the Holy Spirit inspired. Read the book of Romans; I mean, read it. Friend, there is a treatise. There is the mind of a man—yes, united in, by the Holy Spirit, I understand all of that—but here was a man who had the equivalency of a triple PhD. Here was a man that was a leader of leaders. Here was a man who was of the tribe of Benjamin, a Jew of the Jews, noble birth, but he said, "I'm not ashamed of Jesus."

You know the problem with many of us today is we think that somehow to be a Christian is to be something that we just kind of have to be tongue-tied about, just a little ashamed of. Dr. Lee told about an old preacher one time. His name was Mr. Baldwin, Brother Baldwin. Brother Baldwin said this about the gospel. He said, "At thirty, when I

was a young man, I examined all the philosophies of the religions of the world, and I said, 'There's nothing better than the gospel of Christ.'" Then he said, "When I got to be forty, and the burdens of life came and, and I saw the power that I needed in my life, I said, 'There's nothing as good as the gospel.'" Then he said, "When I got to be fifty, and when there were some empty places at the table, and the gravediggers had done their work, I said, 'There's nothing to be compared to the gospel.'" But then he said, "When I got to be sixty and seventy, and I saw with a new set of lenses this world with all of its vanity and all of its illusion, I came to see there is nothing but the gospel, nothing but the gospel." All that really matters is Jesus.

Friend, are you ashamed of Jesus? Ask yourself this question: Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb? And shall I fear to own His cause or blush to speak His name? Paul said, 'I'm going to Rome, but I want you to know when I go, I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. I'm not ashamed of the person of that gospel. It's the gospel of Christ.'" Of all of the people who've ever lived, there are about sixty billions who've ever lived from Adam to this time, there's one who stands out above them all. His name is Jesus: Jesus, the Son of God, Jesus, God the Son. If I had a thousand lives, I'd want to give every one of them to Jesus Christ.

A young man lived a life of sin, and debauchery, and filth. He'd sunk so low. He was terrible the way he'd lived, disgraceful. Then God saved him by His amazing, wonderful grace, and God called him to preach. Upon a time he was in a service preaching and somebody, who had known his prior life, saw him up there and—thought it was disgusting that a man who'd been such a, a reprobate, a profligate, a person who had lived in such debauchery and depth of sin and filth—listed all of the things that he'd known that this man had done, put them on a list, and dispatched it by an usher up there to give it to him, and said to him, "Aren't you ashamed of yourself? How dare you stand up there to preach." You know what that young man did? He took that list with every filthy thing on it that was true and he stood behind the podium and he said, "I want to read a note that's been handed to me." And he read all of these things. Didn't leave anything out. And then with the tears streaming down his cheeks, he said, "Yes, I am ashamed, but," he said, "I'm not ashamed of Jesus, not ashamed of Jesus."

#### **A. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Person or the Purpose of the Gospel**

I'm sure the apostle Paul was ashamed of some things that he'd done, but he was not ashamed of Jesus Christ. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, the person of the cross. And then he's not ashamed of the purpose of the cross, his salvation, for it is the power of God unto salvation.

What is the greatest need of this world? More education? Better roads? Better economy? What is the need of the world? Why did Jesus come? Luke 19:10: "*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost.*" Let Wall Street handle the

finances. Let Hollywood have the fame, their games, and their shame. Let the politicians handle the politics. Let me be in the business of winning souls to Christ. I'm not against these other things, rightly used, but I'm saying to you, friend, the great motive of Paul's heart was salvation. Do you know that we are ridiculed? This church is ridiculed and other churches are ridiculed because we put an emphasis upon getting people saved. That's what it's all about. Saved is a good word. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."* (Acts 11:17) *"[I'm] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...[it's] the power of God unto salvation..."* (Romans 1:16) Paul wasn't ashamed of the Person; it's the gospel of *Christ*. The purpose: salvation. The power: *"It is the power of God unto salvation."* (Romans 1:16)

### **B. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Power of the Gospel**

If you've heard preaching very long, you know that that word *power* is the word we get our word *dynamite* from. It's the Greek word *dunamis*. Paul said it's the dynamite of the gospel. There's power in the gospel. If you were to take a hydrogen bomb, and put it in the lapels of your coat, and detonate it, they couldn't find anything to bury after it was over. You'd be vaporized. But the sin would still be there in your heart. Only the gospel of Jesus can blow that sin out. Friend, that's power. That's power that can make a crooked man straight, make an impure woman pure, can make a drunkard sober, that can give a hope that is steadfast and sure.

The gospel—listen. There's another word that we get from there. Not only *dynamite*, but *dynamo*. He doesn't just forgive you and you have a big explosion and it's all over and all the dust just settles. But, friend, He comes into you, and gives you a power that energizes you, and works through you, and is in me now, working through me, and in you. That is the dynamo of God, the Holy Spirit of God. When you receive Christ, God doesn't just wind you up and let you go. God puts His power into you. What a wonderful gospel!

### **C. Paul Was Not Ashamed of the Plan of the Gospel**

I'll tell you something else why Paul wasn't ashamed of it: its person, its purpose, its power, and its plan. Look in verse 16: *"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation"*—now watch this—*"to every one that [believes]..."* (Romans 1:16) That's the plan of the gospel. You know, it's so simple, and that's why it's so wonderful. It's for everybody—the Jew, the Gentile, the Greek, the Barbarian, the wise, the unwise, whoever will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is universally applicable. What if God said, "Everybody who wants to be saved, run around the block"? That would be easy enough, except there are some little crippled children who can't run. What if God said, "Everybody who wants to be saved, read a chapter in the Bible"? That would be simple enough, except there are some people who can't read.

What if God said, “Everybody who wants to be saved, give ten dollars”? Some people don’t have anything to give. But there’s one thing that all can do, and that’s to trust Jesus. And I’m glad that I can say to anyone, anywhere, any place, anytime, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 11:17) And if you put any other qualification on there, you take the “whosoever” out. If you add baptism to it, then people in an airplane can’t be saved, people in a desert can’t be saved, people in a submarine can’t be saved. But according to this, anybody can be saved if they’ll trust Jesus. I want to show you something—chapter 4 and verse 16.

Let me tell you why it is this way. You know, I’ve been preaching on grace. Now watch verse 16—Romans 4, verse 16: *“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace...”* Now if you add anything else but faith, it’s no longer grace. *“It is [by] faith, that it might be by grace,”* now watch this, *“to the end”*—that is, for the purpose—*“that the promise might be sure to all the seed...”* (Romans 4:16) If you add any other qualification to it, you eliminate people. The only way that you can be sure that you can be saved and be sure that you are saved is the grace of God and your faith in God’s grace. Isn’t that a great verse? Hey, choir, isn’t that a great verse? Say amen. Say, “You’re right, preacher, that’s a great verse.” Now listen, folks. Say, “No, Paul was right, preacher. You’re just preaching.” All right. Now listen, listen, folks. This is what Paul is saying, the world’s great missionary. He said, “Look, listen. I am going to Rome.” And he says here, *“I am ready to preach the gospel to you [who] are at Rome also.”* (Romans 1:15) What does he mean—Rome also? He said, “I’ve already seen it work and I’m going to get you, too. I’m going to get you, too.” It’s like little David. David came against Goliath. He said, “Look.” He said, “I’ve slain a lion, I’ve slain a bear, and I’m going to get you, son. I’m going to get you, too. I know where the power is.” And Paul said, *“I’m ready to preach the gospel to you [who] are at Rome also.”* (Romans 1:15) “I know where the power is.”

## Conclusion

Now, beloved, this is a missionary challenge. It is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed. If you can hear me today, God is speaking to you if you can hear me. If you name the name of Jesus, God is speaking to you. And every one of us must say, “Oh God, help me to be faithful to the missionary obligation. Oh God, help me to be flexible to the missionary opportunity. And oh God, help me to be fearless to the missionary opposition. I’ll never be ashamed of Jesus. I’ll never be ashamed of Jesus. I will not do it. I’ll stand up for Him who died for me.” And God’s people said, “Amen.” Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Lord God, I pray now that you will seal the message to our hearts. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Don’t gather your books. Don’t move. Just look right here at me. This is the most

important part of the service. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to stand down here at the front. If today you're not absolutely certain if you died you'd go straight to heaven, you need to get that settled. And the way to get that settled is to give your heart to Jesus Christ. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. And this is gospel truth, that if you'll trust Christ today, He'll save you. Not just mere intellectual belief, but the word *believe* in the Bible means "trust, commitment, reliance." Cast everything upon Jesus Christ. Turn from your sin and turn to Jesus. I'm going to ask you to do that today, to pray a prayer like this in your heart: "O God, I'm a sinner. I'm lost. I can't save myself. But, Jesus, I trust you to save me." And if you will pray that prayer and mean it, I'm going to ask you, when we stand and sing, to leave your seat and come forward. Pray it right where you are and then come forward. And just come and tell the minister, "I am trusting Jesus." If there are some things you don't understand, you need some more help and guidance, we have an open Bible. It'd be a sweet privilege just to explain the gospel a little more to you. But just come and say, "I need Jesus," or "I'm trusting Christ." And what will happen is this: you'll be warmly received. We'll go with you just a few steps away to a quieter place. And with an open Bible we'll give you a verse of Scripture and seal that decision in prayer, and you can leave this place as saved as the Apostle Paul and on the way to heaven.

Now, others of you are saved, but you need a church home. And if you're truly saved, you ought to be a part of a missionary church, a church whose emphasis is taking the gospel across the street and around the world. And so I'm going to ask you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here at Bellevue." And we can be your support, your prayer team, and your base of operation as you help get out the gospel.

Then there are others of you that God is calling in a specific way. Now, God calls us all in a general way, but there are some whose lives are being separated, and God is saying, "You need to be flexible. I've got special plans for you. I am calling you in a special way as a missionary." And you need to come and let us know, because as a church we want to begin to pray for you and come along your side. You might say, "Pastor, I don't even really quite understand it all. There's just something going on in there. There's just a stirring. I want my church to pray for me." I want you to come. So if you need to be saved, come. If you have and need to make it public, you come. If you need to place your membership here, you come. Or if you feel that God is calling you out in a special way, you come. No one leave unless it is an emergency. Stand together as we sing.†

# Totally Abandoned to the Gospel

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 11, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 1:14–16

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

ROMANS 1:16

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Faithful to the Obligations of the Gospel
- II. Flexible for the Opportunities of the Gospel
- III. Fearless at the Opposition to the Gospel
  - A. Not Ashamed of the Person of the Gospel
  - B. Not Ashamed of the Purpose of the Gospel
  - C. Not Ashamed of the Power of the Gospel
  - D. Not Ashamed of the Plan of the Gospel

Conclusion

## Introduction

Today, we're going to be studying the heart and mind of a man who was totally abandoned to the gospel of Jesus Christ. You know, if you will look at a man and just get down beneath the surface, get down into his heart, understand his motivation, see the philosophy of his life, and then you'll be able to understand his life. I believe we can do that with the greatest Christian who ever lived, in my estimation, the apostle Paul, the one who wrote this book of Romans. And we're going to find some things about him. I'm going to read Romans 1, verses 14 through 16. Here's what he says—he said, "I am debtor, both to Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise, so as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it"—the gospel—"is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."

Now, there are three "I am" statements right here. Look, if you will, in verse 14. He says, "I am debtor." Look in verse 15—underscore this: "I am ready." Then, look in verse 16: "I am not ashamed." Now, if you just put those three "I am's" together you're going to understand what motivated the greatest pioneer and spokesman of the church that ever lived. He preached and was a missionary just a few short years after Jesus

Christ had ascended to heaven, and when Paul himself went to heaven, there was a Christian church, a little colony of heaven, in every major city in the western empire. A little man who had a heart aflame for Almighty God who could say, I am debtor, I am ready, and I am not ashamed. And oh, would to God—listen to me, folks—would to God—would to God—that Adrian could say that, that you could say that, that every mother's child in this building could follow the apostle Paul in those three statements. For Paul said, You follow me as I follow Christ. You see, Paul met the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus, and he asked the Lord Jesus two questions: number one, who are you, Lord; number two, what would you have me to do? Ask those two questions and answer them—get the answer from Him, and follow Him correctly—and you'll understand what life is all about, know who Jesus is and know what Jesus would have you to do.

## **I. Faithful to the Obligations of the Gospel**

Let's look at these three "I am" statements. First of all, he says I am debtor—I am debtor. And that tells me that Paul was faithful. I want you to write this down: faithful to the obligations of the gospel. Paul saw himself as a debtor. Remember last week we told you in verse one that he saw himself as a bondsman? A bondsman is someone who had been purchased and then who wanted to serve his master willingly and voluntarily. The apostle Paul would write to the Corinthians, "You are not your own; you are bought with a price." And so Paul, first of all, saw himself as a debtor to the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you? Do you see yourself in debt to Jesus, or do you say, I thought salvation was free? It is, but don't we sing this also—Jesus paid it all, and all to Him I owe? I am a debtor to the one who hung in agony and blood on that cross for me. Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all. I'm not talking about trying to pay for your salvation; you cannot pay for your salvation. Someone wrote these words: 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. Won't you? Will you not? Don't you see yourself as a debtor to the dear Savior who died for you?

I'll tell you what else we are debtor to, along with the apostle Paul: we are debtors to the heroes of the past. Paul was there when Stephen was stoned. It was through the stoning of Stephen that Paul came under conviction. Paul was holding the clothes of those who were stoning the first Christian missionary. I believe that Paul had a debt to Stephen that he helped to kill. I believe that Paul had a debt to those Old Testament prophets who were stoned and massacred for the cause of Christ. And, folks, I want to tell you, there are many heroes of the past who have suffered and bled and died that we might be here today. Don't you think we owe them something? Matter of fact, we owe those who founded this church something. This church was founded, begun in 1903. It

didn't just happen. I want to ask you a question. Where did the seat that you're sitting on come from? Who put the light bulbs up there? Who put the carpet under your feet? How did that front door get out there? Where did this organization come from? Who is running the sound system now? Who printed the bulletin that you have in your hand? Who has done all of that for you, that you could walk in this morning, and sit down in air-conditioned comfort, and hear the gospel of Jesus Christ? Have you ever thought about where that came from? How did this church get to be where it is today? I'll tell you: the vision, the sweat, the blood, the tears, the faith, the sacrifice of others who came before you. You think that you're just here to just sit, soak, and sour. I mean, you have received blessings. We are debtors to those who have gone before us; we are debtors to our Lord.

I'll tell you something else, folks: we are debtor to all of those around us. That's what Paul is talking about primarily. Look, if you will, in verse 14: "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise." When he says the Greeks and the barbarians, he's talking about the cultured and the non-cultured; he's talking about the up and out, he's talking about the down and out; he's talking about the educated, he's talking about the ignorant; he's talking about the rich, he's talking about the poor; he's saying everybody needs to know Jesus. Do you believe that? I hope that you believe that.

Now, folks, if we have received the gospel, Jesus said, "Freely ye have received; freely give." Suppose there were a man in this state who was sentenced to be executed for a capital crime. Suppose the governor of this state called you and said, I'm going to pardon that man. And the governor said, I want you to take this pardon to the prison and deliver it to the warden of the prison, because he has been pardoned. Suppose you took that pardon, put it in your breast pocket, and then remembered that your wife told you to pick up a gallon of milk on the way home, and you did that, and then remembered that you had some bills that you had to pay, and then remembered also that the furnace wasn't working just right, and you get busy working on these things. And then, a friend calls you and says, you know what, I've got a couple of extra plane tickets, and we can go to Florida and have a few rounds of golf, and you say, that's wonderful. And you go down there, and you come back, and immediately you're a little behind in your work, you're trying to catch up, and you're having your coffee, and you're reading the newspaper, and some print jumps out at you. That man that was pardoned has just been executed, and you reach up there in that coat pocket—you happen to be wearing the same coat—and you pull out that pardon, and there it is! He had been pardoned, but you had never delivered the message. How would you feel? How will you feel when the clods fall on the casket of your next door neighbor and you never even told him about Jesus Christ—your mother, your brother, your father, your sister?

Paul said, I am a debtor; I've been saved by the grace of God. And Jesus paid it all, but all to Him I owe. You know what Bellevue Baptist Church needs? We need a compassion for lost people. We're blessed, but friend, we are an island of blessing in an ocean of need. We have a responsibility.

Now, Paul said, I am debtor. I've not just been called to be blessed, lest I be carried to the skies on flowery beds of ease, while others fought to seize the prize and sailed through bloody seas.

## **II. Flexible for the Opportunities of the Gospel**

Next, here's the second thing he says. Watch it. Look, watch in your Bible. First of all, see it in verse 14: "I am debtor." Now, verse 15—look at it: "So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." Not only was Paul faithful to the obligations of the gospel—now, listen carefully; write this down—Paul was flexible for the opportunities of the gospel. Now, you see, you've got to be both faithful and flexible. You have to understand that you are a debtor, and as a result of that, you have to be ready. Paul says, in verse 15, "I am ready." Now, of course, obviously, he was ready to live for Christ. He said, "For me to live is Christ." You know, Paul was a great witness, but you know what made him such a great witness? He was also part of the evidence. Is there anything different about your life? I mean, can your neighbor see a quality of life in you that would provoke him to spiritual jealousy? I don't mean jealousy in the wrong way. I'm just saying, Look at that family; look at that man; look at that life—what is different about him? Are you ready to live for Christ? You're not if you're not ready to die for Christ. Paul said, I die daily. Paul said, I count not my life dear to myself. Are you ready to die for Jesus? I didn't say, did you want to die for Him? You do that, you have a martyr complex. I say, are you ready to die for the Lord Jesus Christ? Until you are ready to die, you are not ready to live. I've never known a man like the apostle Paul or like anybody to be compared to him, absolutely in love with life, and yet not afraid to die. You see, are you ready to die? The apostle Paul was.

I have visited Rome, and many think that Paul was executed there in Rome. We know that he was imprisoned in Rome, and in Rome there is a cell that is called the Mamartine Prison. If you go to Rome, it's right near the Roman Forum. You can go down into that Mamartine Prison, about the size of the place where I'm standing over to Jim and Greg, just about that size. The ceiling about this high, hewn out of stone, a little hole in the ceiling where they could let down food and whatever; no restroom facilities, just the excrement would be on the floor; no window to let the light in—the apostle Paul was incarcerated there. I can hear the guard as he says, All right, Paul, let's go. Where are we going? You know where we're going, Paul: they're going to take off your head. And I can see that little squinty-eyed hump-backed Jew, that body that had been beaten

and scarred and pickled in the Mediterranean; I can see Paul as he gets up and begins to go with that man, perhaps dragging those chains with him, and the guard says, You don't look particularly frightened. He said, Well, no, I'm not frightened. I'm not worried about this. Well, why not? Oh well, this is nothing new to me: I die daily. Paul said, I die daily. Hey, are you humming a song? Oh, I'm sorry, I wasn't aware of that I was humming. Yes, I was humming a song. What is that song you're humming, Paul? Oh, it's a song that Jim Whitmire taught me: It Will Be Worth It All When We See Jesus. And Paul is thinking, in just a few minutes he's going to see Jesus face to face. Ready to live, ready to die, ready to go—yes, that's what he says: "I'm ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also." Are you ready to go? I mean, if Jesus Christ were to say to you, I want you to be a preacher of the gospel, I want you to be a missionary, I want you to do this thing or that thing, friend, you must be ready to live and ready to die; you must be ready to go, and you must be ready to stay. You must be ready. Are you ready? Are you? If God were to speak to you today, would you say, Yes, Lord, yes.

One of the greatest missionaries who ever lived was David Livingstone. I want you to hear these pregnant words that he said—listen to this. He said, Send me where you will, but go with me. Lay any burden on my heart, but sustain me. Sever any tie but the one that binds my heart to thee. Send me where you will, but go with me. Lay any burden on my heart, but sustain me. And sever any time in my life, except the one that binds my heart to thee. Now, folks, this is Sunday morning, and it's the polite thing to do, to sit in church, but I'm asking you, Are you ready to go? And are you ready to stay? Sometimes it takes more grace to stay and pray and support and give than it does to go. I remember when we put our son on a plane to go as a missionary to Spain, and he took his precious wife Kelly, and our little grandson Jonathan, and Joyce and I stood there in the airport with scalding tears, scalding tears, scalding tears, coming down our cheeks—the happiest and saddest that two could be at the same time. He wasn't going over there like a person goes when they're in the army—to come home. He's going to Spain to stay, to take the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sometimes it takes as much grace to stay as it does to go. Are you ready? Ready to live, ready to die, if necessary—ready to go, ready to stay, and I don't mean with a half heart. Paul said, with as much as in me is, I'm ready.

### **III. Fearless at the Opposition to the Gospel**

Now, you understand what made this man the great man that he was. Now, here's the third thing. Now, watch it. Paul was faithful to the obligations of the gospel. Paul was flexible for the opportunities of the gospel. And here's the third thing. Paul was fearless at the opposition to the gospel—fearless at the opposition to the gospel. There was so

much opposition to the gospel of Jesus Christ, but he says in verse 16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." He wasn't fearful about the gospel.

#### A. **Not Ashamed of the Person of the Gospel**

Now, there were many reasons why he could've been fearful; there were many reasons why he could've been intimidated; there were many reasons why he could've been ashamed. For in the first place, the gospel of Jesus Christ was identified with a poor, Jewish carpenter who was crucified. Can you imagine going to Rome, the Imperial city; Rome with its might, its power, its armies; and saying I want to tell you about a Jew? The Romans had no appreciation for the Jews, especially one who was not one of the mighty philosophers in their mind, but a carpenter, one who was crucified. Who would put faith in a Jew that was crucified? And Rome was such a proud city. They had subjugated the land of Judea. Here was a gospel coming out of Jerusalem, not of Rome. Why should Rome listen to anything that would come out of a conquered place? And the Christians of that day, they were not the big shots of that day. Paul had to say to the Corinthians, You see your calling, brother, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. They didn't have a lot of philosophers; they didn't have a lot of generals; they didn't have a lot of wealthy people. The Christians were the off-scouring, the scum of the earth, of that day, and even Paul himself, when he went to Rome, he went to Rome as a prisoner. And yet, he didn't hang his head in shame. Rome was known for the great philosophers of that day. Who's going to pay any attention to a fable about a Jew who rose from the dead? But Paul was bold for the Lord Jesus.

Now, I want to ask you a question: are you ashamed of the gospel? Are you ashamed to put a Bible on your desk at work? Are you ashamed to bow your head in the cafeteria? Are you ashamed to invite people to Jesus Christ? I say, are you ashamed of the one who died for you? You say, Well, Pastor, I just don't believe in wearing my faith on my sleeve. A little boy had a dog, I'm told. Somebody asked him what kind of dog he was, and the little fellow said, he's a police dog. He was just a mongrel, and the little boy said, he's a police dog. The friend said, Well, he doesn't look like a police dog. The little guy said, Well, he's in the Secret Service. I'm afraid that there are many of us who are in the secret service. We ought to be open and bold for the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Who could be ashamed of the person of the gospel?

But, you know, in all the history of the world, about sixty billion people have lived—in the history of the whole world. We're rapidly approaching six billion right now. But of all of the people, of all of the sixty billion who've ever lived, only a handful have made any mark—true mark—on history. I'm talking about scientists, philosophers, rulers, military people—only a handful. But there's one—one name that stands above all other names:

that is the name of Jesus. And while I am speaking to you right now—listen to me—this very moment, there are multiplied millions of people this moment attending to His Word and seeking to do His will. That one name—that name—that name that is above every name. Are you ashamed of Jesus Christ?

A young preacher had been called out of a life of sin to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. He totally thoroughly repented of his sin, was made new. But somebody who knew his old life wrote him a note, and said, Aren't you ashamed of yourself—you up there telling people to get right with God? And that person who had known that man in his past listed all of those sins in detail. You know what the young preacher did? He read that note, bowed his head in prayer, stood up, and said, Ladies and gentlemen, I've received a note, and here's what it says. And then, in front of that whole crowd, he read every one of those sins without leaving out a one. And then, he said this: Yes, I am ashamed of myself, but I am not ashamed of my Savior—not ashamed of my Savior. Paul said, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." It's the gospel of Christ—the person of the gospel. I want to tell you I hope I'll never be ashamed of Him.

#### **B. Not Ashamed of the Purpose of the Gospel**

But not only was Paul not ashamed of the person of the gospel; he's not ashamed of the purpose of the gospel. Look in verse 16—look at it: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,"—that's the person of the gospel—"for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." There's no greater business or occupation than sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ. Let Wall Street handle the finances. Let Allen Greenspan do what he does. Let Hollywood have the fame. Let the military people figure out what to do in the Middle East. Let's us get out the gospel of Jesus Christ. I mean, folks, the social engineers of this world are trying to put it together. This morning, I was listening to a political talk show. I read some of the newspaper today, and I thought how vapid, how silly. They're trying everything they can do to save civilization.

Folks, let me tell you something. The gospel is not intended to save civilization from wreckage. The gospel is intended to save people from the wreckage of civilization. That's what the gospel is all about. Jesus did not come as a social engineer. Jesus came—Luke 19:10: "For the Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." You see, think about it. There are a lot of kinds of losses. It's tragic to lose your health, to lose your wealth, to lose your friends, loved ones, to lose your life; but how tragic to lose your soul. "What should it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Listen to me, friend—listen to me. How could we be ashamed of the gospel when the power of the gospel is the only thing that can help this world today? The gospel is the only thing that can make harlots pure. The gospel is the only thing that can make drunkards sober. The gospel is the only thing that can make perverts straight.

The gospel is the only thing that can make adulterers pure. The gospel is the only thing that can give a hope that is steadfast and true to rescue the perishing and care for the dying and snatch them in pity from sin and the grave. Without the gospel of Jesus Christ, there's no hope—there's no hope.

### C. **Not Ashamed of the Power of the Gospel**

Paul said, I am not ashamed of the person—it's the gospel of Christ; I'm not ashamed of purpose—unto salvation. And then, he said, I'm not ashamed of the power of the gospel. Look in verse 16: "For the gospel is the power of God unto salvation." And the word that he uses there for power is the word in Greek that we get our English word dynamite from. This world is enamored with power. We've heard so much in our generation about atomic power, but if you were to take an atomic bomb and detonate it between the lapels of your coat, there wouldn't be enough of you to bury—we couldn't find you; you'd be vaporized. But that wouldn't take the sin out of your heart. There's only one power—one power—that can wash and make you whiter than snow. That is the incredible power. You know, not only do we get our word dynamite; we get our word dynamo from that. When you receive Christ, there is a dynamo that comes into you. I've been living for Jesus since I was teenage years, and I can attest to you that were it not for that power, that dynamo that is in my heart, I would not be able to persevere at all.

### D. **Not Ashamed of the Plan of the Gospel**

And then, listen. Not only is Paul not ashamed of the person of the gospel—it's the gospel of Christ; not only is Paul not ashamed of the purpose of the gospel—it's salvation; not only is Paul not ashamed of the power of the gospel—it is by grace through faith, but he's not ashamed of the plan of the gospel. Look at it. Here it is—I love it: "to everyone that believeth." That's it. That's the plan. You say, Adrian, that's so simple. Yes! It is gloriously simple, but it is simply glorious. To everyone that believeth. Aren't you glad the gospel doesn't say everybody who wants to be saved, read so many chapters in the Bible? Some people don't have a Bible, and some people can't read. Aren't you glad that the gospel doesn't say, everybody who wants to be saved, take a walk around the block? Well, you say, that'd be simple enough, except some people can't walk. Everybody wants to be saved, give 150 dollars. Well, that's cheap enough for eternal salvation, yes, but some people don't have 150 dollars. But, friend, there is a whosoever in the Bible—"that whosoever believeth." That's it; that's the gospel. There are always people who want to tell you, Well, you've got to believe and... They say you've got to believe and be baptized. Well, friend, the minute you put baptism on, you take whosoever out. That means nobody in the desert can be saved. That means nobody in an airplane can be saved. That means nobody in a submarine can be saved, surrounded by water. That means that nobody by himself can be saved, because

there's nobody to baptize him. Do you see how silly that is? Friend, I believe in baptism; we're called Baptists. Somebody said you're in the King's Army. No, I'm in His navy. Listen. I believe—I believe—in baptism, but water, whether a spoonful or a tankful, cannot take away sin. God's simple, wonderful, glorious plan is that anybody, anywhere, any time, can say, Lord Jesus, come into my heart, and save me, and He will—He will. Paul's not ashamed of a gospel like that—to "everyone that believeth, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Paul was not ashamed of the plan of the gospel.

There was an old-timey preacher, his name was Christmas Evans. Christmas Evans, in his wonderful way, said, For the gospel is so simple and so available you could put a man in a barrel, nail the lid on, and then whisper through a knothole how to be saved, and he could be saved inside that barrel. I like that—I like that.

You know, there was an old preacher named Baldwin who pastored in Troy, New York, and he pastored there for a number of years, 41 years. Here's what he said about the gospel—it's so wonderful I want to share it with you. Listen to it—you'll get blessed out of this. He said—this is a pastor, now, reflecting back. Now, he's a very old man, and here's what he wrote. He said, At thirty, after examining the philosophies and religions of the world, I said, there is nothing better than the gospel of Christ. Then he said, at forty, when burdens pressed heavily, and the years seemed to hasten, I said, there's nothing as good as the gospel of Christ. At fifty, when there were empty chairs in the home, and the mound builders had done their service, I said, there's nothing to be compared with the gospel. At sixty, my second sight saw through the illusions and vanities, vanities of earthly things, and I said, there's nothing but the gospel. He started out saying, nothing better than the gospel, then nothing as good as the gospel, then nothing to be compared to the gospel, and then, finally, said, there's nothing but the gospel. And then, he said, Then at seventy, among many limitations and privations, I sang, Should all the forms which men devise attack my faith with treacherous art, I have called them all vanities and lies, and bind the gospel to my heart. You see, Paul said, you want to know what motivates me? You want to know what sends me? Three I am's: I am debtor; I am ready; and, I am not ashamed. I am faithful to the obligations of the gospel; I am flexible for the opportunities of the gospel; and I am fearless to the opposition of the gospel. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, are you?

## Conclusion

Dr. Lee used to tell a story about something that happened in South Carolina. There was a schoolhouse fire and the children were trapped in the schoolhouse. The men of the community gathered to try to do what they could do, but the fire, flames, were so hot that they couldn't get near, and the children were trapped inside. And a father—a father—saw the face of his boy in those flames, and the boy saw his father, and their

eyes met. The little boy said, Daddy, daddy, can't you save me? But the flames were such that strong men held him back, and he could not go, and that father had to stand there watching his son in the fire, and over and over again, the little boy said, Daddy, can't you save me? That father stood there and watched his son wither like a flower held in the flames of a settling torch. Dr. Lee said that that father didn't live but two years after that. Night and day, he could see the face of his darling son in those flames, saying, Daddy, can't you save me? And he realized he was powerless to do anything about it. This old hell-bound, sin-cursed world looks at science, and says, Science, can't you save me? Science will say, I can tell you how far it is from the earth to the sun, but I can't save you. This world looks at culture, and says, Culture, can't you save me? Culture says, I can tell you how to dress for a party, and hold your teacup just right. All I can do is to make this world a better place to go to hell from. This world looks at finance, and says, Finance, Business, can't you save me? Finance says, I can tell you how to gather money to leave it all behind, but I cannot save you. Philosophy, can't you save me? Philosophy says, I can tell you more and more about less and less until you know everything about nothing, but I can't save you. But friend, I'm here to tell you there's one who can save. Sing above the battle strife, Jesus saves, Jesus saves. I have given my life to declare the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it—the gospel—is the power of God unto salvation.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Every head bowed and every eye closed. Now, remember the gospel plan. The gospel plan is to everyone that believes—to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. And I want to help you right now to receive Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Savior. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. If you already know the Lord Jesus, would you begin to pray for those round about you? And, by the way, how many here today can say, Pastor, I know absolutely that I have been saved, I've repented of my sin, I've received Christ as my Lord and Savior, and God's Spirit agrees with my spirit that I'm a child of God? If you can give me that testimony, lift your hand. Thank you. Take it down. Now, you're the ones who must begin to pray for those who do not know the Lord.

And those of you who could not lift your hand, right now, I want you to pray. Here's how I want you to pray: just pray out of your heart, Dear God—just pray silently but fervently—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 for my sin with your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised you from the dead. I believe that salvation is a gift, and I receive it right now; right now, I receive it. I don't look for a feeling; I don't ask for a sign; I stand on your Word. Lord Jesus, I trust you to save me. And I will not be ashamed of you; I will make it

public; I will not be ashamed of the gospel. Give me the courage this morning to openly and publicly confess you. Don't let me be intimidated by the devil. Help me, Lord Jesus. In your name I pray. Amen.

# No Other Way to Heaven Except Through Jesus

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: December 1, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 1:16**

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

ROMANS 1:16

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Revelation Factor

II. The Refusal Factor

III. The Reception Factor

IV. The Reckoning Factor

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you turn to Romans chapter 1? Today, I want to talk to you about something that I trust will answer some questions for you, because there is a question that is a problem to many sincere believers, and this same question unanswered in the mind of unbelievers has been an excuse to keep them from coming to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, here's the problem simply stated: Is God a righteous God? Is God a just God? Is God fair to let a person die and go to Hell who has never even once heard the name of Jesus? Let me give the question again: Is God righteous? Is God fair? Is God just? Who would let a person die and go to Hell who never even once heard the name of Jesus?

Now, you'll have to admit that's a good question, isn't it? Or, somebody may say, as an ancillary to that question, "Well then, is there perhaps some other way? Can those who've never heard of Jesus, who don't know about Jesus, can they go to Heaven some other way?"

These are good questions, aren't they? Well, let me say this. Number one: God is righteous, and God is just. Number two: There is no other way to Heaven apart from Jesus Christ. Now, I hope you understand that.

Don't get the sentimental idea that all the world religions are somehow connected.

Oh, no. Jesus Christ said, in John chapter 14, verse 6: *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”*—now listen to this—and *“no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6).

Now, if somebody can come some other way, then what does that make Jesus? That makes Jesus a liar. And, if Jesus Christ is a liar, not only is He not their Savior, He’s not my Savior, because a liar is nobody’s Savior. And, what did the apostles say in Acts chapter 4, verse 12, when they said this: *“Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved?”* (Acts 4:12). If Jesus Christ is not the only way, He’s none of the ways.

Well, that kind of puts us on the horns of a dilemma, doesn’t it? Can a righteous, a good, a loving, a holy God let a man die and go to Hell who never once heard the name of Jesus? How are we going to answer that question? Well, the Apostle Paul is going to answer it for us in Romans chapter 1. So, I pray that you will listen and listen carefully, because, folks, we don’t have to be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Notice how Paul begins in verse 16: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”* (Romans 1:16). And, look up here, and let me give you a good look at a man who also is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. I’ve been preaching it now, for many years. The more I preach it, the more I marvel at it, the more I thank God for it, the more I stand by it, the more I believe in it. *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it”—the gospel—“is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead”—now here’s the bottom line—“so that they are without excuse”* (Romans 1:16–20).

Now, what about those who’ve never heard the gospel, those who are lost, eternally lost, who’ve never heard the gospel? Is God just? Is God righteous? Is God good? Is God loving, if He could let such a thing happen? I want to write four things upon your heart, this morning, as we look into Romans chapter 1 and chapter 2. I want to give you four factors that will help you to understand this, I believe, and put it all together.

## **I. The Revelation Factor**

Factor number one is the revelation factor—the revelation factor. Now, what is that factor? All men have some light. Do you have that? The revelation factor. All men have some light.

Now, I want you to imagine that the end of time has come, that time we know as the

final judgment, and I want you to see out there what we would call *the heathen*—those who have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. The accusation is made, the indictment is given: “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness ... of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*” (Romans 1:18). The heathen, the pagans, they say, “Your Honor, not guilty, not guilty! We never heard the gospel, we never knew how to be saved; we are innocent by reason of ignorance. We never heard, we never knew.” And, the Apostle Paul becomes the prosecuting attorney. And, the Apostle Paul says to the Father, “Your Honor, I will prove that they are guilty; I will prove that they are not innocent because of ignorance. I will show that they cannot say they’ve never had a fair and an equal chance. And, I call two witnesses to testify against these who say they never knew, they never heard. Witness number one: Will you take the stand? Witness number one: Give the court your name.” He says, “My name is *Creation*.” “Oh, *Creation*, you’re the witness that God exists?” “Yes, I am the witness that God exists.”

I want you to read in here, Romans 1, verses 19 and 20: “*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead, so that they are*”—listen—“*they are without excuse*” (Romans 1:19–20). *Creation* testifies to the fact of God. Psalm 19, verse 1 says: “*The heavens declare the glory of God*” (Psalm 19:1).

Now, if you have a creation, you have to have a Creator, and the Bible says that the Creator is clearly seen by the things that are made. *When I see a piano, here, and it’s finely tuned, I know that somebody crafted it. When I see a watch that runs with precision, I say that somebody crafted that watch. When I see a building put together in symmetry and balance and purpose, I say that here is an architect. And, when I see this mighty universe put together, when I see creation, I say Creator. When I see order and system, I say intelligence.* That’s the reason the Bible says: “*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*” (Psalm 14:1). Because, witness—number one—is creation.

But then, *Creation* steps down from the witness stand, and the Apostle Paul says, “Now I call my second witness. Would you take the stand? Will you tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?” “I will.” “Will you give your name?” Witness number two says, “My name is *Conscience*.” So, there are two witnesses. Number one is *Creation*; that is, the outward, objective witness. The second is *Conscience*; that is, the inward, subjective witness. Now, look in Romans 1, verse 19, if you will. He says, here: “*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shown it unto them*” (Romans 1:19). U nto them is *Creation*, in them is *Conscience*.

Now, go over to chapter 2 and verse 14, and look at that if you will, please: “*For when the Gentiles*”—now, another word for *Gentiles* is *pagan*, or those who’ve never

heard the gospel—“*For when the Gentiles, who have not the law*”—the law here means the Old Testament law—“*For when the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another*” (Romans 2:14–15). So, there are two witnesses that all pagans, all heathen, and all the people on all the face of the Earth have. One is the outward objective witness called *Creation*. The other is the inward subjective witness called *Conscience*. There is a built-in knowledge of God. Augustine said the soul of man is restless until it finds its rest in God. God made man to serve him, to know him, and until he does, he’s like a round peg in a square hole, or he is out of fellowship.

Now, what is an *atheist*? There’s no real intellectual atheist. All atheists are not atheists because of intellectual problems; they’re atheists because of moral problems. “Ah,” you say, “but I know some brilliant people who are atheists.” Well, so what? I know some brilliant people who are not. You say, “Well, I know some foolish people who believe in God.” Well, I know everybody who doesn’t is foolish. You see, it’s not a matter of intelligence. The Bible says: “*Professing*”—and we’re going to see here, in a moment—“*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*” (Romans 1:22) .

Why? Because, you see, all of us have a God-consciousness. It is not a matter of intellectualism; it is a matter of morality. “*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God*” (Psalm 14:1). An atheist is somebody who has the idea of God that makes him uncomfortable, so he says, “If I can get rid of this idea of God, I can get rid of this uncomfortable feeling.” But, he really doesn’t get rid of it, not down deep. He’s like a man who bought a new boomerang and killed himself trying to throw the old one away. The idea of God is just there; and, the more he tries to get rid of it subconsciously, the more he knows that God exists, because down in his heart is that conscience.

So, what is the first factor? It is the revelation factor. Put it down: All men have some light. And you might put in your margin “John 1, verse 9”: “*[Christ is] the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*” (John 1:9). You can’t get around that. “*[Christ is] the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world*” (John 1:9). Two witnesses, *Creation* and *Conscience*, testify that the heathen, the pagans, no matter who they are or where they are, have some light. I didn’t say all light, just some.

## **II. The Refusal Factor**

Now, here’s the second proposition. The first factor is the revelation factor. The second factor is the refusal factor. And, what is this factor? Light refused increases darkness. Look, if you will now, in verses 21 and 22. And, he says here—Romans chapter 1, verse

21—verse 20 says that they're without excuse—verse 21 says: *“Because, when they knew God”*—that is, they know by creation and conscience that God exists—*“they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was”*—underscore this—*“darkened”* (Romans 1:21).

Darkened. All men have some light. Light refused increases darkness. Now, you see, you cannot just simply take light or truth and put it on ice. You cannot put truth in your pocket and say, “That’s very interesting, I’ll spend it some day if I need it.” No, when God gives you light, when creation and conscience speak to the heart of any pagan or any individual anywhere on the face of this earth, when God gives him some light, if he does not glorify God, if he does not believe in God, if he does not trust God, he does not remain static; he begins to regress and he loses even the light that he has. His foolish heart will be darkened.

Now, here’s something I want you to listen to very carefully, and I pray that you will not miss what I’m about to say: *In the Bible, the opposite of truth is not error; it is sin.* Now, the error is the baggage that comes with the sin. I’m not saying that a man does not have error if he refuses truth. But, why does he refuse truth? He refuses truth because of the sin that is in his heart.

Now, look in Romans chapter 1, verse 18. Listen to it: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness”*—now, understand this—*“and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness”* (Romans 1:18). Now, look at the word *hold*. You know what that word *hold* means? It literally means “who resist the truth, who smother the truth, who hold back the truth.” And, how do they hold back the truth? Not in error, but in unrighteousness.

Why does a man not believe in God? Because, to believe in God means that he has to adjust his lifestyle. His lifestyle over here is his unrighteousness. Over here is *Creation and Conscience*, and so *Creation and Conscience* tell him there’s a God. His lifestyle says, “If I admit that, I’m going to have to change this.” So, he’s in a quandary between the two. If he turns this way, he turns from that; but if he turns this way, he turns from that. So, when he says, “I will resist the truth in unrighteousness,” then, when he turns this way, he gets further from that. And, he goes away into the darkness, and his foolish heart is darkened. The unbelief is the baggage that comes with his sin.

Now, I don’t think it’s more graphically illustrated than in the book of 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verses 9 through 12. I want you to listen to it. I think it is some of the most terrifying Scripture in all of the Bible. It speaks of the Antichrist who’s coming, and it says: *“Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish, because”*—now, listen—*“they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved”*—now, listen to verses 11 and 12—*“And for this cause God shall send them*

*strong delusion*” (2 Thessalonians 2:9–11).

“Hold it, Pastor, hold it! God doesn’t send anybody delusion.” Well, you’d better go back and read the Bible. 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, verse 9 says that God will send them strong delusion. Well, why on Earth would God send them strong delusion? Well, just continue to read: “*That they should believe the lie*” (2 Thessalonians 2:11). It gets worse, doesn’t it? God sends delusion. And, why does God send delusion? “*That they should believe the lie*” (2 Thessalonians 2:11). Well, why would God send a lie? Well, let’s continue to read: “*God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all might be damned*” (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12). Seems to get worse, doesn’t it? God sends delusion; they believe a lie, that they all might be damned. Why? Why would God do that? Well, continue to read: “*That they all might be damned who believed not the truth*”—they had the truth, they believed not the truth—“*but had pleasure in unrighteousness*” (2 Thessalonians 2:12). They heard the truth; they knew the truth; they turned from the truth; and they had pleasure in their filthy, dirty, rotten sin! And, God says, “All right, that’s what you want. You want your sin, and with that sin, the baggage is delusion, a lie, and damnation.” You understand it?

Maybe I can illustrate it this way: Here’s a man who comes to Bellevue Baptist Church, last Sunday, our Love Offering Sunday—never been here before, and we’re taking a love offering for Jesus. He goes away and he says, “Ha! Those Baptists! All they ever talk about is money.” And, he goes away all steamed, hot under the collar. “It’s the last time I’m ever going to go down to that church. All they ever talk about is money, money, money.” That’s a lie. We talk about Jesus here, and we talk about giving to Jesus, and we’re glad to do it. But, you see, this man’s problem is not the truth. He doesn’t stop to ask, “Are we preaching the truth?” That’s not his problem at all. He knows, if he’ll open the Bible and listen to the Spirit of God, that the truth is there. But, the problem is his rotten greed—his greed! That’s why he got so upset to begin with. So, he leaves, and he says, “I am never going back to that church again.” Now, his problem, there, is not between truth and error, but between truth and greed. And so, he chooses his greed. Now, what happens? He’s home on a Sunday morning, several months from now. Somebody knocks at the door. He’s sitting there watching television, reading the sports page, got a six-pack of *embalming fluid* over there, by his side, and he’s unshaven—just sitting there, on Sunday morning—wife and kids are off at church. He’s by himself. There’s a knock at the door. He opens the door and it’s two of *Jehovah’s False Witnesses*. And, he says, “What do you want?” And, to cut to the chase, “we’re here to tell you there is no Hell.” He says, “Come in, come in.” And, he listens to them. They tell him a lie. He believes a lie. He’s damned, and lost, and on the road to the very Hell he says he doesn’t believe in. Why? “[He] received not the love of the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:10). “[He] had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2

Thessalonians 2:12). *“For this cause God shall send [him] strong delusion, that [he] should believe the lie, that [he] might be damned”* (2 Thessalonians 2:11–12).

Now, folks, you listen to me. All people have some light. That’s the revelation factor. The refusal factor is: Light refused increases darkness. You don’t just put truth on ice. *“Unto everyone who hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him”* (Luke 19:26). Now, here’s the third factor—and, by the way, these people who think they’re in darkness, or who are in darkness, really think that they are in the light—if you would look in verse 22: *“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”* (Romans 1:22). They’re the ones who think we’re the fools. Now, they may have a PhD, but in spiritual things it stands for *phenomenal dud*. They worship science as a god, rather than worshipping the God of science. They never asked, “How did all of this get here?”

### **III. The Reception Factor**

Now, here’s the third factor. The first is the revelation factor. The second is the refusal factor. The third is the reception factor. Now, listen to me: All men have some light. That’s the revelation factor. The refusal factor is: light refused increases darkness, *“their foolish heart was darkened”* (Romans 1:21). The reception factor is this: Light obeyed increases light.

Now, it’s very important that you understand this, because you say, “Now Pastor, there’s a flaw in what you’ve been saying thus far. You’ve been saying that no man can go to Heaven apart from Jesus, and neither creation nor conscience tells you about Jesus. And so, when you say that all men have some light, that’s still not enough to save them, according to what you’ve said.” And, you’re absolutely right. Creation and conscience only bring us to the fact of God. But, you see this: that if a man is not interested in the fact of God, he’s certainly not going to be interested in the way to God. And, God is under no obligation to show any man the way to God who’s not even interested in the fact of God, who is not thankful, but becomes vain in his imaginations, and has his foolish heart darkened.

But, what is the reception factor? The reception factor is this: that light obeyed increases light. Light refused increases darkness. Light obeyed increases light. Look, if you will now, in verse 16: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ”—this is Romans 1:16—“for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith”* (Romans 1:16–17). Now, here is the righteousness of God. Is God righteous? Yes! And, how is the righteousness of God revealed? *“From faith to faith”* (Romans 1:17). That’s the revelation factor. God gives you truth. You believe that truth, and God gives you more truth. You see, *“unto every one who hath shall be given”*

(Matthew 25:29). The more you obey the light, the more light you get.

Here's a man—God speaks to him, *Creation* and *Conscience*. He says, “God, I want to know You, I need to know You, I believe that You exist.” That's faith, and he goes from faith to faith. God gives him more light. He says, “I believe that,” and he goes from faith to faith, and he goes stepping in the light until he comes to the Lord Jesus Christ. When a man is ready to receive the gospel, God will get the gospel to that man if he has to wreck an airplane and parachute a missionary in. I believe with all of my heart there's never been a man who ever lived on the face of this Earth, or a woman who died, without some opportunity to have received Christ, had they lived up to the light that God gave them. While all men don't have enough light to save them, all men have enough light to damn them. Had they lived up to the light that they had, they would've received more light. And, “*in it is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith*” (Romans 1:17).

And, you can find illustrations of this in history, and you can find illustrations of this in the Bible. What about that Ethiopian eunuch there, in Acts chapter 8? He'd been to Jerusalem, the most religious city on the face of the Earth. Why had he gone there? He had gone there to worship. He had come all the way from northern Africa, from Ethiopia, in that day when there were no airplanes. He's traveling now by chariot—can you imagine that—all the way to Jerusalem. And, why had he gone? It was the most religious city on the face of the Earth. He was seeking for God. But, the wells of religion were dry. He's coming back. He's reading the prophet Isaiah. He's trying to understand. Do you know what God does? This man who's living up to the light that he has? God goes down to Samaria. He gets a preacher named Philip who's in the middle of a big revival campaign. He says, “Son, leave that revival campaign. I want you to go out in the desert. I've got one man out there, and I want you to tell him how to be saved.” You remember that story in Acts chapter 8? That Ethiopian eunuch, that *opportunity on wheels*, got saved, and God brought a missionary to that man to tell him how to be saved (Acts 8).

There was another man in Acts chapter 10; his name was Cornelius. The Bible says he was a Gentile, he was not of the household of Israel. But, Cornelius, an army officer, had a hunger to know God. I don't know where he got that hunger. He looked up in the starry heavens, one night, perhaps, as a private on sentry duty, and he said, “Oh, that didn't just happen. O God, whoever You are, wherever You are, whatever You are, I want to know You.” And, God gave Cornelius a vision. And then, God got Simon Peter over here in the house of Simon the tanner, and said, “Simon Peter, I want you to go over there. There's a man named Cornelius. I have spoken to him in a vision. You go tell him and his house how to be saved.” And God got the two together (Acts 10). When you obey the light that you have, God will give you more light.

Now, I want to say this to all of those of you who are saved: *The reason that some of us don't understand the Bible any more than we do is that we have not been living up to the light that God is already giving us.* Why should God show you more in the Word of God until you obey what you already know? Isn't that a good question? Some of you have never presented yourself for believer's baptism. You know what the Bible teaches. You say, "Well, I've got a forty dollar hairdo I don't want to mess up." And then, you're reading a passage of Scripture, and you're saying, "I wonder why I don't understand this. God show me what this means." God says, "Why should I show you what that means? You haven't obeyed what I've already showed you?" *"Unto every one who hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him"* (Matthew 25:29). What I'm trying to say is: Light obeyed increases light. And, if you want to understand the part of the Bible you don't understand, begin to obey the part you do understand, and you'll understand what you didn't understand. Do you understand?

Now, listen: Obey what God teaches. Again, the problem is not in the head; the problem is in the heart. One of the greatest promises in all of the Bible is in John chapter 7, verse 17. They were wondering about Jesus Christ: "Who is Jesus Christ?" The Pharisees were testing Him, taunting Him, picking at Him, and Jesus, throughout this challenge, one of the greatest challenges in all of the Bible, Jesus said: *"My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me"*—and then, Jesus gave this challenge. He said—*"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself"* (John 7:16–17). Whether I'm just some megalomaniac, some peasant prophet who has a messianic complex, or whether or not I have come from God. Do you will to do the will of God? Then, you'll know.

Many years ago, I shared this story with you; it bears sharing again. When I was in the Space Center, down at Merritt Island, before I came to Bellevue, I was in my office, one day, and a man came up in a big Cadillac, parked his car, came in, and said, "Mr. Rogers, I need to talk with you." He was one of the big shots out at the Space Center, helping to put a man on the moon. I said to him, "Well, what do you want to talk about?" He said, "I want to talk about my wife. She wants to commit suicide, and I don't want her to." Well, I thought that was nice—he didn't want her to commit suicide. So, he said, "Would you talk with my wife?" I said, "Well, I will if you'll come with her." So, the two of them came and sat down, and I said, "Tell me, lady, what your problems are." And, her problems were this man! This man was a liar. He was a drunkard. He was an adulterer. He was a gambler. He was a blasphemer. A wife abuser. I mean, he was rotten. And, that's mildly put. And so, I just stopped talking to her, and I started talking to him—this man in the space industry. I said, "Sir, I want to ask you a question. Are you a Christian?" Now, I wasn't asking for information. But, I said, "Are you a Christian?" I was

just getting the conversation started. He laughed a scornful laugh, and said, “No! I’m not a Christian; I’m an atheist.” I said, “Oh, an atheist.” I said, “An atheist is a man who says there’s no God and he knows there’s no God. Do you know there’s no God?” And, he said, “Yes.” I said, “Well, that’s interesting.” I said, “Of all there is to know, how much do you know? Do you know half of everything there is to know?” He said, “Of course not.” “But, you said you know there’s no God. Wouldn’t you have to admit the possibility that God might exist in that half of the knowledge you don’t have?” “Well,” he said, “okay, you got me. I’m not an atheist, I’m an agnostic.” I didn’t tell him the Latin equivalent of agnostic is *ignoramus*. It’s the same word in Latin or Greek: *agnostic* in Greek, Latin *ignoramus*. It means just, “I don’t know, I’m ignorant.” I said, “That’s just a fancy word for a doubter. Are you a doubter?” He said, “Yes, and a big one.” I said, “I don’t care what size; I want to know what kind.” He said, “What do you mean?”

I said, “Well, there are two kinds of doubters: There are honest doubters and dishonest doubters. Which kind are you?” He said, “Well, what’s the difference?” I said, “An honest doubter doesn’t know, but he wants to know, and therefore he investigates. A dishonest doubter doesn’t know because he doesn’t want to know. And, he can’t find God for the same reason a thief can’t find a policeman. Jesus said, ‘They hate the light, and they will not come to the light, because their deeds are evil’” (John 3:20). He said, “Well...” I said, “Sir, would you like to find out whether you’re an honest doubter or a dishonest doubter?” He said, “Yes.” I said, “Would you sign this statement: ‘God, I don’t know whether You exist or not. I don’t know whether the Bible is Your Word or not. I don’t know whether Jesus Christ is Your Son or not. I don’t know, but I want to know. And, because I want to know, I will make an honest investigation. And, because it is an honest investigation, I will follow the results of that investigation wherever they lead me, regardless of the cost?’” I said, “Would you sign that statement?” He said, “Give it to me again.” “God, I don’t know whether You exist or not. I don’t know whether the Bible 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’ll make an honest investigation. And, because it is an honest investigation, I will follow the results of the investigation wherever they lead me, regardless of the cost.” He said, “I’d like to be honest.” I said, “Wonderful!” I gave him an assignment. I said, “I want you to begin to read the gospel of John, because,” I said, “there’s one book written, and that book is *‘written, that [you] might believe that Jesus is the Christ ... and that believing, [you] might have life through His name’*” (John 20:31). He said, “But, I don’t believe.” I said, “That’s all right. You just make an honest investigation. You say to God, ‘God, I don’t know whether this is Your Word or not. If this is Your Word, show me, and I’ll make up my mind before the fact that I will obey You, only if you show me this is Your Word and speak to my heart.’” He said, “That’s fair enough.”

What happened? In a few weeks, he came back, said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God,” got on his knees like a little child and wept his way to the arms of Jesus. That was many, many years ago. I got a letter from him a while back. He’s up in Bangor, Maine now. He has a tape ministry and is teaching the Bible. And, this is what he said to me: He said, “Mr. Rogers, I want to thank you for spending time with this general in the devil’s army.” Where was that man’s problem? He thought his problem was intellectual. His problem was his will. When a man surrenders his will, God will speak to him. Light obeyed increases light. Live up to the light that you have and God will give you more light.

#### **IV. The Reckoning Factor**

Now, here is the final of these four factors. Factor number one is the revelation factor. Factor number two: the refusal factor. Factor number three: the reception factor. Factor number four: the reckoning factor. When God comes to judge us, what is God going to judge us by? Do you think that God is going to judge us by the sin that we’ve committed? No! God is going to judge us by the light that we’ve rejected. God is going to judge us by the light we have rejected! I want you to see this; it’s very clear in the Word of God. Look in Romans chapter 2, verse 5. He says, here: *“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God”*—again, speaking of the righteousness of God (Romans 2:5). Now, skip on down to verse 11: *“For there is no respect of persons with God. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law”* (Romans 2:11).

Now, what’s he saying? He’s just simply saying this: that God knows how much light you have. Many of us, and some in this auditorium, have far more light than other people. Not because you necessarily sought it; you just happen to live in Memphis, Tennessee, where there’s a church on every street corner. There are Bibles in every department store. And, it’s not so much because you sought it; it’s just simply by the providence of God that you have more light than others.

Now, what is God going to do? God is going to hold you accountable more so than the person who’s never heard. Put this verse down: “Luke chapter 12, verse 48”: *“But he that knew not”*—this is talking about the pagan—*“and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more”* (Luke 12:48). Now, see, you’ve had more than other people.

Now, folks, it would be bad enough for the pagan in darkest Africa to die and go to Hell, who never heard the name of Jesus, who refused to live up to the light that even he did have. But, how much more for a person who would sit in an auditorium like this,

air-conditioned, listen to music like this, with a Bible in their hand, hear a preacher tear his heart out and beg people to be saved, and say “no.” If I had to go to Hell, I’d much rather go to Hell as a pagan never having heard the name of Jesus than to go to Hell from Memphis, Tennessee, and from a service like this.

Listen to me: The burning question is not, “What is God going to do with the heathen who never heard?” The burning question is, “What is God going to do with you who heard the gospel of Jesus?” You’ve heard the message that Jesus died in agony and blood upon the cross, and you said “no” to the Lord Jesus. Do you know what our Lord said? Our Lord said to a soul winner, “When you go out soul winning, you knock on a door”—and He said—“when you knock on a door and the people won’t hear you”—He said—“shake the dust off your shoes. Shake the dust off your shoes” (Matthew 10:14). Well, why would He do that? God says, “Because, there’s coming a judgment, and in that day, in that judgment, you may stand before God and say, ‘O God, O God, have mercy. Oh, please, God, have mercy. I didn’t have a chance.’” “Officer, would you bring the evidence into the court?” “What is that evidence?” “Would you look at that, sir?” “What is that?” “That’s the dust off Adrian’s shoes. Those are the shoes he was wearing that morning when he preached the gospel to you.” He says, “Shake the dust off your feet. It’ll be used as a testimony against them in the judgment.”

Don’t ever say you didn’t have a chance. *“Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required”* (Luke 12:48). And, Jesus said to Capernaum, His headquarter city, It would be better for Sodom and Gomorrah in the judgment than for that city where He preached and taught, and yet, they turned their back on Him and never received Him. All men have some light. Light refused increases darkness. Light obeyed increases light. And, men are judged according to the light that they have. The revelation factor, the refusal factor, the reception factor, and the reckoning factor. But, I’ll tell you this much, folks: God is righteous and, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”* (Romans 1:16). And, I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, if you believe in Jesus today, He’ll save you; because He saved me, and He’ll save you.

## Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. No one stirring; no one looking around. If you’re certain that you’re saved, I want you to begin to pray for others who may not know that they’re saved: “Father, I pray, today, that many in this building will obey the light that they’ve received, even today. Lord, that they will not leave this place without saying “yes” to You, because Lord, I believe that if they do, they’ll get further from the truth, their heart will become darker. O God, help people to live up to the light that they have.” And, my friend, if there’s just a glimmer of light, right

now, come to the light. Obey what you do know, and God will teach you what you don't know. But, don't let some intellectual problem keep you from Jesus. You'll wake up in Hell, and you still won't have it all figured out. Just come like a child and trust Christ.

Why don't you pray this way? "Lord Jesus"—just pray it right now—"Lord Jesus, I need You, I want You"—right now—"I open my heart. I receive You by faith as my Lord and Savior. And now, Lord, I'm going to make it public. I'm going to make it public, right now. Save me and help me not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray, amen."

# The Need for Bold Believers

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 21, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 1:16

*“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”*

ROMANS 1:16

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Sovereign Majesty of the Gospel
- II. The Saving Ministry of the Gospel
- III. The Supernatural Miracle of the Gospel
- IV. The Simple Method of the Gospel

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want to ask you a question. As a matter of fact, I want you to ask yourself this question. I'll read the question, but it is a question for you. And here's the question: Am I a soldier of the cross, a follower of the Lamb, and shall I fear to own His cause or blush to speak His name? The title of the message: “The Need for Bold Believers.”

When everything that is named is coming out of its closet, I think it's time that the people of God came out from underneath the rock, stood on the rock, and let it be known where they stand. Don't you? I really do. Listen to what the Apostle Paul said in Romans 1:16. *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it”—the gospel—“is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”* Not ashamed of the gospel. I wonder, are you ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Are you ashamed that people know that you're a Christian at work, at school, on the ball club, on the playground, in the marketplace, in the neighborhood? Are you a bold believer at Memphis State in the philosophy class, in the Kiwanis Club, at Civitan, in the courtroom? Do you stand up and stand out for the Lord Jesus Christ?

¶ I heard of a little boy who had a dog, and kind of a mangy pooch. And somebody asked him, “What kind of a dog is that?” He said, “Well, he's a police dog.” They said, “Well, he doesn't look like it.” He said, “Well, he's in the Secret Service.” ¶

I think we have some Christians who are in the Secret Service. I mean, they're not

bold believers. They don't stand up like the Apostle Paul and say, "...[I'm] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..." (Romans 1:16) You say, "Well, it was easier in his day." No, you're wrong. It was far more difficult in his day to stand up for the gospel of Christ than it is in this day. Today, we decorate with the cross; we put the cross of gold around our necks, and we put the cross upon our steeples. But I want to remind you that the cross was an instrument of capital punishment; it was an instrument of execution. Can you imagine somebody coming to church tonight with a little gold electric chair around their neck, or a miniature gas chamber around their neck? Why, in Roman society, you did not even mention the cross in polite society. It was so ghastly, so gruesome. And in Paul's day, Jesus Christ was not known as the great world's religious leader. To the people of Paul's day, Jesus was a madman at best and a criminal at worst. I mean, the gospel was identified with a poor Jewish carpenter. And on top of that, this poor Jewish carpenter died an ignominious death: He was crucified. Besides that, He was a Jew. Paul is writing to the Romans, and the Romans had no special appreciation for the Jews. The Romans would ask themselves, "Why should I put my faith in a Jew, a carpenter who was nailed up on a cross and crucified?" Besides that, the Romans had some great philosophers and some great philosophy. "Why should we at Rome pay any attention to the fable about a Jew who rose from the dead?" Well, if Paul believes in this gospel, evidentially he's uneducated. He must not have any social standing. He must not have studied. Well, I want to tell you that the Apostle Paul was not only brilliantly intelligent, but he was superlatively educated. He had the equivalency of a double or triple Ph.D. He was an intellectual genius. He had a pedigree. He was a Jew of the tribe of Benjamin. He was a born leader. And in the face of all of these things, the Apostle Paul says here in Romans 1:16: "...I am not ashamed of the gospel of [Jesus] Christ..."

Dr. Lee, former pastor of this church, who also was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, used to tell about a preacher. And this preacher talked about the gospel of Jesus Christ and his relationship to it. And this preacher said at, when, "At thirty, I was a young preacher. I studied the world's religions and the world's philosophies, and I compared them to the gospel. And I said, as a young preacher of thirty studying the world's religions and the world's philosophies, 'There's nothing better than the gospel.'" But, he said, "When I got to be forty, and the burdens of life began to press heavily upon me, and the years seemed to go by quickly, I began to say, 'There's nothing as good as the gospel.'" But then, he said, "Time went on, and there were some empty chairs in our house, those who had stepped over to glory. And, the gravediggers had done their work and the mound builders had built up the mounds over our loved ones." And he said, "I began to say, 'There's nothing to be compared to the gospel.'" Then he said, "I got to be sixty. When I got to be sixty, I began to see with improved spiritual insight." He said, "I began to see through the illusions and the vanity of earthly things. And in the clear light

of eternity I said, ‘There’s nothing but the gospel of Jesus Christ.’” But then he said, “At seventy, when my old body now is beginning to wear out, wear out, and I had many limitations and privations, and I know that before long I’ll be going home, I now sing, ‘Should all the forms which men devise attack my faith with treacherous art, I would call them all vanities and lies and bind the gospel to my heart.’” No, friend, there is nothing better than the gospel. There’s nothing as good as the gospel. There’s nothing to be compared to the gospel. There is nothing but the gospel, if you really step back and see what life is all about.

So why should we be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Why should we be closet Christians? Why should we blush, and stutter, and stammer, rather than standing up straight, and bold, and clear, and saying, “...*I am not ashamed of the gospel of [Jesus] Christ*”? (Romans 1:16) I want us to look at Romans 1:16. I want to give you four reasons why you ought to be incredibly, incredibly proud of the gospel of Jesus Christ and why you ought to be a bold believer.

## **I. The Sovereign Majesty of the Gospel**

Number one: Because of the sovereign majesty whose gospel it is. It is the gospel of Christ! The gospel of Christ! Who is Christ? He is Christ Jesus. Who is Christ Jesus? He is Jesus, the Son of God, and Jesus, God the Son. He is the God man, totally unique.

There are about five and a half billion people on this earth, and historians tell us that the population is growing. Demographers tell us that the population is growing at about fifty thousand a day. And if you were to take all of the people who have ever lived in recorded history, there would be about sixty billion of them. That’s a lot of people—sixty billion. But of all of those people who live now, or whoever have lived, or whoever will live, only a handful, only a handful, I say, have made any real impact on history. A few philosophers, a few scientists, a few rulers, a few politicians, just a handful of religious leaders out of all of these sixty billion, have made any significant impact. But I want to say of that handful, there is one person whose name is Jesus who stands, towers like Mount Everest, around and above the others. No person in all of history has ever attracted as such a combination of attention, devotion, criticism, adoration, and opposition as Jesus Christ. It’s an incredible thing. Twenty centuries after His death, there’s not a moment in time, whether it’s right now or any other time, when there are not millions of people who are reading what He said. This moment, millions, millions right now are reading what He said and endeavoring to live by His words. He’s an incredible person. His birth divides all history to BC and AD—*Anno Domini*, “the year of our Lord.” He split the centuries. Jesus—Jesus.

He never wrote a book, and yet more books have been written about Him than any

person who ever lived. And I can't seem to find room enough in my library at home to put the books that I have about the Lord Jesus Christ. He never painted a picture so far as we know. He never composed any poetry as far as we know. He never wrote any music so far as we know. But more art, more poetry, more music has been written and composed about the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the object of songs, and plays, and poetry, and art.

This morning, I came into my study. And there is, on my study wall, a beautiful poem about the name of Jesus. I didn't do it so I could tell you about it tonight. It, I just thought about it right now. But I stood there and I looked at that poem about the name of Jesus, and I read it out loud to myself, and the tears came to my eyes. And I said, "Jesus, I love you. I love you, Lord Jesus." His name—His name—stands out above all other names.

He never raised an army, and yet millions would gladly die for Him. It's estimated that there are at least 350,000 martyrs a year, today in this modern world, who die for the Lord Jesus Christ and die for their faith. When He was here, when the Lord Jesus was on this earth, He only had a few thousand people that He ever spoke to at one time. But today, over thirty percent of the world's population claim to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ, the largest religious grouping that has ever existed. He had no formal education, yet I went to a university that was founded because of Jesus Christ. I went to a seminary that was founded because of Jesus Christ. Thousands of universities, thousands of seminaries, colleges, and schools have been founded in the name of Jesus Christ. The sovereign majesty of the gospel.

I told you before what Napoleon Bonaparte, that archangel of war, said. He said, "Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, and myself founded empires. But on what foundation—foundation—did we rest the creatures of our genius? Upon force. But Jesus Christ founded an empire upon love. And at this hour millions of men would die for Him. What an abyss between my deep misery and the eternal kingdom of Christ, which is proclaimed, loved, adored, and is still existing over the whole earth." Could you be ashamed of Jesus Christ? Are you ashamed to identify yourself with someone as wonderful as Jesus Christ?

There was a young man who'd lived a wicked and a vile life. He had gone deep into sin, and he had drunk deeply of the cup of sin all the way down to the dregs. And then he was saved by the gospel of Christ. And then, after he was saved, he was called to preach. He did not have the gifts of education; he was not articulate. But he had a hot heart, a tongue on fire for Christ. But there was somebody in the congregation who had known him BC. They had known him before Christ had come into his life, and they resented the fact that he was up there because of the wickedness of his life before he was saved. And in a cruel way, I think, they wrote a note and sent it up to him by an

usher, and it listed all of the things that he had done. And then it said, “What are you doing up there? Aren’t you ashamed of yourself? Aren’t you ashamed of yourself?” Do you know what he did? Rather than crumpling it up and putting it in his pocket, he stood behind the platform, behind the pulpit on the platform, and took the list of those terrible, horrible, heinous, hurtful, hellish things that he had done, and he read them one by one without leaving anything out. And then he said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I am very ashamed of myself, but ‘...I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation...’” (Romans 1:16)

O friend, it’s not us, but it is Jesus—it is Jesus. We cannot be ashamed of the gospel of Christ. I’m not ashamed of Him. I’m not ashamed of His miracles. I’m not ashamed of His message. I’m not ashamed of His ministry. I’m not ashamed of anything about the Lord Jesus Christ. If I had a thousand lives, I’d want to give every one of them to Jesus Christ. Why be ashamed of Christ? Jesus said in 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 [the] Father with his holy angels.” The first reason I’m not ashamed of the gospel is the sovereign majesty of whose gospel it is: the Lord Jesus’.

## **II. The Saving Ministry of the Gospel**

The second reason: not only His sovereign majesty, but because of His saving ministry—His saving ministry. Look at it again. “...I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation...”—unto salvation. (Romans 1:16) That’s what the gospel is all about.

Now, what is more important than getting saved? Can you think of anything more important than that? You think it’s business? Do you think it’s fame? Do you think it’s pleasure? You let Congress run the nation. They’re trying and not doing a good job. You let Wall Street handle the finance. You let Hollywood have the fame. We’re in the greatest business of the world, in the world, and that is bringing men to salvation. The social engineers of this world are mistakenly trying to save society. Never get it in your mind for one little bit that the gospel is supposed to Christianize the world. It is not! That is to assign to the gospel an assignment that God never gave to it. The gospel has never been assigned or intended to save civilization from wreckage, but to save men from the wreckage of civilization. We’re being saved out of this world. It is the gospel of salvation.

You see, the incarnate Christ, the Christ of yesterday, the incarnate Christ, the Christ of flesh, that’s the Christ of the past. And through Him I’m saved by grace. But then there’s the indwelling Christ. That’s the Christ of the present. And not only does that, is He, the gospel of, of grace, but now He’s the gospel of growth. He is saving me

day by day; He is delivering me. And then, friend, there is the invisible Christ. He's coming again. And that's the gospel of glory. All of it—salvation! Luke 19:10: *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which [is] lost."* Why should I be ashamed that I have a message that can rescue men from hell, give them a new heart, a new hope, and set their direction toward heaven, and all the time give them peace and joy?

### **III. The Supernatural Miracle of the Gospel**

I want to give you a third reason that I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Not only because of the sovereign majesty of that gospel: it is the gospel of Christ. Not only because of the saving ministry of that gospel: it is the gospel of salvation. But also because of the supernatural miracle of that gospel.

Paul said, *"...I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God..."*—the power of God. (Romans 1:16) There has never been greater power than the power of the gospel. That word *power* is the Greek word *dunamis*. It's the word we get dynamite from. It's the dynamite of God. If somehow I could get an atomic bomb and put it in my, within the, lapels of my coat and then have it detonated, you wouldn't find enough of me to bury. I'd be vaporized. But that atomic bomb could not blow the sin out of my heart, but the power of God can. The power of God can. That's the only power, the only thing that can deal with sin—nothing else. Psychiatry can't do it. Psychology cannot do it. It is the power of God. And apart from the gospel, God is powerless. God has limited Himself to the gospel.

You say, "Well, I just believe there are many ways. I think there are many ways to go to heaven." You do? Well, if there are many ways to go to heaven, why did Jesus die? Why didn't God just take one of those other ways? Why did God let His darling Son die in agony and blood on that cross when there was some other way? Don't you think if there was another way God would have taken it? If God let Jesus die the most ignominious, shameful, horrible death that anyone has ever died, and there was some other way, and there is some other way, very frankly, I lose respect for that kind of a God. I wouldn't want to meet Him in a dark alley. It's the power of God. The gospel is the power of God.

But not only do we get our word *dynamite* from that word; we get our word *dynamo* from that word. And a dynamo speaks not of an explosion, but it speaks of a continuous power because it is the gospel of Christ that continues to save. The power of God is released in our lives. That's the reason the Apostle Paul knew the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. He said, *"[Listen] [I'm] ready to preach the gospel to you [who] are at Rome also."* (Romans 1:15) He wasn't intimidated by those Romans, their vaunted armies, their great buildings, their universities, there are, their art. He wasn't intimidated by that. And old little David said, "Listen," to Goliath. He said, "I slew a lion and I slew a

bear, and I'm going to get you, too." That's what David said to Goliath. And Paul, Paul had seen the gospel work in other places. He knew what the gospel was. He said, "I preached here and I preached there, and I'm coming to Rome also with the gospel of Jesus Christ." You know something, folks. I've been preaching it long enough to know the power of the gospel also. I've seen it work. I'm not ashamed of the power of this book. I know that I know that I know that the gospel, and the gospel alone, has power to transform, to rescue the perishing, to care for the dying, to snatch them in pity from sin and the grave. That alone is the, the job of the gospel.

We sing that song, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me." (John Newton) And John Newton, a foul-mouthed person, impure in soul and body, a slave trader, got so low, who finally sold himself into slavery, was the one who wrote that song after Jesus saved him. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me." And, friend, it saved me as a teenage boy. And not only has it been dynamite; it's a dynamo. And day by day by day, the life I live, I live by the power of the Son of God. Who, who can be ashamed of such a gospel? Thank God for the supernatural miracle, the power of God. Christians are not just nice people; they're new creatures. Our gospel is a supernatural gospel.

#### **IV. The Simple Method of the Gospel**

I'll tell you a fourth reason I'm not ashamed of the gospel. I'm not ashamed of the gospel because of the simple method of the gospel—the simple method. The Apostle Paul said, "...[I'm] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation"—now listen to this, it seems so simple—"to every one that believeth." (Romans 1:16) You say, "Now, Paul, come on. Complicate it up a little bit. Make it a little more difficult, make it more appealing to the intelligentsia." "No," he says, "...the preaching of the cross is to them [which] perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved [it's] the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18) You can call it foolish if you want, but, friend, the simple message of the gospel is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. It is gloriously simple. It is simply glorious. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." (Acts 16:31) That's the only requirement. Well, why does, why does God do it that way? Well, you're in Romans 1:16—turn to chapter 4 and look in 4:16. Look at it. "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace..." (Romans 4:16)

You see, if there were any other requirement other than belief, then it's not of grace, not of grace. What if God said, "Everybody who wants to be saved, run around the block"? "Well," you say, "that would be simple enough." Some little crippled children can't run. What if God said, "Everybody who wants to be saved read a chapter in the Bible"? Well, that would be simple enough, except some people can't read. What if He said, "Everybody who wants to be saved, give a hundred dollars"? Some people don't

have a hundred dollars. You see, “[It’s by] faith”—by faith—“that it might be [of] grace” (Romans 4:16) “For by grace are ye saved through faith...” (Ephesians 2:8) “Whosoever believeth.” (John 3:15) That’s so wonderful. Now, listen. We’re not finished yet. “Therefore it is of [by] faith, that it might be by grace; to the end”—to the end that—“the promise might be sure to all the seed,” (Romans 4:16) all the descendants. You see, this plan doesn’t leave anybody out. It’s a “whosoever” gospel. This is the only way it can be a “whosoever” gospel. It’s by faith because it’s of grace. And if it’s not by grace, then it leaves certain people out who can’t do certain things. But if it’s by faith so it can be of grace, hey, folks, that includes everybody. Isn’t that wonderful?

I told you this some years ago, but I want to repeat it. I was on an airplane going to Nashville, and I sat down by a very nice individual, and we got to talking. And he was a Bible teacher in a denomination that believes you have to be baptized in order to be saved. So we had a conversation there. And it wasn’t an argument, but it could have been. But we had a nice conversation. And so I said to him, “I want to ask you a question. Do you ever try to share your faith?” He said, “Well, of course I do.” I said, “Well, now, I want to give you an imaginary situation. Let’s suppose that I am a businessman and I’m not a Christian, although I went to church and I heard about Jesus Christ. And I know that He died on the cross for my sins. And my mother was a Christian, and she was praying for me, and so forth. But I, very frankly, when I travel around, I’ve got a girlfriend in certain cities that I see. And, when I go into the hotel, I go in. And after my business I go down and have a few drinks and I take God’s name in vain, and I’ve not been faithful to my wife. Well, to tell you the truth, I haven’t always been honest in my business, either. That’s the kind of guy I am. But I kind of had a religious background. And I’m sitting next to you. Now, suppose the pilot comes on and says, ‘Ladies and gentlemen, I have a very serious announcement. The engines on this plane have failed and we cannot reach a safe landing spot. We are going down. And we are in a mountainous area. Very frankly, it doesn’t look good. I’m going to do the best I can, but I just want to say this: if you have anything to get right, if you’re not ready, I don’t know how to put this, folks, but if you’re not ready, I would suggest you get ready.’” Now, friend, if you ever got an announcement like that, at least he’d have your attention, wouldn’t he? So I said to this man, I said, “Now suppose that’s who I am. I’m this businessman and I’m sitting next to you. And then the pilot says, ‘It looks like it will be about five minutes before impact.’ I turn to you and I say, ‘Are you a Christian?’ You say, ‘Yes, I am.’ And I say, ‘Well, I am not. Can you help me? I don’t want to die and go to hell. Can you help me?’” Now, remember, he believes you’ve got to be baptized in order to be saved. I said, “Sir, what would you tell me?” “Well,” he said, hmm, he said, “Well, you know, there are certain requirements, things that you have to do.” He said, “You know, you’ve got to live a certain way.” I said, “Well, I haven’t. And, very frankly,

I'm a sinner." "Well," he said, ah..." I said, "Look, we've only got two minutes left." You know what he told me? He said, "I wouldn't have a message for you." That's what he told me. "I wouldn't have a message for you." And he wouldn't—he wouldn't—because it's a salvation by works. But this verse says, my dear friend, "...It is [by] faith, that it might be by grace; [that] the promise might be sure to all..." (Romans 4:16) Even if you're in an airplane, and if you're in the desert, no matter where you are. Anytime, any place where anybody takes the "whosoever" out of the gospel, he has no more gospel. Christmas Evans used to say, "You could put a man in a barrel, ties his hands, handcuff him, nail the lid on, and whisper through a knothole how to be saved and he could be saved. That's true. Who could be ashamed of a gospel like that? I'm not ashamed of the simple message of the gospel. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* (Acts 16:31)

## Conclusion

For years, men used to look for the tomb of old King Tut. We had the treasures of King Tut here. I've had the incredible privilege to go to Cairo, and visit the Cairo Museum, and see not only the display that was here, but all of the other displays: those solid gold sarcophagi that they buried him in, and all of the jewels, and all of the gold, and all of the beads, and all of the artifacts. Howard Carter and his expedition were the ones who discovered the king of, the tomb of, King Tut. Seven nations were spending thousands and thousands of dollars to try to find this tomb about four hundred miles south of Cairo in the Valley of the Kings, and they were digging, and so forth. One day, some of Howard Carter's men came to him and said, "We've been digging in a hillside." They said, "We have found a smooth stone. We think you ought to come." And Howard Carter came to that place. There'd been sixteen stairs that led down and there was this smooth stone. He said, "Bring a sledge hammer." They brought a sledgehammer and they broke it. And he lighted a candle and put it in there and looked around. And he saw it was room. It was a tomb. He said, "Break out some more." And they broke out some more. And he put his head in there and looked. It was the tomb of King Tut. He came out, stood up, blew out the candle. They said, "Mr. Carter, what did you see?" He said, "I saw the richest treasure in the world." They said, "But you don't seem to be very excited. Why are you not excited?" He said, "I'll tell you why I'm not excited. Twenty long, dreary, dusty, dingy, expensive years ago I dug within seventy-two inches of this same spot and didn't find it. And I've been digging for twenty years. I was so close." Did you know that some of you are very close to being saved tonight? I hope you'll not waste another night. The greatest treasure is not the tomb of King Tut; it's to know Jesus Christ. It's to be saved, to be born again.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? If you are a child of God, if you are truly

saved, I mean, if you are born again and you know that you know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, if you should die right now, beyond the shadow of any doubt—I'm not talking about your emotion, I'm talking about a Bible reason—on the authority of the Word of God, the witness of the Spirit, that you are saved for certain, and you know if you died tonight you'd go to heaven, would you lift your hand as a testimony? All right, now take it down. Now those of you who lifted your hand, I want to ask you a question. Are you a follower of the Lamb? Are you a soldier of the cross? Do you blush to speak His name? Are you ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? Are you a secret disciple or are you a bold believer? Would you pray, "O God, give me a burning, blazing, passionate, emotional love for Jesus Christ and a fearless love for Him. Help me, Lord Jesus, not to be ashamed of you. And when everybody else is standing up for everything, help me, Lord Jesus, to stand up for you." And then, after you've prayed for yourself, would you pray for any who may be around you tonight who may not know Jesus Christ?

Now you had your head bowed. You don't know who lifted his or her hand. But maybe somebody sitting next to you is not saved. Would you just pray, "God, if the person on my right and my left is not saved, the person in front of me, behind me, God, I just bring your blessings down upon that person that they might be saved." And those of you who could not lift your hand, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you pray this: "O God, I need you. Thank you—thank you for the gospel. Thank you for the sovereign majesty, the Lord Jesus Christ who came to earth for me. Thank you for the saving ministry of the gospel, that you can forgive me, empower me, and deliver me. Thank you, Lord, for the supernatural miracle of the gospel. Thank you, Lord, for the simple message and method, that if I would just trust you, just trust you, that you would save me. Lord, tonight—tonight, O God, tonight—let me get it settled. I know you will, Lord, because you want me saved. Give me the courage. Give me the strength to trust you tonight. In your name I pray, Amen."✠

# Living by Faith

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 10, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 1:17; 10:11–21**

*“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”*

ROMANS 1:17

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Reality of Faith
- II. The Root of Faith
- III. The Result of Faith
- IV. The Release of Faith

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word. Turn to the Book of Romans chapter 1, and be finding verse 17. I want to talk to you tonight about faith. As I’ve told you before, faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of God. If you want something from God, you must come with faith. When you pray, you must pray believing. Pray, believe, and you’ll receive; pray and doubt, you’ll do without. Listen to this verse: “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.” Tonight, our subject is, “Living by Faith.” Because, ladies and gentlemen, faith possesses what grace provides. Thank God for grace. But grace is meaningless to you unless you have faith: God’s grace, marvelous, matchless, fathomless grace. But we lay hold of grace by faith. And faith possesses what grace provides. Grace is God’s ability; faith is man’s responsibility—and those must go together.

Now, faith is so important because the lack of faith, unbelief, is a supreme evil. I mean, I said this morning that idolatry is the supreme evil. I can say it another way tonight. Unbelief is the supreme evil, because idolatry and unbelief are two ways of just simply saying the same thing. It was unbelief that led Eve to fall in the Garden of Eden. It was unbelief that kept the children of Israel out of the Promised Land for some 40 years. The reason that men, women, boys, and girls are not saved is, if they believe not, they’re not. If they trust the Lord, they’re saved. Men are not lost because they lie, steal, or commit adultery, but Jesus said they’re lost because they do not believe in Him.

When Jesus Christ was in Nazareth, the Bible says that His hands were tied there. He could do no mighty works there, because of their unbelief. So you and I are to live, day by day, and moment by moment, by faith. And I want my faith to grow. I was telling the deacons that I believe I am a growing Christian. I've got a long way to go, and I'm running out of time. I want to continue to grow. I want to learn more and more about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the Bible says to those who believe nothing is impossible. To those who fail to believe nothing is possible in the spiritual realm. So let's talk about faith tonight. Let's talk about living by faith.

## **I. The Reality of Faith**

And, first of all, let's think about the reality of faith, because there's a lot that is called faith, folks, that is not faith. Now, true faith is measured by its object. Go to Romans 10 now, for a moment—and we're going to stay the rest of our time in Romans 10—and look with me, if you will, in Romans 10 and verse 11. I went right past it. In Romans 10, verse 11, the Apostle Paul is teaching us a wonderful, wonderful lesson about faith, and he says this: "For the Scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Now, if you don't mind marking your Bible, mark "on him." Just underscore that. You see, the power of true faith, the authenticity of true faith, lies in the object of that faith.

Now, every so often, some well-meaning person will tell us, if we're facing a problem or thinking about an endeavor, they will say, meaning to encourage us, "Well, just have faith. Only believe. Just have faith. Only believe." The question comes to my mind—faith in what? Only believe whom? You see, it is—the Bible never teaches us to have faith in faith. There's nothing magical or mystical about faith in itself. It is the object of faith that validates our faith. Sometimes people say, "Faith moves mountains." Wrong! It is God that moves mountains. Mark 11, verse 22—they were saying, "Lord, how can we move this mountain? And Jesus answered and saith unto them, Have faith in God—have faith in God." Faith in faith is only mere positive thinking. And a lot of people put faith in faith. And if you do that, if you put faith in faith rather than faith in God, you're headed for a calamitous fall. You're going to head for, you're going to come into, a time of discouragement, because you're going to start out, and somebody's going to tell you—you're going to listen to one of these positive thinking courses, and whatever man can believe he can achieve, and all of that. And then, after a while, you're going to realize that you don't have what it takes. You're going to become very vulnerable to the devil. And the devil is going to attack you. You know, the devil will say, "Well, how are you going to live the Christian life, and how are you are going to have success?" And you say, "Well, my faith is going to see me through. I'm a man of faith. I'm a person of faith."

And the devil will say to you, “Well, how do you know your faith is good enough? How do you know your faith is strong enough?” Never put faith in faith. Put faith in God. Just say, “Devil, it doesn’t make any difference how strong my faith is. I don’t have faith in faith. My faith is in God.” And it is not primarily the strength of your faith that matters; it is the object of your faith. Charles Haddon Spurgeon one time said that a trembling hand can receive a golden gift.

Now, what is he talking about? There was a man, a father, whose son was sick, and the father wanted the Lord Jesus Christ to heal him. And just jot this verse down—Mark chapter 9, verses 23 and 24: “Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” And here’s what this man said. The man said, “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” Have you ever been there? I’ve been there many times. I have faith, but it’s not perfect faith. I believe, but I know in the very best of times there’s some unbelief in what I call faith. And, if you’d be honest, you’d say the same thing about you: “Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” And the Lord Jesus did exactly what that man asked Him to do. Verse 24: “And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.” And the Lord Jesus healed that man’s child.

Now, there’s a very wonderful passage over in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 2. Put this down. I’ll share it with you. Don’t turn to it. But the Bible says in Hebrews 12, verse 2, that we’re to be “Looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith...” Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Don’t put faith in faith. Put faith in the Lord Jesus. And the Greek word looking unto, scholars tell us, means, “looking away from everything else and looking unto Jesus.” One translation gives it, “Off looking unto Jesus.” Looking off of everything else and looking unto Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith. Don’t look at others. Don’t look at circumstances. Don’t look at Satan. Don’t look at self. Don’t look at your faith. Look to Jesus. The way to have strong faith is to get to know the Lord. Get to know the Lord. Study the Bible. Let God strengthen you. Look to Jesus. He is the author and the finisher of your faith. The Bible says in Psalm 9 and verse 10: “They that know thy name...”—and remember that name stands for character. Those who know You, God; those who know Your character—“Those that know thy name will put their trust in thee...” So when you know the Lord, you’re going to have faith. Again, Daniel said, in Daniel chapter 11 and verse 32: “But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits.” So now, look again at our text here in Romans chapter 10 and verse 11: “For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” Get to know God. God is the object of your faith. Not yourself, not your feelings, not circumstances, but Him.

## II. The Root of Faith

Now, not only do I want you to see the reality of true faith, but I want you to see the root of this faith. How does it come? Well, true faith is not only knowing God, but hearing God. Look, if you will now, in verse 14: “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?” And then, look down in verse 17: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Let me have your full attention now, and listen to me. In order for you to have faith, not only must you have the right object, but your faith must have the right origin. You must hear from God. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Because what is faith? Faith is getting a word from God, believing it, and acting on it. You cannot have faith unless you hear from God. Faith is not just guessing on the will of God. Faith comes. You don’t generate faith. You don’t work it up. Faith is the result of hearing God.

Now, you can have natural faith without hearing from God. You can put faith in an automobile, faith in an airplane, faith in a doctor, faith in food. You go to the doctor. Sometimes that’s faith. The doctor tells us we have a disease we never heard of, writes a prescription that we or the pharmacist cannot read, for a medicine whose name we can’t pronounce. We give it to a druggist that we don’t know, who gives us bottle of liquid that tastes like poison. We go back and take it, and ask for more. That’s faith! But it’s faith in the natural realm. Biblical faith is not that kind. You’ve got to hear from God. Bible faith is not self-generated. You don’t make yourself believe. You hear from God. When you know God, and you hear from God, then faith is very, very natural. Even the faith itself is a gift of God. The Bible says, in Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”

What is the gift of God? The grace? Yes. The faith? Yes. They are the gift of God. Philippians 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.” Believing on Him is given to us. Nobody can believe God unless God enables that person to believe. And the instrument that God gives to enable you to believe is His Word. Again, Romans 10, verse 17: “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Faith is not a leap in the dark. Faith is a step in the light. It is hearing from God. Without a word from God in any matter, you do not have biblical faith. You don’t name it and claim it. You believe it and receive it. But you can’t claim it until God names it. That’s very important that you understand this. You see, you believe and then receive. But the only thing that you can believe is what God has said. And if you don’t hear from God, if your faith is not in God, and if your warrant is not from God, you do not have biblical faith.

Now, that’s the reason the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1: “Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Sometimes

people translate the word hope in their mind to the word wish, and say faith is the substance of things we wish for. But that's not what the word hope here means. The word hope means bedrock assurance based on the Word of God. Lisa sang about hope, and that was the kind of hope that is revealed in the Word of God. And when you have that kind of assurance, then you have faith. Faith is the substance of things hoped for. The word substance, the Greek word, is very much like our English word substance. It means "something solid." Sub—meaning beneath us; stance—something to stand on. When you have faith, it's not based on ephemeral feelings. You're not walking around on eggshells and Jell-O. You have rock-solid Bible hope. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and it is the evidence of things not seen. If you were a detective, and you were trying to solve a crime, you would look for evidence. And, when you find conclusive evidence, you know who done it.

Now, faith is evidence that God puts in your heart that He's going to do something. You haven't seen it yet, but you find God's fingerprints on your heart. God is speaking to you. And you have substance, and you have evidence. You have heard from God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. You must hear from God in order to have faith. Now, look again at Romans 10, verse 14—look at it: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?" Now, there's a preposition right here. Let me tell you how the New American, Standard translates this: "How shall they believe him whom they have not heard..." "How shall..."—and the Greek allows that.—"How shall they believe him..." It doesn't say in Him, but Him. So, really, hearing Adrian will not give you faith. You can understand everything I say tonight and your faith would be no better. You've got to hear God. You've got to hear God. I'm only the messenger boy. And so, what I'm doing is delivering the word, but you've got to hear God.

Let me tell you how to listen to a sermon. It's fine to get the outline. It's fine to remember the Scriptures. If the illustrations give insight, wonderful. But when you come to church, you ought to ask, what did God say to me today? What did God say to me today? You hear God! And, once you hear God, God takes the word, and makes the word come alive in your heart. Now, there are two words for word in the Bible. And, in Romans 10, verse 17: "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." One word—one Greek word—is logos, and that's translated word. Another is rhema, and that's translated word. Logos means the entire revelation, the Word of God, starting with Genesis and going on through Revelation. That is the Word of God, the written Word, and Jesus is the logos, the living Word. So He is the Word of God, from heaven; the Lord Jesus, the Word made flesh. And the Bible is the Word of God. But then the word rhema that's used here means a truth, an insight, a conviction that comes out of that word directly to your heart. It is a specific word to you. We could almost say it is a word from the Word. It is the word that comes alive to you and God speaks to you. Now, if

God has never spoken to you this way, you probably have not the foggiest of what I'm talking about. But if you've ever heard God speak—not audibly—but if God takes His Word and ensconces that word in your heart, and gives you a word from the Word, then you're going to find faith to begin to grow in your life, because faith comes from hearing. You see, you must know God, and you must hear God, in order to have faith.

Now, that doesn't mean that God will not use preachers. I'd be foolish up here to preach, if I didn't believe that God uses preachers. Look in verse 14: "How shall they then call on him in whom they have not heard, or, or in whom or whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him or believe him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" So when I'm preaching, that's fine, that's good, that's wonderful. I don't mean the preaching is wonderful. I mean it's wonderful that we have preaching. But I mean this: that when a man of God takes the Word of God, the Holy Spirit of God will say, "amen" with that Word, and bring it into your heart, and you will get a word from God for your heart. And when you believe it, that is faith.

### **III. The Result of Faith**

Now, think with me a little bit about the result of biblical faith. What is the result of faith? I've talked to you about the reality of it. Faith must have the right object. I have talked to you about the origin of it. You must hear God. Let's talk a little bit about the result of biblical faith. What is the objective of it? You must know God. You must hear God. And faith is given to honor God. Now, remember this: faith is not given to get man's will done in heaven, but to get God's will done on earth. Look, if you will now, in verse 15: "How shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things." I should never come to you and preach unless God has sent me, unless I have a message from God.

Now, why would God send a messenger? I'm a Western Union boy. Because God Himself has something that He wants done. You see, the result of faith that is born out of the knowledge of the will of God would be the fulfillment of that will. Does that make sense to you? Let me say that again. The result of the faith that is born out of the knowledge of the will of God would be the fulfillment of that will. You cannot have faith unless you hear from God. If God has something He wants done, then God will speak to your heart. It may be through a preacher.

Now, why does He do that? Because He has something He wants done. Faith does not make God man's servant; it makes man God's servant. Again, I want to say to you, it's not getting man's will done in heaven, but getting God's will done on earth. Well, you say, "Oh, I knew there was a catch. You mean, I'm hemmed up to the will of God?" Yes,

like a minnow would be hemmed up by the Atlantic Ocean. Praying in the will of God, believing for the will of God does not mean fewer blessings for you; it means more blessings for you. God doesn't need anything. He's Almighty God. He has everything. God wants to bless you. But faith is God's way of seeing that He stays in control as sovereign God, because we would mess it up and ruin everything, if we could name it and claim it.

Now, in every business that's big, that has people who buy particular things for that business, that person must have authorization in order to go out and make a purchase for the organization. They call that a purchase order. And the individual who goes to the department store, the hardware store, the lumber store, the computer store, or wherever he may go, he must have some sort of an authorization in order to buy things for the organization. In any big organization, it would be in shambles if all of the people just could go out and say, "Well, I think we need this; I think we ought to build that; I think we ought to order this; I think we ought to buy that," and just name it and claim it. No! The way that they keep control and fiduciary responsibility is something called a purchase order. Now, folks, in the kingdom of heaven, faith is God's purchase order. If God doesn't want it done, He's not going to give you faith. Only if God wants it done can you get faith.

Now, the object of faith is God Himself. The origin of faith is the Word of God. The object of faith is the glory of God, the honor of God. Do you want faith? Have you come to the place where you want, more than anything else, for God's will to be done in your life through you and by you? Then you're going to discover faith growing in your heart. First John chapter 5 and verse 14: "This is the confidence that we have in him, if we ask him anything according to his will, he heareth us." So you've got to hear God in order to ask according to His will. And when we ask according to His will, we know that He is going to hear us.

#### **IV. The Release of Faith**

Now, let's think a little bit now not only about the result of this faith, but let's think a little bit about the release of this faith. How do you release this faith? Well, notice now, you must know God. You must hear God. You must honor God. And how do you do this? You must obey God. It is not faith until you begin to obey Him. True faith does more than believe. It obeys. Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. What is the difference between mere belief and faith? Faith is belief with legs on it. Read the 11th chapter of Hebrews, and it tells about all that these people did by faith. If we believe, it is because God has enabled us to believe. But if we do not believe, it is our fault if we fail to believe.

Now, let me show you how that works out. Look, if you will, here in Romans 10, and

look, if you will, in verse 16: “But they have not all obeyed the gospel...”—you see, not everybody obeys. Now, notice here he’s linking disobedience with unbelief—“for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” You see, everything that we really believe we obey. The rest is just religious talk: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard?—well, they did hear—Yes, verily, their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the end of the earth.” Now, some people hear, but they don’t have faith. Why? Because they do not believe and they do not obey. Go on down to verse 21, and look at verse 21, and it sums it up: “But to Israel he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people.”

Now, what is faith? You must know God. You must hear God. You must honor God. It is God’s will that is to be done. And then, you must obey God. True faith believes God. Now, is faith a gift of God? Yes. But faith is like breathing. Is breathing a gift of God? Yes, because God gives you lungs, and God gives you air, and God gives you the capacity to believe, but you can smother if you want to. And faith is a gift of God, because God gives you the object of that faith, God gives you the capacity for that faith, but you must believe.

Now, Paul speaks of some—they heard, but they did not believe. And because they did not believe, they did not obey. And the fault was theirs and not God’s. In verse 21, look at it. He speaks of a gainsaying people. You know what the word gainsaying means? It means, “obdurate.” It means “obstinate.” It means “self-willed.” It has the idea of debating or arguing or speaking against. God speaks, and you begin to debate with God. You argue with God. You take the Word of God, and parade it past the judgment bar of your mind and your reason. The Bible calls that obduracy, that debating spirit. The Bible calls that gainsaying.

Now, folks, the Word of God is not on trial. The Word of God is not on trial. Remember that to believe is to obey, and to obey is really faith, and to obey means blessing. Now, I hope that you’ll take these verses and I hope that you’ll study them. Now, Paul here in Romans 10 is talking about salvation and how to be saved by faith. And, how are you saved by faith? You believe in God. You hear God. Your desire is to honor God, and so you obey God. And so, he calls believing obeying the gospel.

## **Conclusion**

Years ago, after the Civil War, there was a riverboat that traveled in the Mississippi River. Every Wednesday, it started at Vicksburg and went to New Orleans. It was a big, luxurious paddle wheeler. A fire broke out on that boat at midnight. The captain told the second mate, he said, “We don’t have a fire alarm. I want you to go from cabin to cabin as fast as you can, knock on the door, waken the people in the cabin, tell them that the ship is on fire, to gather their things, and be ready to evacuate.” This second mate

began to run down the corridors of this huge ship, rapping on the door, beating on the door to awaken the people. And he said, "The ship is on fire! Get out! Get your things and get out!" That's about all he had time to say, because time was of an essence. Some people thought it was a practical joke. They thought that somebody maybe who had been bending the elbow a little too much was going down there just playing a joke, and so they laughed and made no preparation. Other people were angry. They thought some stupid drunk was doing that, and they were very angry. And they got angry, but they never made preparation and stayed there. Others never heard. They were sleeping so soundly that they never even heard the knock on the door. Others heard, believed, gathered their things, made their way through that corridor before the flames had shut off the way to escape. And I've been preaching long enough to know this: that people will do the same thing when they hear the gospel. There are some people who will laugh. There are some people who will get angry. There are some people who never really hear. Their mind is out to lunch. But there are some people who will hear, and who will believe, and who will be saved. The Bible says, "The just will live by faith."

Let's pray together. Father, I pray tonight that there will be people in this building who will say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ. And should you have come in here tonight, maybe for the first time, or maybe you've heard the gospel many, many, many, many times, but, tonight, whether it's for the first time or after many entreaties, I want you to be saved, and God wants you to be saved. And I want to lead you in a prayer, where you may open your heart and receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. Would you pray a prayer like this, sincerely from your heart: O dear God, I know that You love me, but I know that I'm a sinner, and my sin has separated me from You. Lord, I need to be saved. I need my sin forgiven. I need Your love, Your mercy, Your grace. Lord Jesus, I believe You're the Savior of the world. I believe, Lord Jesus, that You want to be my Savior. I believe, Lord Jesus, that, as the Son of God, You took my sin, and carried my sin to the cross. I believe, Lord Jesus, that You died for me. Thank You for doing that, Jesus. Thank You for dying for me in agony and blood. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You for paying for my sin with Your own precious blood. Lord Jesus, I believe You were raised from the dead by the power of God. I believe You rule and reign in heaven. You died to save me and You promised to save me, if I would trust You. Right now, in this church auditorium, I trust You. Right this moment, right now, forever, I trust You to save me. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Make me Your child. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Ask Him one more time. Save me, Lord Jesus. If you asked Him sincerely, pray this way: Thank You for saving me, Jesus. I believe that You have. And now, Lord Jesus, I will live for You. And if You'll just give me the strength, I'll make this public. I will not be ashamed of You, because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# Midnight at High Noon

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 10, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 1:18–31**

*“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”*

ROMANS 1:18

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Man’s Willful Self-Determination
  - A. The Revelation of God’s Truth
    - 1. Conscience Declares God
    - 2. Creation Declares God
  - B. The Reach of God’s Truth
  - C. The Resistance to God’s Truth
- II. Man’s Wicked Self-Deception
  - A. Selfish Indifference
  - B. Sophisticated Ignorance
  - C. Shameless Idolatry
    - 1. Man Is Depicted By His Idol
    - 2. Man Is Dominated By His Idol
    - 3. Man Is Deceived By His Idol
- III. Man’s Self-Destruction
  - A. He Becomes Sexually Perverted
  - B. He Becomes Socially Perverted
  - C. He Becomes Spiritually Perverted

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s precious Word and turn to the book of Romans, chapter 1. The book of Romans has been called—and rightly so, I believe—“the Constitution of Christianity.” And, in a moment, we’re going to begin reading Romans chapter 1:18. The title of our message today: “Midnight at High Noon.”

I was reading this past week a story—a true story, a tragic story—of a dear lady who bought a new house. And, she had lived in it for a while. She was a Christian lady. And, a fire broke out in the wall of her house because the wiring of the house was so shabbily done. It was an atrocious job. Now, the house didn’t burn down. She got the fire out.

And so, they said, “You go back to the contractor who built this house because it was terribly done.” So, she tried to find the contractor and found out he was no longer contracting, building, and wiring houses. He now worked for the county. He was the county inspector who inspected houses that had been wired. And, I can imagine she was a very, very frustrated woman. Now, it seems that those who have, as it were, made a wreck of their own lives are now trying to tell everybody else how to run theirs.

And, I thought, “What a parable of civilization that story is,” as I read it. We live today, ladies and gentlemen, in a world that’s in a tragic condition because we have no fixed standard of right and wrong. That’s what’s wrong with us. We don’t have a fixed standard.

We’re like those people in Plato’s *Republic*—those sailors. You know, sailors in that day were supposed to steer by the stars and the sun and the shore, but these sailors thought they had a better idea, so they lit a lantern and put the lantern on the bow of the ship and steered by the lantern. Now, that’s the way our civilization is. That’s what our generation is doing today. We have lost our moorings. We have no fixed standard.

It’s not that people are wicked and vile in their own desires. What they do they think is right. You remember in the day of the judges, the Bible says that “*every man did that which was right in his own eyes*” (Judges 17:6; 21:25)—not what was wrong in his own eyes; he was doing what was right in his own eyes. But, the Bible says, “[*There’s*] a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.” (Proverbs 16:25)

Now, we have a generation who says, “We have so much light,” but the problem is it’s midnight at high noon. How did we get into this problem? Well, look, if you will, here in Romans chapter 1 and verse 18: “*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven*”—Romans 1:18—“*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness*”—that literally means “who suppress the truth; hold back, resist, smother the truth”—“*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse*”—the way that people are living today and in Paul’s day is absolutely, totally inexcusable, and Paul says why. Look in verse 21—“*Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*”—and actually, the word *fool* there is a Greek word that we get our word *moron* from—“*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also*

*gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: Who changed”—or, “exchanged,” it literally means—“the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever, amen.”* (Romans 1:18–25) Now folks, it would be laughable if it were not so pitiable and so tragic what has happened in America today.

John MacArthur, who’s a friend of mine, sends me a magazine called *Masterpiece*. And, in that magazine I was reading an article, and he was talking on the fact that we have come to a place where we have come to the death of commonsense morality. And, John mentioned two incidents that were in our newspaper not long ago; I know you read about them. They took place in Cincinnati. And, in one case in Cincinnati, there was an eight-member jury that ruled some very graphic photographs from a late homosexual photographer named Robert Mapplethorpe were not obscene. These photographs were put into the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Center, and they were so vile—sodomasochistic, homosexual activities; nude children in very explicit positions; things that I would not even begin to try to describe here from this pulpit; things that the national news media, when they were talking about it, could not even describe what they were talking about. They were so hideously debauched and immoral that the news people were even using euphemisms and vague terms—could hardly begin to describe these unimaginable acts that human beings would engage in such things, much less photograph them, much less call them art, and much less have that art paid for by public tax dollars in America. Now, the sad thing is this: that a jury met, and they listened to “art experts.” *Newsweek Magazine* said, “An array of art experts testified that the content aside, the photos were the work of a serious and even brilliant artist.” And, they only took two hours to render their verdict that this was not obscenity and perfectly acceptable for display in the Cincinnati Museum of Contemporary Art.

Now, the same day that was in the newspaper, another article was in the newspaper that took place in Cincinnati. The coach of the professional football team, the Cincinnati Bengals, was fined, and he was fined, the same day—or, at least the article was in the paper the same day—twenty-three thousand dollars. You know why he was fined? Well, he would not let a female sports reporter into the men’s locker room while the men were in there, unclothed. And so, he is fined for not letting this this woman—I didn’t say “lady”—into this locker room while these men are undressed. Now, he is fined twenty-three thousand dollars; and then, this unmentionable filth is adjudicated to be art. Now folks, I’m not talking about in Borneo somewhere; I’m talking about in the United States of America.

How does that happen? What has happened? May I suggest, friend, it is midnight at high noon? I mean, we are boasting about our light and all of that. Now, even the things that people say are wrong. The behavioral psychologist will come along and say, “Well,

even if somebody does something that's wrong, he's not wicked; he's weak. He's not sinful; he's sick. He's not to be blamed; he's to be pitied because, after all, he's just a product of his genes, chromosomes, and environment. He's like a computer that's been programmed wrong." And so, that's where we are.

Now, my dear friend, the Apostle Paul is going to say, "All of that is patently absurd," and he's going to show in verse 20 that they are without excuse. This chapter that we have here is like the entire world is in a courtroom, and the Apostle Paul is the prosecuting attorney, and God Himself is the Judge. And, he's going to prove, as I say, that they are totally without excuse. Now, there are three major themes in the verses that I have before you, and I want you to look at them.

## **I. Man's Willful Self-Determination**

First of all, I want you to see man's willful self-determination—his willful self-determination.

### **A. The Revelation of God's Truth**

Look, if you will, in verse 19 again of this passage of Scripture. He says here in Romans chapter 1 and verse 19: "*Because that*"—he says in verse 18: "And that God's wrath is revealed against them." (Romans 1:19) And, why is God's wrath revealed against them? Look in verse 19—"*Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.*" (Romans 1:19) Now look: "in them" and "unto them." Do you see that in verse 19? No one can stand before Almighty God and say, "God, I am innocent because of ignorance." You just can't do that. God has made Himself and His standards known, first of all, in them, and then to them.

#### **1. Conscience Declares God**

Now, when it says that God has made Himself known in them, that's the inner voice that we call "conscience." There is a God-shaped vacuum in every man's heart. Williams' translation says, "It is clear to their inner moral sense." There is no such thing anywhere on earth as a true atheist—nowhere, nowhere. If a man says he doesn't believe in God, he's lying. As a matter of fact, a Mr. Brown, who has an interstate trucking organization, has for a long time been giving lie detector tests to prospective employees. And, one of the things he does—he asks, "Do you believe in God?" And, from time to time, there will be someone who says, "No, I don't believe in God." And, the lie detector test says he's lying every time—every time, when a man says, "I don't believe in God." My dear friend, God has put His moral consciousness into every man's heart, and a man has to try to kick that conscience to death to say, "I don't believe in God."

#### **2. Creation Declares God**

But, not only has God made it manifest in them; He's also made it manifest, according

to verse 19, unto them. Do you see it? *“God hath shewed it unto them.”* (Romans 1:19) That is, not only is there the inward, subjective evidence; there’s the outward, objective evidence. And, you say, “What is that outward, objective evidence?” Creation—creation. Look, if you will, in verse 20: *“For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen.”* (Romans 1:20)

So, there are two witnesses: one is conscience; the other is creation—“in them” and “unto them”; conscience and creation; the inner voice, the outer voice. I mean, anyone with a modicum of sense knows out of nothing, nothing comes. If there’s a creation, there has to be a Creator. I mean, it all, dear friend, just didn’t happen.

The heavenly host ablaze in the sky are ample testimony of the fact of God. During the French Revolution, they were pulling down the cathedrals, and toppling the crosses, and all of this. And, one man looked at a peasant and said, “I’m going to destroy everything that reminds you of your so-called God,” and that peasant pointed to the stars and said, “I suggest that you pull those down.” *“The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.”* (Psalms 19:1)

An ordinary man—an ordinary man—knows that God exists. Have you ever thought how convoluted the arguments against God are? I mean, it’s normal and natural for a little child to believe in God, but the atheist has to get a convoluted argument against God.

I heard about a father who taught his children there was no God and there is no God. And, the little boy was listening; and finally, he said to his dad—he said, “Dad, do you think God knows we don’t believe in Him?” There is in every man’s mind, every child’s heart, this consciousness of God.

Now, the evolutionists will tell us it all just happened.

I mean, suppose I’m wearing a watch now, and just suppose you say to me, “Adrian, where did that watch come from? Who made that watch? What watchmaker made that?” I say, “Well, there’s no watchmaker. I don’t believe in watchmakers. Watchmakers are superstition.” “Well, where did your watch come from?” “The parts just came together out of nothing. And then, out of nothing, these parts comingled themselves, and this watch is really a product of billions of years. First of all, it was a button. And then, it became a compass. And then, it became a steam gauge. And, after a while it was a speedometer. And, ipso facto, it’s a watch, and who knows what it may become. “Well,” you say, “that’s so stupid.” Yes, it’s stupid. My dear friend, one cell in my body is millions of times more complicated than this. And, you just tell me that out of nothing, nothing came, and it assembled itself this way? No, my dear friend.

## **B. The Reach of God’s Truth**

God has manifest Himself to mankind, and there is the revelation of God’s truth. And then, there is the reach of God’s truth. You see, the Bible says in Psalms 19:1–4 that

*“the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork. Day unto day...night unto nigh... There is no [place] where [this] is not heard.”* (Psalms 19:1–3) You see, it’s written in the sky. A God of might and miracle—it’s written in the sky. It’s universal. It’s inescapable. It’s unavoidable.

### **C. The Resistance to God’s Truth**

But, you see, in spite of the revelation of God’s truth and in spite of the reach of God’s truth, there is the resistance to God’s truth. Look again in verse 18: *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness”—and, by the way, those two are always inseparably linked, ungodliness and unrighteousness—“of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”* (Romans 1:18)

Now, look at the word “hold the truth.” When I was reading the scripture a little while back, I told you that the word *hold* doesn’t mean “hold to,” but it literally means “hold back.” They arrest the truth. They stifle the truth. They smother the truth. I looked this up in a number of different translations, and let me just tell you some of the ways that it’s translated: “those who hold back the truth”; “those who smother the truth”; “those who suppress the truth”; “those who repress the truth”; “those who stifle the truth.”

Now, the world is full of people who have resisted God’s truth. Now, it is not that they cannot believe; it is that they will not believe. You say, “I have intellectual problems, Adrian.” No, you don’t. You have dirty, rotten sin. You say, “Hey, that’s pretty blunt.” Yes, but it’s true. Unbelief never comes out of the head; it comes out of the heart. It is not that you cannot believe; it is that you will not believe. You say, “I’m an intellectual.” Well, so what? I know a lot of intellectuals who believe in God. You say, “Well, I know some stupid people who believe in God.” I know some stupid people who don’t. Has nothing to do with your intellect—nothing! You show me an intellectual giant who doesn’t believe; I’ll show you one who does. You show me an ignorant person who believes; I’ll show you an ignorant person who doesn’t—has nothing to do with it. It is not contrary contrary, my dear friend, to reason; it is beyond reason. You see, God has supernaturally revealed Himself to every human heart, and a man has to kick his conscience to death—a man has to repress and smother that which he knows. There is the revelation of God’s truth. There is the reach of God’s truth. There is the resistance to God’s truth, and there are none so blind as those who refuse to see.

I had a young man—he’s a friend of mine now. He has a very fine job over in the center part of the state of Tennessee. He was just a teenager when he came to Christ in our church down in Florida. He was a self-styled atheist. He wrote a letter to the editor, saying, “When men cease to believe in a nonexistent God to save them from a nonexistent hell, then finally, some day, perhaps, the world will be populated by people rather than sheep.” It was a sarcastic, cutting letter. He was a young honors student. But, somehow he was invited to our church. The finger of God found him. He got saved.

Later on, he came and sat in my study—he'd been saved about two or three days at that time—sat in my study, and he said to me, “Mr. Rogers,” he said, “when I wrote that letter,” he said, “I was so sure there is no God.” And, he said, “Now, I can't even remember the arguments.” It's very interesting. What I'm saying is that he saw things from a completely different light.

And so, what you have, first of all, is man's willful—man's willful—resistance of the truth, what I'm calling “man's willful self-determination.”

## II. Man's Wicked Self-Deception

Now, here's the second theme: not only man's willful self-determination, but man's wicked self-deception. He deceives himself. It's not just that he resists God. That's bad enough. But, nature abhors a vacuum. If a man doesn't believe that which is right—you can put it down—he will believe that which is wrong because he's going to believe something.

### A. Selfish Indifference

Now, how does this work? Well, look, if you will, in verse 21. The Bible says it happens this way: *“Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful.”* (Romans 1:21) Now, they don't glorify God. But, when they knew God—the fact of God—they don't give Him glory; they don't thank Him. There is, first of all, what I want to call “selfish indifference.” You see, when you know God, when God reveals Himself to you, you need to give Him glory and give Him thanks. God does not reveal Himself to you to satisfy your intellectual curiosity but to cause you to glorify Him and to worship Him. First of all, verse 21: selfish indifference.

### B. Sophisticated Ignorance

And then, verse 22: sophisticated ignorance. Now, I put those two words together on purpose, just like I put a contradictory title on the message: “Midnight at High Noon”—“Midnight at High Noon.” Sophisticated ignorance. Now, look at it; here's the most pitiable thing of all: *“Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools”—“fools.”* (Romans 1:22) God looks down upon our erudite, sophisticated age—the wise acres, the high muckety-mucks. And, God's estimation of them is that they are sheer fools. As I told you, the word that is translated “fool” here is the word that we get our English word *moron* from.

Now, they are so logical and so wrong. You see, when a man begins any argument with a false premise, he will end at a false conclusion—it doesn't matter how logical the intervening steps are. It's like buttoning your vest or your shirt: you button the first button wrong; you can button all the rest of them, but it's going to be wrong when it reaches the top. And, when you start with a false premise, you end up at a false

conclusion. And, this is what they do: they dismiss the idea of God, and then they say, “Look how smart we are.” But, my dear friend, if we’re so smart, why are we in the mess that we’re in? You answer that. The more we reject God, the deeper we sink. And so, a man here, dear friend, comes to a place of false conclusion.

Dr. Leon McBeth said this—he was a great preacher of yesteryear—he said this, and I want you to listen: he said, “Any system of education that casts God out is an outcast system of education. Education that does not value God is a worthless education. A godless training is a worthless course and a wicked study, a study in wickedness.” Now, we have effectively tried to remove any thought of God in our education in America, and we wonder what is wrong with us. I’ll tell you what’s wrong with us: it’s midnight at high noon. *“Professing [ourselves] to be wise, [we are becoming] fools.”* (Romans 1:22)

### C. Shameless Idolatry

But now, notice: first of all, it starts with what I want to call, dear friend, a “selfish indifference,” and then a sophisticated ignorance, and then it goes on to a shameless idolatry. Notice in verse 23; look: *“they became fools”—verse 22—“And [they] changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up.”* (Romans 1:22–24) They gave up God, and God said, “All right, I’m going to give you up.”

Now, man, then, becomes an idolater. You say, “Adrian, in this world of cyclotrons, and atom smashers, and genetic engineering, you don’t think that idolatry is a program any more.” May I tell you, dear friend, that the irony of the thing is that we have a world and a city that is saturated with idolatry. Now, you say, “What is an idol?” An idol is anything you fear more than God. An idol is anything you love more than God. An idol is anything you serve more than God. That is an idol. That’s simply what any idol is. It is what becomes a god to you. Now, the Bible speaks of those in 2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 4 who are *“lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God.”* (2 Timothy 3:4) We speak of our sports idols, our sports stars, and all of these things. There are many people out there this morning, rather than being in church, they’re worshipping their god out on the green. Now, what I’m trying to say is that it goes to shameful idolatry.

#### 1. Man Is Depicted By His Idol

First of all, have you ever thought about the fact that a man is depicted or pictured by his idols? Do you know what an idol is? An idol is a magnified sinner. That’s what an idol is. How do men make idols? Well, they take their worst vices, and they turn them into gods. For example, Mars is the god of war. Aphrodite is the god of sex and immorality. Bacchus is the god of wine and drink. That’s all people did in that day. And,

when they made idols of sticks and stones, they just took their vices and made gods out of them; and then, after they made a god out of that vice, then, “Look, I can worship my vices.”

I’ve been to Corinth. In Corinth, there is a place called the Acrocorinth. It’s a sheer granite wall that rises up there from that beautiful, ancient city of Corinth, there in the Aegean. And, on top of that Acrocorinth was a temple given over to prostitution, and the way they worshipped their god was to go in and have a relationship with a prostitute. And, they said, “I worship.” Now, people do the same thing today. Our twentieth century is full of idolaters, and an idol is nothing but a magnified sinner. Man is depicted by his idol.

## **2. Man Is Dominated By His Idol**

Then, he is dominated by his idol. Look, if you will, in verse 24: *“God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies.”* (Romans 1:24) First of all, the man molds the idol; and then, the idol molds the man. I mean, we have people, actually, who are worshipping wickedness and practicing wickedness. The Bible says in Psalms 115:8: *“They that make idols are like unto them.”* (Psalms 115:8)

## **3. Man Is Deceived By His Idol**

You see, a man is depicted by his idol. A man is dominated by his idol, but the sad thing is he is deceived by his idol. Look, if you will, in verse 25: *“Who changed the truth of God into a lie”—now, the word literally means “exchange the truth of God for a lie”—“and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator”—you’ll never find a better definition of humanism than this one right here—“who [worships] and [serves] the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”* (Romans 1:25)

Now, let me just tell you how that is worked out, for example, in America. What is the god of America today? Well, it’s success, and pleasure, and self. That’s the most popular god in America today. That’s the reason we have abortion on demand.

“Well,” you say, “is abortion a form of idolatry?” Let me give you some scripture. Put this down in your margin: Psalm 106, beginning in verse 35. The Bible speaks of God’s ancient people and how they were not separated but they mingled with idolaters. And, the Bible says, *“But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works”—that is, God’s people learned the ways of the heathen—“And they served their idols”—heathen idols—“which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto [demons]”—sacrificing, having their babies killed, a worship of demons—“And shed innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and...their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.”* (Psalms 106:35–38) May I tell you that America is polluted with innocent blood? The

land is polluted with blood. Ancient idolaters have set the pattern for modern-day idolaters who have resisted the truth, held back the truth, and now have come to the most gross and horrible demonic worship.

### III. Man's Self-Destruction

Now, let me go to the third point here. I'm talking about midnight at high noon, and I said, first of all, there is mankind's self-determination. Then, there's mankind's self-deception. They exchange the truth of God for a lie. (Romans 1:25) But, it ends with mankind's self-destruction—mankind's self-destruction. I want you to continue to read. Look in verse 26, and see what the result of all of this is. In verse 26: *"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections"*—do you see that? Underscore the word *vile*—*"for even their women did change the natural use"*—underscore the word "natural use"—*"into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust toward one another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet"* (Romans 1:26–27)—or, "which was fitting." Now, what happens? How does man self-destruct?

#### A. He Becomes Sexually Perverted

First of all, invariably, he becomes sexually perverted—sexually perverted. Now, the scripture that I just read to you speaks of the filthy sins of Sodom, and that scripture says that sodomy is both vile and unnatural. That's what God says. Now, if you don't like that, don't argue with me. I don't have any time for you. Just go take it up with God. I'm reading out of the Word of God. God says that that kind of sin, number one, is vile, and God says, number two, it is unnatural. It is vile. It is unnatural. And, God teaches that His smoldering judgment is upon these kind of sins. Put down in your margin 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 6. The Bible says there that God *"[turned] the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes [condemning] them with an overthrow, [and] making them an [example to] those that after should live ungodly."* (2 Peter 2:6) How plain can it be? God says, "You want to know how I feel about this? Go to the smoking ruins of Sodom and see."

Now, midnight at high noon. What we used to call "sin" we started to call a "sickness." And, now no longer do we call it a "sin" or a "sickness"; we call it an acceptable lifestyle. My dear friend, those are the sins that will bring our civilization into self-destruction, and we're spreading this—I mean, with the idea of openness, all kinds of sexual perversion and immorality. Americans spend six billion dollars a year on pornography. Do you know how much a billion dollars is? Can you imagine how much six billion dollars' worth of pornography, like a broken sewer spread out on America, can do in a year? That's one year—next year, six billion more. And, that finds its way into

the hand of little children, invariably.

### **B. He Becomes Socially Perverted**

They became sexually perverted (verses 26 and 27). Then, they became socially perverted. People who treat sex lightly will treat human beings lightly. Look in verse 28: *“And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient”—that literally means “which are not fitting,” “which are indecent”—“Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whispers, Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful.”* (Romans 1:28–31) For further information, consult any newspaper.

That’s it! There you have it. Boy, we’re smart, aren’t we? My friend, I want to tell you, it’s midnight at high noon. This is what we get when we put the lantern on the bow rather than steering by the stars, saying, “There is no fixed standard of right and wrong.” All of the educators say, “We need values in education.” And then, you ask, “Whose values?” and they all get quiet because they don’t know what to say. Whose values? My dear friend, it’s God’s values or there are no true values. It’s just simply steering by the light on the bow.

### **C. He Becomes Spiritually Perverted**

They became sexually perverted. They became socially perverted. People are living today like animals in self-made cages. But oh, saddest of all, they become spiritually perverted. Look in verse 32: the Bible says these, *“who knowing the judgment of God”—that is, innately they know it—“that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”* (Romans 1:32) Now, here’s the sad thing: we have a society not only that does these things, but has pleasure in people who do them. That is, we socially applaud this kind of behavior.

Have you ever thought about it? Do you know what most entertainment today is about? Most entertainment today is applauding sin. Now, you know it is true. It is applauding fornication, adultery, drunkenness, crime, vice, and selfishness. And, we laugh at it. That’s what so many of the situation comedies are about today. Did you know the devil is very smart? The devil knows if he can ever get you to laugh at a sin, you can’t take it seriously again. And so, we make jokes of adultery. We make jokes of fornication. We make jokes of sexual perversion. We are laughing our way into hell. Why do we have pleasure in those who do these things? Because, my dear friend, when you know that you’re not right with God, you feel very uncomfortable until a lot of other people are doing the same thing and then you feel a lot more comfortable. You

see, you become the devil's evangelist. Just like Eve when she ate that fruit—she had to give it to Adam. You see, when a man is in sin, he wants to see how many other people he can get doing the same thing. And, when others do the same thing, then he feels so much better.

And, my friend, you listen to your pastor today, and those of you who are listening on the Love Worth Finding Network: An old preacher told me a long time ago—he drew me aside, and he said, “Adrian, I want to tell you something: sin will take you further than you want to go. It will keep you longer than you want to stay, and it will cost you more than you'll want to pay.” And, how true that is. We coddle sin. We pet sin. We think, oh, well, today, we're sophisticated. Today, we have arrived.

In our State Department, there was a couple that had a precious little baby. But, not only did they have a precious little baby; they had for a pet a baby leopard. This is not a make-believe story—a little leopard. They thought they could raise that leopard in their home. They kept that leopard in their apartment. They were sitting across the hall drinking coffee. The door was open. The baby was in the next room, and this couple in the State Department heard a cry that shattered their tranquility. Their blood froze. They ran into the next room and found that leopard had chewed the fingers off one hand of that little baby. Now, what do you think they did with that leopard? Do you think they said, “Oh, you naughty leopard! We'll have to train you better.” Do you think they rolled up a newspaper and swatted that little animal? No, they put it to instant death—instant death. They were fools to have it in there to begin with, in my estimation. My dear friend, are you going to coddle sin that nailed Jesus to the cross and will one day destroy you? Professing yourself to be wise, you become a fool. (Romans 1:22)

## Conclusion

I want to show you something that's absolutely, absolutely frightening. Look, if you will, in this chapter, and look in Romans chapter 1, verse 24: “*Wherefore God also gave them up.*” (Romans 1:24) Do you see that? God gave them up. Look, if you will, in verse 26: “*For this cause God gave them up.*” (Romans 1:26) That's the second time he says it. Now look, if you will, in verse 28: “*And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind.*” (Romans 1:28) God gave them up. God gave them up. “*God gave them over.*” (Romans 1:28) Don't you let God give up on you. Oh, my dear friend, don't get so sophisticated. When you know God, glorify Him as God. Become thankful. Give your heart to Him. No wonder the Apostle Paul says in verse 16 of this same chapter: “*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For [herein] is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.*” (Romans 1:16–17) Oh, thank God for the righteousness of God and the gospel.

May I tell you that Jesus Christ took our sins, carried them to the cross; suffered, bled, and died in agony and blood; and Jesus, with His blood, atoned for my sin and your sin? And, without what Jesus has done for me I wouldn't have a chance of heaven. But, thank God, I brought my sin to Jesus and Jesus saved me and forgave me and cleansed me—has filled me and given me joy and peace, a hope in living, a purpose in living, a hope in dying, and a future that's steadfast and sure. I want you to know Jesus. I want you... Oh, my dear friend, don't turn your back on God. Come to Christ today.

# The Lost World

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 18, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 1:18–31

*“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.”*

ROMANS 1:18

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Man’s Willful Self-Determination
  - A. The Revelation of God’s Truth
  - B. The Reach of God’s Truth
  - C. The Resistance to God’s Truth
- II. Man’s Wicked Self-Deception
  - A. Selfish Indifference
  - B. Sophisticated Ignorance
  - C. Shameful Idolatry
- III. Man’s Woeful Self-Destruction
  - A. Sexual Perversion
  - B. Social Perversion
  - C. Spiritual Perversion

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and find the book of Romans, as we're working our way through the book of Romans. Romans has been called the Magna Carta of our faith, the Constitution of Christianity. It's the greatest theological treatise ever written, and we are talking today and continuing to talk about foundations—foundations for our faith. In a very unsure age, we need a solid place to stand, and thank God for the book of Romans. In our hands, Christ in our heart, we do have a foundation for our faith. In a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 18.

May I tell you that these are perilous days in which we're living, and there's no ifs, ands, or buts about it, we are on a collision course with disaster and judgment, and you can see the many ways, I suppose the worst indicator of the situation—if I can say the best indicator of the worst—is in entertainment. Americans have not only reached the bottom of the garbage pail; we have eaten right on through. And then, that is

compounded by the fact that crime is on a rampage of the sword; families have been destroyed; millions of babies are being destroyed in their mothers' womb; suicide and violent crime are at the top of the list; there are killers of America's youth. And then, we have sexual diseases that are pandemic. In the last ten years, sexual diseases have killed nine times as many people as were killed in the worst ten years of the Vietnam conflict. And we don't seem to be able to back up and refocus and to see where we are. And if you talk to people and say that the problem is sin, they will disagree with you, because today sin is out of vogue. Do you know what the only sin is today? The only sin today is to call sin sin. Then if you call sin sin, then they say you are intolerant. A man may be sick, but he's not sinful; he may be weak, but he's not wicked; he may be ill, but he's not evil, and even if he were to tell people that what they're doing is wrong, they would say that they have some excuse. It would be environment, it would be genetics, it would be ignorance; but nobody wants to be blamed. Everybody wants to be pitied and coddled.

Well, we're going to learn something today about the wrath of God, the judgment of God. The title of the message today, The Lost World, and I'm not talking about a movie: The Lost World—or the bad news that makes the good news good. Now, you know, the word gospel means good news; but good news is not good news unless, first of all, you have some bad news. Coming back on a trip just recently, I had my wife with me, and we were told that the plane was leaving on time, and we jubilated. Well, why were we so happy? Because we'd heard that the plane was going to be about three or four hours late. It was the bad news that made the good news good.

Now, we're going to have to see the bad news in the Word of God. Look, if you will, in verse 18: "For the wrath of God is revealed"—the wrath of God. Now, we hear about the love of God, and God is love—infinite, boundless, measureless love; God is love. You read of that, don't you? He is love; God is love. But this God of love is also a God of wrath, and when you love righteousness, you hate sin. The doctor who loves health hates microbes and germs, and when you love children, you hate pornography; you hate child abuse. So you see you cannot have a God of love without also having a God of wrath. And if you just take the love of God, and that's all you hear—just the love of God—you only have half of the story. Now, God is love, but when you take half of the truth and try to make half of the truth all of the truth, then that half of the truth becomes an untruth, because you've distorted it, and it's not balanced. So verse 18 says, "The wrath of God"—the wrath of God, God's burning anger against sin—"is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness, because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power

and Godhead,"—now, here's the concluding part—"so that they are without excuse." There's one thing that God will not accept for sin, and that is an alibi or an excuse; He will accept a confession, and He will forgive, but there is no excuse; man is inexcusable in his sin.

I want to give you three reasons. We're going to think today about this scripture as a great courtroom. Think of Almighty God as the judge, think of the apostle Paul as the prosecuting attorney, and he has three lines of argument. He's going to show that the pagan world, the heathen world, even those who've never heard the Bible, even those who've never heard the gospel, those who've never seen a church, they are still without excuse; every man, woman, boy, and girl who's ever lived is a sinner without excuse before a righteous and holy God.

What are these three lines? I hope that you'll write them down.

## **I. Man's Willful Self-Determination**

First of all, man's willful—and I put the emphasis on the word willful—man's willful self-determination. Man does not want God to rule over him. Now, he somehow moves God out of his heart; even though God's existence and God's power and God's authority is clearly revealed, man willfully determines to go his own way. Now, there are three things here in verses 19 and 20 that I want you to notice.

### **A. The Revelation of God's Truth**

Let's read verses 19 and 20—he says, "They hold the truth in their righteousness and suppress the truth because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath showed it unto them." By that verse, write the revelation of God's truth—the revelation of God's truth. The revelation of God's truth comes in two ways: in them and unto them. Do you see it there in verse 19? Look at it. In them and unto them: in them is the inner witness called conscience; unto them is the outer witness called creation. And there are two witnesses that every person, that has ever lived has a witness in them, and a witness unto them. Now, the witness in them is conscience. There is a God-shaped vacuum in every man's heart. The Bible says, "Christ is that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." When a man says that he is an atheist, he is lying. When a man says he's an atheist, he's lying. He may not even know he's lying, but down deep, down in his subconscious, he is lying.

There's a man that owns a trucking firm, and he has this trucking firm, it operates across state lines—interstate trucking firm. When he employs people, he gives them a lie detector test. And one of the questions in this lie detector test is this: Do you believe in God? Every time—listen to me—every time a person said, No, I do not believe in God, the lie detector said he's telling a lie. Every time, he's telling a lie. Now, he may even think that he doesn't believe in God—down deep, God has showed it unto him.

And that's what the Bible says: Everybody comes into this world with a God consciousness; Christ is that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

And then, there is another witness. Not only is there the witness called conscience, but there's also the witness called creation. Look again, in verse 19: "For God has showed it unto them." How does he show it unto them? "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." What does that mean? Means understood by the things that are made. Well, if you have things that are made, you have to have a maker. If you have creation, you have to have a creator. You don't have to be a PhD to figure that out. Do you see, the atheist believes that nothing times nobody equals everything, that it all just happened. But the Bible says it's clearly seen. That's the reason the Psalmist said in Psalm 19, verses 1 through 4, "For the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork."

### **B. The Reach of God's Truth**

There is the revelation of it; there is the reach of it. Everybody knows that God made it all. How else would you explain creation? And evolution is a biased guess, it is not true science; it is the next best guess of those who will not accept Almighty God. Design and designer show that there is a God. If I were to pluck some parts from nowhere, put them in a box and shake them around, and they'd become a button, then after a while they'd become a steam gauge, and then after a while, they'd become a compass, and then after a while, they'd become a watch, and I wear it, and I say that's how this watch became a watch, you would say, You're lying; that doesn't make sense. You or I are far more complicated than this wristwatch that I'm wearing. To think that these things happened by blind, fortuitous chance, we ought to know better than that.

### **C. The Resistance to God's Truth**

There's the revelation of God's truth; there is the reach of God's truth. Every man, every woman, but here's the sad thing. There is the resistance of God's truth. Look, if you will, in verse 18: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness." Now, the word hold is the key word here. In the King James it is translated hold; other translations it is translated suppress, repress, smother, stifle, hold down the truth. That is, there is a resistance against the truth. People put out their own eyes; they do not want to know. Willful blindness is more than tragic; it is wicked.

I received a letter this past week I want to share. I receive a lot of letters—you'd be surprised. Here's one from a listener in another state. Dear Adrian Rogers, your sermons on evolution need balance. While you did not deny that the universe is 15 billion years old and the earth is about 5 billion years old, isn't it past silly that you would

want to attribute the creation of the universe to a savage Hebrew tribal deity—that's his name for the God of the Old Testament: a savage Hebrew tribal deity—who is recent by comparison, and who himself is a product of evolution. The biblical God evolved—the biblical God evolved—from a vile-tempered, foul-mouthed, woman-hating, genocidal maniac to a loving God in forty short booklets. Now, there is your miracle. Here is a man who actually hates the idea of God. He resists the idea of God. I received another letter. Boy, I'm getting some good letters this week. Here's one. Dear Adrian Rogers, you might address your problem with evolution by reading the wonderful new special issue of Astronomy Magazine, February 1998, on the origin of everything. And then, he concludes this letter by saying, I'd sooner place my faith in Dennis Rodman than in God. And you have no idea what I think of the green-haired Dennis Rodman. And then, he goes on to say, DNA and genetic science has proven Darwin correct on evolution. Well, there are a lot of people out there, folks, who absolutely, totally hate God. Now, he says I'd sooner believe in Dennis Rodman than to believe in God. So you know he doesn't want to believe in God. He doesn't say, I wish there were a God I could believe in—he doesn't want to believe in God, so he takes DNA and these other things, and says, that's where my faith is.

So what happens is this: first of all, there is the revelation of God's truth, the reach of God's truth; but then, there is the resistance to God's truth. They hold back; they stifle the truth of God. The problem is not really intellectual; the problem is moral. The Bible says, "The fool has said in his heart there is no God." He doesn't say it in his head; he says it in his heart. Brother Jim Whitmire and I have a friend that we met, he was a youngster down in Florida when we were down there together at the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island. This youngster, who was an honor student, wrote a letter to the editor. His name was George, and he wrote this letter to the editor of our paper down there, and he said, Dear Editor—he said some other things, but then he said—When people stop believing in God, and when they stop praying to a non-existent God to save them from a non-existent hell, then finally one more day, perhaps, maybe the world will be populated again by people rather than sheep. And that was his letter, stinging letter, written by a young atheist. Later on, that young man came to our church, I think to mock and to argue. But the finger of God touched him, he got under conviction, God opened his heart, and he got saved. And, I invited him to my study and I wanted to talk to him. And I said to him, George, you claimed to be an atheist, and now you say you're professing faith in Christ. Tell me about it. Here's what he said. He said, Mr. Rogers, when I wrote that letter, I was so sure that God didn't exist, and he said, and now I cannot even remember the arguments. Now, where was that man's problem? It wasn't in his head; it was in his heart. He had a bias against God.

## II. Man's Wicked Self-Deception

There is the revelation of God's truth. There is the reach of God's truth. There is the resistance of God's truth, man's willful self-determination. And now, what is the second step that shows they're without excuse? First of all, there is that willful self-determination, they repress, they hold back, they smother the truth. Some of you may be doing that this morning. The second step: not only man's willful self-determination, but man's wicked self-deception. You see, when a man decides he's going to go his own way, he also deceives himself. Nature abhors a vacuum, and if man resists the truth, he's going to believe something, so he will believe a lie. When a man says, I don't believe in God, that doesn't mean that he believes nothing; it means he will believe anything, because believe he must. And so, he's going to put his faith somewhere else, and so he deceives himself.

### A. Selfish Indifference

Now, how does this go? Well, look in verse 21. In verse 21, there is a selfish indifference. Look at it: "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful, but became vain in their imagination and their foolish heart was darkened." That's selfish indifference—he's not thankful, he doesn't glorify God. He knows there's a God, but there is no glory to God from his life, there's no thankfulness to God from his heart, and so what happens? With this indifference, this selfish indifference, a darkness comes. You see, God has given him light, but light refused increases darkness. You don't take truth and put it in your pocket. Truth is not meant to be interesting; it is meant to be disturbing—and if you don't use it, you'll lose it. And when you become preoccupied with yourself, and fail to give God glory, and fail to give God thanks, your heart will be darkened. Selfish indifference, verse 21.

### B. Sophisticated Ignorance

Now, look in verse 22—sophisticated ignorance—sophisticated ignorance: "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools." Now, folks, these people may have PhD after their name and I'm not against PhDs. I know many wonderful PhDs, but there are so many who have the idea that they are too intelligent to believe in God, and so they have this air of sophistication about them, and they refuse God's light.

### C. Shameful Idolatry

Selfish indifference, sophisticated ignorance, and now, watch the next step: shameful idolatry. Look in verses 23 and 24: "And they changed"—the word literally means exchanged—"the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like the corruptible man, into birds and four-footed beasts"—now, watch this—"and creeping things." Start at the top of that verse—the glory of the incorruptible God. Come to the bottom of that verse—creeping things. Here's how far man has come from failing to

worship the incorruptible, great, eternal God of might and power who made everything. They worshiped the creature rather than the Creator. It begins with man. Man, first of all, begins in his own humanism, he makes a God of himself, he deifies himself, but the idolatry goes down and down and down until he gets down to where he worships creeping things. Do you know what a creeping thing is? That's a bug—a bug. People worshipping bugs—bugs. You say, nobody would worship a bug. They do. Go to the Egyptian museum in Cairo, and you will see the scarab, the sacred beetle, the bug—they worship bugs. How the mighty have fallen. And, you say, well, nobody would do that. They do—they do. But not in America, Pastor; they don't worship bugs in America. Oh? Do you know what an idol is? An idol is anything you love more, fear more, value more, or serve more than Almighty God—that's an idol, that's an idol. Your idol may be your home, it may be your automobile, it may be your business, it may be sex; it could be anything—anything—that takes the place of Almighty God ought to have; anything that is first place in your life is an idol before Almighty God. And we may think that we're a little bit too sophisticated to worship creeping things, but we still have our idolatry in our hearts—shameful idolatry.

You know what man does—you know what an idol is? An idol is only a magnified sinner—that's all an idol is. Man takes his worst vices of greed and lust and violence and pride and he deifies him. That's a pretty slick thing, because then he legitimizes him, when he deifies them. For example, I've been to Baalbek in Lebanon and seen the mighty temple there to the god Bacchus, the god of drunkenness. And how did they worship him? By getting drunk. You can go to Corinth and see the Acrocorinthus up there on Mount Corinth, where the prostitutes were up there. How did they worship their God? By going in and having sexual intercourse with a prostitute. What it does is legitimize his vices, and nothing is too good for a man's god. Pretty slick, right? You see, first of all, there comes this selfish indifference—he doesn't care about God. Then there comes this sophisticated ignorance—professing himself to be wise, he becomes a fool. And then, there comes this shameful idolatry—he exchanges the truth of God for a lie, and he begins to worship anything but the Almighty; the creature rather than the Creator.

Now, what is the result in society when we have idolatry in America? And, by the way, in 1962, we kicked God out of our schools. In a vacuum we had all kinds of strange idols to come into America and a part of that is the grizzly abortion business. Let me give you some verses—Psalm 106, verses 35 to 38—it speaks of his people who were mingled among the heathen and learned their works: "And they served their idols, which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils and shed innocent blood." Did you know that the chief god of the abortion industry is demonic? They sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils and shed

innocent blood, even the blood of their sons and their daughters and the land was polluted with blood." Today, there's going to be a March for Life downtown. There's an indication in your bulletin—you can find out when it is. Perhaps you can attend and stand up for the unborn. But the Bible links all of this with idolatry. We've made such a god of pleasure. You know, most abortions today are convenience abortions. People, they don't want to have to raise a child, they don't want to have to be inconvenienced, they don't want to have to give up a job, they want to do this or that. Let's just snuff out that life. You say, Well, a woman has a right to determine whether or not she's going to have a baby. Not after the baby's conceived—not after the baby's conceived. The only decision—she talks about being pro-choice—she has a choice whether to have a live baby or a dead one; that's her choice: to have a live baby or to have a dead baby. But she's going to have a baby, because there's a baby living in her. But we've learned the way of the heathen. The land is flooded with innocent blood, and the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness; men who suppress the truth—resist the truth, who hold back the truth—in unrighteousness.

### **III. Man's Woeful Self-Destruction**

Now, here's the third step. Step number one: man's willful self-determination. Step number two: man's wicked self-deception. He blinds himself; he deceives himself. And now, finally, man's woeful self-destruction. Self-determination leads to self-deception leads to self-destruction. And the rest of this chapter tells about that destruction.

What is that destruction? Well, it comes in several stages.

#### **A. Sexual Perversion**

First of all, people who turn from God always become sexually perverted. Look, if you will, in verses 25 through 27: "They changed the truth of God unto a lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the creator who is blessed forever, and for this cause God gave them up to vile affections." Now, what is he talking about when he says vile affection? "For even their women exchanged their natural use into that which against nature, and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men, working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompenses of their error which was meet"—or fitting—"and even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind." Now, what God is talking about here is the sin of sodomy and the sin of moral perversion. Notice how God calls this sin. Actually, He begins up in verse 24. He calls it uncleanness, He calls it lust, He calls it dishonor, in verse 24. In verse 26, He calls it vile affections. In verse 26, He said it is against nature. In verse 27, He says it is unseemly. Over in the Old Testament, in Leviticus chapter 18, verse 22, the Bible says, "Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind. It is an

abomination." I've been amazed as I've read those who want to practice this perversion. Some of the fancy footwork they've done to try to explain away the plain, meaning of God's Word. As a matter of fact, the explosion of sexual perversion that we've seen today is one of the great signs that we're living in the last days and that we're ripe for judgment.

Our Lord said, in Luke chapter 17, that the last days were going to be like the days of Noah and the days of Lot. I want to share that scripture with you—you might reference it in your margin: Luke chapter 17, verses 26 through 30. Our Lord Jesus is speaking, and Jesus says, "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 that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all." Then again, likewise, also, as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, but the same day that 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. As it was in the days of Lot—Lot, you will remember, lived in the society that had glorified sodomy and sexual perversion and God destroyed ancient Sodom with fire and brimstone. Second Peter chapter 2, verse 6, says, "He turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them with an overthrow, making them an example to those that should after live ungodly." God left Sodom with its smoking ruins as an example. The only thing we learn from history is that we don't learn anything from history. God left Sodom with its smoking ruins. Somebody said, Now, wait a minute. America cannot be under judgment, because America is in an economic upturn. Friend, that's where we're the most dangerous. Ezekiel chapter 16, verse 48: "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." God said, they were full of bread, they were full of idleness, there was prosperity in the land, but they were proud and haughty, they strutted, they were proud of their sin. As we've said, sin that used to slink down back allies now struts down main streets. What used to be called sin began to be called sickness, and now it's being called a socially accepted practice; and, as I said, the only sin today is to call that sin sin.

And there will be people who will write to me and tell me that I'm ignorant and bigoted and whatever. Well, if I say something that's not in the Scripture, write me and let me know. But if it's in the Bible, take your argument up with God. And if you think that I'm hard-hearted, I'm not. But I am honor-bound to preach God's Word. You see, a nation—a nation—that cannot distinguish about moral perversion is a nation on its last

legs. Isaiah chapter 3—listen to it—verses 8 and 9: "For Jerusalem is ruined and Judah is fallen because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord to provoke the eyes of his glory, the show of their countenance doth witness against them. They declare their sin as Sodom; they hide it not. Woe unto their soul for they have awarded evil unto themselves." God said this is what has ruined Judah; this is what has ruined Jerusalem. And I submit to you that it will be the ruin of America as surely as there is a God in the glory. I'm only telling you, folks, what the Word of God says. If you want to reference this scripture again, it's Isaiah chapter 3, verses 8 and 9.

But this is not the only kind of sin. Pornography is flooding America. Over six billion dollars worth of pornography has been sold in America this past year. Do you know how much money six billion dollars is? What happens to that pornography? It eventually finds itself in the hands of children—in the hands of children. Vile, wicked, lascivious stuff. Some time ago, I was driving down Poplar Avenue. I saw two little guys out there; it looked like they may have been in grade school. They had a briefcase with them, a nice-looking briefcase, and they were going out into the woods with that briefcase. I knew something had to be wrong when you see two little guys with a briefcase going in the woods. So I stopped my car—they were going in the woods. I got out, and I said, All right, boys, come out. I didn't hear anything. I said, You heard me—come out right now. After a while, two little guys, with eyes like squirrels, came out of the woods, no briefcase. I said, Boys, what were you doing in the woods? Nothing! I said, Where's the briefcase. They said, What briefcase? I said, Go get the briefcase. They said, What briefcase? I said, Go get the briefcase. They said, Yes sir. I didn't know whether they'd come back or not, but they came back with that briefcase. I said, Open it. They said, Do we have to? I said, Open it. And it was full of vile, lascivious pornography. Little guys, it made me so angry. Not angry at the pornographer per se, but angry that little guys like that—little guys like that—would have their minds twisted and warped at that age with the vileness that was in that stuff. I said, Boys, where did you get this? Oh, they said, We got it from some other boys. They left it out in the woods, and we knew where they'd left it, and we got it from them. I said, What would your mother think? You ain't going to tell my mother, are you? I said, Well, I don't know. And I talked with them, and I said, Boys, you wouldn't put garbage in your mouths; don't put garbage in your minds. And I talked with them, had a little prayer. They said, What do you want us to do with this? I said, Give it to me. So I took that briefcase, and I put it in my car, and I said, God, if I have a wreck... And I drove down to a high school, and went behind that high school, and there was an incinerator, and I dumped it in that incinerator. Can you imagine, folks? Six billion dollars worth—six billion dollars worth—of pornography finds its way.

I think of my little grandsons—I don't want them reading that filth. I don't want my granddaughters reading that stuff. I don't want their minds to be twisted and perverted.

But what happens? A man's self-destruction: he becomes, first of all, sexually perverted. Do you think God is against sex? God is in favor of sex. God made man a sexual creature. God made Adam and Eve, and when He gave Eve to Adam, He said, that is very good. And when God says, "Flee fornication," when God says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," when God says, "Thou shalt not lie with man as with woman," He's not trying to keep us from sex; He's trying to keep sex for us. It is God's wonderful gift. And sex is so bad perverted because it is so wonderful as God intended—to love one another in a monogamous marriage, to have that fulfillment and joy—and, frankly, friend, I want that for my children. I want my children and my grandchildren to know what I have known, and what Joyce and I have known, in a happy, Christian, monogamous marriage. The devil is a pervert—the devil is a pervert. He has no raw materials. He can only take that which is from God, and pervert it.

## **B. Social Perversion**

So, they became sexually perverted, and then, when they became sexually perverted, they became socially perverted. Now, look, if you will, in verse 28: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate"—that means a decadent—"mind." And oh, friend, if we don't have a reprobate-minded society today. They say, what does it matter what the President in the high office does in his private life? What does it matter? So what? "God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents without understanding, covenant breakers without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." Man, when he turns his back from God, becomes not only sexually perverted, but socially perverted. The world becomes a madhouse, and we live in our self-made cells, and lock ourselves in at night, while the hoodlums roam up and down the streets, and our wives and our daughters are afraid to go out at night and walk up and down the streets, and we have the kind of mayhem like we had in this city yesterday. Let me tell you something, folks: racial hatred comes out of a heart that does not know God, and when you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to love what He loves, and He loves everybody, red, yellow, black, and white. And if you have a vestige of racial prejudice in your heart, you'd better beg God to take it out, and put the love of Jesus in there. Next week, we're going to come to chapter 2, verse 11: "There's no respect of persons with God." It's not a matter of race—what color your skin is; it's not a matter of place—what part of the city you live in; it's not a matter of face—whether you're male or female; it's a matter of grace—and God loves us all.

### **C. Spiritual Perversion**

But what happens when man turns his back on God? He becomes sexually perverted; then, he becomes socially perverted; and then, he becomes spiritually perverted. Look in verse 32: "Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which do such things—which commit such things—are worthy of death. Not only do the same, but they have pleasure in them that do them." We have begun to entertain ourselves. How do we entertain ourselves? Sitcoms about drunkenness and perversion, immorality and adultery, and the devil has a pipeline right into our homes, because, not only do we do these things; we have pleasure in them that do them. We make them the most admired people in America.

### **Conclusion**

Now, folks, I am brokenhearted for America. Listen to me. God's people need to get on their face before Almighty God in prayer. Three times in this chapter it says God gave them up, God gave them up, and God gave them over. Do you know the very worst thing that God could do to America—the very worst thing? Is just leave us alone—just leave us alone. Just say, All right, you've got it—take your vices, take your lust, take your evolution, take your abortion, take it all—you've got it! So long! I hope that doesn't happen to America. God gave them up. God gave them up. God gave them over. It's revival time in America, time for us to seek the Lord, because Romans 1 is being replayed for us. Willful self-determination, wicked self-deception, woeful self-destruction.

Now, folks, that's the bad news that makes the good news good. The good news is the gospel. That's what Romans is about, the gospel; and the word gospel means good news. Paul says in verse 16, "I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation." That's the reason, as long as God has a heart thumping in my chest, as long as God gives me a voice, I want to be a gospel preacher. I want to be able to tell it clearly, plainly: believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you'll be saved. Every sin will be forgiven. He will come into your heart, radically, dramatically, and eternally change your heart, put His Spirit in you, and He will not only change you, but He will empower you, and then, when time to go to heaven comes, when you die, or when Jesus comes, He'll take you to heaven to be with Him for eternity. Friend, that's the gospel truth, and it's good news. Let's pray.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you begin to pray for those around you who may not yet know the Lord? And, if you're not certain of your salvation, did you know that you can be saved today before you leave this place? I want to lead you in a prayer, and I'm going to ask, please, that nobody leave, nobody be stirring. I'm going to lead you in a prayer, and in this prayer, you can invite Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Savior. You say, Pastor Rogers, I'm not in the condition that those people

are in that you talked about. I sincerely believe that. But you're on the same side of the fence with them, if you're not saved. And, you see, friend, it's not the amount of sin that condemns us; it's the fact of sin. The Bible says, "For all have sinned"—we're going to see that in the third chapter—and you need to be saved, and you can be saved today. Would you pray a prayer like this out of your heart? Dear God...—just speak to Him—Dear God, I know that you love me, and I know that you want to save me. I'm a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. O Jesus, I need to be saved. You died to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you. I believe you are the Son of God. I believe you paid for my sin with your blood on the cross. I believe God raised you from the dead. And now, by faith, like a child, I receive you into my life as my Lord and Savior. Take control of my life; be my Master, my Savior. I will live for you the rest of my life; I will follow you all of my life, because you have given to me the gift of salvation. Thank you—thank you for saving me. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I don't think that I'm going to get this because I'm a good person. I just receive the gift, and all I can say is, thank you. Lord, thank you. Begin now to make me the person you want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of you. In your name. Amen.

# The Last Step on the Way Down

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 25, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 1:24

*“Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves.”*

ROMANS 1:24

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Adultery Is a Sin Against One’s Self
- II. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Home
- III. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Church
- IV. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Nation
- V. Adultery Is a Sin Against Almighty God

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Romans chapter 1. We're in a series of Bible studies on the book of Romans entitled Foundations for our Faith. And, these are shaky days in which we live, and you need to find something solid to stand on, and the book of Romans is something solid to stand on. Now, may I say this: that the book of Romans literally is good news; it is about the gospel. The theme is the gospel, and the word gospel means good news. But, ladies and gentlemen, listen to me: before you will appreciate good news, you've got to hear bad news. Now, that's just the way it is. It's the bad news that makes the good news good. And so, as the apostle Paul begins the book of Romans, he tells us, first of all, about sin before he tells us about salvation and sanctification and service. And so, we're in that part now that talks about sin, and Paul is talking about the terrible, horrible consequences of sin, and the causes of sin in the hearts and lives of people. Now, this nation needs to hear the book of Romans because, folks, most Americans are egomaniacs, peacocks, strutting to hell, thinking they're too good to be damned. And I've learned that, in preaching, if you want to get people saved, first of all, you have to get them lost. Now, they are lost, but you have to get them to understand that they need the gospel. Now, with that in mind—and last week we talked about the bad news that makes the good news good—we're just going to continue that. And the title of the message today is “The Last Step on the Way Down.”

Now, Paul is talking about what has happened to humanity when they turn from God. Begin reading in verse 24. It says—and these are perhaps some of the most chilling words in all of the Bible: "Wherefore God also gave them up." Well, oh dear Lord, you mean you give up on people? "Wherefore God also gave them up"—gave them up to what?—"to uncleanness through the lust of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves." He's talking here about sexual sin. Then look in verse 26: "For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections, for even their women did change their natural use into that which is against nature. And likewise also, the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men, working that which is unseemly and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet." And now, notice verse 28: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient, not fitting,"—now, watch this—"being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication"—first thing on the list. And each of these instances where it says that "God gave them up," "God gave them up," and "God gave them over," the context is sexual sin, sexual immorality. Are you listening? Sexual immorality is the last step on the way down. When a nation loses its ability to discern from basic sexual morality, God says that's the last step—I give up, you have got it.

Now, America is in a crisis. America's in a crisis, and unless we have a moral rebirth, we will join the graveyard of the nations. Paul is writing to Rome. There was somebody who wrote about Rome, his name was Gibbon. He wrote about the rise and the fall of the Roman Empire, and the Roman Empire came crashing down, and Gibbon said number one on the list of the things that destroyed Rome was sexual immorality. Another said that Rome dug her grave with her teeth, killed herself with illicit sex, and embalmed herself with alcohol. And I say America is doing the same thing. Someday, some historian may write the Rise and Fall of the American Empire.

Do you know what bothers me is all that we're hearing today about immorality and adultery and fornication and homosexuality, and with many it is a big joke, and if not a joke, a matter of incident, and not really important. America today is treating adultery with a certain nonchalance. Jonathan Rausch said last September in the New Republic this—and I quote: If the adulterer takes all reasonable steps to be discreet, if he performs all other duties as parent and spouse and citizen, and his mate chooses to hang on, then nothing happened. This is not covering up, so much as it is being grown up. Our own Commercial Appeal said in an editorial last June: If an adulterous affair doesn't interfere with morale, efficiency, or combat readiness, why should the Armed Services be concerned about it? And that eminent theologian Ann Landers said that adultery is now less of a sin than it used to be, and here's what she said: The scarlet letter is gone—the scarlet letter, the A for adultery. I don't think that it should be branded

on your forehead, or that you should suffer all your life for that kind of stigma. And Tom Getland, New York University professor, said—quote: Americans have gone nutty with a kind of puritanical rectitude notion that private conduct is automatically the same as public conduct. I think that somebody can be—and he uses a word here that I'm not going to repeat—I think that somebody can be a blank in private life and be a good public servant. I am against these ritual purgations of people who think that we don't meet our exalted standard of honor.

May I tell you what the new virtue in America is? It is not moral purity, it is not fidelity, it is not chastity, it is not faithfulness; the new virtue in America is tolerance—tolerance. Do you know the new sin in America? The new sin is to call sin sin. And I'm well aware that there will be those who will be hostile with me for what I have to say today. That is the sin today for anybody to stand up and say sin is sin, right is right, and wrong is wrong. That's bigoted, that's narrow; they call that judging. You know, I've tried to keep my children and grandchildren away from X-rated films, but now, God help up, we have X-rated news. I mean, you say, The news is coming on—turn that thing off! I don't want my grandchildren to have to listen to that. We've lost a sense of moral responsibility. But people say, But, wait a minute. Don't you know that the American public have approved these things? Why, it's proven by the way that they vote. And we have come to morality by majority, and we've come to the place very much like those in Plato's Republic written so long ago who had lost their direction, and, rather than steering by the chart and the stars, they put the lantern on the bow of the ship, and steered by that. That's where we are, and yet God's Word is so clear.

Deuteronomy chapter 5, verse 18: "Neither shalt thou commit adultery." And then, God says in Proverbs chapter 5 and verse 29—God is speaking concerning His people, and he says, "Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and their children forever." Now, I'm old and grown; I'm not going to change my ways. I've got some children, four of them who love the Lord. I've got some grandchildren, and, thus far, they all love the Lord. But I'm concerned about the world my grandchildren will grow up in. I'm concerned about what they will see and hear and feel and will accept in this world today. And, God says, Oh, that there were such a heart in them that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever. We don't break God's Ten Commandments; we're broken on them.

We're told today there's a sexual revolution. The tragedy is that not only will those who participate in this so-called sexual revolution reap the bitter fruit in their lives, but the double tragedy is that they will miss God's best, God's plan for them. When Paul speaks here in Romans about fornication, fornication is a big word. It includes all sexual immorality. It includes sodomy. It includes pre-marital sex of any kind. It includes post-

marital infidelity. It includes bestiality. It includes anything other than wholesome sexual relationship between a man and his mate. Marriage is a lifetime matter, and sexual faithfulness is the primary key that holds a marriage together. Our nation cannot endure—our nation cannot endure—without sexual morality. We've been told that it takes a village to raise a child. Friend, you've got it backward. It takes a home to make a village. Without the home, there can be no village. It takes a village to raise a child, and it takes homes to make a village, and unless our homes are solid, we can have no village.

Now, the Lord Jesus put this matter of marital faithfulness right up front. The Lord Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 19 and verse 5, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife and they two shall be one flesh." Do you know what our Lord is saying? Our Lord is saying that the prime—the major, the fundamental, the underlying—basis of all society is the home, and the underlying basis of that is sexual fidelity. Parents are not to be our supreme commitment—I'm talking about earthly commitments—your parents are not your supreme commitment. Now, you're to love and honor your parents, and take care of your parents, but Jesus said, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife." Children are not your prime responsibility. They are your responsibility, but, sir, your responsibility to your wife comes even above your responsibility to your children. "For this cause shall a man leave his father and his mother and shall cleave unto his wife." That is, the husband-wife relationship is stronger than the child-parent relationship and the parent-child relationship. That's why a woman makes a terrible mistake if, while the children are small, she pours all of her love, all of her devotion, all of her care, into her children, and neglects her husband, and then, when the nest is empty, they find out that the marriage is in trouble. Now, of course—of course—we're to care for our parents; of course, we're to care for our children; but our Lord says that your prime responsibility comes before parents, before children, before business life and political life. The prime responsibility, the supreme commitment, is to one's wife. We have young executives today who are expected to put loyalty to the business ahead of their family and ahead of their wife. Absolutely not! You'd better make up your mind of all earthly relationships, your relationship to your wife is an unusual relationship that the Bible calls "one flesh."

Now, having said all of that—and Paul is saying, "For this cause God gave them up," "For this cause God gave them up," "For this cause God gave them over"—I want you to see why I have entitled the message today The Last Step on the Way Down. Let me tell you why adultery is not a proper source of humor on late-night television shows. Let me tell you why adultery is even more important and more damning than perjury. What is adultery? Why is adultery such a horrible, such a terrible, such a heinous, such a

hurtful, such a hellish sin? Why? I want to give you some reasons.

## **I. Adultery Is a Sin Against One's Self**

Number one: Adultery is a sin against one's self—s-e-l-f. Put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 18. The Bible says, "Flee fornication." That is, get out of there. "Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that commiteth fornication sinneth against his own body." He sins against his own body. There is no other sin that will do you more damage spiritually, psychologically, and physically than this sin. You say, How can it hurt me physically? Well, we know today that Americans are being killed literally by sexual disease. In the last ten years, more people—nine times more people—have died from sexually transmitted diseases; in the last ten years, more people have died—nine times more—than died in the worst ten years in Vietnam. When a man commits this sin, he sins against his own body. We hear a lot today about safe sex. Friend, the sex that God made is not supposed to be dangerous—not supposed to be dangerous.

Lord Byron was witty, charming, handsome, feted and praised. He was a man with a silver tongue. But he thought he was smarter than God, and he sinned against his own body. He consorted with impure women. And England's greatest poet and playboy said, at the end, My days are in the yellow leaf, the flower and fruit of life are gone, the worm, the canker, the grief, are mine alone. He's just proving what God's Word says: when a man sins against his own self.

## **II. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Home**

But secondly, not only is adultery a sin against one's own self; adultery is a sin against the home. The sad thing about it is that the lives of innocent children are torn apart every year by adultery. And if there's anything that pains me and hurts me, it is to hear those who are living an ungodly, immoral lifestyle prate about family values. Read Romans 2, verse 22: "Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, does thou commit adultery?" The whole second chapter of the book of Romans is about hypocrites, those who carry big black Bibles and prate about family values. It's a sin against the home. Kent Hughes says this, and I want you to listen: The man who commits adultery tells his child, Your mother is not worth much, and your father is a liar and a cheat. Furthermore, honor is not nearly as important as pleasure. In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you are. That's what the man who commits his sin tells his child. Would you like to hear that again? The man who commits adultery tells his child, Your mother is not worth much, and your father is a liar and a cheat. Furthermore, honor is not nearly as important as pleasure. In fact, my child, my own satisfaction is more important than you are. You see, God established

monogamous marriage to meet the deepest emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of a child. Because, you see, a child needs the context of the home, and the glue—the glue—that holds the home together is sexual faithfulness.

### **III. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Church**

Adultery is a sin against one's self. Adultery is a sin against the home, and the home is the foundation of society. Thirdly, adultery is a sin against the church. If you're a member of this church, and you're living an impure life, you have sinned against the rest of us, because we're in this together. First Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 16: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12 that we are "members one of another." Folks, we're in it together, and what affects you affects me. And you cannot say, What I do is nobody else's business—not in the covenant relationship of the church. When one member suffers, every member suffers; when a part of my body is sick, the rest of my body feels it. I cannot isolate any member of my body, and say, Well, that doesn't really make any difference to me. Adultery is an infection in the body. The church is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And I beg you—I beg you, please, please—if there's immorality in your heart and in your life, get right or get out. Don't hurt the body of Christ, don't sing in the choir, don't play in the orchestra, don't sit on the platform, don't preach from the pulpit, if this is your lifestyle.

You say, Pastor, are you telling me that I can't come here for help if I have a problem? Yes, friend, that's what we're for. We are a society of sinners who finally realized it, and have banded ourselves together to do something about it. Church is the only organization I know of where you have to profess to be bad before you can join, unless it's Hell's Angels. But what I'm saying is this: if you think that this is a minor sin, that this is something you intend to practice, if you've not come for help and encouragement, and if you do not have a repentant spirit, you're in the wrong place. You have sinned against the church, and the Bible says, "If any man defile the temple of God which temple ye are, him shall God destroy," because you've defiled something that is pure and holy.

### **IV. Adultery Is a Sin Against the Nation**

Adultery is a sin against one's self. Adultery is a sin against the home. Adultery is a sin against the church; it is an infection in the body. And, adultery, ladies and gentlemen, is a sin against the nation. Adultery is an act of treason. In the Old Testament—not the New Testament, in the Old Testament—adultery was a crime worthy of death. 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." Put this sin not only away from the people of God, but from the nation itself; put away evil from Israel. May I tell you something foolish? It is foolish to say that character and leadership are not synonymous. No man is morally fit for leadership who is sexually impure. Proverbs 14, verse 34, says, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Character counts! Now, here is the rubric we're listening to today; here's what people will say today. They'll say, Character has nothing to do with it; ability is what matters. If you're on an airplane, and the pilot is a good pilot, and he can fly the airplane, if he can take you off safely, if he can land you safely, then what difference does his character make? It makes absolutely no difference unless you want the blessing of God on that airplane. When you say that character doesn't count, you know what you're saying? You're saying God doesn't count; you're saying, We can do it by ourselves, we don't need God, we know how to do it, we don't want the blessing of God. Yes, character doesn't count, if there is no God; I agree. But there is a God, and we want his blessing. A skilled but an ungodly leader is dangerous. That would be like a skilled surgeon, a surgeon who is skilled to do brain surgery, but he does not scrub before he does surgery. He will infect everything he touches. I want him to be clean if he's going to do surgery on me. Proverbs 16, verse 12, says: "It is an abomination to kings to commit wickedness, for the throne"—listen—"the throne is established by righteousness." You say, Well, we don't have kings. We have leaders. You see, leadership is stewardship. The leader, whomever he may be, the City Council or anybody else, they are acting for God. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 13, he is the minister of God. You are a steward; you're acting for God. The man who commits adultery is a liar—he's lied against his marriage vows—and liars and leaders are not the same. The Bible says, in Proverbs 20, verse 28, "Mercy and truth preserve the king." Abraham Lincoln—we call him Honest Abe—Abraham Lincoln said, You can fool all of the people some the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time. And I would add, Mr. Lincoln, you can't fool God any of the time. God knows, and God sees.

There was a king in the Old Testament—his name was Lemuel. He had a mother who gave him some good advice. Proverbs 31, verse 3, is the advice that Lemuel gave to her son who was the king. She said, "Give not thy strength unto women, nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings." No man is fit to lead who is morally impure. Immorality was the sin that led to the downfall of Greece, Rome, Egypt, and Babylon, and it will be the ruin of the American Empire, if we do not learn to take a stand for that which is right, and that which is holy; you can kiss America goodbye, because God will give up on this nation .

Josiah Gilbert Holland, who was born in 1819, wrote these words, but they were

never more needful: God, give us men. A time like this demands strong minds, great hearts, true faith, and ready hands. Men, whom the lust of office does not kill. Men, whom the spoils of office cannot buy. Men, who possess opinions and a will. Men who have honor. Men who will not lie. Men who can stand before a demagogue and damn his treacherous flatteries without winking. Tall men, sun-crowned, who live above the fog in public duty and in private thinking. For while the rabble with their thumb-worn creeds, their large professions, and their little deeds, mingle in selfish strife, lo, freedom weeps, wrong rules the land, and waiting justice sleeps. Yes, God give us men.

## **V. Adultery Is a Sin Against Almighty God**

Adultery is a sin against the nation, but I'll tell you what else it's a sin against. Not only against one's self, not only against the family, not only a sin against the nation, but adultery, my friend, is a sin against Almighty God. There is a God in the glory, and when people say, what difference does it make? you may as well ask, what difference does God make? Exodus 20, verse 14, says, "Thou shalt not commit adultery." You see, this sin is against God, because God says it is wrong. When King David recognized what he had done, King David wrote a penitential song. He did not try to cover it up, because what we try to cover God uncovers, and what we uncover God will cover. But David said, in Psalm 51, verse 4, praying to God, "Against thee and thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight." David realized that he broken both God's law and God's heart, and sin was against Almighty God. Adultery, friend, is a sin that God will judge.

If you're making notes, jot these following scriptures—Hebrews 13, verse 4: "Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled, but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." I didn't say that; God said that. God will judge. Proverbs chapter 6, verses 27 through 29: "Can a man take a fire in his bosom and his clothes be not burned? Can a man go upon hot coals and his feet not be burned? So he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife, whosoever toucheth her shall not be innocent." Proverbs chapter 6, verse 32: "But whoso commiteth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding; he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul." Proverbs chapter 7, verse 27, speaking of the adulterous woman: "Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death." First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 9: "Know ye not that the righteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God, be not deceived, neither fornicators,"—that's sex before marriage—"nor idolaters, nor adulterers,"—that's illicit sex when married—"nor effeminate,"—that is sexual perversion—"nor abusers of themselves with mankind." God says don't be deceived—they're not going to heaven unless they change. Thank God he goes on to say, "and such were some of you." He doesn't say there's no hope; he doesn't say there's no forgiveness. He's saying, if this is your lifestyle, your choice, your practice, you need to get saved. Ephesians 5, verse 5: "For this ye know: that no

whoremonger or unclean person or covetous man who is an idolater hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God." And then, the last book in the Holy Bible, Revelation chapter 21 and verse 8—here's the roll call of the damned: "But the fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

You see, God is a holy God; God has given His commandments, His laws. Law without penalty is only advice. God is not giving advice. And, no matter how immorality is laughed at, glamorized, rationalized, legitimized by the social engineers and the pundits, God brought me here to tell you—and I've prayed about this message—this is a sin that God will judge. Do you know the reason that some people think that God's not going to judge this sin? Look in chapter 2 and verse 5—Romans 2, verse 5: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasures up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath"—wrath against the day of wrath—"and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God." You see, people are just treasuring up wrath; every day they put a new deposit in the bank, and the sun comes up, and the sun goes down, and they say, Well, look, I did it again! No judgment! But after their hardness and impenitent heart treasures up wrath against the day of wrath—one more deposit is put in the bank.

Well, what must we do—quickly. We cannot change the hearts and minds of others, and revival is not going to come to this nation from the White House, the state house, or the schoolhouse. It's going to come from the church house. And it's going to begin with the people of God. One by one, we need to take our nation back. And let me tell you young people who are here—listen to God's Word: don't sacrifice the ultimate, the eternal, on the altar of the immediate. Don't be so foolish! Quickly, first of all, make a decision. Give your heart to Almighty God, because He is the only one who is able to guide you. After you make that decision, depend upon Him; look to Him. He will deliver you from sexual immorality, if you trust Him. Number three: after decision, and dependence, devotion. Love God with all of your heart, and love your own wife—love your own mate, your own husband—with a supernatural love. When the Bible says, "Husbands, love your wives," that's not a suggestion, that's not a request; that's a command, and anything God commands you to do, you can do. Number four: development. Look: decision, dependence, devotion, and development. Feed your love; help your love to grow. Love is not like a diamond, something that you find, hard and brittle and beautiful, and you keep it to save it. Love is like a flower; it's got to be cultivated and watered and cared for and nurtured. If you don't love your wife more today than you did when you married her, you probably love her less. Continue to feed that love from day to day. Never flirt with another woman, and never fail to flirt with your own wife. Just develop that love, and then disciple. Guard your company. Give attention

to what you read and what you see. Decide there are certain things you are not going to watch. Discipline your life. You wouldn't put garbage in your mouth; don't put garbage in your mind. Guard your company. "The companion of fools will be destroyed." Last of all, determination. Determine. Joshua said, "I don't know what course others will take, but, as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." I love what the Psalmist said, when he said, "My heart is fixed on God." If you make up your mind about one big decision, you won't have to keep making up your mind about a lot of little decisions. You won't have to determine every time you go to the Holiday Inn whether you're going to watch a filthy movie or not. Because your heart is fixed, you have determined, O God, my God, I will serve you.

## Conclusion

Now, you say, Pastor, you made me feel bad today, because, very frankly, my life has been touched by immorality. Well, I want to tell you something: that's what this book is all about. Good news, good news, good news—it's the bad news that makes the good news good. For the Bible says, "Through the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is the power of God unto salvation." God is a God of grace, and God is a God of forgiveness, and God is a God of another chance, and God is a God that says, "Thou your sins be as scarlet they shall be as white as snow; though they be as red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Hallelujah for such a gospel! Thank God for that: "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." But there's one thing that God will never accept for sin, and that is an excuse or an alibi. But oh, when there comes a confession, thank God, the cleansing tides of Calvary sweep across the human soul, and every blot, every blur, every blemish, every stain that ever came, Jesus' blood washes whiter than snow. Hallelujah, Amen and Amen.

Now, what I'm going to ask today is this: that you give your heart to Jesus, not because you've done these things; if you've never done these things, it's all the more reason to give your heart to Jesus, so He will keep you and preserve you. It is all the more reason also—and I don't think Bellevue is the only one, but you want to find a church without stutter or stammer or apology that will open the Word of God and will say, Thus saith the Lord. And if you'd like to be a part, if you need to be saved, I want you to come and say, yes, I need Jesus. Pastor, if I went down there this morning, everybody would think I'm an adulterer. No, but you may be. That's not the point—whether you are or whether you're not, that's not the point. We need Jesus, and you need to get your life in a church—this one or some church that gives a standard in this unsure age. We need foundations for our faith, amen?  
Father God, bless in the invitation, and I pray, dear God, that many today will come and

say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Lord, just grant repentance today. And, Father, just help people openly and publicly to trust you. Help little boys and girls today to say yes to Jesus. Teenagers, husbands, fathers, mothers, daughters, business people—Lord—college students, may they say yes to Jesus today. In His name. Amen.

# Does Character Count?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 8, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 1:28–32

*“Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”*

ROMANS 1:32

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Character That God Requires

- A. A Leader Must Be a Man of Righteousness
- B. A Leader Must Be a Man of Wisdom
- C. A Leader Must Be a Man of Honesty
- D. A Leader Must Be a Man Who Chooses Wise Leaders
- E. A Leader Must Be a Man of Sexual Morality
- F. A Leader Must Be a Man Who Protects the Weak and the Helpless

II. The Choice That God Respects

III. The Control That God Reserves

IV. The Coronation That God Resolves

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's holy Word, find Romans chapter 1. In a moment, we're going to begin reading with verse 28. But look up here before we begin to read. And may I tell you what you already know: that our nation is in crisis, and, as a minister of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I feel I must—I say, I feel I must—address this matter. We cannot, we dare not, we must not, and we shall not, ignore what is happening in America today. Now, some terrible and shocking accusations have been made against the President of the United States of America, our beloved republic. The matter is under investigation. It is our duty as Americans and as Christians to pray that truth will be revealed and that justice will be administered.

Now, there are three categories of individuals today—more than these, but three basic. There are those who are convinced absolutely, and totally convinced, that the president is guilty of these charges. And yet, we don't have all of the facts. Every man in America is due his day in court, and the Bible says that he who answereth a matter before he hears it, it is a folly to him. Now, I have my opinions, and you have yours, but

there are those who feel he is absolutely guilty as charged. There's a second category of persons in America today. There are those who think he is not guilty at all, that these charges are fabrications, they are part of a conspiracy, they are partisan, they are motivated by politics, they are nothing but innuendo, smear—they are nothing but a connivance, some horrible conspiracy, politically motivated. That the president himself has denied the charges, they believe him, and so, therefore, they say he is innocent. And like the first group, they are welcome to their opinion; they have their opinion, and I have mine. But there's a third group, and that's the group I want to talk about today. Not those who say that he is guilty, not those who say that he is innocent, but those who say, So what? So what? Guilty—innocent. So what? What difference does it really make, so long as he's doing a good job? Who cares? Those who say there is no connection between a man's personal life and his political abilities.

Now, I want you to understand in this message that I am not saying that he is guilty or innocent; I'm not talking about those other two groups. I'm talking about the third group that says, What difference does it make? And I want to show you today that it does make a difference as to what a man who leads the nation believes and does in his personal character. I've been reading, as you've been reading, I read last week an editorial in U.S. News and World Report—here's what it says: A majority seem to believe in the president's programs and politics, even if they don't believe in him. They care far more about the good times. As one wife put it, people say they vote Dow Jones, not Paula Jones. And then, another in the same magazine, Matthew Miller, in an editorial, wrote this: Prosecuting lies about adultery makes no sense. We elected him knowing his propensities. The economy is strong, and he has a promising agenda. Tossing him out to keep up appearances would merely match the president's destructive self-indulgence with our own. This man just assumes that the president has done wrong, but he's saying the economy is strong and his programs are good. And then, I read in the newspaper where a sociologist, a professor, suggested—and I'm quoting:

“Character has been slowly bred out of many Americans, especially Baby Boomers and their children.” And then, he argued that decades of pampering and organized activities and feel good approaches in which participants do not have to take personal responsibility have made character almost passé. Is character passé?

A Newsweek poll said that voters tend to say that the President is lying about Monica, but he is enjoying the highest approval rating ever! I still want to say, I'm not talking about guilt or innocence. I'm talking about the third group who says a roaring "So what! Let the good times roll!"

Now, with that, let me begin to read here in Romans chapter 1 and verse 28: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a

reprobate mind." Now, what is a reprobate mind? That is a mind that is devoid of godly wisdom. A reprobate mind—that is a carnal, sensuous, ungodly mind. And then, he gives the characteristics of this mind: "being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful." But now, notice the most frightening of all of these—verse 32: "Who, knowing the judgment of God, they which commit such things are worthy of death. Not only do the same, but"—now, watch this—"have pleasure in them that do them." That is, they're pleased with people that live this way. They, in the so-called polls, they say, Hey, that is fine.

Now, does character count? What does God say? Not, what does Adrian say? Not, what does Bellevue say? What does God Almighty say about the kind of leadership a nation needs? I'm going to give you some Scripture that I have ferreted out of the Word of God. Now, these scriptures come from many places, not from the book of Romans.

## **I. The Character That God Requires**

The book of Romans is only our starting place here, but I want you to think, first of all, about that character that God requires—the character that God requires. You remember what the Bible says—and, by the way, just get a sheet of paper, and jot these scriptures down, and don't turn to them, because we have too many. Just jot them down, as I have jotted them down, and then, you can look them up and read them at home. But Proverbs chapter 29, verse 2—the Bible says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." Now, we've told you that people are saying that the presidency today is like an airplane pilot. We don't care about the man's morals; we don't care about the man's character. If he can fly the airplane, if he can get us from point A to point B, that's all that really matters. We want a safe take-off; we want a safe trip; we want a safe landing—and what happens between the man and his personal character and morals is none of our concern. Well, you know, that might be true if you don't need the blessing of God on the country—if you don't need the blessing of God. I mean, if you say, God, we don't need you—we don't need you to bless our leadership, we don't need you to bless our constituency—then that may be true. But God says, if you want my blessings, here are some things that are necessary.

Let me give you now the characteristics that God requires of leadership.

### **A. A Leader Must Be a Man of Righteousness**

Number one: a leader must be a man of righteousness. Put this verse down—Proverbs chapter 16, verse 12: "It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness."

Now, this is God speaking: "It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, for the throne is established by righteousness." The throne—you say, well, we don't have a king. No, but we're talking here about leadership, whether it's a king or a president. You see, leadership is stewardship. Leadership is stewardship. The Bible calls the political leader a minister of Almighty God. He is acting for God, and therefore he should be godly. An unrighteous man is unfit for leadership, whether it be in the church, whether it be in homes, whether it be in business, or whether it be in politics. And the worst kind of leadership is hypocritical leadership that carries a big black Bible but does not live a righteous and a holy life. God's Word says that the throne is established by righteousness, and so, the first qualification is that a leader must be a man of righteousness.

### **B. A Leader Must Be a Man of Wisdom**

Number two: A leader must be a man of wisdom. Proverbs 8, verses 12 through 16: "I dwell..."—I, wisdom—"dwell with prudence." When a man is wise, he is prudent. And then, in verse 15: "By me,"—by wisdom—"kings reign, and princes decree justice. By me, princes rule and nobles, even all the judges of the earth." What is he saying? He is saying that a leader must be wise. Now, we say we want our leaders to be skilled. God says, I want my leaders to be wise. It is far better for a leader to be wise than to be intelligent or gifted. That's the reason that a nation should not be run by the taking of polls. A man who takes a poll finds out what people want, and then pampers to their wants, and promises these things to them, whether he can deliver or not, is an opportunistic politician, is not a godly leader. Harry Truman, erstwhile president of the United States, commented one time on the difference between leadership and poll-taking. Here's what Harry Truman said—he said, I wonder how far Moses would've gone if he had taken a poll in Egypt. What would Jesus Christ have preached if he had taken a poll in Israel? Where would the Reformation had gone if Martin Luther had taken a poll? It isn't the polls of public opinion of the moment that count. It is right and wrong leadership, men with fortitude, honesty, and a belief in the right, that make epochs in the history of the world. And then, Harry Truman said, people are easily misled by polls.

I read this the other day. A freshman in a junior high school recently won first prize in the Greater Idaho Falls Science Fair, and in his project he took a poll, and urged people to sign a petition demanding the control or the total elimination of a chemical—dihydrogen monoxide, that was the chemical. And he listed the reasons this chemical ought to be banned. I want to give you the reasons. Number one: it can cause excessive sweating and vomiting. Number two: it is a major component in acid rain. Number three: it can cause severe burns in its gaseous state. Number four: accidental inhalation can kill you. Number five: it contributes to erosion. Number six: it inhibits the

effectiveness of automobile brakes. Number seven: it has been found in tumors of terminal cancer patients. And so, he asked 50 people, would you join a ban on this chemical? Forty-three of the fifty signed that they would join a ban. One refused to sign because he knew the student was talking about water. Water! It's water that's a component in acid rain. It is on water, that can cause severe burns, if you turn it into steam, and so forth—nothing but water. But asking the question in a particular way listed a response where 43 out of 50 people said, Yes, we ought to ban water. Listen! Beware of polls. Beware of polls.

You see, God says, I need men to lead who are wise, who have wisdom. Wisdom is better than a strong economy. Proverbs 16, verses 15 and 16: "Then the light of the king's countenance is life and his favor is a cloud of the latter rain. How much better it is to give wisdom than gold." Now, listen, those of you who think that, it's the economy, stupid. How much better it is to give wisdom than gold, and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver. Roger Batson, an economist of yesteryear, was talking to a South American president. He said, What is the difference between North America and South America? Both of these have great natural resources, fertile fields, and great land masses. Why has North America been so blessed and South America has gone through such poverty? Roger Batson asked this South American president this question, and the South American president said, It is because the people who came to your shores came seeking God; the people who came to our shores came seeking gold. Now, friend, wisdom: Almighty God is far more important than 8,000 on the Dow Jones. Our pilgrim fathers did not come to these shores that the stock market might blossom.

### **C. A Leader Must Be a Man of Honesty**

A leader, according to God, must be, number one, a man of righteousness. Number two: he must be a man of wisdom. Number three: he must be a man of absolute honesty. Put these verses down—Proverbs 17, verse 7: "Excellent speech becometh not a fool, much less do lying lips a prince." Proverbs 20, verse 28: "Mercy and truth preserve the king." Liars and leaders are not the same. I say that again: liars and leaders are not the same. If a man is a liar, he has a character flaw that goes all the way to the core. Men are not liars because they tell lies; they tell lies because they are a liar. And a man is never more like the devil when he's a liar, for Jesus said, in John chapter 8, verse 44, that Satan is a liar and the father of it. A man is more like the Lord Jesus when he tells the truth, because Jesus himself is the truth. A leader must be a man of impeccable honesty.

### **D. A Leader Must Be a Man Who Chooses Wise Leaders**

Next, a leader must be a man who chooses wise leaders. Listen to this verse—Proverbs chapter 25, verses 4 and 5: "Take away the dross from the silver, and there

shall come forth a vessel for the finer." Now, the dross is the scum, the filth that is there in the ore, and he's saying, you take away the dross, and then you're going to have fine silver. And then, he goes on to say, "Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness." Don't let wicked people influence the king. A leader is known by the helpers he chooses. Any leader who chooses consultants and political operatives who have the morals of an alley cat is not fit to lead. Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness. When sexual perverts have come out of closets and gone into the Cabinet room, something is wrong. Proverbs 29, verse 12, says, "If a ruler hearkened to lies, all his servants are wicked." So, a leader must be a man who chooses wise consultants and helpers. Take away the wicked from before the throne, before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.

Now, listen. If you think I'm being political, you have a big problem. I am preaching the Word of God. I'm not talking about Democrat, Republican, Independent, or anybody else. I'm talking about what God Almighty says, that He requires of leadership.

#### **E. A Leader Must Be a Man of Sexual Morality**

Again, a leader must be a man of sexual morality. Proverbs 31, verses 1 through 3: "The words of King Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him: What, my son? and what, the son of my womb? and what, the son of my vows? Give not thy strength unto women nor thy ways to that which destroyeth kings." Listen to it again. Here was the mother of a king, and she said, Son, don't give your strength unto women, nor your ways to that which destroyeth kings. If the man has no personal moral standards, tell me, how can he set a moral standard for a nation? How can he be the man that parents say to their children, You can look up to him—he's our leader? Be like him. Maybe one day you can be the president of the United States of America. That kind of sounds hollow when we have taken the presidency and have so lowered the presidency to where he's some sort of a glorified CEO rather than a moral leader, setting a tone for a nation. We've come to a sad day when parents have to turn off the news when children come into the room, when not the movies, but the news is X-rated. And what bothers me is that the stand-up comics love it! But if we as a nation laugh it off, will we be surprised when our children treat immorality lightly as trivia. You see, a man who is a leader must be a man of absolute sexual immorality, because if a man cannot control his own desires, what might he do in a time of national crisis? I mean, if a man has no more self-control, if a man cannot keep the most sacred promise of all, a promise he's made to his wife before Almighty God, how can he be trusted to keep any other promise? A leader must be, therefore, a man of sexual morality.

## **F. A Leader Must Be a Man Who Protects the Weak and the Helpless**

Next of all, our leader, a godly leader, must be a man who protects the weak and the helpless. Now, we were in Proverbs, 31—that deals with King Lemuel. And down there in verses 8 and 9 of the same chapter, God says to the king, "Open thy mouths for the dumb in the cause of all, as such as are appointed to destruction." That is, you speak for those who can't speak, those who are about to be destroyed. Open thy mouths; judge righteously. You see, the president, or any leader, is to be a defender of the weak. As a matter of fact, when the president is inaugurated, he takes a pledge to defend the nation. We have a lot of defenseless people in America today, and they're depending on the government to defend them. The president ought to be standing for the unborn, he ought to be standing for the defenseless, because this verse speaks of those who can't speak for themselves.

I think I told you about being in Washington testifying before Senator Orrin Hatch and the Senate committee about abortion. After I left that room there at the Capitol, a female lawyer met me in the hall. She said, You don't understand. You're a man—you don't understand what a trauma it is to have an unwanted pregnancy. I said, Do I understand that you're saying if somebody gives you a trauma that you can eliminate them? Because you're traumatizing me right now. And I said to her, Suppose I were to put both thumbs in your windpipe and strangle you right now, and she started backing up. I said, At least you could scream; at least you could run. I said, A little baby in his mother's womb can't do either. She just turned and walked off. I'm sure she said, That Baptist preacher said he's going to strangle me. I only said, What if.

Somebody needs to speak up for the unborn, and that's what is the job of a ruler. "Open thy mouth for the dumb and because of all as such as are appointed to destruction." Well, you say, but Pastor Rogers, it is legal. If you don't hear any other verse, I want you to put this one down—Psalm 94, verses 20 and 21: "Shall the throne of iniquity..."—that's what God calls this throne now: the throne of iniquity—"shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee which frameth mischief by a wall. They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous and condemn innocent blood." He calls it a throne of iniquity because they make laws to shed innocent blood. Nothing is politically right that is morally wrong. Nothing! Jeremiah 22, verse 17: "But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness and for to shed innocent blood and for oppression and for violence to do it." Habakkuk 2, verse 12: "Woe unto him that fills the town with blood and establisheth a city by iniquity." The king, the leader, the magistrate, the prince, the president—he is to be the protector of the helpless. This is the character that God requires.

## II. The Choice That God Respects

But I move to a second point. Not only the character that God requires, but—listen carefully—the choice that God respects. Did you know that, while God requires character, God respects your choice to choose somebody who doesn't have character? Not that he approves it; he just respects human will. He allows men to choose their own leaders. Put this verse down—Hosea chapter 8 and verse 4: "They have set up kings..."—now God is speaking—"they have set up kings, but not by me. They have made princes, and I knew it not." That is, God said, they didn't seek me; they didn't have my will. They set up kings, but it was not by me. That's the reason that we say that wicked rulers are God's reward for wicked people. Now, I want to show you one of the most chilling verses also in all of the Bible. It's found in 1 Samuel chapter 8 and verse 18. Here's what God says—now, this will give you pause as you listen to it: "And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which you have chosen you, and the Lord will not hear you in that day." You will cry out in that day because of your king that you have chosen you.

You see, we've come to a place. We've come to a place where we've said, Hey, man, let the good times roll! The stock market is doing great, everything is fine, and then we find ourselves in biological war, atomic war in the Middle East or whatever—who knows what may transpire in the next two or three weeks? And we way, O God, O God, have mercy on America! Do you see that? Do you see what we're doing as a nation? Do you see how we're saying that character makes no difference? It's a way of saying that God makes no difference! You choose your king, God says, Go ahead, I'll give you the choice. Well, you say, well surely, Pastor, God must be blessing America; look how prosperous we are, we've never been this prosperous. The Dow Jones is up and unemployment is down. Come up close, and I want to tell you something. If they had had a Dow Jones in Sodom, it would've been up. You say, I don't believe it. Listen. Sodom had the bloom of prosperity on it just before the fire fell. Let me give you a verse—Ezekiel 16, verses 49 and 50: "Behold, this was the iniquity of my sister Sodom: pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness. Pride, fullness of bread and abundance of idleness was in her, and in her daughters; neither did she strengthen the hands of the poor and the needy, and they were haughty and committed abomination before me; therefore, I took them away as I saw good." What was Sodom like? Three things: pride, prosperity, and perversion—that's it—pride, prosperity, and perversion. And had you asked a Sodomite, how are you doing, he'd say, Man, look at the economy. We've got so much to eat we don't even have to work. Pride and fullness of bread.

Now, the Bible says, "When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn." We are going to rejoice or weep by

the choices that we have made.

### **III. The Control That God Reserves**

Now, here's a third thing that I want you to see: not only the character that God requires, not only the choice that God respects, but I want you to see the control that God reserves. Do you think that God is out of control just because we choose against God's will? Oh, no! Because God still rules in the heavens. Isaiah 40, verse 23—it speaks of God that bringeth the princes to nothing: "He maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." God is still, friend, the King of Kings, and don't forget it. And he is forever king. Psalm 66, verse 7: "He ruleth by his power forever." You didn't vote Him in, and you won't vote Him out. He is God, and where He does not rule He overrules.

Now, you say, Well, how can God let wicked leaders here, there, or anywhere—how can God let them get away? They don't get away with anything. Put this scripture down, and what an incredible scripture this is—Romans 9, verse 17—chapter 9 and verse 17: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh..."—now, who was Pharaoh? Pharaoh was the great and mighty king of ancient Egypt, living high, wide, and handsome—"For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." How did God show His power in Pharaoh? Pharaoh kept getting bigger and bigger, and greater and greater, and the polls kept going up and up and up. God said, I raised you up, because I'm the one going to bring you down. What He's talking about is what happened to Pharaoh and his armies when they crossed the Red Sea! And, by the way, the same area where we're just about to get in a big mess. I don't know if you remember a story; maybe you haven't read the book but you've seen the movie—Cecil B. DeMille did a movie on it. God said to Pharaoh, I raised you up; I must show my glory in you. You see, there is the control that God reserves.

### **IV. The Coronation That God Resolves**

Now, here's the final thing, and I must come to a final point, and I'm fast-forwarding now: the coronation that God resolves. You see, listen. Any king, any president, any potentate, is here only for a little while. One of my favorite Psalms in all the Bible is Psalm chapter 2; it speaks of how the people of the world want to throw off the restraints of Almighty God, and they say, Let's cast these restraints from us! But it says, in Psalm 2, verse 6—and I love it: "In spite of their rantings, in spite of their arrogance, in spite of their pride, in spite of their willfulness, Almighty God says, yet will I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." There is a coronation, friend, and the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus, is going to rule and to reign. And another of my favorite scriptures is 1 Timothy chapter 6, verses 14 and 16: "But thou keep this commandment without spot,

unrebukable unto the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his times..."—listen, listen, if you're discouraged—"which in his times he shall show who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords." Don't you love that?

## Conclusion

Well, Pastor Rogers, you had a lot to say about the president today. I didn't say anything about the president. I'm talking about the people. I'm talking about people in America who say, What difference does it make? It only makes a difference if you believe there's a God in glory. If you believe that there is a God who helped us to found this nation and sustain this nation and brought us thus far. But if you're willing to say, God, we don't need you anymore, we don't want you anymore, we know how to do it, we can do it with skill, ingenuity, then you don't understand the scripture that says, "And God gave them over to a reprobate mind." God says, all right, you've got it: you don't need me, but don't call on me. You know how to do it.

In the light of that, what should we do? Number one: we need to pray for revival. Now, listen to me carefully. When God sends revival, He's not going to send it through Washington. The presidency cannot bring revival, and the presidency cannot stop revival. Pray for revival. Number two: prepare for survival. You need to begin to teach your children, I don't know what's going to happen to America. You need to insulate your children—and you can't isolate them; you need to insulate them. And you need to be building into the hearts of young people like these 450 young people up in the balcony today, some rock red revival truths, because rebellion and immorality is in the air like a fungus! Pray for revival, prepare for survival, and get ready for arrival. Jesus is coming! Jesus is coming! I mean, dear friend, God's eternal plan goes beyond the shores of America. Jesus is going to come back to this earth, and in His day He's going to show us His holy name, who is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. The most patriotic thing that any of us can do is to get right with God and to help others to get right with God.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. How many today would say, Pastor Rogers, I know that I know that I know if I died right now I would go to heaven; God's Spirit bears witness with mine that I am a child of God; I have repented of my sin; I've trusted Jesus; I've been born from above; and I know if I died right now I'd step into glory, not because of anything good that I've done, but because of God's grace and mercy at Calvary, because I have been saved, I know, I know, that I'm going to heaven when I die? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you can give me that testimony, would you slip up your hand? Thank God, take it down. Now, if you couldn't lift your hand, I want to help you. You might say, Pastor, I couldn't say that, but if it's possible, if a person could know it, I want to know it.

All right, you can. You see, salvation is a gift. Jesus died for you upon the cross, and with His own blood, He paid your sin debt and purchased for you salvation. And this is a gift that you must receive by faith. And the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." And that word believe doesn't mean mere intellectual belief; it means trust. Trust Him—trust Him and He will save you. To be saved means that every sin is forgiven. Thank God for that. To be saved means that God's true Spirit lives in our heart to give us peace and power and purpose, and to be saved means that, when we die, or Jesus comes, we'll go to heaven.

I want to lead you to prayer. If you're not certain that you're saved, I want you to pray this prayer, fervently but silently: Dear God, I'm a sinner, and my sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. I need to be saved. Lord Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me if I would only trust you. I do trust you, Jesus. Tell Him that. I trust you right now. I receive you into my life as my Lord and Savior. Cleanse me. Forgive me. Save me, Jesus. Lord Jesus, you're now my Lord, my God, and my friend. And I will follow you the rest of my life. I will never be ashamed of you. Give me the courage to make this public today. Give me the courage to make it public today. In your name I pray. Amen.

# How God Handles Hypocrites

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 18, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 2:1–8, 16

*“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”*

ROMANS 2:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Hypocrite’s Judgment Is According to Truth
- II. The Hypocrite’s Judgment Is According to Deeds
- III. The Hypocrite’s Judgment Is According to the Gospel

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, amen. Be finding Romans chapter 2, and when you've found it, look up here. Howard Carter discovered the tomb of old King Tut back in the early twenties. And when Howard Carter finally broke into the tomb of one of Egypt's richest kings, he went in there, and he found the casket, the sarcophagus. It was a huge thing; I've seen it in the Egyptian museum, perhaps you have. And he took, opened, that coffin, and inside was another coffin covered with gold leaf. And he opened that, and inside was a third coffin. And he opened that, and inside was one of solid gold—I've seen that. And when he opened the fourth, inside was King Tut, and he was wrapped in gold cloth, and he had that incredible gold mask on his face. It is so beautiful. But when they lifted that off and took off that gold cloth, there was an old, dried, withered, dead corpse inside all of that. The outward thing did not change what was on the inside.

We're dealing today with hypocrites, and many hypocrites have quite a few things on the exterior. But God doesn't look on the exterior; God looks on the heart. God sees through all of those things that we adorn ourselves with and decorate ourselves with. We're talking today about how God handles hypocrites. Now, in chapter 1, we talked about how God handles the heathen; in chapter 2, we're going to see how God handles the hypocrite. In chapter one, we saw the down and out; in chapter 2, we're going to see the up and out. Because Paul, who's very smart and anointed by the Holy Spirit, knew that there were certain religious people who would listen with relish as Paul described

God's judgment upon the heathen—those who worship bugs and creeping things. And they would say, “Well, we're not that way, we're not that way, we don't do that.” And so they listened with these things in mind. They were indignant at the sins of others, but indulgent about their own sins. And so in this chapter, chapter 2, we're going to see how God handles the hypocrites. And if you're a hypocrite, I pray God that today you will come to the real thing, because, you see, the devil had rather send you to hell from the pew than from the gutter. And so I'm praying today that many will be saved. I'm praying also that those of you who let some hypocrite keep you from Jesus will do it no longer.

And let's begin looking, if we will here, in chapter 2, verse 1: *“Therefore, thou art inexcusable,”*—underscore the word *inexcusable*—*“O man, whosoever thou art that judgest, [or] wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest [doeth] the same things.”* (Romans 2:1) *“But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things.”* (Romans 2:2) *“And thinkest thou this, O man, [which] judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape”*—escape—*“the judgment of God.”* (Romans 2:3) We're going to stop reading there; we're going to come up and pick it up again. But, you see, go back, if you will, and look in chapter 1 and verse 32: *“...Knowing the judgment of God, that they...”* (Romans 1:32)—underscore the word *they*, and now notice in chapter 2, verse 1: *“Therefore thou art inexcusable.”* (Romans 2:1) It's easy to talk about *they*, but God is going to talk to you. What God is doing is saying, “Hey, don't talk about other people; it's time right now to examine yourself.”

¶ I heard somewhere of a man who went to the psychiatrist's office. He had a scrambled egg on his head and a strip of bacon over each ear. He said, “I came to see you about my brother.” ¶

It's time that we stop thinking about *them*, and begin to think about ourselves, and examine ourselves. Because even those who are saved may be guilty of some hypocrisy, including the man who's speaking. Faults in others I can see, but praise the Lord there's none in me. Now, we tend to want to measure ourselves by other people, but God measures himself by that perfect standard: himself.

Now, look in chapter 2, and it's easy to see what the theme is: it's judgment. Look in verse 1: *“O man, whosoever thou art that judgest [another], for wherein thou judgest another,”*—the last part of that verse—*“...that judgest [doeth] the same things.”* (Romans 2:1) Verse 2: *“[For] we [know] that the judgment of God is according to truth...”* (Romans 2:2) Verse 3: *“Thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them...”* (Romans 2:3) Last part of verse 3: *“[Do you think you'll] escape the judgment of God?”* (Romans 2:3) Verse 5, the last part: *“...The righteous judgment of God.”* (Romans 2:5) Verse 16: *“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ...”* (Romans 2:16) This is talking about judgment. This is talking about the hypocrite's

judgment. It's talking about the judgment of those who judge others without ever having met the Lord themselves.

Now, what is the hypocrite's judgment going to be like? What is the basis? Three things. Now, I want you to get this. By the way, if you don't have a Bible, look on with your neighbor, get a Bible out of the pew rack, and let's look. Number one, the hypocrite's judgment is going to be according to truth. Three times he uses the word according. Look at it in verse 2: *"But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth..."* (Romans 2:2) All right, just underscore that. Now go down to verse 6: *"Who [rendereth] every man according to his deeds."* (Romans 2:6) First of all, according to truth—the hypocrite's judgment is according to truth. Number two: it is according to deeds. Now, go down to verse 16: *"In the day when God [should] judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."* (Romans 2:16) So the judgment is going to be according to truth, is going to be according to deeds, and is going to be according to the gospel. Now, that's what he says the hypocrite's judgment is going to be. So, that makes our outline today. We have a three-point outline, and we're going to see today how God handles hypocrites.

## **I. The Hypocrite's Judgment Is According to Truth**

What's the judgment going to be like? First of all, the judgment is going to be according to truth, and therefore there will be no disguise. You see, the word *hypocrite* means "actor". It means play actor; that's what the word literally means. And in Jesus' time, the actors would put on disguises. If they were supposed to be happy—rather than merely acting happy—they would put on a happy face, a disguise. If they were to be sad, they'd put on a sad face. If they were to be fierce, they would put on a fierce face. They were wearing masks; they were wearing disguises. And Jesus said, "In the religious world there are some who are hypocrites; they are actors, they are wearing disguises." But Paul says that the judgment is going to be according to truth. God is going to pull off the mask. There will be no disguise. Not profession, not pretension, not performance, but truth is the standard.

Boy, have you been watching television lately? Remember what we said last week that Abraham Lincoln said? Said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time, and you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all of the people all of the time—but you can't fool God any of the time." Now, God's judgment is according to truth. Now, today, we've forgotten truth. We have sacrificed truth for pragmatism. We don't ask, "Is it true?" We ask, "Does it work?" We sacrificed truth for style. We don't say, "Does he or she tell the truth?" "Do I like him?" "Do I like her?" We're not interested in truth; we're interested in the stock market. We are one nation under greed, rather

than one nation under God.

Now, we think we're smart. And did you know, that somebody said that if you were to take all of the knowledge—the accumulated knowledge—of the world, from creation to 1845, and measure it an inch on the scale, and using that standard, from 1845 to 1945, it would've grown to three inches? But from 1945 to 1975, it would be as tall as the Washington Monument. But from 1975 on, it would be out of sight. Now, knowledge is doubling, but truth never changes. You know the Bible, Daniel, said, “In the last days knowledge shall increase.” (Daniel 12:4) What a prophecy! But the Bible says that there are men ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. God's standard is truth! God has written the Bible; it is called the Word of truth. God has given His Holy Spirit; He is called the Spirit of truth. God is building His church, and the church is called the pillar and the ground of truth. God has sent His Son, and His Son is the truth. The apostle John said, “*I have no greater joy than to [know] that my children walk in [the] truth.*” (3 John 1:4) The truth has fallen in the streets today. The hypocrite's judgment, however, is going to be according to truth. God knows the truth, and God will judge every hypocrite by the truth, no matter what office he holds. Truth is to your spirit what food is to your body, what light is to your eyes, what melody is to your ears.

#### **A. The Outward Appearance Does Not Matter**

Now, the hypocrite doesn't understand that God is going to judge according to truth, so the hypocrite, the play actor, has three fatal flaws in his thinking. Flaw number one: he has the idea that outward appearance is all that matters. He thinks that somehow, if he can just simply appear righteous, then he will be righteous.

Put this verse in your Bible: Matthew 23, verses 25 through 28. Jesus is talking to the religious mafia of His day, and He says, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for [you] [may] clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within [you] are full of extortion and excess.*” (Matthew 23:25) The way men do dishes has not changed for two thousand years. An old Pharisee doing the dishes, and he's just wiping the outside, and on the inside the oatmeal is crusted. He just puts it back up there on the shelf till his wife comes and talks to him about it. “*Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is [in] the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean [of them] also.*” (Matthew 23:26) “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are likened unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but [within are] full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.*” (Matthew 23:27) Remember old King Tut? “*Even so ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within...are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*” (Matthew 23:28) The hypocrite thinks all God sees is how he dresses on Sunday morning, and how he sings, and how he greets people, and how he behaves; and the religious people of Paul's day were of that category.

You're in chapter 2; go down to verses 21 and 22, and look at it. “*Thou therefore*

*which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest [that] a man should not steal, dost thou steal?*” (Romans 2:21) *“Thou that sayest [the] man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?”* (Romans 2:22) You say, “Well, Pastor, I’m not an adulterer.” Matthew chapter 5, verse 28: Jesus said, *“[If you] [look] on a woman to lust after her, [you’ve] committed adultery with her already in [her] heart.”* (Matthew 5:28) You say, “Well, I’m not a murderer!” First John chapter 3, verse 15 says that *“whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer.”* (1 John 3:15) You see, so many times we think that it’s the outward part that matters, when the Bible says there’s no excuse and there’s no escape.

You know, you have to pity hypocrites because the problem with the hypocrite is on the inside, not on the outside, and so he’s a pretender. You see, he doesn’t have the courage to out-and-out serve the devil, and he doesn’t have the true grace to really serve the Lord. And so he is a great big actor. He is a respectable sinner, but he is still a sinner. Now, the hypocrite is going to be judged according to truth. His outward appearance is not going to make any difference.

#### **B. The Blessings of God Do Not Indicate Rightness with God**

There’s a second mistake that the hypocrite makes. Not only a mistake concerning appearance, but he also makes a mistake concerning whether or not he’s getting along in life. The hypocrite thinks that if he is not being chastised, if he’s not having trouble, he’s right with God. Look in verse 3: *“And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and [doeth] the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?”* (Romans 2:3) *“Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”* (Romans 2:4) Are you listening to that? You see, some people have the idea that if they’re not having any problems, they’re right with God. They have the idea that if they’re healthy, if their bank account is up, if they have no problems, that evidently God loves them, and everything is fine, and they don’t need to repent, because, look at all of these blessings. Friend, the blessings of God don’t mean that you’re right with God. God gives you blessings to bring you to Him. It doesn’t mean you don’t need repentance. The Bible says that *“...the goodness of God [leads you] to repentance.”* (Romans 2:4)

Do you know why many Americans are not upset over an adulterous affair? Because the stock market is up—a blessing. They said, “Well, God must approve”—God must approve. How come God is blessing us so economically? God must be on our side. Oh, don’t you know—don’t you know the Bible says that the absence of problems does not mean that you don’t need repentance? As a matter of fact, of the goodness of God only makes your judgment more severe if you deny or fall from the goodness of God. If you’re being blessed now, let me beg you to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. And don’t

get the idea that God's goodness is an invitation to sin more, because the greater the blessing, if those blessings are refused, the greater the judgment when the judgment comes. And I want to remind you that Sodom and Gomorra were at an economic all-time high when the fire and brimstone fell. You just read that. The Bible says that one of the marks of Sodom was not only did they commit an abomination, but fullness of bread and idleness—that is, people didn't even have to work. There was so much prosperity, and that's when the fire fell, because the goodness of God did not lead them to repentance.

Let me give you another, another verse. Put this in your margin. This is very interesting. I was thinking about this last night: Luke chapter 13, verses 1 through 5. Now, there had been a calamity, and here was the calamity. There were some people who were walking down the street one day, and a tower fell on them. They were in Galilee, and a tower fell on them. And Jesus is talking about that—and by the way, Jesus talked about contemporary affairs—and the Bible says that *“there were present at that season some that told him”*—that is, Jesus—*“of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.”* (Luke 13:1) They were worshipping, and Pilate came in there and had them killed. *“And Jesus answering said unto them, Suppose ye that these Galileans were sinners above all the Galileans, because they suffered such things?”* (Luke 13:2) *“I tell you, Nay: except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”* (Luke 13:3) *“Of those eighteen, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell, and slew them, think ye that they were sinners above all men that [dwell] in Jerusalem?”* (Luke 13:4) *“I tell you, [no], nay...except [you] repent, [you] shall all likewise perish.”* (Luke 13:5) Now, don't get the idea that if somebody has trouble it's because God has judged them, and if you don't have trouble God is not going to judge you. Jesus said, “Whether a tower falls on you or not, if you don't repent, you're going to perish.” And the hypocrite doesn't understand this. He thinks that outward appearance is all that matters. He thinks that the absence of problems is all that matters.

### C. **Delayed Judgment Does Not Mean No Judgment**

Now, here's the third thing that this hypocrite needs to learn. The hypocrite needs to learn that delayed judgment does not mean no judgment. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *“But after thy hardness and impenitent heart”*—rather than repenting, you have an impenitent heart—*“[treasures] up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and [the] revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”* (Romans 2:5) Now, what does that mean? When God is good to you, and when God blesses a nation, and that nation hardens its heart against God, or when God blesses an individual, and that individual hardens his heart against God, God says, “You're just putting wrath in the bank; you're treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath.” It's one more deposit. One day, the hypocrite's judgment is going to come, and God is going to say, “What did you do with all of my

blessings? What did you do with the prosperity I gave you?" You hardened your heart, you impenitent; you started to put those deposits in the bank of wrath.

Why doesn't God judge right away? I'll tell you why God doesn't judge right away: because God waits for all of that sin to ripen. You see, you put it in the bank, and at the judgment you collect with compound interest. When you sin against God, your sin does not just end here: it goes on and on and on, and the ripples touch the shores of eternity. And then, finally, God says there's coming a day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, and so, the judgment is going to be according to truth—according to truth. God is going to rip off the mask. God is going to say, "Outward appearance doesn't matter." God is going to say, "The blessings that I gave you, that didn't mean you were right with God." And God is going to say, "Just because I didn't judge you now, does not mean that I will not judge you." And any hypocrite, anybody listening to me on television, you're living high, wide, and handsome—you are not getting away with your sin. You're not—you are not! *"After thy hardness and impenitent heart [you are] [treasuring] up unto [yourself] wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."* (Romans 2:5)

Now, you're not going to escape. He says in verse 3: *"That [thinkest] thou [that you] [will] escape...?"* (Romans 2:3) The word *think* is a technical word; it means, "have you figured out a way to escape"? Do you think that somehow you're going to escape the judgment of God? You can't do it! Houdini was an escape artist, but he didn't escape death, and he did not escape judgment. Now, today, you may escape; your sin may go undiscovered. How many of you have ever broken the speed limit and didn't get arrested? Your sin may go undiscovered. You may be un-apprehended, they may not be able to catch you, or you may go unpunished. You may get a high-power Washingtonian lawyer, but you will not escape the judgment of God. You will not. You will not! Do you think—have you connived, are you so intelligent that you think—that you shall escape? No! God will rip off the mask; the judgment of the hypocrite is according to truth. That's the first thing.

## **II. The Hypocrite's Judgment Is According to Deeds**

Now I want you to see the second thing. The hypocrite's judgment is not only according to truth, but it is according to deeds. So, not only is it going to be without disguise; it's going to be without distinction. Notice it now, beginning in verse 6: *"Who will render to every man according to his deeds"* (Romans 2:6)—according to his deeds. You see, you're not saved by works, but you will be judged by works. Somehow we get the idea that certain people—maybe Americans, or maybe Baptists, or maybe Bellevue Baptists—have a special distinction, but we do not. Go down to verse 11: *"...[There's] no respect of persons with God"* (Romans 2:11)—no respect of persons with God. It

doesn't make any difference whether you are Jew or Greek. Paul is going to show, in Romans 3, that the entire world is guilty before God.

Sometimes, when I am interviewed on television, the interviewer thinks he's going to put me in a hot box: make me seem like I'm a racist, or make me seem like I'm a bigot. And so, he will eventually ask this question, if he's pretty shrewd. He will say, "Do you think a Jew without Jesus is lost?" Now, you can just imagine—if you're in front of the modern urbane audience, and being interviewed like that—what a question like that says. Because, if you say, "Yes, I believe that a Jew without Jesus is lost," you, number one, are looked at as a racist, and, number two, as a bigot. Isn't that right? Of course! If you say, "No, I believe he's saved," what you have done is absolutely dishonored the Lord Jesus Christ who died for the sins of all people. Do you know what I tell the man when he asks me that question? I say, "Friend, I believe that one of my own children without Jesus would be lost." It doesn't matter whether he's a Jew or a Gentile. It's not a matter of race, it is not a matter of place, it is not a matter of face—whether you're male or female—it is a matter of God's grace. Do you know it or do you doubt it? *"There is no respect of persons with God!"* (Romans 2:11) Nobody is lost because he's a Jew, and nobody is saved because he's a Gentile.

God judges according to truth, and God judges according to deeds. *"All have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* (Romans 3:23) You see, so many people have the idea that God's going to grade on the curve. We're bad, but we're not as bad as somebody else. And so these religious people in chapter 2 had laid themselves out in the gutter alongside the pagan in chapter 1, and they measured themselves by the pagan, and they said, "Well, I'm a little longer than the pagan, and God is going to grade on the curve"—but God doesn't grade on the curve. As a matter of fact, James said, in chapter 2, verse 10, *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, [the same] is guilty of all."* (James 2:10) You see, God demands absolute perfection, and none of us in ourselves can provide it, and that's why we need the gospel. That's why we need the righteousness of God that comes by believing on the Lord Jesus Christ.

† Suppose, is there anybody here who would say that you've always kept all of God's Ten Commandments? Of course not! "Well," you say, "I've only broken one." I don't believe that, but let's suppose you'd only broken one. Here's a man dangling over a fire by a chain of ten links. Nine of those links are made of forged steel, and one of them is made of crepe paper. *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, [the same] is guilty of all."* (James 2:10) The hypocrite is going to be judged according to his deeds.†

### **A. The Hypocrite Will Be Judged by His Actions**

Now, let me show you how this goes: first of all, by his actions. Look in verse 6. Whatever he does is going to judge him. *“[He's going to] render to every man according to his deeds.”* (Romans 2:6) That just means according to his sins. What kinds of sins? Sins of commission, sins of omission, sins of the flesh, sins of the spirit. You see, the most respectable man, woman, boy, or girl in this building or listening to me by television is just as lost as the worst criminal on earth without a second birth. Now, you may not believe that, but Jesus told Nicodemus—a better man than any man here in this building today, morally, outwardly—*“[Unless] [you're] born again, [you] [can't] even see the kingdom of God.”* (John 3:3)

### **B. The Hypocrite Will Be Judged by His Attitude**

Not only—verse 6—are they going to be judged according to their actions, but, also, they're going to be judged to their attitudes. Look in verses 7 and 8: *“To them who by patient continuance [and] well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, [and] eternal life: (Romans 2:7) But [to] them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath, (Romans 2:8) Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, [to] the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.”* (Romans 2:9) What is that talking about? It's talking about your attitudes. He's talking about some who come to church seeking God. And there are some who come to church wanting to be contentious.

Hey, folks, I've been preaching long enough to know that there are people out there who are mentally arguing with me right now. You don't like me, you don't like what I preach, and your mind is saying, “I think I can find some fault in what that man is saying.” Friend, that'd be easy to do. I can do that. I mean, if you come to church, if you come to the house of God, or anywhere, and you're looking for something to criticize, friend, you can find it starting with the man standing in the pulpit. I'm going to tell you something else: if you come looking for God today, you can find God, because He's here. You're going to find what you look for. There are some who are seekers, and there are some who are scorers. And the Lord says that when He comes to judge, not only is He going to judge actions; He's going to judge attitude. Are you looking for God, or are you looking for some loophole? Are you looking for something to criticize, something to find fault with? Well, I'll guarantee it—you'll find it. But if you come looking for God, He's here; He's standing, knocking at your heart's door.

### **D. The Hypocrite Will Be Judged by His Advantages**

The hypocrite's going to be judged by his actions, he's going to be judged by his attitudes, and I'll tell you what else he's going to be judged by: his advantages. Now, here's the one that ought to frighten some of us. Not only his actions, and his attitudes,

but his advantages. Look in verses 9 and 10 of this same thing: *“Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil, [to] the Jew first and also [to] the Gentile; (Romans 2:9) but glory, honor, and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile, (Romans 2:10) for there is no respect of persons with God.”* (Romans 2:11) What does that mean? Why to the Jew first? Because he had the greater advantage. He's going to say to the Jew—he's given the oracles of God, and God has blessed the Jew, and we're going to think about that in chapter 3. Look in verse 1: *“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? (Romans 3:1) Much [in] every way, chiefly because [of] that unto them [was] committed the oracles of God.”* (Romans 3:2) They have the Word of God, they have the Old Testament, and so *“[therefore] unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same] shall much be required.”* (Luke 12:48)

You see, listen. God holds you responsible for being in this service today. God is going to judge you because of your advantage. There are millions of people on earth who sit in darkness who have never even once heard the name of Jesus. You see, God knows what you've heard, and *“unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same] shall much be required.”* (Luke 12:48) How sad it would be to go to hell from the jungle, but how much sadder it would be to go to hell from an air-conditioned, upholstered church. How sad it would be to sing in the choir and go to hell. How sad it would be to usher and go to hell. How sad it would be to sit on the platform and go to hell. Jesus said, *“Many will say [unto] me in that day, Lord, Lord, [when]...[I] 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 who work iniquity; [I never knew you].”* (Matthew 7:22–23) They didn't get saved and lose it; they never had it. They went through the form of religion, but they were never saved. And how is the hypocrite's judgment going to be? Number one: according to truth. Number two: according to his deeds—his actions, his attitudes, his advantages. God takes all of that into account when he comes to the judgment.

### **III. The Hypocrite's Judgment Is According to the Gospel**

Now, let's come to the third way, very quickly. How's God going to judge? Not only according to truth, and not only according to deeds, but here's something very strange. He's going to judge the hypocrite according to the gospel. Look, if you will, here in verse 16 of this same thing: *“In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.”* (Romans 2:16) What on earth does that mean? *“In the day when God [is going] to judge the secrets of men according to my gospel”* (Romans 2:16)—my gospel. He said, “It's according to truth, it is according to deeds.” And now it is according to his gospel.

Well, what is his gospel? Well, you don't have to guess about what the gospel is. First Corinthians chapter 15, verses 1 through 3—Paul says, “[*This is*] the gospel [*that*] [*I've*] preached unto you... (1 Corinthians 15:1) ...*how that Christ died for our sins...* (1 Corinthians 15:3) ...*that he was buried...that he [was raised] again the third day according to the scriptures.*” (1 Corinthians 15:4) That, friend, is gospel truth. And if that gospel does not save you, that gospel will judge you, because that is the gospel of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, what does the resurrection of Jesus Christ have to do with judgment? Well, He is the judge. The Bible says, “*The Father [judges] no man, but [He] [has] committed all judgment unto the Son.*” (John 5:22) The same Jesus who wants to be your Savior will one day be your judge if you do not allow Him to be your Savior. But listen to me, and listen to me well; everybody listen to me. You're going to meet Jesus Christ. If you do not meet Jesus Christ in salvation, you'll meet Him in judgment. If the gospel does not save you, the gospel will condemn you. How is that? Well, Christ is the judge. Now, you can't hold court if the judge is dead, but God raised up the judge. And you can't hold court if the defendant is dead, and God will raise you up. You cannot crawl up in the grave, and pull the dirt over your face, and hide from God. The Bible says, in Acts chapter 17, “[*God*] [*has*] appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; [*wherewith*] he hath given assurance [*of*] all men, in that he raised him from the dead.” (Acts 17:31) What does that mean? That means that the resurrection of Jesus Christ that is meant to save you is the very resurrection that will condemn you, and the hypocrite picks death from the tree of life.

You see, the gospel is a savior of life unto life, or of death unto death. It is a two-edged sword. But, my friend, that blessed blade will come to heal or to slay, but it is a sword today, and you're going to be judged according to the gospel. Listen—listen. It is not that you *could* not be saved; it is that you *would* not be saved. And there's the Lord Jesus in agony and blood, dying on that cross for you, and you wrap yourself in your robes of self-righteousness, and will not receive the Lord Jesus Christ. And he says, one of these days, God is going to reveal the secrets of the hypocrite. Notice, if you will, in verse 16: “*In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus...*” (Romans 2:16) What does that mean? It means secrets that have been repressed, sins that you've committed that you've forgotten about, you put them away, secrets that have been repressed—secrets will be revealed. One day, God is going to reveal your heart. One day, He's going to open the door, and skeletons will come out of closets. The Bible says that God is keeping books, and every word—every idle word—every thought, every deed, it's there, and that judgment—the judgment of the hypocrite—is going to be for many worse than the judgment of the heathen. “*For unto whomsoever much is given...[much shall] be required.*” (Luke 12:48)

## Conclusion

I'm speaking to a number of people today. You're not hypocrites, but you're not saved. Do you know why you're not saved? You're not saved because you've been looking at somebody else who claims to be a Christian, and you say, "Well, if that's Christianity, I don't want it." Friend, it's not Christianity. Put your eyes upon Jesus. I believe some people are going to die and go to hell because they sat up late one night and watched Elmer Gantry on television, about some money-grabbing, money-grubbing evangelist, and they say, "They're all that way." Friend, they're not all that way. You say, "There are hypocrites in the church." That may be, but I'm going to tell you something else. I've been preaching this gospel for forty-five years, and the best people I know on the face of this earth who love Jesus, and are part of His blood-bought church, and they're going to heaven. You let some hypocrite keep you from Jesus; you'll spend all eternity with every one of them in hell. Give your heart to Jesus; give Him all your life. Don't be whitewashed; be washed white by the blood of Jesus. Have reality.

If you're not saved, come today, and cast yourself on the mercy of God. Don't bring your self-righteousness; bring your sin to Jesus. "In my hand no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling." (Augustus Toplady) Pastor, would Jesus save me today? Friend, He wants to save you. He is knocking at your heart's door, and He will save you. There's nobody—nobody—here so good you don't need to be saved, and nobody here so bad you can't be saved. Romans 1 says there's nobody so bad they can't be saved. Romans 2 says there's nobody so good they don't have to be saved, okay? You know what you need to do today? You need, when the invitation is given, just to get up out of your seat, and come down one of these aisles, and tell one of the ministers, "I am trusting Jesus." Don't let some hypocrite keep you out of heaven; give your heart to Jesus. And if you yourself have been a church member but never really saved, you'd better come and get it settled today. Others of you need a church home. I'm going to invite you to come down one of these aisles and say, "I want to place my membership in this church."

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And I want to ask you to pray this prayer. Just pray it if you're not certain that you're saved. "Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, I need you. Today, I open my heart. Right now, I receive you as my Lord and Savior. I yield you my life. I trust you, Jesus, to save me." And then, as soon as we begin to sing, I want you to step out. Don't look around to see what anybody else is going to do. Just step out...†

# God Versus Humanity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 15, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 3:9–10

*“What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.”*

ROMANS 3:9

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Indictment

II. The Evidence

A. Man’s Corrupted Wisdom

B. Man’s Corrupted Will

C. Man’s Corrupted Words

D. Man’s Corrupted Ways

E. Man’s Corrupted Worship

III. The Verdict

IV. The Mercy That Is Available

A. It Is of God

B. It Is by Faith

C. It Is unto All

D. It Is Through Grace

E. It Is in Jesus

F. It Is with Justice

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you find, please, Romans chapter 3, and when you've found it, look up here.

We're studying together the constitution of Christianity—the book of Romans, the greatest piece of literature ever written. Now, when you have Romans chapter 3 open, in your mind, let me tell you something that you already know: there's something terribly wrong in the world, amen? Something terribly wrong. You don't even need a Bible to tell you that. You know that there's something wrong in the world, but God did not make a world with something wrong. When God created the world, He said, That's good—that's good. Now, what has happened? There's something come into the world, something that may sound old-fashioned when I say it, but it is sin—S-I-N—sin. You can almost hear the hiss of the serpent as you say sin. And when you look in the middle of that

word sin, you see a capital letter I. And the sin is not primarily in the world as much as it is in hearts, and not primarily so much in hearts as in my heart, and in your heart.

Life is short, death is sure; sin the curse, Christ the cure. But you're not going to get the cure until you have a proper diagnosis, until you see the problem. You're never really going to understand the cross that the choir sang about, and you're never going to see that coronation that Sarah sang about. You see, you've got to understand what the need is, so you may think that Paul is morose, or Paul is cruel, or Paul is vindictive, when he begins to tell us about sin. We have a generation today that doesn't want to hear much about sin. Paul opens this book, and he begins to lay down the problem so we can see it and understand it. So, first of all, he talked, in chapter one, about the sin of the heathen, those who've never heard. And then, in chapter two, he talks about the sin of the hypocrite, those who have heard but those whose lives are full of duplicity. And then, in the last part of chapter two, he talks about the sin of the Hebrews, those who thought that because they were God's chosen, because they'd heard so much, because they have the Bible, because they knew the truth, that somehow sin did not affect them. And so, after he deals with the sin of the heathen and the hypocrite and the Hebrew, then he just sums it off, and he comes to the sin of humanity, all of us. He says there's no difference between the Jew and the Greek, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. And as you open the book of Hebrews chapter three, you realize that what Paul is doing here is this: he is becoming a prosecuting attorney, and he is bringing the human race before the judgment bar of Almighty God, and he's making an indictment, and the case is this: God vs. humanity.

## **I. The Indictment**

And since you're human, it's an indictment against you—so it would pay you well to listen. I want you to hear the indictment as it's stated. We're in Romans chapter 3, verses 9 and 10: "What then, are we better than they..."—better than the heathen, better than the hypocrite, better than the Hebrew—"What then, are we better than they? No, in no wise, for we have therefore proved..."—now, the word proved here is a very interesting word. It is a legal term which means to make an indictment, and prove it—"We have therefore proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one." Now, the word under sin literally means dominated by sin, ruled by sin, subjugated to sin. It is not only that we sin, but we serve sin, that we have become slaves of sin. You know, the irony of it is that the sinner boasts about his freedom, he's so free—but that's so ridiculous. He is a slave to his sin. He is free to do what he wants, but he's not free to do as he ought; and he is the servant, he is the slave, of sin. And does it matter about his ethnic background, whether he's a Jew or Gentile, white or black, young or old, rich or poor? He is a sinner.

Sometimes, we think that because of our environment or pedigree that we're excused. I preached one time at a church, and a lady could hardly wait to get to see me because my name is Rogers. And she said, You, sir, are a Rogers. And she said, I am a Rogers, said, My father was a Rogers, and my maiden name was Rogers. And then, she just smiled and threw her shoulders back, and said, You know, I have studied our family background, and you will be pleased to know that we came over on the Mayflower. And I said, Well, that's interesting. I said, I traced it back further than that. She said, You did? I said, Yes, we have come all the way from a crooked farmer and a drunken sailor. The farmer was Adam, and the sailor was Noah, and we go all the way back. And, friend, we are sinners by birth, by nature, by heritage. It doesn't matter about our race or background.

Now, what the people in the book of Romans were wanting to do was to stretch themselves out in the gutter alongside somebody else and say, I'm better than he or she is. But you see, that's not the standard. The standard is the glory of God, and that's the reason Paul is going to say later on, in verse 23, that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We need to quit comparing ourselves to one another. Sometimes you ask people to come to church, they say, I don't need to go down there; I'm just as good as those folks down there at the church. They've got it backward. They need to say, I'm just as bad as those folks down there at the church. "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Total depravity doesn't mean that we are as sinful as we can be; it just means that every part of our nature is contaminated by sin. It is there, it is incipient, it is inculcated in our hearts and in our minds, because the Bible says sin comes out of our heart. Now, you may not have committed that sin, but it is down there—it is down there. You say, Not in my sweet little heart. Yes, it is. An oak tree is in the heart of an acorn. Now, it may not ever come to maturity, but it is there. Sin is hurtful, hellish, heinous, and it is in every heart and every mind. And so, Paul says that we have proved that they're all guilty.

You see, because sin is an internal thing, that's the reason that reformation is not enough. We frequently use an illustration of the timber man who takes a log from the woods, and that tree may be crooked. But it brings it into the sawmill, and puts it on the cradle, and begins to run it through that sawmill. Well, that great buzz saw is there, and the saw lops off one side of that log; and then he turns it, runs it through again, and it lops off the other side; and then, he turns it, runs it through again, and it takes the other; and then; finally, the fourth side. And there it is, perfectly straight, perfectly square, but if you look at it from the end, the heart is still crooked. Now, that's what reformation does. All reformation does is to square us out on the outside, presumably, but the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.

## **II. The Evidence**

So, first of all, you see the indictment that is given: that's the indictment as God versus humanity, in verses 9 and 10, have you got that? Now, what good is an indictment without evidence? So the next thing the apostle Paul is going to do in God vs. humanity is not only make the indictment, but God is going to present the evidence against us, and he's going to show how sin has corrupted the entire human personality of every man, woman, boy, and girl or child on the face of this earth.

### **A. Man's Corrupted Wisdom**

First of all, he talks about man's corrupted wisdom. Look in verse 11: "There is none that understandeth." Man's mind has been warped by sin. Now, man may be otherwise brilliant, but the apostle Paul has also told us, in 2 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14: "The natural man understandeth not or receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know." You take a man with a PhD. He still cannot understand God. There's none that understands.

I'm amazed at the brilliance of the human race today. Don't you stand in awe of the computers now and what they're able to do, and even in the simple things. When you get in the automobile, it says, Shut the door. You say, Who? You, shut the door. Yes sir. You find yourself interacting with machines. It's an incredible thing today. But when it comes to spiritual and eternal things, man is an ignoramus; his wisdom is warped, his imaginations are filthy, his deductions are false. The average man thinks he can go to heaven without being born again. He's absolutely ignorant of two things: he doesn't know how sinful he is, and he doesn't know how holy God is. He has a corrupted wisdom.

### **B. Man's Corrupted Will**

But not only has his mind been touched by sin; his will has been touched by sin. He has a corrupted wisdom; he has a corrupted will. Look, if you will now, in verses 11 and 12: "There is none that seeketh after God." They are all gone out of their way. Now, you would think that men seek God, but this verse says that they don't seek God. They are together become unprofitable. Now, there's none that doeth good, no, not one. You say, Well, wait a minute, Pastor, surely people seek God. All over the world there are temples, people are worshiping in jungles; everywhere you go on the face of the earth, people are religious. How could Paul say to Rome that had all of its gods that there's none that seeketh after God? Get the point and don't miss it—these people are not seeking God; they're in demon worship. First Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 20: "The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to devils." They're not seeking the true God of heaven; they're fleeing the true God of heaven.

The only reason that you sought Jehovah God, the true God, is that He first sought

you, did you know that? Did you know that ever since the Garden of Eden that man's been running from God? When Adam sinned, he beat it to the bushes. He hid from God, and God came seeking Adam. And God said to Adam, Adam, where art thou? It wasn't Adam saying, O God, where are you? And the voice of God was not the voice of a detective. It was the voice of a brokenhearted God who was a seeking God. You see, ever since man sinned, he has been running from God, and God is chasing you. That's why He brought you here today. Do you know if God couldn't run faster than you could run, you never would've been saved? But He caught you. "There is none that seeketh after God, no, not one."

The Bible makes it clear and plain that we love Him because He first loved us. Thank God for that. You see, Jesus said, in John chapter 6 and verse 44, "No man can come unto me except the Father which sent me draw him." And, by the way, if you have a hunger to know God today, the Holy Spirit is drawing you, and I thank God for that. Sometimes we hear about in evangelism today seeker-sensitive services. Now, they say to preachers today, Now, if you want to build a church, all these people who come who are seeking God, you be sensitive to them. Well, friend, humanity is not seeking God. Do you know who the seeker is? His name is Jesus. Listen. Luke 19:10 says, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." Isn't that great? So, you know, we need to be sensitive to the seeker, but we need to be sensitive to the seeker who is the Holy Spirit, and not sensitive to the sinner who couldn't give a hoot. Because we are dependent upon the Holy Spirit to convict him, and that's the reason we have to pray and soak all that we do in prayer, because there's none that seeketh after God, no, not one. Just like a sheep, Jesus said, "All we like sheep have gone astray." One thing about a sheep is he never says, Oh, I'm lost; I've got to go back to the shepherd. If the shepherd doesn't go and find him, he will never come home.

And then, he goes on to say, in verse 12, they've all become unprofitable. Do you see that? We're still talking about his corrupted will. Unprofitable—do you know what that word literally means? It refers to milk or meat that has spoiled. Have you ever been on a vacation and left milk in the refrigerator? You know, the kind that's dated, and then you come back, and your wife goes to the refrigerator, and she opens the refrigerator, and she opens that milk carton, and I mean, friend, it's rancid. I don't know why they do this, but they come to you, and they say, Smell this. Why do they do that? You don't have to smell it. Man, you can smell it when they open it, way across the room. Smell this. You think that's okay? No! No. It's unprofitable; it's rancid. It refers to stinking meat. You see, God made us to serve Him, but we don't do it; we're unprofitable—unprofitable servants. Unprofitable literally means good for nothing. A little boy asked his mother, said, Mother, would you pay me, if I'm good all day. She said, Why don't you be good for nothing like your father? We are good for nothing.

### **C. Man's Corrupted Words**

You see, man has a corrupted wisdom, he has a corrupted will, he has a depraved will; and then; go on. Look; if you will. He has depraved words. Look at verses 13 and 14: "Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they've used deceit. "The poison of asps is under their lips." Serpents—look at it. It's talking about their tongues, whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Corrupted wisdom, corrupted wills, corrupted words, because the words just tell us what's down in the heart. This world is so full of wicked words. Fondlers of filth. And now, God help us, they've gotten on the internet. Lovers of lies, traders in trash, peddlers of profanity. It's all around us. And out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. In the country they say, what's down in the well comes up in the bucket. You say, well, Pastor, I just curse a little; I take God's name in vain, but I don't mean anything by it. That's where you're indicted, sir, that you could take the thrice-holy name of Almighty God in vain, and not mean anything by it, that God is no more to you than a curse word that you can mix in the muck and mire and slime of the sewer. The Bible says that God will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain; He will not. You will not curse Him when you meet Him face to face at the judgment.

### **D. Man's Corrupted Ways**

What is God speaking about here? He's bringing an indictment. There's none good, no, not one. And he talks about man's will, he talks about man's wisdom, he talks about man's words; then he talks about man's ways—depraved, corrupted ways. Look, if you will, in verse 15 and 16: "Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known." For further information, read any newspaper in America today, across the land, or around the world. Violence, child abuse, abortion, war, filth. We're headed for another conflict, it looks like, in the Middle East. It may not be like Desert Storm. We may be on the threshold of Armageddon. Man's wicked ways, sin, has turned this world into a madhouse.

### **E. Man's Corrupted Worship**

But the indictment continues. Not only does he talk about man's wisdom, and not only does he talk about man's will; not only about man's words, and not only about man's ways; but he talks, as the crowning indictment, about man's worship. Look, if you will, in verse 18: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." You would think that mankind would be prostrate on the ground, saying, O God, have mercy. Not this generation and not a prior generation. People are egomaniacs, strutting to hell, laughing about God. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. What is the fear of God? It is a reverence, a holy awe, to Almighty God. The fear of God is love on its knees before the Almighty God. Our generation has lost the fear of God.

Do you know what the worst form of badness is? The worst form of badness is human goodness, when that is substituted for the new birth. That's the worst form of badness. We have the idea that somehow our goodness is good, but the Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 4, that "the plowing of the wicked is sin." A farmer who plows a field without giving glory to God, who causes the rain to fall and the seed to germinate, that's sin. What does it mean when it says the plowing of the wicked is sin? It means that the sinner can do no good, he can do no good; even his good is bad if he's not saved. Plowing a field is fine, making crops grow is fine, being a farmer is fine, but not if you're unsaved. All of that is iniquity. You say, I don't understand that. Suppose you go to dinner today, and there's a fruit salad made of the freshest, finest fruit, mixed with the best ingredients, but the man who has made that salad and mixed that salad has open running sores on his hands, and he's mixing the salad—contagious sores on his hands, and he's mixing the salad, finest fruit, finest ingredients. Here, you want some? You want any? No, no! I don't want it. Why? Because, even though the fruit may be good, he has contaminated what he has touched. "The plowing of the wicked is sin." The unsaved man contaminates all that he touches, because he himself is a sinner.

### **III. The Verdict**

So, God makes the indictment, and then God brings the evidence, and then God gives the verdict. He doesn't depend upon the jury. He himself is the judge. Here is the verdict. Look, if you will, in verses 19 and 20: "Now, we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law,"—now watch it—"that every mouth may be stopped and all the world may become guilty before God." The verdict of the court is guilty. And he goes on to say, as a result of that, in verse 20: "Therefore, by the deeds of the law, there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." The law was not given to save you; the law is given to condemn and convict you. The law cannot save you. God has given His holy law, but the law is given to show us that we're sinners, for sin is the transgression of the law, and we realize that God has given His holy law, and we have come short of God's holy law. So, what is the wisest thing that you could do today? What is the wisest thing you could do today? Shut up and plead guilty. Shut up and plead guilty. That's what Paul is saying, and I know, boys and girls, that we use the words shut up in the wrong sense; we ought not to do it. But listen. Here's what he's saying in the last part of verse 19: "that every mouth may be stopped." God says, Shut your mouth! "And that all the world may become guilty before God." Now, you're never going to get saved until you admit your guilt before Almighty God.

I remember reading in Luke chapter 18 about a Pharisee who came, and he prayed, and he said, God, I thank you that I'm not as other men are. He was so full of himself.

But Jesus said that there was a publican—that means he was a tax collector, and a knave, dishonest. The Bible says he bowed his head; he would not so much as lift his eyes to heaven. He smote himself upon the breast, and he said, God, God, be merciful to me, a sinner. Literally the Greek language says he said, be merciful to me, the sinner. I'm the guy—be merciful to me, the sinner. And Jesus said this man, the publican, went home justified, rather than the other, the religious man. There are two ways you can go from church today. Some of you will go home dignified, and some will go home justified. You say, Hey, I thank God I'm not as other men are, and when the pastor gives the invitation you'll crane your neck to see if any of those old sinners go down there to get saved. But God help us; may God have mercy! Paul says, Shut your mouth; plead guilty—guilty. The verdict of the court has been given.

There's a story about a king that visited a slave ship. It was a galley, a slave galley, you know, where they chain men to the oars, and they row, and a man beats the drum, and another man has a lash to make them—there were no diesel engines; that was the engine. And they would take the prisoners of the state, and not just let them languish in prison; they'd put them to use, made them pull on the oars. The king visited one of these slave ships, went below the decks, and began to talk to those who were chained to the oars. And he asked one man, Why are you here? Oh, he said, Sire, I don't know why I'm here. I was in a crowd when a crime was committed, and when they arrested everybody, they got me, and I'm innocent! They asked another, said, Why are you here? The king asked another. He said, Oh, sire, noble king, I have enemies who have lied about me, and he said, I'm not really guilty, but I'm the victim of false witnesses who have lied about me. And the king went through, and each one of them had some reason why he was innocent, should not be there, till he came to one man, said, Why are you here? He said, Sire, I'm here because I deserve to be here. He said, I've sinned. I'm guilty. I'm receiving the just recompense for my sin. I've sinned against my God, I've sinned against my king, and now I'm paying the penalty for my sin. When the king heard that, he stepped back, and he said, You knave, you rascal, you scum. What are you doing here among so many honest men? Guards, release him and get him out of here.

Not until we admit our sin are we going to know the mercy and the forgiveness of the king. So many times we want to strut to heaven, so here is the verdict of the court: All have sinned. God says, Be quiet. Paul says, Be quiet; every mouth, shut up, plead guilty.

#### **IV. The Mercy That Is Available**

Now, here's the final thing that I want you to see today. Not only the verdict, but I want you to see now the mercy that is available. You see, God is not fair. Don't ever get the idea that God is fair. God is not fair. I see some of you getting very upset. God is not

fair. Do you know what fairness means? It means, look, like Jim Whitmire and I, we'd go to eat and we sit down, and there's a piece of pie, and a lady gives it to us both, and I cut it, and take the biggest half. Jim says, Hey, preacher that wasn't fair—that wasn't fair. In other words, we get the idea that we deserve something, that it is ours, and when we get it, we just think we're getting what we deserve. And, we're not thankful when we get it; we're just upset we didn't get it sooner, and doubly upset if somebody gets more than we got. God is not fair; God is just—just. God doesn't owe us anything. He is a God of mercy, but you will never, never, never, never plead for mercy until you see the justice of God, when you see the justice. As long as you are prating about God being fair, you're not going to cry out for mercy. But when you see that God is a just God, and we're guilty, and we deserve judgment, then we can say, God have mercy. Do you understand that?

An old story about a lady who went to a photographer to have her picture made, and when she got it, she didn't like it. The reason she didn't like it is it looked like her, so she took it back to the photographer, and said, You'll have to do this picture over. And he said, Well, lady, what's wrong with it? She said, It doesn't do me justice. He looked at it, and looked at her, and said, Lady, you don't need justice; what you need is mercy. Friend, God is just, but we need mercy; we need the mercy of the court. But it is not until the indictment is made, and the evidence is given, and the verdict comes down, that then we throw ourselves upon the mercy of the court, and we're ready for God's amazing grace, then we're ready for salvation. And if you've never ever come to the place where you've seen yourself as a sinner, lost before Almighty God, and cried out to Him for mercy, you've never been saved. You may have waltzed down somebody's church aisle and joined a church and gotten baptized and turned over a new leaf, but have you thrown yourself on the mercy of the court and said, Lord God, be merciful to me, a sinner?

Now, in the few moments that we have left, do you remember what a preposition was in school? I barely do, but I do. I want to give you some prepositions, and I want to show you what God's mercy is. Now, listen to these prepositions: of, by, unto, through, in, and with. Now, here's the mercy; here's what we're going to get.

#### **A. It Is of God**

Notice—we're in chapter 3 now, and look, if you will, in verse 21: "But now,"—and boy, thank God for that, just draw a circle—but now. He's changing the subject. But now that man sees he's a sinner—"but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets." If this righteousness is of God, that's the first preposition. The righteousness of God. What is justification? Justification is an act of God. No court can ever justify anybody. If you go into court, all they can do is prove you guilty or innocent. They may pardon you, they may fail to

sentence you, but they can't justify you. Only God can make the unclean clean. It is of God. Justification is the way that God declares us righteous in His sight. He puts the righteousness of Christ on our account, and places and takes and bears our own sinfulness. No one but God can do this.

### **B. It Is by Faith**

Number two: not only is it of God; it is by faith. Look again in verse 22: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith..." And I'm so grateful that God doesn't require anything else. If He required anything else, some wouldn't make it. If He required baptism, if He required money, if He required good works, some would be disqualified. Now, faith in the natural realm is a very common thing. You get on the airplane, that's faith; you take a prescription, that's faith; you eat a meal cooked out, that's faith—it's getting to be more and more. What is the difference in saving faith? It is in the source and the object. God gives us that faith, and then we place our faith in the Lord Jesus.

### **C. It Is unto All**

It is of God, it is of faith, by faith. And now, thirdly, it is unto all. That's the next preposition: unto all. Look, if you will, in verses 22 and 23 again: "Even the righteousness of God which is by faith in Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference." All people need to be saved, and thank God, all people can be saved. Listen to me, precious friend. There's nobody here so good he doesn't need to be saved, and nobody so bad they cannot be saved. That was a good place for an amen. Listen. It is unto all—whether you are Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman, you can be saved. And God sent me here to tell you that today.

### **D. It Is Through Grace**

Now, here's the next thing. It is through grace. Look, if you will, in verse 24: "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ." You see, grace is the most beautiful word in the Bible other than Jesus. Grace is what makes God love us when there's nothing lovely about us. "God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." It is grace that makes God love the unlovely. We are not loved because we're valuable. We're valuable because we're loved. That, friend, is God's amazing grace. It is through grace.

### **E. It Is in Jesus**

And now, watch this. It is in Jesus. Look, if you will now, in verses 24 and 25 of this: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." I love Him today; I love Jesus. Friend, it's in Jesus; not in the church, it's not in good deeds. This amazing grace is in the Lord Jesus Christ—redemption in Jesus. I've read that Abraham Lincoln, who hated slavery, was in the slave market, and he saw a beautiful

young slave girl being auctioned off. Lecherous men were bidding on her to make her their dirty plaything, though she was not dirty—but I'm talking about their dirty deeds. Abraham Lincoln began to bid for this girl, and one man would bid, and another, and he'd bid for her, and he'd bid for her, and he bid for her. Finally, she was sold to Abraham Lincoln. She lifted those beautiful sad eyes to him, not knowing who he was; she walked over to him, knowing that he now owned her. He took the certificate of the sale, and handed it to her, and said, You're free. She said, What? Said, You're free. She said, What do you mean free? He said, You're free. She said, Free to do what I want to do? He said, Yes. Free to say what I want to say? He said, Yes. Free to go where I want to go? He said, Yes. She said, Then I'm going with you—going with you! That's the way I am with Jesus. Friend, He made me free. That's the redemption; the word redemption there means to buy out of the slave market. I have been redeemed by His precious blood. It is in Jesus, and I am going with Him. He loved me. He died for me. He redeemed me. Thank God for this justification.

#### **F. It Is with Justice**

Now, it is also with justice. Look, if you will, in verse 26 of this same chapter here: "To declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." You see, that's the gospel. The whole thing is based on law. God is a holy God. God will be true to His own honor. God will be true to His own law. Why doesn't God just overlook sin? Why doesn't God just say, Well, that's all right, that's okay; you're sinners. I'm a loving God, so what. Come on, come on up to heaven. Why can't God do that? Because sin must be paid for. Sin is an affront to a holy God, and if God were to let sin go unpunished, God would be unjust. God would topple from His throne of holiness. They say, in a court of law, when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. But on the cross, Jesus paid the full price; because of Calvary, God is both just and the justifier of those that believe in Him. It is in Jesus, and it is with judgment, with justice. God doesn't overlook our sin; He pardons it freely by His grace.

### **Conclusion**

Listen carefully. Look up here, every eye right here. God brought you here today to be saved, if you're not saved. It is my solemn duty to tell you that there's no other way for you to be saved. You cannot be saved by your good deeds. If righteousness comes by the law, then Christ was dead in vain; that's what Paul says in Galatians. But God is just. But He's a God of mercy and grace, and, by the cross—listen, don't move; just listen to me—He will save you. But I want you to know this: that your sin will be pardoned in Christ, or it will be punished in hell, but it will never be overlooked. God brought you here today to be saved.

# It's Time for Some Good News

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 22, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 4:1–5

*“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt.”*

ROMANS 4:4

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Grace That Abraham Discovered
    - A. Salvation by Grace Respects God's Glory
    - B. Salvation by Grace Receives God's Gift
      - 1. Adam's Sin Was Imputed to Us
      - 2. Our Sin Was Imputed to Jesus
      - 3. Jesus' Righteousness Is Imputed to Us
  - II. The Grace That David Described
    - A. Iniquity Is Forgiven
    - B. Sins Are Covered
    - C. Sins Are Not Put on Your Account
  - III. The Grace That Paul Disclosed
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Romans chapter 4, where we left off last week, and when you've found it, look up here, if you will. I heard a country song one time that said something like this: if it weren't for bad luck, I wouldn't have any luck at all, and I think some of us are feeling today, as we read the newspapers, if it weren't for bad news, I wouldn't have any news at all. But thank God there is some good news. And it's time for some good news.

You know, preachers never get tired of telling the story of John Newton. He lived hundreds of years ago. He wrote books, and he wrote sermons, but you're probably not familiar with any of those; but he wrote a song that, if you've been around churches at all, and even if you don't go to church, you probably know the song. It is called Amazing Grace: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me; I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see. Let me tell you about John Newton. He didn't start out as a songwriter. As a matter of fact, he had a very godly mother and a very wicked father. His father was a sailor. His mother prayed for him and committed him to the Lord, but as a youngster, he was rebellious and ungodly, and he, just as a

boy, very young, he left home to become a sailor like his father. And John Newton got engaged in the slave trade, and he became a slaver, buying and selling slaves. But then, his fortune reversed on him, and he, John Newton, became a slave of slaves. As a matter of fact, his mistress, who owned him, had him chained to her table, and all he would get to eat was scraps that fell from her table. That's how low this man got, and some sailors, however, had given to this cursing, drunken, ungodly, lascivious young man a copy of the book by Thomas a Kempis, called *The Imitation of Christ*, and he began to read that aboard that ship. And, one day, a ferocious storm came up at sea. John Newton was on the deck, they thought the ship was going down, a great wave washed over the deck of that ship and washed John Newton off the deck and into the angry sea. He cried out to God for mercy. Another wave came and washed him back on board. That was all he needed. He got right with God and he wrote the song that you love to sing: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me. And when he said, a wretch, he wasn't just using hyperbole; he really meant it.

Now, what is grace—what is grace? May I give you a definition of grace? Would you listen to it very carefully? Listen to every word of it. Grace is the unmerited favor and kindness shown to one who does not deserve it and can never earn it. Now, let me give it to you again: grace—grace is the unmerited favor and kindness of God shown to one who does not deserve it and can never earn it. And may I tell you something: already, if you're saved, you will be saved by grace, or you won't be saved at all. Now, the good news is the grace. In chapters 1, 2, and 3, Paul has been telling us about the bad news—about sin, wickedness, degradation, depravity, all of the things. He's been talking to the heathen, he's been talking to the hypocrite, he's been talking to the Hebrew, he's been talking to humanity; and he summed it up in Romans chapter 3, verse 23: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." That is the bad news that makes the good news good.

And so, let's begin reading here in chapter 4, verse 1: "What shall we say, then, that Abraham, our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now, to him that worketh his reward is not reckoned of grace,"—there's our word—"but of death. But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justified the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Now, actually, what we're going to do in our study today, we're going to see the gospel—the good news, the gospel, that's what the word gospel means is good news; did you know that? It means good news—we're going to see the good news according to three men: according to Abraham, according to David, and according to Paul.

## I. The Grace That Abraham Discovered

Now, first of all, I want you to see the grace, the good news, that was discovered by Abraham. Write that down: discovered by Abraham. What did we say then? Abraham, our father, as pertaining to the flesh, has found—you see that word, has found? It's the word we get our word eureka from. It speaks of a discovery. Abraham made a discovery. Now, if you haven't been going to church very long, you might say, Well now, wait a minute—who is Abraham. Well, if you were a Jew, you would know who Abraham is, because Abraham is the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven. Abraham was the first of the Jewish nation, of the Hebrews, and Abraham was the premier saint; he's the beginner of the Jewish race. You can say the founder of their faith. They held Abraham in highest esteem, and in the Jewish mind, if anybody could behave himself into heaven, it would be Abraham. If anybody could get to heaven by doing good works, it would be Abraham.

But the Bible says here that Abraham believed God. You see it in verse 3: and that was counted to him for righteousness. Now, all that is doing is just quoting Genesis chapter 15 and verse 6, and it talks about Abraham, and it says he believed the Lord and he counted it to him—that is, the Lord—the Lord put it on his account for righteousness. Now, you see, God had called Abraham when he was a heathen, and in the land of Ur said, I want you to go into a land that I'm going to give you, and, just, I want you to go. He didn't even really tell him where he was going; he just went out under orders, under sealed orders. But then, the Lord appeared to him, and this time he was a very old man. He was impotent and childless, and his wife, Sarah, had gone through the menopause, and her womb was past reproduction. The Bible says—we're going to see later on in this chapter—that it was dead, that is, she could not reproduce and have a child naturally. But God came to Abraham and there in that passage of Scripture I just read for us, and God said, Abraham, I'm going to give you a son, and through that son you're going to have, you're going to have children. Matter of fact, look up at those stars, Abraham; you see all those stars, can you count them? You can't count them, can you, Abraham? Well, Abraham, you're not going to be able to count the number of your descendants. I'm going to work a miracle. I'm going to work a miracle in your life, and, rather than arguing with God or doubting God, the Bible said Abraham believed God. He just believed God. And God said, All right, that's what I want, and I'm going to put you down as righteous. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.

What did he believe God for? Well, he believed God for a miracle son. Jesus is a miracle Son, isn't He, born of a virgin? And Abraham—you see, this all just pre-figures Jesus—he believed God for a miracle son, and he also believed in God who could bring life out of death. Didn't Jesus come out of the grave? He did. Well, just as God gave life

to Sarah's dead womb, Abraham just believed this. He had an incredible faith in God. It pre-figures the gospel of God's miracle Son—His death, burial, and resurrection—and Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness.

Now, that's what we're talking about right now. What does salvation by grace do, and what did Abraham discover?

#### A. **Salvation by Grace Respects God's Glory**

First of all—listen—salvation by grace—are you listening?—it respects God's glory. Now, look in verse 2: "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory but not before God." Now, what that means is just simply this: that if Abraham could be saved by being good, he could boast about it, he could glory in his own salvation, but he could say nice things about himself. But that wouldn't be saying nice things about God. But when Abraham believed God, he gave God glory. Do you know the best thing that you could do to glorify God? People try to do all kinds of things to glorify God, I mean, to gain favor with God. I have seen pictures of people who would take whips and flagellate themselves until they bleed. I've been to India and seen people do strange and horrible things, where they would, perhaps, mutilate themselves, or bathe in the filthy rivers, or whatever, to glorify God. People have hung by ropes and hooks and self-crucifixion in order to glorify God. People have gone on pilgrimages to glorify God. People have given great sums of money to glorify God. But do you know what glorifies God? Believing God; it's believing God.

Now, sometimes when I go off to speak, people introduce me, and they may say nice things about me, but then they might say, But there's one thing about Adrian, you just can't believe him. I hope they'll never say that. But, you see, no matter how many nice things you might say about me, if you say you can't believe him, you've just cut the taproot of my character, didn't you? You see, the Bible says that, "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." The greatest thing that you can do to glorify God is to believe God. Faith pleases God, because it glorifies God, and because faith pleases God, God rewards faith. If you want to please God, believe God—believe God. You see, what is faith? Faith is not saying, God prove it to me, and then I'll believe it. No, no. Faith is response. Listen. Faith is response to the nature and character of God. Faith believes God, not for what God has done, but for who God is. You see, when my eye is right, my eye responds to light. When my ear is right, my ear responds to sound. When my heart is right, my heart responds to God. And that response—that response—is faith. And that faith glorifies God. If a man could be saved by works, God doesn't get the glory. But when a man is justified by faith, God gets the glory. It's amazing how many people want to put together faith and works. There's something about human pride that says, I want to do it.

Now, suppose Bobby Lewis, who is sitting over here, were to say, Pastor, I love you

so much, and I just struck oil, and I'm very wealthy now, and I'm going to buy for you, Pastor, a brand new automobile—and I don't want a cheap one, I want one 50,000 dollars. Now, he's going to buy a 50,000-dollar automobile for me. What would that be? A Mercedes, okay? See, he's going to buy me a Mercedes. I've got it on record now; y'all heard that. All right now, and 50,000 dollars, he's going to pay for that Mercedes. And he comes to me, and he says, Pastor, I want to give you this automobile. I said, Well, Bobby, thanks a lot, brother; that's really nice, but, Bobby, I can't just let you give me a car like that; it's too much. Bobby, let me help pay for that car. Bobby, here, let's see; there it is, there's a quarter. Thank you, Bobby. And so, Bobby has paid 49,999 dollars and 75 cents, and I've paid two bits, and I'm driving that Mercedes, and somebody says, Rogers, nice car you've got, and I say, Yeah, Bobby and I bought this car. Wouldn't that be ridiculous? Friend, let me tell you something: when you add your two bits worth of self-effort to the grace of God, you destroy the whole thing. You take the glory from Almighty God. If you go to heaven, you're going to say, Jesus paid it all, and all to Him I owe. And don't you get the idea that you can add a little bit to it, because when you do, you take away God's glory. You give the glory to yourself. You say, Look what I did. For the Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It is the gift of God,"—why?—"lest any man should boast." No peacocks in heaven. You know what they're going to be singing in heaven? Unto Him who loved us and washed us with His blood—that's what they're going to be singing—Unto Him who loved us and washed us with His blood.

We were playing Daytona Beach in high school, and there were about three inches of water on the field, coming up over our shoe tops. And we were beating Daytona Mainland, but it was horrible; it was wet, our uniforms were just soaking wet, and somebody put a pass in the air, and our defensive tackle, who was very overweight, that pass just landed there and stuck. He looked down, and saw it, and put both arms around it. He had intercepted a pass, first time in his life. Now, I want to tell you, if he was the slowest man on the field, but, you know, as fate would have it, he ran that thing back for a touchdown. We blocked every man three times in order for him to get down there. Here's the way that guy would run. Right leg, left leg, right leg—but he ran it back. Now, would you know that I spent the night with that guy that night? We shared a room afterward. All night long, I heard about him running those moves, running that ball back down that field. Boy, I'd hate to spend eternity with a guy bragging about how he got to heaven. I want to spend eternity with people who are giving the Lamb all the glory, as we sang this morning, unto Him who loved us and washed us with His blood.

### **B. Salvation by Grace Receives God's Gift**

What does salvation by grace do? It respects God's glory. And I'll tell you what else it does: it receives God's gift—it receives God's gift. Now, look, if you will, here again in

verse 3: "It was counted unto him for righteousness." Now, that word counted is used a number of times in this chapter, but if you look at it in the English, you wouldn't necessarily see it. Because the same word is translated imputed, and the same word is translated reckoned. Look, if you will, in verse 3: "It was counted to him." In verse 6, "God imputeth righteousness." Verse 8: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." The last part of verse 9: "That faith was reckoned." Verse 10: "How then was it reckoned." The last part of verse 11: "Might be imputed." Go down to verse 22: "Therefore it was imputed." Notice in verse 23: "That it was imputed to him." Notice verse 24: "To us also, to whom it shall be imputed." Over and over and over, he's talking about something called imputation. Now, don't you check me out. You say, There you go with a theological word. I don't want to hear anything about imputation, has nothing to do with me. Friend, it has everything to do with you—it has everything to do with you, because the way that you're going to get saved is for God to count something, to reckon something, to impute something to your account. Now, this is what God does: God reckons or imputes or counts righteousness to you when you have the faith of Abraham.

### **1. Adam's Sin Was Imputed to Us**

Now, let me tell you something about imputation. All right now, listen very carefully, and it's all going to come together and make sense. Adam's sin was imputed to you. Adam's sin was put on your account. You know, our son David is a missionary, and Joyce and I sometimes want to give him a gift, and rather than sending him a check in the mail, we just say, David, we'll put a check on your account. We'll just add it to your account. It's there, because you can write a check overseas, because we're going to put it in your account over here. Now, we impute that to his account. The reason he can write a check for it over there is because we put it on his account over here. It just simply means to charge or reckon or put on your account. Next time you go to the department store, don't say, Charge it; say, Impute it. She won't know what you're talking about, but then you can witness to her. Just say, Impute it! Charge it to my account; put that on my account. Now, that's what it means. Now, Adam's sin was imputed to you. You say, I didn't vote for Adam. What Adam did didn't have anything to do with me. Oh? Well, if Adam hadn't had any children, where would you be? Think about it. Adam, when he sinned, became a slave of sin, and the son of a slave is a slave. And besides that, you then inherited Adam's sinful nature, and Adam's guilt was put on you. Let me give you a verse for that—Romans 5, verse 12: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin, so death passed upon all men." That is, death was imputed to all men. We got it from Adam. So, sin was imputed to you through Adam.

## **2. Our Sin Was Imputed to Jesus**

Got that? All right now, watch it. Adam's sin was imputed to you. Our sin was imputed to Jesus. That's what the gospel is all about. You're in chapter 4. Look, if you will, in verse 25 of chapter 4. Look at it, it speaks of Jesus, who was delivered for our offenses; not for His own sin, but for our offenses. Put down 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21: "For God hath made him who knew no sin to be sin for us." You see that? God has made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin. Jesus was a sinless, spotless Lamb of God—thank God for that. But God made Him to be sin for us. God didn't make Him a sinner—He was not a sinner; but God made Him to be sin. Adam's sin was put on me. My sin was put on Jesus. Jesus carried my sin to the cross.

In Leviticus chapter 16, there's a ritual there; it's the story of the scapegoat. Have you ever heard the term scapegoat? Well, in Old Testament times, God gave so many pictures and illustrations of salvation, and what they would do, they would take two goats, and bring those two goats to the door of the tabernacle. One goat would be slain, his throat would be cut, the blood would be spilled out, and that would picture Jesus on the cross, in agony and blood, dying for us. But then, Aaron, the High Priest, would take both hands, and lay his hands on the head of the other goat, the live goat called the scapegoat, and confess the sins of the people upon the head of that goat. And then, that goat would be led out into the wilderness, never to return, picturing our sins being carried away by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And when Aaron laid his hands on the head of that goat, the sins of the people of Israel were being placed, imputed, charged, reckoned, upon the head of that goat, picturing our sins being laid upon the Lord Jesus.

## **3. Jesus' Righteousness Is Imputed to Us**

Now, watch this: Adam's sin was imputed to you, your sin was imputed to Jesus, and now, thank God, Jesus' righteousness is imputed to us. That's the gospel. His righteousness is imputed to us. Notice verse 3: "For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted"—reckoned, imputed—"unto him for righteousness." Now, that is the grace that Abraham discovered.

## **II. The Grace That David Described**

Second thing: Not only the grace that Abraham discovered, but the grace that David described. Abraham discovered it; David described it. Now, begin reading in verse 6: "For even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Now, you have to understand, as they would read this, they would think of Abraham as the greatest of saints, they would think of David, perhaps, as the greatest

of sinners, because David had committed a terrible, horrible, egregious sin—David had committed adultery. And in order to try to cover that adultery, David had committed murder. It's a dark and dirty tale, and he had just broken God's commandments, and David was worthy of death, but God brought him to a place of repentance. He received the grace of God, and he wrote a Psalm telling about it, and that's what Paul was quoting, is Psalm 32, verses 1 and 2. But after he'd experienced the grace of God, he wrote this: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity and in whose spirit there is no guile." Now, you see, there was nothing David could do. I mean, he deserved death; his case was hopeless apart from God's amazing grace—that's verse 6: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works." There wasn't anything David could do; he was hopeless, and God put on his account righteousness.

Now, I want you to see how he describes that righteousness, because this will make you happy—this will make you happy—if you understand it.

#### **A. Iniquity Is Forgiven**

First of all, iniquity is forgiven—do you see that? Look at it—saying, "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven." Now, in order for God to forgive your iniquity, God has to pay the price. There are no free pardons, not in heaven. If any sin is forgiven, the one who does the forgiving is the one who bears the penalty.

Let's go back to Bobby again, since we're using him for illustration this morning. I want that quarter back, okay? Now, just to be sure. All right now, let's suppose that Bobby stole ten dollars from me, and he comes back, and he is so stricken, so smitten, he says, Pastor, I stole ten dollars from you, and I don't have it to give it back. And I say, All right, Bobby, I forgive you. Now, the minute I forgive him, what happens? It cost me ten bucks—it cost me ten bucks. You see, somebody pays, so when I forgive that sin, at that moment, I absorb the penalty. That's what Jesus was doing on the cross. God is not overlooking that sin; God himself is paying the price of that sin. And by sovereign grace he is being saved. Somebody wrote these words: I owed a debt I could not pay. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe. I owed a debt I could not pay. Jesus paid a debt He did not owe.

#### **B. Sins Are Covered**

Iniquity is forgiven, but it's even better than that. Sins are covered. Look at verse 7: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered." You know, even if I forgave him, I would still know that he had done it. But when God forgives, God forgets. God says, in Micah chapter 7, verse 19, "I will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea." There are depths in the ocean that nobody has yet probed.

As the mountains are high, the depths are deep. There are places where the pressure is so great that nothing could even sink there. It's as dark as ink, as black as midnight, and that's where God has put your sins. God says, in Isaiah chapter 38, verse 17: "Thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." I love that. I've thought about that often. If my sin is behind God's back, and that's where they're going to stay, can God ever see my sin again? Well, my sin's back here. Suppose he turns around to see where they are. They're still back here; no matter where he looks, my sins are behind His back. "As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us." Now, I can measure North Pole to South Pole, but you can't measure East from West. How far is that? Let's see. That's west—how far is west? How far is east? No, it just goes on and on and on and on. You see, David says, Oh, my iniquities are forgiven. Yes, hallelujah! But my sin is covered; it is gone, it is buried in the depth of God's forgetfulness.

### **C. Sins Are Not Put on Your Account**

Well you say, That's good; could it get any better? Yes, it does. Now, I want you not to miss this. Look in verse 8. Not only does He forgive your sin, not only does He cover your sin—hey, folks, now don't miss this. Look in verse 8: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord"—are you ready for this?—"will not impute sin." Don't miss this. God, when you get saved, will never put sin on your account again. He will not impute sin to you. Now, you say, Well, Pastor Rogers, what if I get saved, and then I sin again? Did I hear you say, what if? You know, some people have the idea that, If I'm living right when I die, I'll go to heaven. Well, if that's what you're counting on, you're going to hell. Well you say, I was pretty good when I was... Listen. I wouldn't trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven. I mean the best, much less some bad ones. You know, we need to understand what sin is. The Bible says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." The Bible says, "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." The Bible says, "The thought of foolishness is sin." Do you think that your goodness is going to get you to heaven? No! Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, blessed is the man whose sins are covered, and blessed is the man to whom God will not impute iniquity. If He were to put one half of one sin on your account, you'd die and go to hell—one half of one sin. He's a holy God, but God will not impute iniquity. Now, that doesn't mean that you can sin and get by with it; He'll carry you to the woodshed and beat the daylight out of you. "Whom the Lord loves, he chastens and scourges every son whom he receives."

That's the reason why we need to keep a short account with God, but God will never put that sin on your account. If God put that sin on your account, you'd have to get saved all over again, but God will not impute sin.

Now, folks, listen. I'm telling you, when you understand grace, you can understand why John Newton wanted to write that song. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that

saved a wretch like me. There was the grace that Abraham discovered; there was the grace that David described. Now, finally, there's the grace that Paul discloses. Now, look at it here, if you will, finally, beginning now in verse 6—and this is the wonderful thing: "Cometh this blessedness, then, on the circumcision only,"—where he means by the circumcision, the Jews, they were called the circumcision—"or upon the uncircumcision also? For we say that the faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How then was it reckoned? When he was in circumcision or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all them that believe, thou they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also."

### **III. The Grace That Paul Disclosed**

Now, what does all this mean? Well, what Paul is saying is this: First of all, hey, folks, he's talking to you now; he's talking to Gentiles. We may have some Jews here today, and I hope we do, but he's talking now to the Gentiles. And he's saying, Look: Abraham discovered it, David described it, but I want to tell you, it is for everybody; it is not just for the Jews, but for the uncircumcised—also, the uncircumcision, the Gentiles.

Now, what he's saying is this—now listen very carefully: This salvation doesn't come by ritual. It doesn't come by ritual. You see, circumcision was a Jewish ritual that said, as he said in verse 11, it was a sign and a seal. But he said, When was Abraham saved—before or after that sign and that seal? Before—before. Don't get the idea that you are saved—how does that apply to us today? Are you saved before or after baptism? Before. The Bible doesn't say be baptized and believe; it says believe and be baptized. And the minute you believe, you're saved.

Now, some people will say you have to be baptized in order to be saved. Well, that's ridiculous. If you say you have to be baptized in order to be saved, you know what you do? You take the whosoever out of the Bible. A man in the desert couldn't be saved, because no water; in an airplane couldn't be saved—no place to baptize him. A man in a submarine, surrounded by water, couldn't be saved without drowning at the same time by opening the door. I'm telling you—listen—it's ridiculous. You'd have to say, For whosoever shall believe, and shall be near water, and is fortunate enough to have a preacher of my denomination, shall be saved. Hey, that's silly—that's silly. The Bible says it sweetly, plainly, sublimely: Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. When Peter baptized the household of Cornelius, he said, "Can any man forbid water, that these should be baptized, who have received the gift of the Holy Ghost?" They'd already received the gift of the Holy Ghost before they were baptized. Listen to me, friend. What is Paul saying? We see it discovered by Abraham, we see it described

by David, and then we see it disclosed by Paul. He is saying it is not by ritual, it is not by resolve; it is by reception. You just receive God's amazing grace.

## **Conclusion**

Well, let me just tell you quickly another little story. I started telling you a story about a song about God's amazing grace and Isaac Newton. There was another man named William Cowper. William Cowper was so tormented in his mind, he was so distraught; he lived in Paris. He was going to kill himself. He went down to the Seine river that runs through Paris, and four times he tried to get enough courage to throw himself in the river Seine. He couldn't do it, so he went and got some poison, and he was going to take the poison. Three times he put the poison to his lips, but he couldn't do it. So he said, I'll take a gun, and I will shoot myself. And twice he took a gun and put it to his temples but could not release the trigger. And then, somebody told him about Jesus, and William Cowper wrote these words: There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

That's the grace of God—that's the grace of God, that's the good news. That's what Abraham discovered, that's what David described, that's what Paul discloses, and friend, that's what you need—is God's amazing grace.

You bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. There aren't going to be any peacocks in heaven, not going to be any boasters in heaven, only those who've trusted the grace of God. Would you pray like this? Lord Jesus, I need to be saved. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me, Jesus. I trust in your grace, in your love. I believe you. In your holy name. Amen.

# How to Be Strong in Faith

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 17, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 4:16–25**

*“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.”*

ROMANS 4:16

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Promise Factor
- II. The Person Factor
- III. The Possibility Factor
  - A. The Confidence of God’s Promise
  - B. The Confidence of God’s Ability
- IV. The Performance Factor
- V. The Praise Factor

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and be finding the book of Romans, chapter 4. Romans has been called, and rightly so, the “Constitution of Christianity.” And, we often say from time to time, if we were shipwrecked on a desert island and had only one book of the Bible that we could take with us, it would be the book of Romans. I truly believe for my own heart that would be so, although it would be hard to leave the Psalms and the Gospel of John behind and so many other books that we would like to take with us to that desert island. Thank God for the Word. Thank God for this book.

And, the subject tonight is “How to be Strong in Faith.” As we told you this morning, faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of heaven. We go to the grocery store and you want food, you give dollars. You want gasoline, you give dollars. You pay your rent with dollars. But, in heaven, we offer to God, in exchange for what we need, faith. *“According to your faith be it unto you.”* (Matthew 9:29) And, the scripture that we’re going to be reading tonight tells us how to have strong faith.

Archimedes was a philosopher and physicist, and Archimedes said, “If you give me a lever long enough and a fulcrum to rest it on and a place to stand, I can move the

earth.” That’s the law of physics. He could. Just give him a lever long enough, a fulcrum to rest it on, and a place to stand, and he would be able to just move the earth out of its orbit. Well, my dear friend, that lever is faith. The fulcrum is the Word of God. The place to stand is in that Word, and by it and through it we can move not only the earth but heaven as well, when we learn to be great believers.

I want us to begin in verse 16. And, look at it—Romans chapter 4, verse 16: *“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end [that] the promise might be sure.”* (Romans 4:16) And really, folks, I don’t even intend to dwell with this part, but just let me say this is an incredible argument. And, Paul is a great logician—a lawyer, as it were—anointed with the Holy Spirit. But, you see, salvation is by grace, and, therefore, it must be of faith. Look at it again. See, therefore, *“it is of faith, that it might be by grace.”* (Romans 4:16) Now, if there is anything required for salvation other than faith, then it can’t be of grace.

For example, suppose God said, “Everybody who wants to be saved, give one hundred dollars.” Well, that seems simple enough. But, the only problem is some people don’t have one hundred dollars. Suppose God said, “Everybody who wants to be saved, run around the block.” Well, that seems simple enough, but some little crippled children can’t run. I mean, dear friend, there is one thing that anyone and everyone can do, and what is that? Believe! Isn’t that beautiful?

You see, it’s so simple. Look: *“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace”*—if it were of anything other than faith, it would not necessarily be of grace. But—*“it is of faith, that it might be [of] grace”*—now, look at it—*“to the end [that] the promise might be sure.”* (Romans 5:16) If I depend upon anything other than faith in God’s grace, I can never be sure I’m saved. If I depend upon works for one percent of my salvation—ten percent, twenty percent, fifty percent, ninety-nine percent; it matters not what percentage it is—if any percentage depends upon me, I can never be sure. I can’t be sure. “Adrian, are you saved?” “Well, I hope so. I’m doing the best I can. I lived pretty good today, but I did lose my temper with that guy that headed me off on the expressway. I hope I’m saved.” But, I would never know for certain whether I was saved or not if I depended upon anything. By the way, that’s only an illustration. I kept my temper all the way home. But anyway—you’ll be happy to know what an even-tempered pastor you have—but the point being that keeping my temper doesn’t keep me saved. I am saved by grace, “and, therefore, it must be by faith that the promise is sure.” (Romans 4:16) Isn’t that a beautiful thing?

Now folks, that’s all for free. That doesn’t even pertain to the message tonight except to say how important faith is. But now, listen to it: *“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end [that] the promise might be sure to all the seed”*—and that means, dear friend, to everybody, because believing is something everyone can do—*“not to that*

*only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.*" (Romans 4:16) Now, Abraham was the brightest star in the Hebrew heaven. He is the father of the faithful—but not only to the Jewish people. That's what he's saying. But, *"[he] is the father of us all."* (Romans 4:16) He is the father of faith. He is the classic illustration for every one of us—Abraham. And, God did some incredible things with Abraham. And, the point that we're going to see here in just a moment, as we continue to read, is Abraham, who received such an incredible miracle from God when God gave him a son, Isaac, when both he and Sarah were past the age to have children—when God did that, God performed a miracle, and the point being is this: that Abraham, who is the father of us all, is the father of the faithful. And, if we believe as he believed, we can receive as he received. That's the point. If we believe as he believed, then we can receive as he received.

Now, watch it. Now, it says here, *"That also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all"*—verse 17—*"(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed"*—underscore that phrase "whom he believed"—*"even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith"*—underscore that—*"being not weak in faith"*—here's where I get the title for our message, "How to be Strong in Faith"—*"And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither...the deadness of Sarah's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness"*—now, watch this. Verse 23. Underscore this—*"Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; But for us also"*—folks, this is for you. What happened to Abraham is for you—*"But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification."* (Romans 4:16–25) Now, Abraham, I say, is the example—the father of the faithful. And, what happened to Abraham the Bible makes it emphatically, perfectly, crystalline clear that that is to be an example, a pattern, for Adrian Rogers and for you in this day and age in which we live.

Now, let me tell you something really wonderful, something that thrills me: you know, Abraham wasn't such a hot guy—I mean, really. Abraham did some pretty raunchy things, some pretty bad things. You read the story of Abraham. And, we talk about Abraham being so wonderful—"Father Abraham, the father of the faithful," and this and that and so forth. But, you just read the life of Abraham; see what he did. Now, he fathered a child out of wedlock, lied about his wife and put her into jeopardy. He

disobeyed God on several occasions and had some halfway obedience and other things. I mean, really, don't get a romanticized idea about old Abe—that he was just, you know, just absolutely perfect, never had any flaws, never had any problems. Folks, he did, but the wonderful thing is this: when you read about him in the New Testament, you don't read about his failures; you read about his faith. And, that's a great blessing to me—that God buried his failures in the grave of His forgetfulness and God remembered his faith. Isn't that wonderful? Isn't that an encouragement?

So, if you want God to smile upon you, you may be weak like old Abraham... And, I'm not trying to make an excuse for my sin, his sin, or anybody's sin, but I'm just trying to tell you that in the New Testament, the Bible does not mention Abraham's failures; it mentions Abraham's faith and then calls Abraham up as an example to the rest of us. And so, I want God to remember me as He remembered Abraham, and what it was that pleased God that Abraham did that I want to do. The Bible says this about Abraham. God is so pleased that “[Abraham] was strong in faith”—“strong in faith.” (Romans 4:20) You want to be strong in faith? I hope so, because again, the measure of God's blessing to you is your faith. “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matthew 9:29)—not your fame, your feeling, your figures, your finances, but your faith be it unto you.

May I give you tonight, in this passage of Scripture, five faith factors? Okay, five faith factors. And, these five factors will enable you to be strong in faith. Now, I'm not going to give you out of my own well, like something I thought up, some hunch, some idea that I have. This is going to come absolutely directly out of the Word of God—the Word of God that God has given us here, that we might be strong in faith. Abraham was strong in faith; because he was strong in faith, God blessed him. And then, the Bible says this is written for us; he is our example.

## I. The Promise Factor

Faith factor number one is the promise factor. Write it down: the promise factor. If you would have strong faith, you must get a promise from God. Do you have it? The promise factor. If you would have strong faith, you must—you must—get a promise from God. Look, if you will now, in verses 16–18. Romans 4:16: “Therefore it is [by] faith, that it might be [of] grace; to the end”—watch—“[that] the promise”—“the promise”—“might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,)”—that's what God said to Abraham—“I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations”—now, watch this; underscore it—“according to that which was spoken”—“according to that which was

*spoken.*” (Romans 4:16–18)

Why did Abraham have faith? Because God spoke to him; God gave him a promise. I cannot say this emphatically enough: without a promise from God, there can be no faith. Without a word from God, there can be no faith. You cannot ask God for faith about anything if you’re merely guessing at the will of God. You must get a promise from God. You must get a word from God. You see, faith is not man’s way of getting man’s will done in heaven, but it is God’s way of getting God’s will done on earth. Faith is not some way that we superimpose our will on heaven, conjure up and think up some ideas that we want, and say, “Now I’m going to believe God for this,” and get it. When you put it that way, that puts you in control. The other way puts God in control. You’ve got to hear from God in order to have faith. So many of our prayers are trying to bend God’s will to fit our will, and we’re trying to get God to cooperate with us rather than our cooperating with God.

Now, God has not promised, “If you have enough faith, I’ll do whatever you want.” But, my folks, there are a lot of people who believe just that way: “If I only had enough faith, I could have whatever I want.” That is not so. You cannot have faith for anything that is not the will of God. And, if you think what you had is faith, it was not faith if it was not the will of God because God dispenses faith. And, you can’t have faith until God gives you faith. And, God is not going to give you faith for anything that’s not His will. You cannot have faith apart from the will of God, the purpose of God. And, the will of God and the purpose of God is found in the Word of God and the promise of God.

Now, the Bible says in Romans 10:17: *“faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”*—*“faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing [comes from a] word of God.”* (Romans 10:17) Now, learn this about faith: faith is not positive thinking. I believe in positive thinking. I like to be around Zig Ziglar. He gets me charged up. But, positive thinking and faith are not the same thing. Positive thinking is not wrong. I believe that a Christian ought to be a glowing optimist, and I believe that we ought to be positive and not negative. As a matter of fact, after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, there’s not a negative verse in the Bible. Friend, listen, it is so positive. But, faith is not merely positive thinking. Positive thinking may spring out of faith, but faith and positive thinking are not the same. Faith is not just following a hunch. Do you ever get a hunch? You say, “Well, I just think I’m going to put faith in that hunch.” That’s not faith. Faith is not hoping for the best. I think it’s good to hope for the best, but that’s not what faith is. Faith is not a feeling of optimism, although there’s nothing wrong with optimism. Faith is a response to the Word of God. You must hear God—not hear about God; you must hear God.

Now listen, I want you to look at it very carefully here in verse 17: *“(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed.”* (Romans 4:17) He believed God. God spoke, and Abraham said, “Yes, sir. That’s right, Lord.” He

believed God. I mean, in believing the promise, he was believing the Promiser. A man must hear God.

Now, in Romans chapter 10, verse 14—look at it in the King James, if you have the King James, or whatever you're having there—Romans 10, verse 14. Look, if you will, in this passage of Scripture. It asks a very interesting question. Romans 10, verse 14: *“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?”* (Romans 10:14) Do you see that preposition there—“in whom”? Well, that's fine, and it may be correctly translated that way. But, the New American Standard puts it this way: “How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard?” Now, what's the difference? Well, what it is talking about is this: that both verses, properly interpreted, mean the same thing. But, what it's saying is this: that we must hear from God. That's the reason that you have all of John chapter 15—John chapter 15, which speaks of abiding in Christ and He abides in us. (John 15:5) And, when we abide in Him and His Word abides in us, then we *“ask what [we] will, and it [is] done [to us].”* (John 15:6)

Now, we may get a promise right out of the Word of God, or the Holy Spirit of God may take the general truths of the Bible and specify a promise to us. But friend, you must abide in Him. You must fellowship with Him. You must allow the Spirit of God to speak to you and take the Word and make the Word alive in your heart so that you get a promise from God. You must hear from God in order to have faith. Have you got it? There is the promise factor. Do you have it? The promise factor. That's factor number one of these five faith factors.

## **II. The Person Factor**

Now, here's the second faith factor that we find here in this passage of Scripture: not only must you get a promise from God, not only must you hear from God, but there is the person factor—the person factor. Not only must you get a promise from God, but if you would have faith, you must know the character of God. Now, what good is a promise from anybody who doesn't have character? You see, the promise is no better than the man or the personality who makes the promise.

Now, look again, and you're going to find out that Abraham knew not only the promise, but he also knew the person. Look, if you will, in verse 17 now of this same chapter—Romans chapter 4 and verse 17: *“(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God”*—now, watch; here's a description of God—*“who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.”* (Romans 4:17) Now, Abraham believed God because he knew the character, the traits, of God. You see, you cannot trust somebody that you do not know. And, Abraham knew God. He knew that God had two great characteristics. Here they are: number one, to give life out of death; and to make something out of nothing. Those

are the two things that God has cornered the market on. Nobody else can do those two things. Do you see it? Look at it. It's right there. It says, "*He believed... God, who*"—number one—"*[quicken] the dead*"—do you know anybody else who can do that other than God? Nobody. Nobody can bring life out of death—"*and [who] calleth those things which be not as though they were.*" (Romans 4:17) That means He makes something out of nothing. Those are God's two specialties, that God is the only One who can do that.

You see, the Bible says, "*They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.*" (Psalms 9:10) You've got to know God in order to trust Him. Everything in the Christian life, and especially the life of faith, depends upon an adequate understanding of the character of God. An illustration of that you find in the New Testament, where there was a centurion who had a servant who was sick. And, the people said to Jesus, "You need to go heal that centurion's servant." And, Jesus was on His way to heal the centurion's servant, and when the centurion, the army officer, came and found out that Jesus was coming toward his house, he sent a messenger out and said, "Jesus, I'm not worthy that you would come under my roof, but you just speak the word and my servant will be healed." (Matthew 8:8) And then, he said, "For I, too, am a man set under authority. And, I say to this man, 'Go,' and he goes, and this man, 'Come,' and he comes. And so, Lord, if you will just speak the word, my servant will be healed." (Matthew 8:9) Now, this army officer, who was under the general, knew that he was over the private because he was under the general. He said, "I'm a man under authority. Because I'm under authority as an army officer, I can say to this man, 'Go,' and he goes, and I can say to this man, 'Come,' and he comes." And, he says, "Jesus, I know that's the way you work. You're under the authority of heaven, and because you're under the authority of heaven, you have authority over this sickness. You can tell this sickness to go, and it will go. And, you can tell health to come, and health will come. Because you're under, you're over." And, Jesus stepped back, and the Bible says that "*Jesus... marvelled*"—"*Jesus... marvelled.*" (Matthew 8:10)

Now, when you cause Jesus to marvel—I mean, when you astound Jesus—you've done something. Jesus stepped back, and He marveled. And, Jesus said to this Gentile, "I haven't seen faith like this in all of Israel. You've got more faith than any Jew I've ever seen." (Matthew 8:10) Here's a Gentile. Now, where did that Gentile's faith come from? It came from an adequate understanding of the character and the nature of Jesus Christ. You see, because he knew who Jesus was, he had great faith. He said, "I am like you, Jesus, and I understand who you are. I see the way you operate." Why did Abraham have such great faith? Because Abraham knew the character of God. He knew the person of God. He knew the personality of God. You see, friend, it is not primarily great faith in God that we need, although I'm not against great faith, but it's

faith in a great God that we need. It is the greatness of God that causes us to have faith in Him. You must understand who God is.

Now, if your faith is weak, may I tell you, do not make it your ambition to have strong faith. If your faith is weak, make it your ambition to get to know God. Make it your ambition—the same ambition that the Apostle Paul in the book of Philippians had when he said, “[Oh,] *that I may know him.*” (Philippians 3:10) And friend, when you know Him, to know Him is to trust Him, and to trust Him is to obey Him, and to obey Him is to be blessed. But, you cannot trust someone you do not know. You’ve got to know the character of God. There is the promise factor. Yes, you’ve got to get a promise from God. But, a promise from a person who doesn’t have the right character—what good is that? And so, Abraham said, “God specializes in two things: God specializes in bringing life from death, and God specializes in making something out of nothing.” So, you want Him to make something out of you? Are you willing to be nothing? If you’re willing to be nothing, He can make something out of you. He makes something out of nothing. Just bring your deadness to Him, and He—and He alone—will give you life. And, it’s so important that we see this.

And look, if you will, in verses 18 and 19. You’ve got a big problem. Okay, here’s your problem. Abraham had a big problem. God said, “Abraham, I’m going to give you a son,” but at that time, Abraham was an old man and Sarah was past menopause. And, it was impossible, humanly speaking, for her to have children. But now, look at it. Look in verse 18. Here’s what I’m calling the person factor: “*Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be*”—now, what’s he doing? Look in verse 19—“*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: He staggered not at the promise of God.*” (Romans 4:18–20) What he did was to glance at his problem and gaze at his God. He didn’t see how big the problem was; he just saw how great God is—that God brings life out of death and God makes something out of nothing. And, the fact that Sarah’s womb was dead and the fact that he was a hundred years old did not diminish that, because God specializes in making something out of nothing.

All right, so that’s the second factor. First factor: the promise factor—you’ve got to have a promise. Second factor: the person factor—you’ve got to get a focus on who it is that you’re trusting. Glance at your problems; gaze upon your God. Get to know God.

### **III. The Possibility Factor**

Ready? Let’s move to the third factor. The third factor is the possibility factor—the possibility factor. You need to renounce all confidence in human resources. Look in verse 18. It’s a little hard to interpret, but it’s a beautiful verse. It speaks of Abraham,

*“who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.”* (Romans 4:18) Now, he speaks of two hopes here, and the word *hope* means “confidence”—“confidence.” It speaks of two forms of confidence.

#### **A. The Confidence of God’s Promise**

Now, the first hope speaks of the confidence of God’s promise. God said to Abraham, “Abraham, I’m going to give you a son.” Abraham says, “Well, I’m a hundred years old. And, Sarah’s womb is shriveled, and it’s impossible for her to conceive.” But, God says, “I’m going to do it.” So, the first hope is the confidence that Abraham had in God’s promise.

#### **B. The Confidence of God’s Ability**

The second hope that he had was hope in his own ability, and in his own ability it was hopeless. So, what did Abraham do? He faced the problem, but he focused on the promise and the person of the promise. You see, Abraham here was faced with two impossibilities—two impossibilities. First impossibility is that he could have a son. Impossible! He has no procreative powers. He’s dead physically to generate a son. He can’t do it. And, Sarah can’t conceive. It’s impossible. Now, he’s faced with another impossibility over here: it’s impossible for God to lie. “God can’t lie, and I can’t have a child. Now, I’ve got two impossibilities. One impossibility is it’s impossible for me have a child. The other impossibility—it’s impossible for God to lie.” So, he just says, “I’ll just mark out this impossibility over here, and I’ll turn this one into a possibility since God cannot lie. I’m going to believe that God means what He says.” Now, that’s what it means when it says, *“Against hope [he] believed in hope.”* (Romans 4:18) Here was the hope, on the one hand, that he could do it; hope, on the other hand, that God will not lie and that God will keep His word.

Now friend, God cannot break His word, and God cannot fail. There’s the possibility factor. Don’t you say that something is impossible if you get a promise from God. *“With God all things are”—what?—“possible”—“possible.”* (Matthew 19:26; Mark 10:27) You see, so many times we take the promises of God, and we parade them past the judgment bar of our mind. And, we say, “That’s possible,” or, “That’s not possible,” and we put the human factor onto it. The great Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, said, “Look at yourself, and doubts will increase. Look at Jesus, and they will disappear.” And so, there must be the promise factor. There must be the person factor. There must be the possibility factor. And, these follow one, two, three. God makes a promise. Okay, who is that that makes the promise? God makes the promise. And so, since there’s a promise and since it’s God that’s making the promise, then we know that the possibility factor is there, according to verse 18. Look at it again: *“Who against hope believed in*

*hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken.*" (Romans 4:18) He just simply stood on the Word of God.

#### **IV. The Performance Factor**

Now, you ready for factor four of five faith factors? Okay, here's factor four, and it's so very, very important. You might come one, two, three, and be doing just fine up to this point and still not have Bible faith and not believe God as Abraham believed God. And, the fourth factor is the performance factor—the performance factor. Learn to cooperate with God. Look, if you will now, in verse 20 of this same chapter: *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief"*—oh, I love that—*"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded...what he had promised, he was able to perform."* (Romans 4:20–21)

Now, here's a question for you: Who did this? Did God do it or did Abraham do it? I mean, the conceiving of Isaac in Sarah's womb—did God do it or did Abraham do it? The answer to that question is yes—yes. God did it, but Abraham did it. I mean, I don't want to be crude about it, but Abraham and Sarah went to bed together. And, he fathered a child. And yet, the Bible says that *"what [God] promised, [God] was able...to perform."* (Romans 4:21) Now, I want you to see, my dear friend, how faith and works merge together. And, when the Bible speaks of Abraham as being the father of the faithful in Hebrews chapter 11, which is God's hall of fame for the faithful, the Bible says there, *"By faith Abraham...obeyed"*—*"By faith Abraham...obeyed."* (Hebrews 11:8) There is the obedience of faith. And, the natural and the supernatural cooperated together. Abraham did father that son, and Sarah did go into the maternity ward, or whatever they had, and gave birth to that son. And yet, the Bible says God did it. That's so important—so important.

What is believing God? Is it just sitting around? Not at all, my dear friend. To believe is to obey. And, even our English word *believe* comes from an old English word "by-live." Whatever we really believe, we live by; the rest is just religious talk. By-live—believe. There's the natural and the supernatural that cooperated together. God did it, and Abraham did it. And, Abraham couldn't have done it without God, and God wouldn't have done it without Abraham. And, there was the actual cohabitation of Sarah and Abraham, and Sarah went into the delivery room and gave birth to a baby. And yet, the Bible says that God did it—faith and works together.

Turn to James chapter 2 now. Just keep your Bibles open, and turn to the book of James chapter 2. And, let's look at that classic passage again. It's so important. James chapter 2, verse 21: *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?"*—now, this is talking about another episode: not the conception of Isaac, but the offering of Isaac—*"Was [he not] justified by works,*

*when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?*—the word *perfect* there means “mature” or “complete”—“*And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.*”

(James 2:21–23) Now, what does that mean? It means, my friend, that faith without works is a hollow profession. Works are the proof and the product of faith. *We're not saved by faith and works, but we're saved by faith that works.* To believe is to obey.

Let me give you another passage here. Just turn to 1 Corinthians here for a moment, and look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3—1 Corinthians chapter 3. God tells us a little bit about farming. I'm going to begin reading in verse 6. Paul is using the analogy of farming for his ministry, and he says, “*I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So...neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.*” (1 Corinthians 3:6–7) Now, a lot of you are planting gardens this spring—me excused. If there's one thing I do not have, it is a green thumb—and never have had. I don't know; I can't understand it. It might be laziness; it might be something else. I don't know what it is, but I can't do it. If you've got any fresh vegetables... But listen, Paul says, “I planted; Apollos watered. God caused it to grow.” (1 Corinthians 3:6) Now, there's not a farmer in the world that can cause a crop without God causing the seed to germinate, God causing it to grow. That's the supernatural work of God. Every seed is a miracle—every seed is a miracle. All growth comes from God. All life, whether it be spiritual, physical, vegetable, animal—it's all of God. It's of God.

Now, suppose you and I go down here to Mississippi—or, over here somewhere in West Tennessee, or over in Arkansas—and we see a farmer sitting on his front porch, just sitting back there in a rocking chair. And, we say to that farmer—say, “What are you doing?” He says, “Well, I'm farming.” And, I say, “Well, how are you farming?” He says, “Well, you know, I'm just depending upon God for a crop.” I said, “Where's your seed?” “Seed's in the barn.” “What about your fields?” “Well, I haven't ploughed the fields.” “What about your weed control?” “I'm doing nothing about it.” “What about fertilizer?” “I'm not worried about that. Listen, mister, I am farming by faith.” Well, I'll tell you one thing: he won't have a crop—he won't have a crop. Now, he can't have a crop without God, but he won't have a crop. I mean, he's got to plant. He's got to cultivate. But, it is God that gives the increase. (1 Corinthians 3:6) And so, it is with faith.

“*Faith without works is dead.*” (James 2:20) Abraham and Sarah did cooperate with God. And, you have the natural and the supernatural working together, and that doesn't mean you're not trusting God when you get up and do something about it. My dear friend, it means that you are trusting God. So, there's the performance factor. It's so very, very important.

## V. The Praise Factor

Now, let me give you the last of these five faith factors to have a strong faith. And, they're right here in the Word of God. The last factor—and what a wonderful factor it is—is the praise factor. Look, if you will now, in verse 20: *“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God”*—*“giving glory to God.”* (Romans 4:20) That's the praise factor. He gave praise. One translation gives it this way: “He gave praise to God for the miracle that was to be wrought through him”—“He gave praise to God for the miracle that was to be wrought through him.”

Now, we say that faith and works are inseparable. I want to say also that faith and praise are inseparable, I believe. I mean, you just need to learn how to praise God. I mean, listen, folks, when you, first of all, you get the promise factor. You see a promise; praise Him. And then, when you see the person factor, you see who He is; praise Him. And then, when you see the very possibility factor—that it's impossible from man's viewpoint but it's possible from God's viewpoint—begin to praise Him. When you see the performance factor—that, Lord, you're going to use me to do it—begin to praise Him. And, as you praise Him, you're going to find faith just growing in your heart.

Do you know what praise is? May I tell you what praise is? *Praise is faith turned inside out.* When the faith is in there, it just comes out in the form of praise. And, may I tell you that praise strengthens faith, and faith strengthens praise, and praise strengthens faith, and faith strengthens praise, and there's a reciprocal action there? And, praise, makes faith shout. And, when faith hears the shout of praise, it turns stronger and stronger.

## Conclusion

Those are five wonderful, wonderful principles in order to have faith. And, I think that the clue to the whole thing is hearing God, hearing from God, getting a promise from God, and we have to be quiet and still to know God.

Now, look at the conclusion. I'm finished. Look in verses 22 and following here if you're not saved. The Bible says, *“And...it was [imparted] to him for righteousness”*—not only did he get a son; oh, my friend, he got salvation—*“Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him”*—God said, “Abraham, you're my child. You're my son. You're going to heaven.” But, it wasn't written for his sake alone—*“But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead”*—now, what is all this about? Well, here's what it's about: just as God raised up Isaac from Sarah's dead womb, God raised up Jesus from that stony tomb. And, just as God gave Abraham salvation when Abraham believed, looking forward to Jesus, God gives us salvation—“if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences”—that is, He died for our sins—*“and was*

*raised again for our justification.” (Romans 4:22–25)*

Now listen, would you like to put this in practice tonight? If you’re not saved, let me tell you how to do it. You’ve got a promise from God: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) You are dead in trespasses and sins, and He will bring life out of death. You are nothing in the sight of God, but He will make something out of nothing if you’ll just trust Him.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Father, I pray tonight that many in this building will trust in Christ and be saved. And Lord, even if they’re church members, but they’ve never been saved, may tonight they say an everlasting “yes” to Christ and be saved. And Lord, if there are those here tonight who need to be a part of the Bellevue fellowship, I pray that you will give them to us in fellowship tonight. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

# How to Be Strong in the Faith

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 1, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 4:16–25**

*“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.”*

ROMANS 4:16

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Strong Faith Receives the Gift of God
- II. Strong Faith Releases the Grace of God
- III. Strong Faith Respects the Greatness of God
- IV. Strong Faith Regards the Guidance of God
- V. Strong Faith Reflects the Glory of God

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be finding Romans chapter 4, and as you're finding Romans chapter 4, I want you to imagine something. I want you to imagine two letters that have been placed in the mailbox. One letter is on crisp, embossed stationery, very expensive stationery. It is typed impeccably. It is full of cogent thoughts, not one word is misspelled, not a smudge on that letter, but it has no stamp on its place, in the mailbox. Another letter, written in a pencil, written on inferior paper, with many misspellings, smudged and dirty, is dropped into the same mailbox, but this letter has a stamp on it. Now, which letter is going to be delivered? The one that is beautiful with no stamp, or the one, though inferior, that has a stamp on it? Well, you know the answer.

Now, folks, in the spiritual life, in the Christian life, faith is that stamp. Now, some of us may look better than others, but you know what God looks for? God looks for the stamp of faith upon our lives. I want to talk to you about faith, strong faith, and how to have it. We've been studying about Abraham, and when God called Abraham, God said to Abraham, Abraham, through you all the nations of the world are going to be blessed. Now, God did not want to make the Jewish nation simply a reservoir of blessing; He wanted to make them a channel of blessing, that through them all the nations of the world would be blessed. And God did not bring you here today to make you simply a

reservoir of blessing, to have you sit, soak, and sour, but to make you a channel of blessing. And the same way that God made Abraham a blessing, God will make you a blessing, and God made Abraham a blessing by faith. And the scripture that we're going to study today talks about Abraham's faith, and the Bible tells us that it was strong faith. Would you like to be strong in faith—would you?

Well, let's read here in God's Word, beginning in verse 16—Romans 4, verse 16. The Bible now is talking about our relationship to God, and it says, "Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end, that the promise might be sure to all the seed,"—that is, to all of Abraham's descendants—"not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham who is the father of us all, Jew and Gentile." Now, we can all call him father Abraham. "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations." Look at all of these flags. Abraham, "father of many nations, before him whom he believed." Abraham believed God, that's what that means. "Even God, who quickeneth the dead"—the word quickeneth means He brings the dead to life—"and calleth those things which be not as thou they were,"—that is, He brings something out of nothing. And then he speaks again of Abraham—"who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed"—or thy descendants—"be." And now watch this—verse 19: "And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb." Oh, I love this verse—watch it: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was..."—here's our key, are you reading?—"but was strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what he"—that is, God—"had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness." Now, watch this—this is not just ancient history. Look now in verse 23: "Now, it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him,"—in other words, God did not have a message for Abraham only and not for us—"but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed. If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our justification." It's clear, folks, what happened to Abraham so long ago is an example and a lesson to us.

Now, why is faith so important? Friend, you can't please God without faith. The Bible says, without faith it is impossible to please Him, and if you please God, it doesn't matter whom you displease. And if you displease God, it doesn't really matter whom you please. And the way to please God is to believe God—Hebrews 11 and verse 6. Folks, you can't be saved apart from faith: "For by grace are ye saved through faith, therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ," and anybody who is in this building today can be saved if they will put their faith where God put their sins, upon the Lord Jesus Christ. We're saved by faith. It's faith, friend, that

enables us to live the Christian life. Some folks here are stumbling and failing; other folks are victorious. What is the difference? It's the difference in those two letters I told you about. By faith—the Bible says, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Some are overcomers and some are overcome. What is the difference? The difference is faith. Some folks have a bright hope for heaven. To some people heaven is very real. To others it's not real. But for those who have faith, "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Heaven is just as real to some folks as if they were already there. What makes the difference? Faith makes the difference.

Now, what is faith? Listen carefully—listen carefully. What is faith? Faith is not a hunch; faith is not positive thinking; faith is not believing everything will work out. Faith is taking God at His word. Are you listening? Did you hear that? Faith is taking God at His word. Faith is not responding to emotions, feelings, icicles up and down your spine, miracles and signs. Faith is not believing simply that God can; faith is knowing that God will. Real faith, strong faith, is deaf to doubt. It is dumb to discouragement. It is blind to impossibilities. It knows that God will. Now, this is the kind of faith we need, and we're going to learn the kind of faith that Abraham had, and then we're going to learn that what Abraham experienced, we can experience. Now, folks, if we believe as Abraham believed, we will achieve as Abraham achieved. That's what this passage is all about we're studying, and what an encouragement this ought to be to us.

You say, Adrian, the illustration that you used about the smudged letter, was that a good illustration—because are you encouraging us to have a smudged life? No, no. Well, let me tell you something wonderful. Abraham smudged the letter, if you'll read the Old Testament. I mean, he did some dumb, boneheaded things. Abraham made some industrial strength mistakes; he really did. You study the life of Abraham, he wasn't perfect by any stretch of the imagination. But, you know, Brother Jim Whitmire, in the New Testament, you can't read one word about all of his mistakes—not one, not one. Do you know what God remembered Abraham for? Not his failure but his faith. Isn't that great—isn't that great? It's the stamp of faith that God is looking for.

Now, the Bible says that Abraham was strong in faith. Would you like to be strong in faith—would you? Let me mention about five things that are true about Abraham's faith that I want to be true about your faith.

## **I. Strong Faith Receives the Gift of God**

First of all, write down the word gift—g-i-f-t. See, strong faith is received as a gift of God. Strong faith is a gift of God. Now, look, if you will again, in verse 16—chapter 4 and verse 16. You're going to see here, "Therefore, it is of faith that it might be by grace." Now, what is grace? Well, grace is God taking the initiative. Grace is the unmerited favor of God given to sinners such as where there is no merit whatsoever.

Now folks, salvation is the grace gift of God, but so is the faith that we have to receive that salvation. Now, grace is not the reward for our faith; it's grace that takes the initiative to give us that faith. You don't generate faith; you are totally depraved by nature. There's nothing in you that could generate faith. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, in Ephesians 2, verse 1, "And you hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." It's not just that you're sick, folks; without Jesus you are dead—you're dead. So learn this. Now, grace is not a reward for our faith. Our faith is the gift of God's grace. It's an amazing thing. You see, God must give us faith. Well, does He give us faith? Indeed He does. Well, does He give faith to some people? Put down Romans 12, verse 3—we'll get to it later, but it says that "God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith." God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith. The only reason that we could have faith is that God takes the initiative and God puts that faith in our own hearts.

Now, faith is a gift of God; faith receives the gift of God; faith receives the gift of God. Now, listen very carefully. Does that mean, therefore, that God is going to believe for you? No, He will not. You must do your own believing. Well, you say, Adrian, I thought faith was a gift of God. Indeed it is. Apart from God, you could not believe. Let me ask you a question. Is breathing a gift of God? It really is. God gives you lungs, and God gives you air, but you can smother if you want. God gives you lungs; you couldn't breathe without lungs. God gives you air; you couldn't breathe without air. But friend, you can smother if you wish, and you can fail to believe God. Now, faith is the gift of Almighty God, and thank God for that. Now, what does that mean? That means that not a mother's child in this building can say, Well, I just can't believe; it's not my fault. Yes, you can—yes, you can. If you wish to believe, you can, but you can smother the truth, and smother yourself, if you wish, but God will enable you to believe. But when you do believe, no bragging, no boasting. To God be the glory, even for that faith which is the gift of God. You see, remember what I said, that faith is simply taking God at His word? Now, you've got to find a word from God. Look in verse 13; look for the promise. See the word promise—underscore it. Look in the end of verse 14: "that the promise might be made of none effect"—underscore the word promise. Look in verse 16: "Therefore, it is of faith, that it might be by grace to the end that the promise might be sure." The promise, the promise, the promise. Faith—faith—is your response to the promises of God, the Word of God. And that's the reason that the Bible says, in Romans chapter 10, verse 17, "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by"—what?—"the Word of God." You'll never have faith if you don't get a word from God. You've got to get a promise from God in order to have faith. And, friend, the Bible is chocked full of them, the Bible is chocked full of promises. And, you see, God gives you the lungs—that's the promise; and God gives you the air. But you've got to believe, you've got to receive; it's a gift of God.

Now, we're all familiar with Billy Graham; everybody knows who Billy Graham is—

he's the great evangelist on the scene today. But, unless you know something about church history, you might not know Dwight L. Moody. But Dwight L. Moody was the Billy Graham of his day, many years ago. And Dwight L. Moody said something about faith, and I want you to listen very carefully, because it's important. He said I used to close my Bible and pray for faith—God give me faith, God give me faith, God give me faith, please—and he said faith never would grow. And then, he said, I read in the Bible in Romans chapter 10, verse 17, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." And, he said, I stopped praying for faith, and started reading my Bible, and faith just burst aflame in my heart. You see, faith is a gift of God. You've got to get into the Word of God. And, by the way, in soul winning, when we bring people to faith in Jesus Christ, if you want them to believe, you've got to get them something to believe. Give them the Word of God,—the promise, the promise, the promise. So first point, strong faith; strong faith receives the gift of God, have you got that?

## **II. Strong Faith Releases the Grace of God**

Second thing: Strong faith releases the grace of God. It receives the gift of God, and then it releases the grace of God. Look in verse 16 again: "Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace to the end that the promise might be sure." You see, faith links us to grace. We're not saved by faith; we're saved by grace. But it is faith that links us to grace. The only way that grace can ever operate is through faith. Now, Jesus died on the cross, He paid for your sins, but that does you absolutely no good until you put your faith, as I've said, where God put your sins: upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, grace is released by faith; unbelief holds grace a prisoner—unbelief holds grace a prisoner. Matthew chapter 13, verse 58, it speaks of the Lord Jesus and His hometown of Nazareth, and it says He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief—because of their unbelief. They had fettered the grace of God in their own lives. You see, the only way that the promise can be sure is if it is by grace. Look at verse 16 again: "Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace to the end that the promise might be sure." You say, Adrian, are you sure that you're saved? Yes, yes. How can you be sure? You've got a lot of confidence in yourself, don't you? I don't have any confidence in myself. You see, if I had any confidence in myself, I could never be sure. I don't know if I'm good enough or not. But, if it is by grace, then I'd be sure. That's what it says right here. Suppose everybody said, Everybody wants to be saved, run around the block. Some can't run. Everybody who wants to be saved, read a chapter of the Bible. Some can't read. Everybody who wants to be saved, give a hundred dollars. Some don't have a hundred dollars. But there's one thing that can make the promise sure, and that is grace—grace. You see, faith receives the gift of God; faith releases the grace of God.

You know, if you think that you're going to get to heaven by your good works, I'll

guarantee you you'll never be sure. You'll always be wondering, Have I done enough? You'll not have a know-so salvation; you'll have a hope-so salvation. Rather than being an exclamation point, you'll be a question mark. Until you understand it's by grace, and then you say, Praise God, Hallelujah, I know that I'm saved.

I heard about a group of people, Brother Bob, who were queuing up to get into heaven, and they were checking them into the pearly gates. And there was a long, long line. People standing at the end of the line heard some jubilation there at the front of the line; they were leaping and dancing and cheering. And they said, Go down there to a friend, said, Run down there way to the front of the line and find out what all of the good news is. He came back. He said, It is wonderful news. He said, What is it? He said, They're not counting prayer meeting attendance. Now, listen, folks. You ought to come to prayer meeting, but you don't get saved by coming to prayer meeting, or to Sunday School, or by giving your tithe, or whatever it is. You'll never have the assurance of your salvation, if you do that. But to say, Thank God, I know that I know I'm saved, it is by grace that it might be sure.

### **III. Strong Faith Respects the Greatness of God**

So, what does grace do? It receives the gift of God. I mean, what does faith do—strong faith? It receives the gift of God. What does strong faith do? It releases the grace of God. Third thing—I hope you're getting this—strong faith respects the greatness of God. Now, here's the key to his strong faith. He had respect to the greatness of God. Begin reading in verse 17: "As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations, before whom he believed,"—the whom refers to God; he refers to Abraham—"even God,"—now, watch this—"who quickeneth the dead,"—that means He gives life to the dead—"and calls those things which be nought as though they were." Now, what's he saying about this? He's saying our God specializes in two things; as a matter of fact, He's cornered the market in these two things. You want me to tell you two things that nobody else can do that only God can do? Of course there are many, but these are the two that are mentioned right here. Number one: God raises the dead. Number two: He makes something out of nothing. Now, He's cornered the market there, hasn't He? Now, this is what Abraham believes. Look at it. It says here, "He believed even God, who quickeneth the dead and calleth those things which be nought as thou they were." He's saying, God, this is your specialty. I know what you can do. You're the one, Almighty God, who brings life out of death and something out of nothing.

Well, why was this very important? Well, you have to remember now that Abraham was a hundred years old when God spoke to him, and his wife was ninety years old, and they were both past the age of procreation—that is, having children. Look, if you will here, in verse 19: "And being not weak in faith he considered not his own body now

dead when he was about a hundred years old, neither the deadness of Sarah's womb." Now, what he's talking about is that Abraham, a hundred years old, is past the age, he's impotent, and Sarah's been through the menopause; there's no way they can have a baby. But he says, Now, wait a minute. God, wait a minute. God, you're a God who brings life out of death. You're a God that brings something out of nothing. And what strong faith does, it doesn't look at the problem; it looks to God, Almighty God. So Abraham, coming out of the maternity ward on a cane, said, It's a boy! Can you imagine—can you imagine? How do you explain that? A miracle of God.

Now, the Bible says that Abraham had respect to the greatness of God. Do you know that people with weak faith just have a small God? Listen. If your faith is weak, you need to get to know God. The Bible says, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Glance at your problem; gaze at your God. Notice here in verse 18—look at it, it speaks of Abraham. Now, watch this: "Who against hope believed in hope." Now, look up here, and let me ask you a question. Do you think you're hopeless—do you? Do you think there's no hope for you? Do you think God is finished with you, or never got started with you? Listen to me. Do you think that other people can know God, but not you? Friend, let me tell you, God sent me here to tell you that God has hope for you. Now, you listen to me. Look now in verse 18: "Who against hope"—that is, human hope—"believed in hope." That is, there is human hope—impossible; there is heavenly hope—with God all things are possible. Now, the difference is that Abraham now looked at God, God who can bring life out of death and make something out of nothing, and Abraham said, I am going to believe in that God. Now, don't you look at yourself; don't you look at your problems; don't you dare say that you're hopeless. You are not! You are not! God can bring life to you, and God will make something out of you. And, by the way, the only thing that God makes something out of is nothing, and so, if you'll become nothing, He'll make something out of you—when you stop trying, and let God. You see, Abraham was faced with two impossibilities. First impossibility: that he could have a child—impossible. Second impossibility: that God can tell a lie. So, he just says, I'll forget that impossibility, and I'll take this one, and that impossibility became possibility, because God did exactly what He said He would do, because God cannot lie, and Abraham had a promise from God.

#### **IV. Strong Faith Regards the Guidance of God**

Now, are you following? Strong faith receives the gift of God; God enables you to believe. Strong faith releases the grace of God, so you can be sure. Strong faith respects the character of God. God is God, and when you see that God is God, then you're going to have strong faith. Faith, mighty faith, the promise, looks to God alone, laughs at impossibilities, and says it shall be done. Now, the next thing. Strong faith—

watch this now—regards the guidance of God. Strong faith regards the guidance of God. Look in verses 20 and 21: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform." Now, who did the miracle? Who caused Isaac to be born—the son of promise—who caused it? Well, the Bible says what God promises God performed it. Well, I want to ask you a question. Do you think that Abraham and Sarah slept together? Of course they did. Now, I don't mean to be crude or vulgar, but God did it—but God did it through Abraham and Sarah. Are you listening? Listen, now. Let me tell you something. Real faith responds to the guidance of God. And, real faith doesn't just sit back and say, Well, God, you said you're going to give us a son, and that's all there is to it. No, Abraham and Sarah certainly did their part, and, you see, there was the obedience of faith. Put this verse down in your margin—Hebrews chapter 11, verse 8, when it speaks of Abraham and his faith, and it says, "By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive as an inheritance, obeyed." Now, the point I'm trying to get out of that is by faith he obeyed. Faith is more of a verb than a noun. You know the difference between belief and faith? Faith is belief with legs on it. Strong faith not only believes that God can, but it believes that God will, and God will do it by me.

Now, we cannot be in this passage without going to James chapter 2. Don't turn to it; I'm going to read it to you. But put it in your margin—James 2, verses 21 through 23. Now, remember that the Bible says that Abraham was justified by grace, by faith. But now notice what old James said. He says, "Was Abraham our father not justified by works when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?" Now, remember this—this was after he'd already been justified by faith; now it says he's justified by works. "Saying, seest thou how faith was wrought with his works and by works was faith made perfect. And the scripture was fulfilled that saith that Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness, and he is called the friend of God." What does all of that mean? Are James and Paul in contradiction? No. You have to understand it. You see, Paul is talking about being justified before God. James is talking about being justified before men—not that men justify us, but that men can see. James says, Listen. You show me your faith without your works; I will show you my faith by my works.

Now, listen very carefully. You are not saved by faith and works, but you are saved by faith that works. Did you hear that? You are not saved by faith and works; you are saved by faith that works. You are justified by faith alone, but the faith that justifies is never alone. It always has works. If your religion hasn't changed your life, you'd better change your religion. I mean, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature, and when God does something in your heart and in your life, it will be seen. That's the reason, I'm going to, in a moment, give you an invitation to come forward and confess

your faith in Jesus Christ. Now, you just sit back there, and you say, Well, I'm trusting Him, but I'm not going to make it be known, I'm not going to take any stand—then you're not really trusting Him. The Bible says, when we believe on Him, we'll not be ashamed of Him. Faith without works is dead. Walking down this aisle won't save anybody, but what it indicates will save everybody. If you love Him enough that you're not ashamed of Him to make it public, open, and glorify the Lord Jesus; Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of me and my word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father." It's very clear, folks, that Abraham and Sarah did something because of their faith. You see, faith responds to the guidance of God. Faith is acting upon what we know to be true. We faithfully obey. And I'm going to tell you something. If you have Paul's faith, you'll have James' works; they just simply go together.

## **V. Strong Faith Reflects the Glory of God**

Now, here's the last thing, and I must close. Here's the last thing. Faith reflects the glory of God. Look in verses 20 and 21 again: "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith,"—now, watch this—"giving glory to God." Would you like to give glory to God? Do you think your unbelief glorifies God? No! Faith reflects the glory of God. Do you know the greatest thing that you could do to give God glory? Not give a million dollars, not give your body to be burned, not go overseas as a missionary. The greatest thing that you could do to glorify God is to believe God. He "was strong in faith, giving glory to God." Faith says, God, you're trustworthy. "He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." Don't parade about your belief in a good God, a strong God, and all the rest of that, and then fail to believe Him. Believe God. Strong faith glorifies God. And then, the last two verses say this: that wasn't just written for Abraham; it was written for us. Abraham believed that God could bring death out of life and make something out of nothing. Do you believe—listen—do you believe that God raised Jesus from the dead? Do you believe He can make something out of you? Then you can be saved. That's it. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. You'll be saved. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He'll save you. And it's by grace, so you can be sure.

## **Conclusion**

Folks, isn't that good? Ain't God good? Amen. You bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, if you're not saved, you can be saved today. And remember, even the faith is a gift of God. Faith is not an emotion; it's taking God at His word, and God will enable you to do that. Why don't you pray this way: Dear God...—just pray it—dear God, I'm a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. I am

spiritually dead, and I need life. Jesus, thank you for paying for my sin on the cross. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me. Thank you for paying my sin debt with your precious blood. Oh, thank you, Jesus. And now, by faith, I trust you, Jesus. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, save me, Jesus. Lord, give me the courage now to make this public, not to be ashamed of you. And by your grace, and for your glory, I'll live for you the rest of my life, if you'll only help me. And I know you will. In your name I pray. Amen.

# Strong Faith

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 2, 1984**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 4:16–25**

*“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all.”*

ROMANS 4:16

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Promise

II. The Person

III. The Problem

IV. The Performance

V. The Praise

Conclusion

## Introduction

Say, whose the strongest person here today, who do you think? Would it be Phil Weatherwax, is he the strongest one? He looks strong to me. Well, you say, “Pastor, there’s different kinds of strength. There’s physical strength, but that’s not the only kind of strength. What about mental strength? Whose got the strongest mind?” Ah, you say, “But wait a minute, that’s not the only kind of strength. What about moral strength? Who lives the purest life?” Ah, but you say, “That’s not the only kind of strength. What about financial strength? Whose got the most money in this place?” Some of us say, “I know who doesn’t have it.” Well, let me talk to you today about a kind of strength that’s greater than any of the other strengths that I have mentioned and it is that strength of faith. I want to talk to you today about how to be strong in faith, and the title of our message today is “Strong Faith.”

Turn to Romans chapter 4 and we’re going to break right in verse 16. Paul is telling us how to be saved, and he says Romans chapter 4, verse 16, by the way, let me see how many Bibles, hold them up. Let me just look at them. Well, now isn’t that something, praise the Lord, take them down. Romans chapter 4, verse 16. Paul is talking of salvation and he says, “*Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure...*” Boy, I like that. “Of faith, that it might be by grace to

the end of the promise might be sure.”

OK, attention then dear friend, you want to know that you know that you're saved. "...to all the seed;"—to all the descendants—*“not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,)*”—That is, God said to Abraham, you're going to be a father of many nations—*“before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.”* That is, Abraham believed God was able to give life to the dead and to bring something out of nothing. That's what that verse is saying.

Verses 18–23, back to Abraham, *“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. 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: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith,”*—underscore that, strong in faith—*“giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him;”*—I'll put a star by this—*“But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed...”*

Now, all of these things didn't just happen to Abraham friend, they happened for us. I mean, here's a lesson for us—*“...if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”* Now, therefore, what happened to Abraham is not just history, dear friend, it is also a deep devotional lesson to everyone of us, to learn how to be strong in faith, because the Bible says in verse 16 here that, “Abraham is the father of us all.” That is, like father like son, we're to be like Abraham. Abraham was the brightest star in the Hebrew heavens. The Jews looked back to father Abraham, but not only the Jews, those of us who are Christians call Abraham our father also, because he is the father of all the faithful, that is, are you paying attention? Abraham is the standard of faith for all of us. God uses Abraham as an example of faith. If you want to know what faith is like, if you want to know an illustration of faith, if you want a model of faith, if you want a standard for faith, go back and study the faith of Abraham, because it happened to him as an example to us. God is saying, “If we believe as Abraham believed we will receive as Abraham received.”

Ok. Now, Abraham was father of the faithful. Abraham lived by faith and God remembered his faith. Over there in the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Hebrews, the Bible puts Abraham in the hall of fame. He was one of those who lived by faith, and by the way, this is an encouragement to me because if you study the life of Abraham, really folks, in many ways he wasn't so hot. I mean, really, he wasn't. God said, “Abraham, get

up and leave the land.” And, lead you know, get out from your kinfolks and so forth, and he took that rascal Lot with him didn’t he? And God said, “Go all the way” and he stopped off at Moran and he got down to a certain place, he lied about his wife, he called her a sister. I mean, there are a lot of things that Abraham did that weren’t so swift. Really, not so good. But, you see, the thing that I like about it is this, that God doesn’t mention any of that over there in the New Testament, God forgets his faults and remembers his faith. Isn’t that wonderful? You see, listen, listen, dear friend, it’s so wonderful when we believe God and it is counted to us for righteousness. We may be weak in many ways, like Abraham, but we can also be strong like Abraham. That is, we can be strong in faith because he the father of us. And, I want to tell you if you believe as Abraham believed then you can receive as Abraham received.

Five things I want you to learn.

## **I. The Promise**

Number one, the promise. God gave Abraham a promise. Look in verses 17 and 18.

*“(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.”* Abraham heard God. God spoke to Abraham. God gave to Abraham a promise. Now, listen folks, come up real close and listen to your pastor. There can never be faith without a promise. OK. No promise, no faith. Do you know what faith is? Believing what God has said. That’s all it is. Faith is believing the promise of God. So, if you don’t have a promise, how can you have faith? Faith is not guessing at the will of God, or faith is not cooking up something and asking God to rubberstamp it. Faith is not some way where a man’s will is done in Heaven, but faith is God’s way in which God’s will is done on earth. Faith is not trying to bend God’s will to fit our will. Faith is not just wanting something and asking God to give it to us. There can be no faith without a promise from God. Are you, I’m trying to teach you how to be strong in faith.

Now, you ought to be taking notes, and the very first thing you ought to be writing down is something like this: “I must have a promise from God.” You know, some people have the mistaken idea if I’d just have enough faith I can have whatever I want. That’s ridiculous. If you could have enough faith and then have whatever you want, that would make you God. And boy, you’d want some things you ought not to have and you’d have them and boy, I mean, it’d be a mess, it would be a mess. Have you ever thanked God for not answering your prayers? Boy, there’s one prayer, I can’t even tell you about right now, I’ll tell you about it later but, boy, I thank God He didn’t answer it, I really do. I just thank God He’s not answered my prayer. I thank God that He doesn’t give us everything

that we want and that, you see, God must give us a promise. It's not just that we have faith like money in our pocket we can spend for whatever we want. God will never give you faith for anything that is not his will, and you must know his will in order to have faith. That is, he heard from God the Bible says in verse 18. God spoke to him because the Bible says in Romans chapter 10, verse 17: "faith comes by"—what?—"hearing," and hearing by The Word of God.

A word from God literally is what it says, a remark of God, that is, when God speaks to you personally, you've got to hear God. Abraham heard God. You'll never have faith until you hear from God, you've got to hear from God in order to have faith. Now, over there in Romans chapter 10, verse 14, Paul asked the question, "...*how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?*" That's what the King James says, "how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard." But, do you know what the new American standard says? And, I prefer this translation: "How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard,"—not in whom, but whom. You see, faith is not just hearing about God, it is hearing God.

Now, you can hear about God and not have faith. Oh, you've got to hear God. That is, how do you hear God. Well, of course you're going to hear God through the Bible but you see, God takes a word from The Word. God gives you a promise, you hear from God. Now, it may be right out of the Bible, and it may be in your heart as you're praying, it'll still be based upon the Bible, it'll never be contradictory to the Bible. But, God will take His word. and God will take His spirit, and God will give you a promise. It may be a specific promise, like you're going to get well, or you're going to do this, or you're going to do that, or you will have this, or you'll not have that. It may be a specific promise, but it'll still be undergirded by the basic promise of the Bible. But, you've got to hear God.

## **II. The Person**

So, the very first thing is, God spoke to Abraham and there was a promise. Now, the second thing I want you to see, not only was there a promise but there was also a person. Now, look again if you will, in verse 17: "*(As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were.*" Now, the person here is God. Now, not just any God, but thee God who gives life to the dead and makes something out of nothing.

By the way, those are two of God's specialties, creation and resurrection. Do you know anybody else can do that? Now, Abraham believes God, and because God needed this kind of a miracle. You see, Abraham was a hundred years old, Sarah's womb was dead, and God said they're going to have a child. Well, brother, I'll guarantee you, you need resurrection and creation to do that right? All right, here's a guy a

hundred years old, a woman that is past the age of having children and God says she's going to conceive and have a child. That is, it's going to take a miracle. Now, Abraham knew the God behind the promise. You see, what good is a promise unless there's a person able to back it up. Now, you see, not only did Abraham hear from God, Abraham knew God. The Bible says, "even God who quickeneth the dead and bringeth those things to be which are not." That is, Abraham knew that the qualities, the capabilities and character of God matched the need. That is, Abraham knew God, he knew God, he heard God because he knew God.

Now, you see, listen, real faith, true faith is rooted in the character of God, you must know God, not know about God, you must know God. Why? You can't trust someone you don't know, you can't trust someone you don't know and you can't know someone you don't spend time with. Abraham was called what? Friend of God, right? A friend of God. Are you a friend of God? No wonder you don't have strong faith. Everything in the Christian life depends upon your understanding of the character of God, and when you understand the character and the nature of God then faith is the is the outcropping of that.

Do you remember when the Lord Jesus Christ, who healed the Centurion son, and the Centurion said to Jesus, or the Centurion servant it was, rather, and the Centurion said to Jesus—by the way, the Centurion was an army officer, that's what it means, a Centurion, a captain over a hundred—and he said to Jesus, "Now Jesus you don't need to come to my house to heal this servant." He said, "For I too am a man set under authority, and I say to that man go and he goes, and I say to this man come and he comes." And, he says, "All you have to do is speak the word, my servant will be healed." And Jesus said, "I've not seen faith like this in all of Israel." The centurion was a gentile, he wasn't even a Jew, but Jesus sat back and marveled at his faith. Now, what that centurion had was an insight into the character of Jesus Christ. He said, "Jesus I know how you operate. You operate just like I operate. I'm a roman army officer and as long as I'm under the authority that's over me, then I'm over those who are under me." That is, as long as I stay submissive to the general I can perform as a captain, but if I ever get rebellious against the general he takes away my authority as a captain. And so, I too am a man under authority, and therefore I say to that man, "go" and he goes, and I say to this man, "come" and he comes. He says, "Jesus, I know that you operate that way in the Kingdom of Heaven because you're submitted to the father's will. All of this sickness and disease and demons and all of the rest of it, they're under you." You see, because you're under Lord Jesus, you're over.

Now, I'm not trying to give you an illustration here on submission and authority, although that's a good lesson. I hope you'll always learn it, but what I'm trying to say is that the way that that man had faith is, he had an insight into the nature of Jesus, into

the fact that God was the God of creation, he knew that God was the God of resurrection, and the Bible says, “because of his knowledge of God he was able to believe the promise.” Now, listen again, are you listening? You cannot trust someone you do not know, and if you’re weak in faith, I want to suggest that you spend more time getting to know God.

All right. Got to get in the Bible, study The Word of God and learn something of the character and the nature of God. Do you know what the ambition of the Apostle Paul was? Philippians 3:10: *“That I may know him...”* That ought to be the ambition of your life, to know God. Everything that is right and good in the Christian life, everything depends upon an adequate understanding of who God is.

### III. The Problem

Now, the third thing. First of all, there’s the promise, then a person, then a problem. You’re going to find out that when God gives you a promise and backs it up with his person, then you’re going to come smack dab to a problem that says, “Well, it just can’t be that God can’t do what he says that he was going to do.” Look in verses 18 and following. The Bible says, *“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be.”* Now, God says, “Abraham, you’re going to be a father of many nations, these are going to be your descendants.” But, now notice verse 19: *“And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead...”*—I’d say that was a problem wouldn’t you?—*“when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;”* Now, outwardly, outwardly it was impossible. God said Abraham, you’re going to have a son. Now, look folks, Abraham is a hundred years old. It’s impossible, it’s impossible. Now, at that moment Abraham is faced with two impossibilities. Impossibility number one, “Abraham, you’re going to have a son.” Impossibility number two, that God can lie. Amen. So, Abraham says which of these impossibilities am I going to erase? Well, I’m just going to erase the one over here, it says it can’t be done, because with God all things are possible.

Now listen, you’re going to come to a time when your faith is tested, you get a promise from God, you see that God is behind his promises. There’s a character, the nature of God, the person who makes the promise, and then you’re going to see the problem. Everything in you is going to cry out, “It cannot be done, it will not be done.” Well, at that moment, at that moment dear friend, you’re going to have to glance at the problem and glue to the promise. Just fix your eyes upon the promise and stagger not at unbelief, regardless of how difficult it may seem, regardless of all of the problems, just do not put your eyes upon the problem, keep your eyes upon the Lord. Charles Haddon

Spurgeon said, “Look at yourself and your doubts will increase, look at Jesus and they will disappear.” “Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees and looks to God alone, laughs at impossibilities and cries it shall be done.” (Charles Wesley)

Oh, listen friend, the Bible wants the problem to be there so that when it is done God will get the greater glory. With God all things are possible, and do not let some problem keep you from exercising faith. It is not there to weaken your faith, it is there to strengthen your faith. The Bible says in verse 20: *“He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith...”*

#### **IV. The Performance**

Now the fourth thing I want you to notice. First of all, the promise. God gave a promise. Secondly the person, the God who raises the dead. Thirdly, the problem there’s the barrenness of Sarah’s womb, there’s the age of Abraham, and yet he looked beyond the problem to the promise. Now, the fourth thing I want you to notice in this lesson in faith is what I want to call the performance. Look in verse 21 here: *“And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform.”* Now, God did perform it, because he promised it, and Abraham was persuaded that he’d promised it and therefore, with the promise and the persuasion came the performance. Now, listen, listen, who did it? Well, God did it. Obviously verse 21 speaks of God doing it, what God promised God performed. And, everything God promises God does and it’s God all the way, but I want to ask you, “How he did it?” Did he do it without Abraham? Of course not. Abraham literally fathered a son and Sarah literally gave birth to a child. Now, how did God do it? God did it through them. This is the reason the Bible says faith without works is dead. Here you have the natural and the supernatural coming together. It is natural for a husband and wife to conceive and have a child but it is supernatural when a hundred year old man and a woman with a dead womb has a child. And, so here you have the natural and the supernatural coming together. You see, it was what I want to call the obedience of faith, the performance was the obedience of faith.

Now, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 8, *“By faith Abraham...obeyed.”* Ha, you see, listen, what a man really believes when a man really believes he obeys. I want you to put your bookmark there in Romans 4, and I want you to turn to James chapter 2 here for just a moment with me. Now, just turn right to the book of James, it’s not too far. When you get to Revelation you’ve gone too far. All right, James chapter 2, verse 21–22: *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works,”*—Now, wait a minute, I thought he was justified by faith. Well, maybe we better get James theology straightened out here—*“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?”* Now, what does that mean? Well, it

means this, that when a man is justified before God he's justified by faith alone, but when a man shows his faith, that is, when he justifies before man, the proof of his faith is works. There's no contradiction here. What James is saying is this, that faith without works is but hollow profession. Works are both the product and the proof of our faith. Now, if a man says that he has faith and he doesn't have works he's lying. Now, the Bible does not teach, and James here is not teaching that a man is saved by his own good works. We know that is an impossibility. We're saved by grace. Paul makes that very clear and very plain. But listen, what kind of faith is it that brings us into grace that saves us? We are not saved by faith and works, are you listening, but you're saved by faith that works. I'll say that again. You're not saved by faith and works, but you're saved by faith that works. Man is not saved by works, but faith that saves is never alone. Man is not saved by, man is saved by faith alone, I meant to say, but the faith that saves is never alone. You and works, but the faith that saves is the faith that works. Faith without works is dead. If a man says that he believes, and he has not faith, he really isn't; if a man says that he believes and he has not works, that really is not faith. To believe is to obey.

Now, do you remember what Paul said over there in the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, talking about soul winning? He said, *"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."* (1 Corinthians 3:6) Huh? Now, you know there are certain things that a farmer can do and God won't do those things for that farmer. The farmer must plant, the farmer must water, but there's one thing the farmer can't do and what's that? He can't make it grow. I mean, he's to depend upon God for that. I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.

Now, suppose we go down here in Mississippi and we find a farmer sitting on the front porch of his farm and we say: "What are you doing?" And, he says, "I'm farming." He's in a rocking chair and we say, "How are you farming?" And, he says, "Well, I'm farming by faith." "Why how do you farm by faith?" "Well, I just pray and ask God for a crop." "What are you growing?" "Well, I'm going to grow corn." "And how do you do it?" "Well, I just sit up here in the rocking chair and pray. I just say Lord, I believe in you for a crop." I want to ask you a question, Is there anybody here believes that farmer is going to get a crop? I don't, I don't at all because, if he really believed God and if he asked God for a crop he'd do something else, he would go out there and do what he must do.

"I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase." God will not plant, you can't make it grow. That same thing happens to me when I preach. I must prepare my heart, I must pray, I must saturate myself with The Word of Bible. I must make certain that this is the good seed and I sow the seed, I water it with my tears, then my work is over, it's God that gives the increase. I can't make you believe. I can't make you get

right with God. I am totally dependant by faith on God to do that, but I want to tell you dear friend, if I'm not preaching The Word of God, if I'm not, I have no right to expect to have a harvest. I plant, someone waters, God gives the increase.

Now, faith without works is dead. God is not going to do what we can do, it's just that plain. And, God said to Abraham, "Abraham, I am going to give you a son," yet still Abraham sired that son and Sarah bore that son and this was the way it was performed. Now, listen, James and Paul are a beautiful combination helping us to understand how to live this life of faith.

## V. The Praise

Now, one last thing I want you to notice. First of all, are you paying attention? First of all, you've got to hear a promise. Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by The Word of God. Not just reading a promise, but hearing God as God speaks to you. Secondly, you've got to know the person who makes the promise, because without the person the promise doesn't mean anything. You've got to know God, but it's got to be the personal, intimate knowledge of God. And, then you've got to face the problem, look beyond the problem to the faith, keep your eyes glued on the promise. And, then dear friend, you've got to cooperate with God and obey God, faith without works is dead. But, now notice, finally and last of all, what I want to call the praise. Look if you will again in Romans chapter 4 and verse 20. Romans chapter 4 and verse 20: *"He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;"* Now, underscore the phrase "giving glory to God." One translation gives it this way, "he gave praise to God for the miracle that was to be wrought in him. He was strong in faith giving glory to God." That is, God said, "Abraham, you're going to have a son." He said, "Well, glory, I'm going to have a son. Praise the Lord, I'm going to have a son." And, he began to praise God even before he had a son, he gave praise to God for the miracle that was to be wrought in him. He didn't wait until he got a son and said, "God thank you for the son." He said, "Thank you God for the son I am going to have." Now, that's faith.

Do you know what praise is? It's faith turned inside out. And, the Bible says, as we said as we began this service this morning, "Who so offers us praise"—praise is the way that God gives glory and faith, above all things praise God. So faith and praise are inseparable. Faith and praise are inseparable, like faith and works are inseparable. Faith and praise are the heads and tails of the same coin. Praise is faith turned inside out. And, by the way, if your faith is weak, begin to praise the Lord, thank the Lord, it will strengthen your faith. You see, praise strengthens faith and faith strengthens praise. How, how can that be? Well, when you have faith, praise. When you have faith, praise—Well, glory to God—and faith hears that, and says "Well, listen over there, praise is glorifying me, I must be pretty good"—and faith grows a little bit, and when

faith grows a little bit praise grows a little bit and there's a reciprocal coalition between faith and praise. Begin to praise the Lord, just praise the Lord, it's the seed bed in which faith grew.

Now, if you don't have a strong faith, get a promise from God, spend time with God, knowing the character of God. Look beyond the problem to the promise, glance at the problem, glued to the promise, just hold on to the promise of God. Obey the Bible, whatever he says to you, do it. Begin to praise the Lord and you're going to find this faith growing in your heart and in your life.

Now, finally, are you saved? All of this is that you might be saved. Look in verse 23–24: *“Now it was not written for his sake alone,”*—that is, God was not doing all of this just for Abraham alone. God wasn't just primarily interested that Abraham should have a son—*“that it was imputed to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead;”* God is saying not only was Abraham righteous by faith but oh, anybody can be righteous. What I said to you before is, if you believe as Abraham believed you can receive as Abraham received.

There's an old story, I made have shared it with you years ago, about a little girl who was in the hallway of her home, and in that hallway of her home there was a cellar door that went down to the basement, down to the cellar. It was a trap door and there was just a basement under the house where the family stored some things, and that trap door was open and she heard a noise down there and she said: “Who is down there?” And, her daddy answered and said, “I'm down here darling.” She said, “What are you doing down there?” He said, “Well, I'm storing some things away.” “Well,” she said, “can I come down there where you are?” He said, “If you want to, come on down.” He said, “I've taken the ladder away, you'll have to jump.” “Well,” she said, “daddy, I can't see you, it's dark down there.” He said, “That's all right, I can see you, my eyes are used to the dark. I can see you quite well. Just go ahead and jump.” She said, “Well, now wait a minute, daddy, I can't see a thing. You just want me to jump in there.” He said, “Yes.” She said, “But, I'm afraid.” He said, “All right, now listen to me. Do you believe I'm down here?” She said, “I know you're down there; I'm talking to you.” “OK. Do you believe I'm strong enough to catch you?” “Yes.” “Do you believe I love you?” “Yes.” “Have I ever knowingly told you a lie?” “No sir.” “Did I ask you to jump?” “Yes.” “Did I promise to catch you?” “Yes.” “You know I'm here?” “Yes.” “You believe I'm able to catch you?” “Yes.” “OK. Jump.” She said, “OK, Daddy,” stepped off into that hole, and he caught her and set her down.

That's an illustration of what I'm talking about. That is faith. You see, she heard from her father. There was a word from him. She knew his character. And she acted, in spite of her fears—she glanced at the problem, and became glued to the promise, and it pleased her father. Because what that did was give him glory—“Daddy, you are strong

enough. You do love me. And you don't lie.

## Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now while heads are bowed and no one's stirring, no one looking around, I wonder if there's not someone here today who has heard the Lord say, "My child, take that step of faith. I love you. I'm strong on your behalf. I will not lie to you. I will save you."

Now friend, I said there can be no faith until you get a promise from God. I want to give you a promise right out of the Word of God: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." Not the words of some Baptist preacher. That's God's Word. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." "Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That's God's Word. Will you hear it? But, you say, "I'm so weak; I'm so sinful." Friend, just glance at the problem and glue to the promise. The God that can bring life out of death can bring spiritual life to you today. The God who made something out of nothing can make something out of you. Just tell him, "Lord, I'm nothing, but you're everything. Make something out of me. Give me life. Come into my heart. Save me today. Help me, Jesus, not to be ashamed of you. Give me courage to trust you. In your name I pray, amen."

# The Authority of the Holy Spirit

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 29, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 5:1–5, 17**

*“For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”*

ROMANS 5:17

## Outline

Introduction

I. What We Receive in Adam

- A. We Receive Weakness Rather Than Power
- B. We Receive Ungodliness Rather Than Godliness
- C. We Receive Sinfulness Rather Than Righteousness
- D. We Receive Wrath Rather Than Approval
- E. We Receive Warfare Rather Than Peace

II. What We Gain Through Jesus

- A. We Gain the Much More of Our Justification
- B. We Gain the Much More of Our Reconciliation
- C. We Gain the Much More of Our Regeneration
- D. We Gain the Much More of Our Righteousness
- E. We Gain the Much More of Our Reign

Conclusion

## Introduction

Thank you, Brian. That was a blessing. I was thinking about seeing Jesus face to face. That may be very soon. I've told you before everything that's going to happen eventually will. Sooner or later we're going to see the King, and it may be sooner than we realize.

Would you take God's Word and be finding Romans chapter 5. The book of Romans, sometimes called the "Constitution of Christianity." And what a great chapter, chapter 5 is. It deals with Kingdom Authority. May I tell you this: nothing is settled, until the matter of authority is settled. Let me say that again: nothing is settled, until the matter of authority is settled. And the church that pretends to be a church and does not operate under Kingdom Authority is a farce, not a force. And any Christian who has not discovered the tremendous worth and power of Kingdom Authority is living beneath his privileges. He is a disgrace to grace. He is a dishonor to his sovereign Lord. He is a

source of mockery to demons. And he has cheated himself, if he does not learn what the Bible teaches about how to discover, deploy, and enjoy Kingdom Authority. God wants you as a believer to rule and to reign—not just some day, but today. As we said two weeks ago, not just in the sweet by and by, but in the nasty now, and now you are to have victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Now, we've already taught you in order to have authority, you must be under authority. And God will never place you over those things that He means to put under you until you get under those things that He has put over you. And you cannot be over those things that ought to be under you until you are under those things that God has put over you. And, if you are a rebel, you're guilty of high treason against heaven's King, and therefore heaven's King will never give to you Kingdom Authority. But, when He finds out that you have submitted to His authority, then He gives to you incredible authority.

Now, let me say this, beloved friend: we've already talked about areas where we ought to have authority, and we ought to be under authority. We've talked about the fact that we need to be under the authority of the lordship of Christ. You understand that, don't you? The King is supreme. Amen? The King is supreme. "Whatever he saith unto you, do it." And then, we told you, also, that, not only are you to be under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, but you're also to be under the authority of the Word—the Word of the King, the Holy Scripture. And we've said to you that, when the Bible speaks, God speaks; and our response is, "Yes, Lord. Yes." And so, we take Holy Scripture—not only the Lord of the Word, but the Word of that Lord—and we place ourselves under that authority. But there's another authority that we need to be under, and that's the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Now, so many of us don't think of the Holy Spirit as a person with authority. But, of course, the Holy Spirit has authority to rule and reign in our lives, and how does the authority of our sovereign Lord, and how does the authority of the sacred Scripture, come to us? That authority is mediated by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is called in the Bible the advocate of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, Jesus is our advocate before the Father, but the Holy Spirit is the advocate—that's just a fancy name for a lawyer or attorney—to us. The Holy Spirit has the power of attorney. He takes the things of God, the things of Jesus, and He shows them unto us, and He gives us the power of the King, as He works in our lives, and He mediates that power to us. But we need to be under the authority of the Holy Spirit of God.

So, we're talking about Kingdom Authority today, and the Holy Spirit. Now, let me say this. Some people have gotten a conflict between the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. They say, "Well, I'm not bound by Scripture." "I'm under the Holy Spirit." And others will say, "Well, don't tell me what the Spirit says." That's dangerous. I want to

know what the Word says. Well, that's an artificial conflict. I want you to know, friend, that the Holy Spirit was the One who wrote the Scriptures. I want you to know that the Holy Spirit is the One who interprets the Scriptures. And it is not the Holy Spirit or the Scriptures. It's not the Scriptures or the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures, as the Holy Spirit of God takes the Scriptures and interprets those Scriptures to our hearts, that we learn how to live under Kingdom Authority.

Now, I don't want you to fade out on me today. I don't want you to miss the message today. I don't want you to think this is getting too technical. Believe me, if you will listen, you will be blessed—not because I'm the preacher. I'm only the messenger boy. I want you to hear the message. I want you to hear what the Scripture is teaching to you today, so that you can live with, enjoy, Kingdom Authority. But remember, to be over those things that God has put under us, we must be under those things that God has put over us, and God has put the Holy Spirit over us.

Romans 5, verses 1 through 5: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed: because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Now, there's so much in those first verses that we could comment on, but we'll resist that just simply to get to verse 5, where it says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." Now, that just simply means that it is the Holy Spirit that takes the things of God and gives them to us. One of those things is the love of God comprised in Calvary—all of the things that Brian sang about when he sang, "Hallelujah! Oh, What a Savior!"

Now, it is the Holy Spirit of God that takes the love of God, and sheds that abroad, puts it in our hearts, helps us to understand it, and then to share it, and it becomes love worth finding, and love worth sharing. Now, that comes from the Holy Ghost. Now, let me just fast forward a little bit for the sake of time, and I want you to go to verse 17, which is the key verse of all that I have to say today. Now, remember these are things that the Holy Ghost is teaching you. Now, look in verse 17: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Now, we're just going to slow down on this verse. There are three words or three phrases that I want you to learn. Number one is the word one—o-n-e. Number two, I want you to look, if you will, at the word reign—r-e-i-g-n. And then, look at two words—much more. Now, all are found in that one verse.

But, let me say, if you were to go back and read verses 12 through 19, you'd find

that the word one is used 11 times. Let me just show you here what we're talking about here.

For example, look in verse 12: "Wherefore, as by ONE man sin entered into the world." Look down in verse 15: "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of ONE many be dead." Look in verse 16: "And it was by ONE that sinned." Look, again, in verse 16: "For judgment was by ONE to condemnation." Look in verse 17: "For if by ONE man's offence." And then, at the end of verse 17: "...by ONE Jesus Christ." Verse 18: "Therefore as by the offence of ONE judgment came." The middle of verse 18: "By the righteousness of ONE the free gift came." Look in verse 19: "For as by ONE man's disobedience." Look in verse 19 again:

"...by the obedience of ONE."

Are you picking up a theme? One, one, one, one, one. Now, there the word one is used 11 times.

The word reign is used 5 times in this passage. Look, if you will, in verse 14: "Nevertheless, death REIGNED." Look, if you will, in verse 17: "For as by one man's offence death REIGNED." The end of verse 17: "The gift of righteousness shall REIGN." Look, if you will, in verse 21: "That as sin hath REIGNED unto death." Again, verse twenty-one: "...even so, may grace REIGN."

Now, to reign means to rule, to have Kingdom Authority. Now, you say, "Pastor, I'm not understanding what you're saying. You're just reading a bunch of words." All I'm trying to do is to let you see what the theme is. Then we're going to work it out. Okay? Now, the one key word is the word one. Another key word is the word reign.

All right now, another key phrase is much more. Now, folks, don't miss this. There is an incredible blessing here. Look, if you will, in verse 9: "MUCH MORE then, being justified by his blood." Look in verse 10: "MUCH MORE being reconciled." Look in verse 15: MUCH MORE the grace of God." Look in verse 17: "MUCH MORE they which received the abundance of grace." Look in verse 20: "...grace did MUCH MORE abound."

Now, all of those words were in that one verse that we were reading just a few moments ago, verse 17, but they're in that entire passage. He uses the word one over and over again. Then, he uses the word to reign over and over again. And then, he uses the word much more over and over again. Okay?

Now, let's see what that means. What he is saying is this: there are two kingdoms. There's the kingdom of darkness; the kingdom of light. There's a kingdom of Satan. There's a kingdom of God. There's a kingdom of life. There's a kingdom of death. Two kingdoms. And then, he says there are two men that are associated with each kingdom—one man, Adam; one man, Jesus. Now, what he is saying is that you are in one of those kingdoms. You are either with Adam in the kingdom of death, or you are

with Christ reigning in the kingdom of life. But one kingdom will rule and reign over you, or another kingdom will rule and reign over you.

So let's go back now to verse 17, and look at it one more time: "For if by one man's offence—that's Adam—death reigned by one—Adam—much more—in a greater way—they that receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life—not out yonder, but shall reign in life—by one, Christ Jesus." Does that make sense to you? I hope it does. The two men are Adam and Jesus. The two kingdoms are the kingdoms of death and life. And the idea is that everybody under this roof, and everybody listening through television or radio, or on tape later on, everybody is in one of those two kingdoms. Either you are in Adam, or you are in Christ. Either you are in the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light.

Now, when you come out of Adam, and you come into Jesus, you get much more in Jesus than you ever lost in Adam. That's the reason why he keeps on saying "much more, much more, much more, much more." Now, all of that is just to set the stage. Got it? Got it. Now, here's where we're going. Let's see, first of all, what we lost in Adam. And then, secondly, we're going to see what we gained in Christ. And then, thirdly, we're going to see what we ought to do about it. That's simple enough, isn't it? Okay, let's go!

## **I. What We Receive in Adam**

Now, what did we lose in Adam? Or, what did we, to put it positively, what did we receive from Adam? Go down to verse 19: "For by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Now, who was the one who disobeyed? His name was Adam. Who was the one who obeyed? His name is Jesus. And so now, what did we receive from Adam? Remember that Adam was the first man. He was the federal head of the race. Adam was given dominion over the earth. When God made Adam and Eve, He said, "Let them have dominion." But Adam sold himself into slavery. Adam sinned, and he became the slave, the servant, of Satan. And we are his progeny. We are his offspring. And remember this: that a child of a slave is a slave is a slave is a slave is a slave. A child of a slave is a slave. Adam sold himself into slavery, and sin now has dominion over the one who was to have dominion over all of the earth. And we are in Adam, and because we are in Adam, without the new birth, we are identified with him in this slavery.

Now, folks, we all have our roots in Adam. Sometimes people have the idea that we are in the image of God. You know, they say, "Well, man is in the image of God." Come on, folks. Look around. You think God's in this shape? Adam was in the image of God. We are in the image of Adam. The Bible says that Adam brought forth a son after his likeness, in his image, in Adam's image! And the image of God was in Adam, but the

image of God has been marred and defaced. And now we do not bear the image of God. Only faint echoes of the image of God are in us. What we see in all of us is the image of Adam. So you've never seen a man as a man was intended to be. You've never seen what God had in mind.

Suppose you'd never seen a railroad train, never seen one in all of your life. I talked to a little boy one time in Key West, Florida, who'd never seen a railroad train. He'd never left Key West. He'd never seen a train! Suppose you've never seen a train. Suppose I took that little boy and I brought him to Memphis, Tennessee, and let's suppose that there'd been a train wreck in Memphis, Tennessee. And here are cars all tangled and bent and crashed and smoke and steam and the locomotive is upside down, and the rails are bent and bowed. And I said, "Son, you've never seen a train before. There is a train." Well, I want to ask you a question: Has he really seen a train? What he's seen is a train wreck.

Now, you take Brother Scott over here. You think that's a man? Folks, that's a wreck! That's a wreck! You haven't seen a man. You won't see a man until the resurrection and you're made like the Lord Jesus Christ. Then you'll understand what a man is supposed to be. Then you'll understand what a woman is supposed to be. Then you'll understand what it is to be in the image of God. But, right now, folks, we have inherited something from Adam. And, what did we lose in Adam? Well, let's just go down and look.

#### **A. We Receive Weakness Rather Than Power**

First of all, or, what we got from Adam, we got weakness rather than power. Look in verse 6: "For when we were without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." In Adam, you received weakness rather than power. Now, the weakness that he's talking about here is spiritual weakness. God gave Adam power to be what God wanted him to be; but he lost that power, he lost that authority. And, God has been wanting you to have authority one more time and power to be what you ought to be.

Now, you say, "Well, I have strength. I have monetary strength." I'm not talking about that. You say, "I have physical strength." I'm not talking about that. You say, "I have intellectual strength." I'm not talking about that. You say, "I have emotional strength." I'm not talking about that. You do not have spiritual strength. You may have or think you have the power to do what you want, but you do not have the power to do as you ought. And admit it. Every one of us knows that we're without strength.

#### **B. We Receive Ungodliness Rather Than Godliness**

What else did we gain from Adam? We gained weakness rather than power—verse 6. We gained ungodliness rather than godliness—verse 6. Look at it: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died—for the what?—the ungodly." Now,

not only did we receive weakness from Adam; we received godlessness from Adam. To be ungodly doesn't mean to be vile. It just simply means not to be like God. It doesn't mean that you're an axe murderer. Doesn't mean that you're a rapist. It just simply means that you are not godly. You are not in God's image! You're not godly! Why? Because of Adam. You know one of the problems with many of us. We measure ourselves by ourselves. The Bible says a man that measures himself by himself is not wise. But that's what we do. We look at ourselves, and we have our own little standard. We say, "Well, I think I ought to do this. I think this—ta da da da." And so, we measure ourselves by ourselves. The Bible says a man that does that is not wise. I'll tell you, a man that seems to me almost a fool is a man who measures himself by somebody inferior to himself. You know, some type of people say, "Well, I'm just as good as those folks down there at that church." I've been looking for a man honest enough to say, "I'm just as bad as those folks down there at that church." I mean, a church is nothing but a society of sinners, who finally realized it, and banded themselves together to do something about it. Isn't that right? But what a man does sometimes, he'll lie down in the gutter alongside some old hypocrite, stretch himself out alongside that old hypocrite, and say, "I am a little longer than he is; so, therefore, I must be a pretty good person." No, my friend, the standard is godliness.

Do you know what sin is? It's found in Romans 3, verse 23: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Do you want me to tell you what sin is? It's that difference between you and the glory of God. That's what sin is. Sin is that difference between you and the glory of God. The Bible just simply says we're ungodly. Now, we are to be like God. We are to be righteous and holy like God. But from Adam we received ungodliness.

### **C. We Receive Sinfulness Rather Than Righteousness**

What else did we receive from Adam? We received sinfulness from Adam. Look in verses 7 and 8: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." And so, we're weak, we're ungodly, and we're also sinful. Now, the word for sinner here is the word that means to miss a mark. It's like a man shooting a bow and arrow, and he fails to hit the bull's eye right in the center with absolute perfection. Do you know what God's standard for you, for me, is? Absolute perfection. Is there anybody here who thinks that he's perfect—who's never missed the mark, always hit the bull's eye? I know that you know that you're not. You know, the Bible says that sin is the transgression of the law. And the Bible says that in 1 John chapter 3 and verse 4, "Sin is the transgression of the law." If you've ever broken one of God's laws, you're a sinner. You say, "Well, I haven't broken all of them." Well, if you get stopped for a traffic violation, do you think it's going to do you much

good to tell the policeman all of the laws that you didn't break? The Bible says, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." You say, "I don't understand that." Suppose you're suspended by a fire with a chain of ten links. How many links in that chain have to break before you fall in the fire? Ten? Just one—just one. Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all," is what the Bible says. "Sin is the transgression of the law."

But let me tell you something else that sin is. Sin is not only doing what you ought not to have done, but sin is failing to do what you ought to have done. James chapter 4, verse 17, says, "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Have you always done everything that you thought you ought to do, everything that you knew that you ought to have done? To him that knoweth to do good but doeth it not, to him it is sin. God not only has us guilty for what we have done that is wrong, but for what we have failed to have done that we ought to have done—the sins of omission. Who can say that he's always done what he ought to have done in every occasion? But not only that—we're sinners when we don't believe God, when we don't have faith. The Bible says, in Romans 14, verse 23, "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." You say, "You've always had faith? Perfect faith? You never doubted God? Never done anything that was doubtful?" "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin." And, unbelief is the mother sin, the father sin, the sin of sins, the sin that will damn you, and send your soul to hell. "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed." No greater sin than aim the gun of unbelief at Christ on the cross and pull the trigger.

But not only that, but, friend, the Bible teaches that human goodness is sin. Many people don't understand this, but Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 4 says this: "A high look, and a proud heart, and the plowing of the wicked is sin." What does that mean? What does that mean? It means when a man in arrogance goes out here to farm, and he puts his plow in God's green earth, when he takes the seed that is made to germinate—a great miracle is a seed! I ponder. I think about seeds often. He takes that little brown thing, that seed, and puts it in the ground that's going to sprout, and throw off its little overcoat, and shoot up through the earth, and bring forth life. That farmer puts that seed in the ground, and then he depends upon God's rain to fall upon it, and yet he is proud, and he's arrogant, and he never gives God thanks, and he never looks up to think of where it comes. The Bible says, "The plowing of the wicked is sin." Everything that an unsaved man does without God is sin. He contaminates everything that he touches. Human goodness is the worst badness, when it becomes a substitute for the new birth.

#### **D. We Receive Wrath Rather Than Approval**

Now, listen. What did we receive from Adam? Weakness. What did we receive from

Adam? Ungodliness. What did we receive from Adam? Sinfulness. What else did we receive from Adam? Wrath, rather than approval. Look, if you will again, in verse 9: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” That’s a word that we don’t hear much about today, but there is the wrath of God. And what does that wrath of God lead us toward? Verse 18 says toward condemnation. Now, people have a lot of ideas of what’s going to happen to people who are sinners who die in Adam, but, friend, the Bible says, “In Adam all die.” The Bible does not teach reincarnation. The Bible does not teach a chance after death. The Bible does not teach annihilation, that you’re just simply going to disintegrate. The Bible does not teach universalism, that everybody eventually is going to be saved. The Bible teaches that, if you die outside the Lord Jesus Christ, if you die a natural man, if you die in Adam, you will face the sure judgment of God; you will die and go to hell. I can’t put it any plainer than that. I don’t say that with glee. I would not be a good preacher, I would not be your friend, if I did not tell you that. We received from Adam wrath! Our sins deserve the righteous judgment of a holy God, and God’s anger burns against sin.

#### **E. We Receive Warfare Rather Than Peace**

And then, what else do we receive from Adam? Warfare, rather than peace. Look, if you will, in verse 10: “For if then, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God.” Did you know that if you are in Adam, you’re an enemy of God? Did you know what sin is? Sin is high treason against heaven’s King. What sin is, sin is a clenched fist in the face of God. You say, “I’m not an enemy of God, Pastor. I may not be saved, but I’m not an enemy of God. I may not have given my heart to Jesus, but I’m not an enemy of God.” Well, let’s hear what Jesus has to say about that—Matthew chapter 12, verse 30—Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me is scattering abroad.” Either you’re gathering for Christ or you’re working against Christ. If you’re not with Christ, you’re against Christ. You cannot be neutral. Pilate tried that, and he failed miserably. And today I want to say to every one of you in this building: if you’re not out and out 100 percent for Jesus Christ, you are out and out 100 percent against Jesus Christ. You need to understand that. We received all of this from Adam.

Now, let me just pause here and say, somebody says, “I don’t like that. I don’t like that at all. I rebel against that. I mean, why should I be held accountable for what Adam did? I mean, I didn’t vote for Adam. Why should I...? As a matter of fact, what Adam did has absolutely nothing to do with me.” Is that right? You think that? Well, I want to ask you a question: if Adam had had no children, where would you be? Don’t say what Adam did had nothing to do with you. You say, “Well, I don’t want to be held guilty for Adam’s sin.” Okay, how about yours? Is there anybody here who would say he has not sinned? Don’t worry about Adam’s sin. You’ve got enough sin of your own to worry about! I mean, listen. If you had been put in Adam’s place, you would’ve made the same

choice that Adam made. You say, “Was God just to let me suffer for Adam’s sin?” Not only was He just, but He was merciful and wise. Listen very carefully. Friend, because we’re condemned by one man—hallelujah—we can be saved by one man. Oh, listen to this. Listen to this. You see, if it were not that we were in Adam, we could never be in Christ! Thank God! Thank God for this one Man salvation. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

## **II. What We Gain Through Jesus**

Now, we’ve been thinking about what we lost by one man, Adam. Let’s think of what we gain through one Man, Jesus. And the idea is that we gain much more than we ever lost in Adam! That’s what he’s talking about. Now, look at it.

### **A. We Gain the Much More of Our Justification**

First of all, there’s the much more of our justification. Look in verse 9—much more then, much more then: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” Well, you say, “What is the much more there?” Well, Adam was only innocent. We are positively justified. Remember there are three words when you think about the cross you always need to remember. One is justice, one is mercy, and the other is grace—justice, mercy, and grace. Remember? Justice is God giving us what we deserve, which is judgment. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. And grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve, okay? Those three words—they’re all met in Calvary. When my sins were laid upon one Man, the Lord Jesus Christ, then God’s justice is satisfied. That sin has been paid for. And, therefore, when I don’t endure the wrath of God, God’s mercy is shown. But then, when God makes me righteous, God’s grace is given. That’s all in Calvary. That’s all through the Lord Jesus Christ. That, my friend, is the much more. That’s the much more of justification.

### **B. We Gain the Much More of Our Reconciliation**

Now, look at the much more of reconciliation, in verse 10: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” You see, when Jesus died on the cross, He gave Himself of us. But then, when He sent the Holy Spirit, He gave Himself to us. And now, we have that fellowship with God that was severed when Adam sinned. We are reconciled. Now, I want to be clear and plain about this. It is not God that is reconciled. God doesn’t need to be reconciled. We are the ones who are reconciled with God. “Well,” you say, “how do we have much more than Adam had?” Well, friend, Adam walked with God in the garden, but I have the Holy Spirit within me. Much more! Much more. You talk about reconciliation. Friend, it is much more.

### **C. We Gain the Much More of Our Regeneration**

And then, there's the much more of our regeneration. Look in verse 15—the last part of verse 15: "...much more the grace of God and the gift of grace, which is by one man." Now that, the grace of God, just means that God has regenerated us. He's not just simply saved us from wrath. He has come into our hearts and given us life. "Well," you say, "what's the difference?" Adam had life; I have abundant life. Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life and have it abundantly." Adam doesn't know what a Christian knows. Adam never knew until he got redeemed—what you and I know. Folks, I want to tell you something. I'd rather live in Romans 5 than live in the Garden of Eden. Listen. It is the much more of regeneration.

### **D. We Gain the Much More of Our Righteousness**

And then, there's the much more of righteousness. Look again in verse 17: "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, much more they which receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life." Remember, Adam was only innocent. I am positively righteous. When Adam sinned, he could have sin placed on his account. If I sin, I can never have sin placed on my account. "Well," you say, "Adrian, if I believed that, 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 you want to, you need to get saved. You need to get your want fixed; no, you need a new one. You need to be born again. I'm telling you, folks, Adam—Adam—was innocent, but sin, when he sinned, could be put on his account, but sin can never be put on your account.

Are you ready for a blessing? Turn to Romans 4, just back to Romans 4. Look, if you will, in verse 5. Look at it—Romans 4, verse 5: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." You cannot work your way to heaven. There is nothing you can do—big or small—that'll save you. You must put your faith in the Son of God, and, when you do, God says, "I count you righteous." Do you understand that? Look in verse 5: "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."

Now, what does the word impute mean? It means to put it on your account. Next time you go to the department store and buy something, don't say, "Charge it." Just say, "Impute it." That'll confuse her a little bit. It means the same thing. "Put that on my account." God imputes righteousness. He just simply puts that righteousness on your account. You say, "Well, that's wonderful. He imputes righteousness without works." But it gets better. Look in verse 7: "Saying, Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven." You say, "Thank You, Lord, for forgiving me." But He does more than that: "...and whose sins are covered." Hallelujah! They're buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness,

never to be brought up again. But it gets better than that! Look in verse 8: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Did you hear that? “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Not only does He forgive my sin, not only does He cover my sin, but He says, “I will not impute sin to you.” I hear people say, “Oh, man, if I’m living good enough when I die, hope I get to heaven.” Then you’re not going to make it. You don’t understand what sin is, if you think that you can live good enough to get to heaven. I wouldn’t trust 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.” You see, Adam could have sin imputed to him, but you can’t have sin imputed to you, if you’re in the Lord Jesus. Do you understand what I’m saying? It is much more, much more, much more, much more, MUCH MORE in JESUS than we ever lost in Adam. Oh, hallelujah for this.

#### **E. We Gain the Much More of Our Reign**

Now, there’s another much more. Very quickly, there’s the much more of our reign that we have. Look in verses 20 and 21—chapter 5, verses 20 and 21: “Moreover the law entered, that the offence we might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.” Oh, the much more of our reign. Adam had an earthly kingdom; we have a heavenly kingdom. We, in Adam, we’ve gained so much. And, you see, Adam lost—listen—Adam lost his authority. God gave him dominion. He sold it out to Satan. Jesus came. He died upon that cross. “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners. By one man’s obedience many were made righteous.” What was His obedience? He became obedient to the cross. He laid down His life. He paid the debt that Adam’s sin deserved. He bought us back. He bought back our ruined estate. It was lost by a man. It was gained by a man. It was legally lost. It was legally regained. And now, He’s bought it back. He has given it to us. And He’s saying, “I am giving to you much more than Adam ever lost!

Everybody in this room is either in Adam or in Christ. In Adam, all die. In Christ, all are made alive. Let me say this, and I’ll be finished. I want you to imagine yourself as a passenger in an automobile. That automobile has stalled on the railroad tracks. You were not the driver; another man was the driver, but you were in the car with him, and the car is stalled on the tracks. Now, you hear the train whistle, and you know that a powerful locomotive is coming down that train track. There’s the door. You were healthy. The seat belt has been released. You must open a door and get out. At this point, you’re faced with a choice. You can stay in the car and die, or you can open the door, flee, and live. Now, the choice is yours. You say, “I won’t make a choice.” Then you’ll die, because not to choose is to choose, in itself. Because, you see, you’re already in the car.

## Conclusion

Now, folks, let me tell you this. You are already in Adam. You didn't have any choice about that. You were born in Adam, and in Adam all die. You know where the choice is for you today? It's to choose Jesus. That's your choice. And, if you don't make the right choice, you don't have to choose to die. You're already under the condemnation of death. You're already in Adam. You're already in condemnation. What you must do now, and what God sent me here to tell you today, is you must choose life. Choose Jesus. Choose Kingdom Authority. And I'll tell you, if I had ten billion lives to live, I'd give every one of them to Jesus. As Brian sang, "Oh, hallelujah, what a Savior!"

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, while heads are bowed, and eyes are closed, would you like to receive Jesus? Would you pray a prayer like this? Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for my sin. Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You suffered, bled, and died for me. Thank You, Lord. Come into my heart, right now. Forgive my sin. I want to step out of Adam. I want to step into Jesus. I receive You, Lord, this moment, right now, as my Lord and Savior. I receive by faith—reconciliation, regeneration, redemption, justification—I receive it by faith. Thank You, Lord. Now, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make this public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# The Authority of the Holy Spirit

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 29, 1996

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 5:1–5, 17

*“For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.”*

ROMANS 5:17

## Outline

Introduction

I. Our Loss in Adam

- A. We Receive Weakness Rather Than Power
- B. We Receive Ungodliness Rather Than Godliness
- C. We Receive Sinfulness Rather Than Righteousness
- D. We Receive Wrath Rather Than Approval
- E. We Receive Warfare Rather Than Peace

II. Our Legacy in Christ

- A. We Gain the Much More of Our Justification
- B. We Gain the Much More of Our Reconciliation
- C. We Gain the Much More of Our Regeneration
- D. We Gain the Much More of Our Righteousness
- E. We Gain the Much More of Our Reign

III. The Help of the Holy Spirit

- A. Fact
- B. Faith
- C. Function

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding, please, Romans chapter 5. We're talking today about Kingdom Authority and the authority of the Holy Spirit. Now, so often, we think of the Bible having authority. We certainly know, that Jesus as Lord has authority. Well, we need to think today about how that authority comes to us, and it comes to us through the Holy Spirit. And may I say that a church that is not living in and exercising Kingdom Authority has ceased to be a force and it has become a farce. A Christian who is not living in and exercising Kingdom Authority is living beneath his privileges, and he is living beneath the dignity that God expects for him to have, as he lives with Kingdom Authority in this life; and, as

such, he is the heartbreak of heaven, he makes angels weep, he is the mockery of demons, he is the stumbling block to the lost, and a great disappointment to himself. Many people are wondering, why is my Christian life in such shambles? Why don't I have all of this glory, this happiness, this victory that has been spoken of? You see, God has not intended for you to live a life of defeat or desperation. When God saved you, God endowed you with something called Kingdom Authority. You're to have authority over the world, the flesh, and the devil. You're not meant to be the devil's dirty plaything. You're not meant to be squeezed in, and molded in by this world. You are not meant to obey every whim and passion of that old man called "the flesh." God has redeemed you, He has saved you, He has equipped you, and He has ordained you to have Kingdom Authority. I can tell you that Satan does not want you to understand the import of this message.

Look, if you will, in verse 5—the Bible says, "And hope maketh not ashamed"—that is, we don't have to live shameful lives—"...because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Now, God gave us the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit sheds abroad in our hearts, makes known to us, the hope, the assurance that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that's called the love of God—God's great love, God's mighty love to us; and then, that love through us to others. Now, it's the Holy Spirit of God that mediates that to us. You see, the Holy Spirit of God is the ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible calls Him "the Advocate." Now, Jesus is our Advocate before the Father. He represents us before the Father, but the Holy Spirit represents the Lord Jesus to us. The Bible says He'll take the things of Christ, and He'll make them known to us. He is the authority for the Lord Jesus on this earth. He is to be Lord in our lives, because He takes the place of Christ in our lives. The Bible says, in the book of Galatians, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." That may be translated, "Where the Spirit is Lord, there is liberty." We only have liberty when we get under the lordship of the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, some people have the idea that there is some sort of a dichotomy between, or a conflict between Holy Scripture and the Holy Spirit. Some people say, "Well, I don't pay much attention to the Bible. I am just led by the Spirit." And others say, "Oh, you folks are so foolish. You'd better get under the authority of the Word, because being led by the Spirit can be auto-suggestion, and you can just go off the reservation in any direction." The truth of the matter is there's no conflict between the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. The Holy Spirit is the One who wrote the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit is the One who interprets the Scriptures to us. It's not the Scriptures or the Spirit, or the Spirit or the Scriptures. It's the Scriptures and the Spirit, as the Holy Spirit of God takes the Scriptures and applies them to us, and makes known the will and the way of the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts and in our lives. And where the Spirit is Lord, there is

liberty. And that's what we want—liberty. That's just another way of saying Kingdom Authority.

Now, fast-forward on down to verse 17, and look in verse 17, which is the key verse, that we're going to be looking at: "For by one man's offence death reigned"—circle the word one—"by one man's offence death reigned"—circle the word reigned—r-e-i-g-n-e-d. And then, "By one man's offence death reigned by one; much more..."—circle the phrase much more—"...they which receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Christ Jesus."

Now, without trying to understand it, yet, let me just tell you that the key to everything is found right in this verse. There are three key words or phrases that are found in this one verse. One is the word one—o-n-e. If you'll read this chapter, you'll find that that word one is used eleven times. Over and over again, he uses the phrase one, one, one, one, one, one. Got it? Got it. Then the next thing you'll find is there's another word that is being repeated over and over again; it's the word reign—r-e-i-g-n. It's talking about authority, ruling, reigning. And then, another phrase that is used over and over again—five times—is the phrase, much more. Now, if you understand that, you're going to understand all that we're talking about today.

Now, first of all, let's look at the word reign—r-e-i-g-n. And what we're going to discover is there are two kingdoms. One is a kingdom of darkness and death; the other is a kingdom of light and life. And we're going to find out that everybody here is in one of those kingdoms. If you are in the kingdom of darkness and death, then, you are under the subjugation of the world, the flesh, and the devil. But if you're in the kingdom of light and life, then Christ is your Lord and liberty is your legacy, because you have stepped out of the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light into the kingdom of God's dear Son. And so, that's the reason he's using the word reign so many times. He's talking about kingdoms—kingdoms.

Now, the second thing is this: he uses the word one over and over again, because he's saying there are two men. One heads one kingdom; one heads another kingdom. One man is Adam, the first man who ever lived; the other man is Jesus. So one man is the head of one kingdom; the other Man is the head of another kingdom, and both of them center in one man. That's the reason he uses the word one so many times.

Now, here's the blessed part. He uses the word much more many times. Now, what is he going to say to us? Are you ready for this? He's going to say to us—listen—that we lost much in Adam, but we gain much more in Jesus. Now, that's it. We lost much in Adam, but we gained much more in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that's what we're going to be thinking about right now.

## I. Our Loss in Adam

Now, I want us to think what we received from one man, Adam. Look in verse 19 now: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners...”—one man’s disobedience—who was that one man who disobeyed? His name was Adam—“ ... many were made sinners...” Who’s that? Just write in your Bible, me. Don’t write, Adrian; just put your name there. All right, many were made sinners. All right now, look again: “So by the obedience of one ...”—who is that One? Jesus—“... many be made righteous.” Now, if you’re saved, you can put your name there, too! I’ve been made righteous. So that’s the whole thing. In Adam, we lost it; in Christ, we got much more back than we ever lost in Adam. So, what we’re going to see is what we lost in Adam, then the legacy that we received in the Lord Jesus, and then how the Holy Spirit of God makes that real in our hearts and in our lives.

So, what did we receive from Adam? What is the legacy of Adam?

Now, by the way, let me say this: that you were born in Adam. I mean, that’s your nature. You say, “Well, I didn’t vote for Adam. I didn’t have anything to do with Adam.” Of course you did! I mean, if Adam had died before he had any children, would you be here today? No, you see, we are linked to Adam in a very special way, and, you know, so many of us have the idea that we are in the image of God. Well, I want to disabuse you of that idea. You are not in the image of God. Adam was made in the image of God; you are in the image of Adam. The image of God was marred and defaced in Adam. Now, the Bible says God said, “Let us make man in Our image and after Our likeness,” and He made Adam and Eve. But then Adam and Eve sinned, and then the Bible says that Adam brought forth a son in his likeness and in his image, in Adam’s likeness and in Adam’s image. And, that likeness and that image is marred. You see, if you think that we today are in the image of God, look around. You think God’s in this shape? I mean, think about it. You see, I mean, look at everything! This is not the image of God! This is the image of Adam. You see, we’ve never seen a man as God intended for us to be, and as we will be one day, when we’re made in the likeness of the Lord Jesus—as the psalmist said, “I shall be satisfied when I awaken in thy likeness.” Suppose you’d never seen a railroad train in your life—never seen one! And then, let’s suppose there is a train that wrecks, and there’s twisted steel and smoke and steam and just mayhem everywhere, and the cars are all tumbled up, and the locomotive is upside down. And you’ve never seen a train wreck—you’ve never seen a train, and I take you and show you the train wreck, and I say, “There is a railroad train.” Question: have you seen a train? Not exactly. What you’ve seen is a train wreck, isn’t that right? Now, let’s take over here Bernie. Look at him. Do you think that’s a man? That’s not a man; that’s a wreck! That’s a wreck! He’s not a man. He is not as God wanted man to be. All creation has been wrecked, and the person next to you is a wreck, and you are a wreck—go

look in the mirror! Now, folks, we are in the image of Adam.

Now, let me show you what we lost in Adam, in Romans chapter 5. Let me show you what Adam gave to us.

#### **A. We Receive Weakness Rather Than Power**

He gave us weakness rather than power. Look in verse 6: “For when we were yet without strength...” Let’s just stop there. That’s all we are; without Jesus, we’re without strength. You say, “Well, I have strength.” We’re not talking about physical strength. You say, “Well, I’ve got money.” We’re not talking about financial strength. You say, “Well, I’m smart.” We’re not talking about intellectual strength. You say, “Well, I have a sound mind.” We’re not talking about emotional strength. We’re talking about spiritual strength. You do not have spiritual strength to be what God wants you to be and to do what God wants you to do. You can try as much as you want, but you do not have what it takes; nor do I, in Adam. We’ve lost that strength, and in the place of it, we have been given spiritual weakness. You may have the power to do, you think, as you want, but you don’t have the power to do as you ought, without the Lord Jesus. So, what did I get from Adam? I got weakness from Adam, because I am without strength.

#### **B. We Receive Ungodliness Rather Than Godliness**

Now, what else did I get from Adam? I got ungodliness rather than godliness. Look, if you will again, in verse 6: “For when we were yet without strength, Christ died for the ungodly.” Now, what did God make Adam to be? Godly—like God! What did sin make him? Ungodly—unlike God. Now, folks, do you know, the problem with many of us? We are measuring ourselves by the wrong measure. We say, “Well, I’m better than those folks down there at that church.” Well, what’s that got to do with it? Somebody says, “I’m just as good as those folks down there at that church.” I’m looking for a man honest enough to say, “I’m just as bad as those folks down there at that church.” I mean, after all, a church is nothing but a society of sinners who finally realized it and banded themselves together to do something about it, isn’t that right? We measure ourselves by ourselves. We say, “Well, I think I’m all right.” What’s that got to do with it? The Bible says, “You are those who measure yourselves by yourselves; you’re not wise.” But the worst thing we do, we find some old hypocrite and we stretch ourselves out in the gutter alongside of him, and say, “I’m a little longer than he is.” We measure ourselves by people who are inferior to us, and therefore think that we’re all right. But God’s standard is godliness.

Do you know, what sin is? Let me give you a definition of sin—Romans 3, verse 23: “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” The distance between the glory of God and where we are right now—that’s sin. That’s sin. We have sinned and come short of the glory of God! What did we get from Adam? We got weakness from

Adam. What did we get from Adam? We got ungodliness—ungodlikeness—in Adam. It doesn't mean we're bank robbers; it just simply means that we have come short of the glory of God.

### **C. We Receive Sinfulness Rather Than Righteousness**

Now, let me tell you a third thing that we got from Adam. We got sinfulness rather than righteousness. Look, if you will, in verses 7 and 8: "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Now, we sit in church many times dressed up, Bibles in our hands, hymnals by our side, and we look so good, but, friend, in Adam we're sinners. We're sinners. The Bible says, "Sin is the transgression of the law." Now, you may not think that you're a sinner, but you are a sinner. You're a sinner.

Is there anybody here who would say, "I have not sinned"? Well, let me ask you a question: is anybody here who has ever told a lie, whether it's a white lie, black, or Technicolor? Ever in your life, ever one time, ever, told a lie—would you lift your hand? Go ahead. Come on. All right now, is there anybody here who has ever taken anything that did not belong to you? Wait, wait, wait—wait. Whether it was a toy out of your neighbor's yard when you were a child, whether you cheated in school and took an answer off somebody else's paper, whether you carried materials home from a job, whether you did not pay your proper taxes, whether you stole some money off your mama's dresser, or whether you robbed a bank—is there anybody here who has ever taken anything that didn't belong to you, would you lift your hand? Go ahead—go ahead. Come on. All right now, brother, did you lift your hand? Now, I want to tell you something. You know what we have here today? We have a congregation of liars and thieves. Isn't that right? Yeah. It's kind of funny when we do it that way, but it's really not funny; because, you see, 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. Now, some, of course, are terrible thieves and terrible liars. Others, maybe, are not in that category, but we're not talking about degree. We're talking about kind. The Bible says that we are sinners, and the Bible says, "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, the same is guilty of all." What did we gain from Adam? We gained weakness from Adam. What did we gain from Adam? We gained ungodliness from Adam—the distance between us and the glory of God. What did we gain from Adam? We gained sinfulness from Adam rather than righteousness.

### **D. We Receive Wrath Rather Than Approval**

Let me tell you what else we gained from Adam. We gained wrath from Adam, rather than approval. Look in verse 9: "Much more then, being now, justified by his blood, we

shall be saved from wrath, through him.” Did you know, what we are when we are in Adam? We’re under the wrath of God—the wrath of God. Now, you know, people, don’t like to hear about the wrath of God. Somehow if a preacher preaches on the wrath of God, that preacher supposed not to be preaching, as he ought to preach. We’re supposed to tell everybody that God is love. Well, God is love. He’s perfect love, infinite love, and the Bible says, “God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” But this verse also speaks of the wrath of God, doesn’t it?

Now, if you preach the love of God to the exclusion of the wrath of God, you’ve not preached the whole truth; and, when you preach part of the truth, that part of the truth becomes an untruth, if you don’t preach the whole truth. Now, there’s a wrath of God. Some people have the idea that God is going to overlook our sins. He will not; He’s a holy God. Some people have the idea that we’ll be reincarnated, we’ll get another chance. You will not; it’s appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment. Some people have the idea that God is going to save everybody—sort of universalism. He is not; He is not. The Bible says that, if a man dies without Christ, he is forever eternally lost. And there are only two categories of people in the world: the saved and the lost. The Bible does not teach universalism. Some people think, “Well, when I die, I just annihilate. I just go back to the ground. I rot. I decay. I evaporate. I’m no longer.” Oh, no. The Bible teaches that you live forever and ever and ever and ever. And God sent me here to tell you, and I want to say it as plainly, as straightly, as lovingly as I can: “In Adam you’re under the wrath of God, and if you die without Jesus, you’ll die and go to hell.” Now, I’m not saying that to be smart-alecky. I’m certainly not saying that to be cruel. Sometimes we get the idea that if a preacher preaches about hell, he’s cruel. The preacher who does not want people to flee from hell is a cruel man, because he’s not telling people the truth.

#### **E. We Receive Warfare Rather Than Peace**

What did we receive from Adam? We received weakness from Adam. What did we receive from Adam? We received ungodliness from Adam. What did we receive from Adam? We received, folks, sinfulness from Adam. What did we receive from Adam? We received wrath from Adam. And what did we receive from Adam? We received warfare from Adam.

Look, if you will, here in this same passage of Scripture in verse 10: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son...” Just look at the word enemies. Do you know what you are if you’re not a child of God? You’re an enemy of God. You say, “Now, wait a minute. I am not a Christian, but I’m not an enemy of God.” Well, yes, you are. If you’re in Adam, you’re an enemy of God. You see, Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30, “He that is not with me is against me: and he

that gathers not with me scatters abroad.” You cannot be neutral. Not to be for Christ is to be out and out against the Lord Jesus. You see, if you are in another kingdom, then you are guilty of high treason against heaven’s King. High treason is a capital crime, so don’t get the idea that you can be neutral; you cannot. If you’re in the kingdom of darkness, you are in opposition to the King of light. Jesus said, “He that is not with me is against me: and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad.” Either you’re for Christ or you’re against Christ. Either you’re working for Christ or you’re working against the Lord Jesus, and you are not neutral. What you are when you’re in Adam is you are an individual with a clenched fist in the face of God. Now, you may not understand that, but the Bible says that we are enemies. So put it down big, plain, and straight: in Adam, we’re in trouble. Isn’t that right? I mean it; by one man we’re in trouble!

Now, I know what you’re thinking. You’re saying, “Now, Pastor, that is not fair. That is not just! Why should I be in all of that difficulty because of Adam? I mean, I didn’t vote for him! I didn’t choose him! Is that fair? Is that just?” Friend, not only is it fair; it is wonderful. You better thank God for it! It shows that God not only is just, but He is kind. Why? Well, number one, if Adam hadn’t have sinned, you would’ve anyway. If you’d been put to the same test, you would’ve sinned. And, number two, you’ve already sinned, so don’t worry about Adam’s sin. You got enough of your own to take care of, right? All right? But here’s the good part. Friend, because we can be condemned by one man, we can also be saved by one Man. See, that’s it. Thank God that He deals with that one man. Thank God because of one man’s disobedience when many were made sinners, but verse 19, by one Man’s obedience—by one Man’s obedience—the Lord Jesus—many are made righteous! Thank God that those who are in Adam, one man, can also be in Christ, one Man.

## **II. Our Legacy in Christ**

So now, we’ve talked about our loss in Adam; let’s talk about our legacy in Christ. Let’s just turn it over and see, what our legacy in the Lord Jesus Christ is. What did we gain in Christ? Now, remember that we gain much more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam. Five times he mentions that phrase much more. Let’s look at them.

### **A. We Gain the Much More of Our Justification**

First of all, there’s the much more of justification. Look in verse 9: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.” Now, what do I have much more than Adam had before he ever sinned? Well, before Adam ever sinned, Adam was simply innocent; but, friend, after we have been saved, we are much more than innocent. We are justified! Now, I’m going to explain that a little bit more when I get on down the line, but there are three words that you need to keep in mind when you think of the cross. One is justice; the other is mercy; and the third is grace.

Remember those words: justice, mercy, and grace. Justice is God giving us what we deserve. You say, “Well, I hope I get justice.” You better hope you don’t. You get justice, you’ll go to hell. Justice is God giving us what we deserve. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve. Grace is God giving us what we don’t deserve—His righteousness. Okay? All three of those are in the cross. At the cross, when the Lord Jesus Christ died for us, Jesus suffered the wrath of God for us, and so, therefore, God’s justice is satisfied because His wrath was poured out upon His own dear Son, the Lord Jesus, when He became our substitute. And then, because God’s justice is satisfied, God’s mercy is shown, and you and I are forgiven of our sins, and, because of the mercy of God, we don’t face that wrath. But then, more than that, God’s grace says that we are now justified, and He puts us back as though we had never sinned at all—and, folks, that’s much more than Adam ever had before he sinned. That is much more! You call that the much more of justification. Got that one?

### **B. We Gain the Much More of Our Reconciliation**

Let’s move on to the second one. There’s the much more of reconciliation. Look, if you will, now, in verse 10: “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.” Now, Adam, when he sinned, ran off into the bushes and hid. God came looking for Adam: “Adam, where are you?” Because sin had separated God and man. Now, it’s not God that needs to be reconciled. God didn’t do anything wrong; we’re the ones who are reconciled. The Bible never talks about God being reconciled; we’re reconciled to God. But we have much more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam. In the Garden of Eden, Adam walked with God, but Jesus lives in us. In the Garden, Adam walked with God, but Jesus lives in us. Folks, we gain much more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam.

### **C. We Gain the Much More of Our Regeneration**

Here’s the third thing I want you to notice: what’s the next “much more?” It’s the much more not only of justification and reconciliation, but the much more of regeneration. Look in verse 15—the last part of that verse: “... much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many.” Look at the word abound. Well, in the Bible, Jesus said, “I have come that you might have life and have it abundantly.” Adam had life, but we have abundant life. We have, that is the regeneration. When He comes back into us, we are regenerated. We are re-gened. The genetic code of our spiritual life now is the genetic code of the Lord Jesus. We are partakers of the divine nature. We are regenerated, re-gened, made like the Lord Jesus on the inside. Adam never had that before he sinned. That’s the much more that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that’s the much more of that.

Folks, I’d rather live in Romans 5 than in the Garden of Eden. Much more. Much

more.

#### **D. We Gain the Much More of Our Righteousness**

Now, look at the next much more—the much more of our righteousness. Look in verse 17 of this same thing: “For if by one man’s offence”—that’s Adam—“death reigned by one;”—that’s the old kingdom—“much more,”—much more!—“they that received the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by our Lord Jesus Christ.” Look now at the word of righteousness. Adam, we said, was innocent, but we are positively righteous. Now, what is the difference? Well, Adam could have sin placed on his account; you can never have sin placed on your account.

Now you’re in Romans 5; just turn left to Romans 4, and look at Romans 4 and how Paul gives one of the richest discussions of our righteousness—the much more of our righteousness—that he could possibly give. Now, look in verse 5—this is Romans 4, 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 joining a church, by keeping the Ten Commandments, by obeying the Golden Rule, by getting baptized, by giving your money, or anything else. Salvation is not a reward for the righteous; it is a gift for the guilty. “To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” When God sees you put your faith in Jesus, God writes down by your name, “He is righteous.” Verse 6: “Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works.” Do you know what the word impute means? It means to put on your account. When you go to the department store and buy something, don’t say, “Charge it.” Say, “Impute it.” That’ll confuse her a little bit. It means the same thing. “Put that on my account.” God put righteousness on your account. He just imputed it to you. You didn’t earn it; you don’t deserve it. But when you put your faith in the crucified Son of God, God imputed that to you. Is that not wonderful? Say “Amen.” That is wonderful!

But wait a minute. It gets better yet. “Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven.” Now, He takes every vile, terrible, horrible thing we’ve ever done, and He forgives us. Well, that’s wonderful. But it gets better yet—“... and whose sins are covered.” Not only does He forgive; He forgets. He covers. He buries in the depth of the deepest sea, in the grave of His forgetfulness. “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.” So, “whose iniquities are covered.” Well, that’s wonderful. Can it get any better? Yes, it does. Continue to read. Verse 8: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” Now, He has imputed righteousness, but it goes on to say He will not impute sin. He will never put sin on your account—never! You say, “But what if I sin?” Well, He’ll carry you to the woodshed. Whom the Lord loves He chastens, and if you’re a child of God, you know, the chastisement of God. But, friend, that sin will never be put on your account.

People have the idea that if they're living good when they die, then they're going to heaven. Well, you ought to live good, but, friend, I want to tell you this: you don't go to heaven by the way you live, and I wouldn't trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven. You know what I'm trusting? "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." If God imputed sin to you, to me, or any of us, we would never make it, none of us. God will not put that on your account. You say, "Well, Pastor, if I believed that, 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. When God saved me, He gave me a brand new want. He gave me a new nature, and that's one of the ways that I know that I am saved. And if I were to disobey the Lord, He'd carry me to the woodshed, but He would not put sin on my account. Now, sin could be placed on Adam's account, but when we got saved—listen to me—we got much more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam. You understand that! It is the much more—it is the much more of our righteousness.

#### **E. We Gain the Much More of Our Reign**

And then, look, if you will—the much more of our reign. Look in verses 20 through 21—we're back to chapter 5, verse 20: "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound." That means, in plain English, God gave us the law to let us know we're sinners. "But where sin abounded, grace did"—here it is!—"much more abound." And how did that grace abound? Well, watch it. "That as sin reigned unto death"—when you were in the kingdom of death and sin was ruling over you—"even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." We come into a new kingdom; it is the kingdom of grace, and it is much better than the kingdom that Adam had even before he sinned. Adam had an earthly dominion, and he lost it, he blew it. But Jesus bought it back, and it now becomes a kingdom of grace; and we have gained much more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam. We have gained much more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam.

I saw advertised something called Super Glue, and they said where you put the thing back together, it'll be stronger there than at any other point. That's what salvation is. Folks, it's stronger after it's been put back than it was before it ever got broken. That's what he's saying. By one man we got into one kingdom, and by another Man—the Lord Jesus—we got out into the kingdom of love and light to reign in life. But we gain much more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam.

### **III. The Help of the Holy Spirit**

Now, what does this have to do with the Holy Spirit? I'm glad you've asked. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 1: "What shall we say then?" I mean, what are going to do about this? How does this going to become real to us? So far, it's just theology. Now, how are we going to get it down into our lives? How are we going to walk out of here

tomorrow morning, this afternoon, whenever it is, and live with Kingdom Authority? What shall we say to these things? What he's saying there is, where is the practical application? "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." We're not saved by works. But does that mean we're to live sinful lives? Forbid it, Lord.

Now, there are three key words here in chapter 6, and I've got to give them to you quickly. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 6: "Knowing this,"—and write down in your margin fact—f-a-c-t. Then go down to verse 11: "Likewise reckon." Write down the word faith by that word. And then, go down to verse 13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of righteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God." Underscore the word yield, and write down function—fact, faith, and function. All right now, here it is. Listen. Here's how the Holy Spirit of God takes care of you.

#### A. **Fact**

First of all, this is a fact. He says, "You're to know it." Listen. You are to know it! You're to know that Jesus has bought back that lost estate. You are to know that Jesus has given you righteousness, all of these things; that is a fact, and I want you to know that fact. That's the reason that God brought you here—so that I could give it to you. Because, what is the import of that fact? Remember that a son of slaves is a slave. Now, suppose you're a slave. Let's suppose you're a runaway slave. Let's suppose you deserve punishment. Let's suppose you're not only a slave, but a criminal, and then you die. What happens to the criminal charges against you when you die? They're gone. You can't prosecute a dead man. Suppose you're a slave. What control does your old master have over you when you die? None! He can't tell you when to go to bed, when to get up, what to do. Now, listen. We died when Jesus died. He died for us. We died in Him. One Man, the Bible says, died for all of us, so His death had my name on it. That is a fact! Therefore, all the charges against us are dropped! And all the demands that Satan has upon his old slaves, they're gone! That's a fact—a fact.

#### B. **Faith**

Now, the Bible says, in verse 11, reckon that; that's faith. You see, it's one thing to get the fact. It's another thing now to believe it. This word, reckon, is a bookkeeping term. It means calculate on it, act on it. I mean, if you have your bank account there, and you add it up, and you say, "I have got a certain amount of money in the bank," once you reckon that, then you can write the check. And the facts are there—those are the numbers—then you calculate it. You say, "Okay. That is true. Now, I can begin to act on this." Reckoning is not closing your eyes and pretending, but it is a fact that Jesus died for us, that He broke Satan's back, that Satan's kingdom is doomed, and that Jesus bought back for us more than Adam ever lost.

### C. Function

Now, here's the third thing—this is where you really need to get to where it begins to operate, is the function—and that is the word yield in verses 12 through 14. We're in chapter 6. Now, look at it very carefully: "Let not therefore sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments unto righteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God." That is your function, to yield. Now, notice what he says there: don't let sin reign in your mortal bodies. Now, what does that mean? It means you could, if you wanted to! I mean, if you're so silly once you've been emancipated, once the charges against you have been dropped, once Satan's hold over you is nullified, you're no longer his slave, then why are you going to let him rule over you? You don't have to do it! He doesn't want you to know that, but you are going to have to take your authority. You're going to have to use that authority. Satan never gives up anybody or anything without a fuss or without a fight, because he's a liar, he is a usurper, and he doesn't want you to know the truth.

One time a long time ago, I told you about a sailboat that I used to have down in Florida that got stolen. I couldn't find my sailboat. It was gone down from the riverfront. Upon a time, I was driving down a highway, and I looked over there in a boat yard where they had boats for sale, and there was my sailboat right out there in the front. It was the one that they were featuring. I looked at that. I said, "There's my boat!" I wheeled in. I looked at it. I saw every little nick. I'd been in that boat for hours; I knew everything about it. No doubt about it—that was my boat! And so I walked in then. I said, "How much is the boat out there?" And he told me. I said, "Where'd you get it?" He said, "Well, it belongs to so-and-so," or whatever; I can't even remember what he said. I said, "Oh." I said, "Well," I said, "that's my boat, and I'll be back in a while to get it." I went and got my trailer and came back, and I went out there and started to load the boat. He came out and said, "What are you doing, mister?" I said, "I'm getting this boat." He said, "You can't do that!" I said, "Watch me!" I was loading the boat up. He said, "You better not do that!" I said, "Why don't you call the police?" I said, "Go call the police, and bring them down here, and tell them that a man is carrying away a boat." He went inside. I never heard any more from him. I loaded up the boat and took it away. You know why? Because, folks, I had the truth—the facts—on my side, and I could act on them. Now, Satan will bluster. He'll try to keep you from having your Kingdom Authority, but you can say to him, "You're a liar. If you don't like what I'm doing, tell God on me, and see what happens." What I'm saying is this: you don't have to let it happen. "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies." But yield yourselves as instruments of righteousness. There's only one thing to do when temptation comes, and it's yield—not to temptation, but to Jesus. And when you yield to Him—when you yield to Him—then Kingdom Authority begins to flow in you and through you, and you yield yourself as an

instrument of righteousness.

## Conclusion

Now, everybody here is in one of two kingdoms. You're in the kingdom of darkness and death, or light and life. Isn't that true? Everybody here is either in Adam or in Christ—everybody! "In Adam all die; in Christ are all made alive." Here's a situation: you're on the railroad tracks, and your car has stalled. The train is coming at a great velocity, and there you are. If you remain in the car, it is sudden death. You have a choice: you can get out of the car, or you can remain in the car. Now, you don't have to decide whether or not you're going to die; that's already decided if you don't get out of the car. Your choice is to get out or to die. Now, folks, let me tell you something. You are already in Adam. All you have to do to die and go to hell is just stay right where you are. I mean, you're already there. You're already there. The choice is, Are you going to get out of Adam and into Christ? That's the choice—that's the choice, because in Adam all die, and you're already under condemnation, and the train is coming. But our Lord says, "Come to Me. Come to Me." And I'm telling you today that you can step into the kingdom of God's dear Son, and you can live with Kingdom Authority. When you yield, do you know who you're yielding to? The Holy Spirit of God, and that's the Kingdom Authority of the Spirit.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. If you're saved and you know that you're saved, why don't you just praise the Lord here, and thank Him for the much more that you have in Jesus. Just thank Him for the much more that you have. Hallelujah. And if you're not saved, would you pray right now, and say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me. I am stepping out of the kingdom of darkness. I'm coming out of Adam; I'm coming into Jesus. I am receiving Jesus now as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus." The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And that word, believe, means trust. Trust Him, and you'll be saved.

Father, I pray that many in this place today will trust Christ, and, Lord, that they'll step out of that kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of light before the locomotive of Your wrath and judgment comes. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. Look at me, every eye. Don't gather your books. I'm going to ask you to do something very wonderful today. If I could do it for you, I would, but I cannot. I'm going to ask you today, by faith, like a child, to get up out of your seat and come forward, and let your coming forward be your way of saying, "This indicates that I am trusting Jesus, and furthermore that I am not ashamed of Him, that He died for me." Standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a minister of this church, and up there in that aisle way in the balcony will be ministers along. You come to the minister

and tell him this. Tell him, "I am trusting Jesus." What we want to do is to give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions, and seal that decision in prayer. There's something about coming forward that settles it and seals it, that shames the devil, gives glory to Jesus, blesses the church, and blesses the one who does it. You just come and say, "I'm trusting Jesus." There are others of you today. Maybe you've trusted Jesus a long time ago, but you've never made it public. You've never presented yourself for believers baptism. You need to come forward and say, "I know I'm saved. I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I want to be baptized and added to the fellowship of this church." There are others of you who would like to come today and place your membership here by transfer from another church. Now, we're not looking for mere joiners. If you don't love the Lord Jesus, if you're not truly saved, don't come to transfer your membership if you need to be saved; but if you know that you're saved, you believe as we believe, want to be a faithful member, we invite you to come and say, "I want to place my membership here."

Now, look up here, and let me ask you this: please do not leave during the invitation. One person leaving can distract and disturb others. If you're with a friend during the invitation who would like to make a decision, you may volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus. This is the most sacred, solemn part of the service where souls are getting saved, so be in a spirit of prayer. We're singing, "Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess You now." And, when we sing that, just leave your seat and come. Let's stand together. That's right. Step out, and come on to Jesus.

# How to Have a Rock-Solid Faith

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 15, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 5:1, 3**

*“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also:  
knowing that tribulation worketh patience.”*

ROMANS 5:3

## Outline

Introduction

I. Conversion Brings Conflict

II. Conflict Teaches Constancy

A. When Conflict Comes, Some People Retreat

B. When Conflict Comes, Some People Resent

C. When Conflict Comes, Some People Resign

D. When Conflict Comes, Some People Resolve by Faith to Follow God

III. Constancy Develops Character

IV. Character Gives Confidence

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take please the Bible, and look now in Romans chapter five; find it, if you will. And when you've found it, just look up here. I heard somewhere of a little boy who had a horse, and the horse was really just an old, oat-burning nag. The horse was decrepit, sway-backed, and wasn't much of a horse. Really sort of a flea-bitten horse, and a man was making fun of the little guy and his horse. Now, the boy loved the horse very much, because they had been pals for a long time. The man, in order to ridicule the little boy, and have some fun with him, said, "Son, is that horse any good?" He said, "Yes sir, he's the best horse in the whole world." He said, "Well, Son, he doesn't look so good." He said, "Can he run fast?" He said, "No sir, but he can stand fast."

Now, I want to talk to you about how to have a faith that will stand fast, how to have an anchor that will grip the solid rock, how to put some spiritual steel and concrete in your life, because in these desperate days in which we are living, you will need it. Many Christians today are being blown about by the winds of circumstances, and they are being scattered by the storms of calamity. They are being swept away in floods of affliction. They don't have an anchor that will hold in the storm. To the contrary, their life

seems to be built on eggshells and Jell-O. They are weak and floundering saints. And God wants us to be strong. God doesn't want us to fold up and give up. God wants us to look up and stand up. God wants us to have a foundation that is sure. The book of Romans is a foundation for our faith, a solid word for an unsure age. Would you like to have rock-solid faith? Would you like for your anchor to hold? You see, God is in the business of building saints. When God gives you salvation, He's not finished with you; He's beginning with you. The Bible says, in Philippians 1, verse 6, "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it." So getting saved does not mean we're now the finished product. One man was wearing a lapel button and it just had a series of letters on it. It said, P-B-P-G-I-N-F-W-M-Y. That's all it said on the button. And a friend asked him, "What does that mean?" He said, "It means, Please be patient; God is not finished with me yet." And God is not finished with you yet. God wants to build into you a rock-solid faith.

Now, our scripture tells us how He does that, in four steps, and I want you to look at it right now, beginning in verse 1: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost."

Now, I want to ask you a question: When God saves you, what does God give you as the by-product of that salvation? Is it peace, or is it tribulation? The answer is yes. Now, we read about the peace of God in verse 1: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." But notice verse 3: "And not only so, but we glory in tribulation." Don't think, dear friend, that when you get saved that all you get is peace, and there's no problem, no heartache, no tears, no disappointment. Oh no! When God is going to build into you a rock-solid faith, He's going to mix in some tribulation. Four things I want you to notice.

Now, folks, this is for your welfare. Don't let this blow past. I mean, this is God's Word to you now. We're not just playing games. And if you want to have a solid faith, then you're going to have to learn today.

## **I. Conversion Brings Conflict**

Point number one: conversion brings conflict. Did you get that? Conversion brings conflict. Verses 1 and 2, he's talking about our conversion, being justified by faith. He's talking about peace with God, he's talking about access by faith into this grace, "wherein we stand and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." Oh yes! Praise God! Hallelujah! We like that. But now move into verse 3: "and not only so, but we glory in

tribulations.”

Now, the word “tribulation” means pressure; that’s literally what it means. It’s translated here tribulation, but it was used when you would crush grapes to get wine; the same word “tribulation” is used. It was used when you would crush olives to get oil. And God wants to build into your character the wine and the oil of His strength and His love. And so, God is going to bring pressure into your life, because, without pressure, God cannot make you a strong saint. Without tribulation, God will not make you a strong saint. You need conflict. You need pressure. Conversion brings conflict. A diamond is a lump of coal that’s been under pressure for a long, long time.

Now, you need to understand the ways of God that when you are having trouble and heartache and disappointment, God is over it all. The word “luck” does not belong in the Christian’s vocabulary. And the word “fate”—f-a-t-e—does not belong in your category, or in your vocabulary. God is watching over it all. Now, you may not be able to understand it. Thomas Watson said, “Where reason cannot wade, there faith must swim.” But you must understand that God is over all, and when you come to Jesus, you’re going to come into conflict and pressure.

Now, this conflict and this pressure may come from Satan, or it may come from God, but God is over it all. Satan will bring conflict to cause you to stumble; God will bring conflict to cause you to stand; but you’re going to know pressure as a Christian.

Now, some of this pressure is going to come from the world. You know, the Bible says, in Romans 12, verse 1, “Don’t be conformed to this world.” The minute you come to Jesus, this world is going to begin to bring pressure on you to squeeze you into its mold, and you will feel that every day in the entertainment world, in the business world, in the social world, in the political world. There will be incredible pressure upon the child of God. And this world with its theories and with its thrills, this world is going to come against you in so many ways.

But not only is the pressure going to come from the world; it’s going to come from the flesh. You’re going to find out that once you get saved, you receive a new nature. But the old Adamic nature is still there. The proclivity to sin is still there. You feel it. I feel it. You never get beyond it. The Bible calls it “the flesh.” It is an enemy inside the fort. You’re going to feel a civil war within you. I felt it when I first got saved as a teenager boy. I can remember a particular time after I had given my heart to Jesus, I was out with some friends and an incredible temptation came to me. And I can remember it as it were yesterday the incredible war that was going on within me, because my flesh said, “Adrian, that’s something you want to do. That’s something you need to do. Everybody else is doing it.” And the Holy Spirit said to me, “No, you’re different. You cannot do that.” And I felt the biggest battle going on in my heart, and I prayed and I struggled as a new Christian.

And friend, you'll feel that. When you come into salvation, you're going to find out that the world will be working on you to squeeze you into its mold. And you'll find out that inside there is something that rises up within you, and there is raging in you a conflict, a civil war. Am I the only one who has felt that? Have you felt that? Okay, you feel it. That's in all of us. The Bible says, "the flesh resists the spirit and the spirit against the flesh." Galatians 5, verse 17: "the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary one to another."

And then, not only will there be the conflict with the world, and not only will there be the conflict with the flesh, but the conflict with the devil himself. Friend, you never really understand the power of Satan until you get saved—until you get saved. You know, you say, "Well, I don't have any difficulty with the devil." Well, if you don't, let me tell you why. It's because you and the devil are traveling in the same direction. You turn around, you'll have a collision with him. Right now, you're in collusion with him. But you turn around, and you start the other way, if you've never met the devil, it's because you and the devil are going in the same direction. That's all I'm saying to you is, when you get saved, when you give your heart to Jesus, Satan is going to level all of the artillery of hell against you. And if you are not struggling against the devil, if you're not in battle with Satan, may I tell you, you must be a little better than Jesus, because He was. And Satan came against Jesus, he comes against me, and he will come against you.

There was a man who had a farmhand who worked on his farm. The man was not a believer; the farmhand was. The two of them, however, were friends, and they went out duck hunting together. And the man who was not a believer was saying to the farmhand, he said, "Look, you're always talking about fighting with the devil and wrestling with the devil." He said, "I never have to fight with the devil; I never have to wrestle with the devil; and I'm not even a Christian." He said, "Boss, if you and I shot two ducks, one was wounded, and one was dead, which one would you go after first?" He said, "Well, I guess the wounded duck." He said, "That's right." He said, "the devil knows you're a dead duck." Now, friend, that is true. If the devil doesn't bother you, it's just because you're a dead duck. He doesn't have to bother you. But I'm saying this—listen to me: conversion brings conflict, conflict like you've never known. You may get the idea that you're not even saved, because here you're sailing along, and then, one day you give your heart to Jesus, and bang, here comes the world, here comes the flesh, here comes the devil against you. The Bible calls that tribulation. The Bible calls that pressure.

But not only will it come from Satan to cause you to stumble; it will come from God to cause you to stand. God himself will bring tribulation and pressure. The Bible says, whom the Lord loves He scourges and disciplines—every child of God. You see, listen. God is not trying to make you happy. Good wants to make you holy. And temptation and

testing and trials are a part of life. It's a false gospel that says, if you come to Christ, there will be no adversity, no misfortune; there will be no persecution, there will be no pain.

The late great Vance Havner said this, and I've copied it down for you. I want you to listen to it. Here's what Vance Havner said—he said, "I'm often amused and amazed by the way we equate Christianity with success, popularity, and prosperity. We may not admit it, but we use the same old gauge that the world uses, except we use religious language. It would appear that gain is godliness with us, in spite of Paul's formula that godliness plus contentment equals prosperity." No, I'm telling you folks that the first step in God building a rock-solid faith is conflict.

He tells us, in verses 1 and 2, that we're going to be saved. And then, he tells us, in verse three, that we need to glory in tribulation. And remember the word "tribulation" means conflict; it means pressure.

## **II. Conflict Teaches Constancy**

Step number two, step number two, now; this is what God is going to do to build character into your life. Conflict teaches constancy—conflict teaches constancy. Notice again: "knowing that tribulation worketh patience." Now, what is patience? Not the ability to thread a needle. Not the ability to finish a crossword puzzle. No, the word "patience" means constancy. It means consistency. You see, when the pressure comes, the crisis comes. It doesn't make you; it just reveals what you're made of. The same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay. The word "patience" again, it means endurance. The New American Standard says, it brings about perseverance. Goodspeed says, "it produces endurance." How many in this building today would say, "Pastor, I want strength. I want victory. I want prosperity. I want contentment." Oh, you'd say, everybody here wants those. I wonder if I were to ask, how many of you want patience, very few of us would say I want patience. But, you'll never have these other things that I've just mentioned without patience, without constancy, without endurance. You see, tribulation works patience.

Now, come up close—I'm going to tell you something. You will never learn much of anything worth learning if you don't have constancy, endurance, and patience. You just won't do it. If you want to learn how to play the piano, you're going to have to learn the scales. If you're going to learn Greek, you're going to have to study the verbs. Sorry about that. If you want to lose weight, you're going to have to have constancy. If you want to build character, you're going to have to persevere; you're going to have to endure. There is no instant maturity. Conversion brings conflict, and conflict is meant to teach continuance. Constancy—the Bible calls it patience.

What do you do when the conflict comes? Well there are four things you can do.

### **A. When Conflict Comes, Some People Retreat**

Some people just retreat. They just run away from conflict. Whether physically or emotionally, they get a plane ticket, they take a pill, they turn up a bottle, they take a needle, they take a gun. They just try to run from conflict. One man said, “The way to fight a woman is with your hat.” They said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Grab it and run.”

### **B. When Conflict Comes, Some People Resent**

So some, when conflict comes, they retreat. Others, when conflict comes, they resent. I mean, they say, I gave my heart to Jesus Christ. I went down there. I got baptized. I started going to Sunday School. I started tithing. Now, look what has happened to me. And they pout; they get a grudge with God. They become cynical. They don't retreat; they resent.

### **C. When Conflict Comes, Some People Resign**

Others resign; they just cave in. They give up. They lie down on the field, and surrender their shield, and they give in to discouragement and despondency.

### **D. When Conflict Comes, Some People Resolve by Faith to Follow God**

But what is God's plan? God's plan is not for you to retreat, not for you to resent, not for you to resign, but to resolve by faith that you will follow Him. Faith—listen to me—faith is shown more in patience and constancy than in other way. If you really have faith, when trouble comes, you will endure. Faith is not receiving the things you want nearly so much as it is accepting from God the things He gives. Tribulation works patience. Don't try to wiggle out of what God is doing to you. Job said, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust him.”

Winston Churchill was a man. He looked like a bulldog, stood like a bulldog. He was the one who said, never, never, never give up. And he reminded us that a bulldog has his nose slanted backward so he can hold on and still breathe. That's a bulldog. Now, what you need to do is to get a bulldog grip on Almighty God, and like Job say, I don't care what is happening, what my children do, what the doctor tells me, what my banker tells me, I will not let go. My anchor holds, as Dale sang for us.

Right away, do you see? What is this constancy? William Barclay describes it so well, I want you to listen to what he said: “It is not the patience that can sit down and bow its head and let things descend upon it and passively endure until the storm is passed. It is the spirit which can bear things, not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope. It is not the spirit which sits statically enduring in one place, but the spirit which bares things, because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory. It is not patience which grimly waits for the end, but patience which radiantly hopes for the dawn.” That's the kind of endurance that the child of God has. Oh, I wish you would

hear what he says.

### **III. Constancy Develops Character**

So notice: conversion brings conflict, conflict teaches constancy, and constancy develops character. Now, watch it. Look in verse 4, if you will: “And patience, experience.” Now, what does he mean, experience? Well, I looked this up last night again in a number of translations, and it is translated many times character. The translation you may be holding in your lap today may say character. Patience, constancy, brings character, and God wants to build into you character. God wants to build into you rock-solid faith. God is building His saints with spiritual steel and spiritual concrete. Do you see, reputation is what others think about you? Character is what God and your wife know about you. God wants to build character into your life. This word “experience” was used, in the Bible, of gold that is tried in the fire and comes out pure. Same word; that is, it has character to it.

You see, God is going to put you in the fire of affliction. Why? To test you. The faith that can't be tested can't be trusted. So God is going to put you into the fire of affliction to test you. And that's the way that you're going to learn how much dross there may be in your life that needs to be burned out of your life, the sludge that's in the gold ore. You see, that's the way God builds character. I hate to tell you this, folks, but the time that I've grown the most, and the time you will grow the most, is not when everything has been going fine with me. You think back about those times when you grew the most in the Lord, and most likely they were times when you were going through sorrow and pressure and trouble, isn't that true? Listen, it's just simply true, that God is in the furnace of affliction. Somebody wrote these lines: “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 her, when sorrow walked with me.”

God wants to build character into your life. And what God does is not to remove you from difficulty or pain, but to the contrary. God is in the transformation business. You know, God did not take away evil. What God does, He transforms us. God didn't stop the crucifixion; He just gave us Easter. You see, God's method is not the method of substitution. Most of us want God to give us health instead of sickness. We want God to give us wealth instead of poverty. We want God to give us friendship rather than loneliness. We just want God to substitute things. But God is not in the substitution business; God is in the transformation business. God took Paul's weakness and He transformed it into strength. He took his suffering; He transformed it into glory. That's the reason why Job said, “He knoweth the way that I should take. And when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.”

Now, God wants to build into you character. And there is no way that you are going to have character, which is also translated experience without experience. That's the reason why I think the King James Version translates it experience. Somebody was talking to a businessman; he said, "How do you become a success in business?" He said, "Good decisions." "Well," he said, "that's fine. Where do you learn how to make good decisions?" He said, "Experience." He said, "Well, where do you get experience?" He said, "Bad decisions." You see, what God is going to do, God is going to put you in the furnace of affliction, and God is going to build your character. You can be instantly spiritual, but you cannot be instantly mature. And, by the way, you can be young once, but you can be immature for a long time.

Now, listen here: conversion brings conflict. Conflict teaches constancy. Constancy builds character. If you will stay in the fire, God knows what He is doing. Most of us just want to get out of the fire. We don't want to stay there. But they say that when the person who is the refiner, who is refining the gold, he knows it's pure, when he can see his face reflected in it. What God is looking for is His character, His likeness, reflected in our lives.

#### **IV. Character Gives Confidence**

Now, here is the fourth and final thing. Are you following with me? Are you following along? Now, listen. Conversion brings conflict. It's hard, but it's true. Conflict teaches constancy. Patience, endurance—stay in there. When you do, that constancy will build character. And then, do you know what will happen to you? That character will give confidence. That's the last thing. That's the rock-solid faith I am talking about—the confidence.

Look at it here in God's Word: "And patience experience, and experience"—what?—hope. Hope. Now, what does the Bible mean when it says "hope?" It doesn't mean, maybe so; it might be. No, friend, you need to understand this, and if you don't get this, you're going to miss the whole thing. When the Bible uses the word "hope," it means rock-solid faith. That's what it means. For example, the Second Coming of Jesus is called what? The blessed hope. That doesn't mean the blessed maybe. No, no. He is talking about hope as an anchor of the soul. Remember what Dale Shipley sang?

All right now, let me give you a scripture that I thought of—Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 19: "Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul both sure and steadfast." What good is an anchor without a solid rock? Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, steadfast, sure. You say, "Well, I want a rock-solid faith." All right, conversion brings conflict, and conflict teaches constancy, and constancy preaches brings character, and character brings confidence. You've been through the fire, and you know He has not failed you. You know that He has kept His word. You know 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.

Do you know what hope is? Hope is faith in the future tense. I mean, it believes God not only for the present, but it believes God for the future. Thomas Brook says, “hope can see heaven through the thickest clouds.” It doesn’t matter what. I have that absolute confidence.

Now, look at it. He says here—look: “and patience experience, and experience hope,”—now, watch this—“and hope maketh not ashamed.” What does that mean—“maketh not ashamed?” It means it will never disappoint you. He cannot fail. He will not fail. But you need to get a bulldog grip on the things that really count. No one ever has or ever can put his faith in Jesus and be disappointed or ashamed that he did it. That was a good place for an amen! Amen!

I read somewhere of a Salvation Army lass who had been witnessing to a family in a poor neighborhood. There were some people who lived in an upstairs tenement and the father in the home was an atheist, and avowed atheist, a philosophical atheist. And this girl who worked in the Salvation Army had been trying to lead this family to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and the father would was in a conflict with her, but she just kept loving and kept going. The son in that family grew ill, and he was critically ill. They didn’t have enough of whatever it took to put him in the hospital. He was dying at home. This girl went back one more time to see if she could witness, to see if she could share the love of Jesus. And, as she stood outside the door, she could hear what was going on in the door, and reported it later. The boy asked his dad, “Dad, am I going to die?” The father said, “Son, you will die. But don’t worry about it. After you die, it will be all over. You won’t feel anything; you won’t know anything; you will have forgotten the pain and the sorrow. So, don’t worry about it, son. I love you, son. And just hold on, son; just hold on. After a while, it will be over.” And the son said, “But father, I am afraid, and I don’t want to die. Father, I need some help.” And the father said, “Son, my son, I love you. It will be over in a moment. It will be all over, all over. Son, hold on; just hold on.” And that Salvation Army lass said, “I heard that boy pathetically say, ‘Father, you’re telling me to hold on, but there’s nothing to hold on to.’”

## Conclusion

Friend, I want to tell you something. When you know Jesus, and when your feet touch those chilly waters of death, and when the winds are blowing, your anchor will hold. Your anchor will hold. You will have a rock-solid faith. That’s what hope means—that’s what hope means. Conversion brings conflict, conflict teaches constancy, constancy builds character, and character enables us to trust God in the darkest storm.

“Which hope we have is an anchor of the soul.” The apostle Paul, in the book of Ephesians, talked about those who were lost, and he talked about them being alienated from the life of God, without hope in this world.

Aren't you glad there is a hope? Not a maybe—a hope, a certainty. That's what we have today. Now, it begins with conversion. Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you begin to pray right now for friends who may be around you, maybe somebody here today who never even really thought about giving his or her heart to Jesus, but today God's Holy Spirit has been speaking to hearts and people are saying yes, that's what I need. That's what I want. Would you just pray for somebody today that may be near you, the person to your right, to your left, that might need Jesus.

And while heads are bowed, maybe somebody is praying for you right now, but I want to talk to you. If you are not certain that you are saved, let me tell you how to be saved. Would you pray a prayer like this: Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, I know that you love me. Thank you for paying for my sin with your blood on the cross. My sins deserves judgment. Thank you for taking my judgment. Thank you for bearing the penalty for my sin. Thank you for being my substitute. Thank you for such great love. Thank you, Lord. And now, Lord, just, by faith, I open my heart; I receive you. I believe you are the Son of God. I believe that you paid the full debt for my sin. I believe that God raised you from the dead. And now, right now, I receive you into my heart, as my Lord and Savior. Right now, I receive you into my heart, as my Lord and Savior, this moment. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me, and save me. I'm not asking for a special feeling. I'm not looking for some kind of sign. I stand on your Word. I just trust you, by faith. You are now my Lord and my Savior, my God, my guide, my friend. And, Lord Jesus, because you died for me, I will live for you. I will not be ashamed of you. I will confess you openly. I will follow you the rest of my life. By your grace and for your glory. Amen.

# How God Develops Christian Character

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 31, 1992**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 5:3**

*“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also:  
knowing that tribulation worketh patience.”*

ROMANS 5:3

## Outline

Introduction

I. Pressure

II. Patience

III. Purity

IV. Prospect

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to Romans chapter five—Romans chapter five. In a moment we will begin reading in verse three. I want to talk to you today about character and how God develops Christian character. Now when you're saved, when you receive Christ as your personal Savior, then God begins to work on you. Nobody is born full-grown. And, so after you receive Christ as your personal Savior, then God begins to build your Christian character.

Now, in order for you to have Christian character, first of all, you must receive Christ. Some people are trying to develop character but they have no base to develop character. Years ago, I read of a missionary wife who with her husband moved into a missionary home and she wanted it to be as beautiful as it could be and she was used to western standards and she looked at the floor and the floor seemed dirty. So, she said to herself, the first thing I will do is to scrub this floor and so she got her big brush, she got her suds, she got her pail, she got down on her hands and knees and she began to scrub that floor in that house.

She scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed and mopped, and rinsed and scrubbed and scrubbed and mopped and rinsed and scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed and scrubbed and she said, I'll never get the dirt off this floor. One of the locals said, I need

to tell you the reason you can't get the dirt off the floor: it is a dirt floor.

What she had been doing was scrubbing a floor that was made of dirt. That's all there was. It was just hard packed dirt, so she could not possibly get the dirt off the floor because that's all there was there on the floor—dirt. Now, some people are trying to develop a character just like that. They scrub, they rub, they wash, they rinse, they mop, they dry, but friend there's nothing there to really scrub till you've been born again. Until you have been saved. Until you have that foundation. Then, once you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, then upon that foundation, then upon that base, you can build a Christian character.

Now, Romans chapter five and I begin in verse three. Here's the way that God builds Christian character and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience and patience, experience. Now, many translations give that patience, character—character. And, character, hope. And hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.

Now, listen to me my dear friend. When you give your heart to Jesus Christ, if so facto you do not have a Christian character. You have the basis for a Christian character, but then God begins to develop Christian character.

You know the Bible says in Philippians chapter one, verse six: He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it. So, when you get saved, God just simply begins a good work in you. You are not a finished product. As a matter of fact, one day many years ago, I saw a man wearing a lapel button and that lapel button it said this, please be patient with me, God is not finished with me yet. I like that. Please be patient with me, God is not finished with me yet. He who hath begun a good work in you, that is, He will complete it; God will build that Christian character.

Now, how does God build Christian character? Four steps, they're right here in these verses, I want you to see them.

## **I. Pressure**

Step number one: God allows pressures to come. God allows pressures to come. Now look in verse three, and not only so, but we glory in tribulations. Sorry bout that folks. We glory in tribulations and the word tribulation literally means pressure. Pressure. It was a word that was used when they would crush grapes in the vat or when they would crush olives. If they wanted wine or if they wanted oil, first of all the grapes and the olives had to go through tribulation. Tribulation. Had to go through pressure. Now, God wants wine and oil in your character. He wants the oil of gladness. He wants the wine of joy. He wants that which will sustain and give strength to come out of you, but the only way that God will get it out of you my dear friend is to press it out of you—to

press it out of you. We glory in tribulation. And, is something bad happening to you right now? Are you having trouble? Are you feeling pressure? My dear friends, these are not obstacles; they are opportunities. They are things that God has engineered to build character into your life.

Maybe you can't understand it. You say, I'm having bad luck. No, you're not. You're saying, well, it's just my fate. My friend, will you take the word luck and the word fate and get them out of your vocabulary, as a child of God? Anything that wrinkles me is for me to go off to preach somewhere, and somebody says, well, good luck. Oh, my dear friend, I'm not interested in luck—that's a pagan concept. I'm not interested in fate—that's a pagan concept. All things work together for good to those who love God who are called according to His purpose. Our God is a sovereign God and if you cannot understand the trouble and the pressure that you're having then just stand under it. You don't have to understand it.

As the great pilgrim Thomas Watson said, where reason cannot wade, there faith must swim. Faith—just simply trust God. Let me say to you, my friend, if you're thinking about giving your heart to Jesus Christ, or if you've already given your heart to Jesus Christ, don't get the idea that if you become a Christian then it will be all honey and not bees. It is a false gospel that says there will be no adversity, no misfortune, no persecution, no pain, no sickness, no sorry, no moan, no groan, we glory in tribulation.

You say well, if that's what it takes to be a Christian, then I don't want to be a Christian. Well, friend, you're going to have tribulation, whether you're a Christian or not. Man that's born of woman is full of trouble. You got here any other way, then you're excused. But man that is born of woman, the Bible says, is full of trouble, but a child of God sees that God engineers what happens to him and he can say, we glory in this tribulation—we glory.

I read a book the other day entitled, If It Ain't Broke, Break it, by Mr. Kriegel. It's a book for business people. It's not a religious book at all. It's just simply saying to businessmen, don't keep on going through the same old ways just because you think it's always worked this way. He's trying to teach them to be new and innovative, but in the introduction of that book that is worth the price of the book. Now, he didn't make the spiritual application, but I want to make the spiritual application. Let me read to you the story that's in the beginning of this book, If It Ain't Broke, Break It.

Listen. For several centuries, down through many dynasties, a village was known for its exquisite and fragile porcelain. Especially striking were its urns, high as tables, wide as chairs, they were admired around the globe for their strong form and delicate beauty. Legend has it that when each person was finished, there was one final step. The artist broke it and then put it back together with gold filigree and an ordinary urn was then transformed into a priceless work of art. What seemed finished wasn't until it was

broken.

Here's a beautiful urn—it's perfect. Then the artist takes a hammer and he shatters it. He breaks it. It's broken in pieces. And then, with gold filigree he puts it back together. Can you see that in your mind? I can see an urn. I would love to have one in my home, put it back together with gold filigree. You see, listen, friends. Men throw broken things away. God never uses anything until He first breaks it. A broken and a contrite spirit, thou wilt not despise, O God. And God is trying to break your life.

My dear friend, no preacher can ever preach as he ought to preach, unless he preaches from a broken heart. No singer can ever sing as he ought to sing, unless he sings with a broken heart. No teacher can ever teach as he ought to teach, unless he teaches with a broken heart. We glory in tribulation. God knows what He is up to. May I tell you, dear friend, very clearly and very plainly, that first of all, God brings pressure into your life.

## **II. Patience**

Secondly, look at our text again: and not only so, but we glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh patience. There's the second step in building a Christian character. First of all pressure; and then, patience.

Now, you have to have the pressure in order to have something to be patient about. The Bible teaches that God wants to work in your heart a character quality known as patience. But the word patient here is not passivity. Actually the word means endurance or constancy. The New American Standard says, brings about perseverance. Goodspeed translates it this way, produces endurance. Endurance. Now, what do you do when troubles come? What do you do when you're in the middle of all of that? What do you do when you're in the wine vat being pressed. What do you do when the artist takes the hammer and begins to break the urn? What do you do?

Well, the Bible says, you are to develop a character trait known as patience, perseverance, constancy, endurance. You're not to drop out. You know some people they get saved, they give their heart to Jesus and then troubles come and they just drop out. They try to escape. They think maybe a plane ticket or a pill, a bottle a needle, a gun, somehow they drop out; they give up. Other people they get cynical, they shake their fist in the face of God? What do you do, my dear friend? You simply endure. God wants to teach you endurance. It's His way of building in you a Christian character.

Barclay has said some very poignant words—I want you to listen to them. I copied them down. It's not the patience that can sit down and bow its head and let things descend upon it and passively endure until the storm has passed, it is the spirit which can bear things, not simply with resignation but with blazing hope. It is not the spirit, which sits statically enduring in one place but the spirit, which bears things, because it

knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory. Now, listen to this sentence. It is not patience, which grimly waits for the end, but patience, which radiantly hopes for the dawn; not patience, which grimly waits for the end, but patience that radiantly hopes for the dawn.

My dear friend, listen. One of the greatest marks of your faith and your confidence in the Almighty: your endurance, your perseverance, your constancy, when trouble comes.

### **III. Purity**

First pressure, then patience. Then, my dear friend, purity—purity. Look again here. And, patience, verse four, and patience works experience. Now, I've told you that the word experience is translated in many Bible character, and why? Because it has to do with the idea of purity. This word was used to speak of gold. Gold that had been put in the fire and had been refined by the refiner until it is pure. It speaks of gold tested in the fire. It's the same word. If you're using the King James, it's translated experience. It's the same word that is translated in many Bible character. But it speaks not just of a character but a character that is pure. A character that has gone through the experience of tribulation and has gone through the experience of perseverance and God begins to burn out the dross.

Now, many of us don't want that. Very frankly, I've had all of it I want, but yet, I want some more. You understand what I've saying. I want God to continue to work into my heart and into my life until He burns out that dross. Now, most of us, we'd just rather have a good time. But how many of you really, really grew in your Christian life and in your spiritual life, when everything was smooth? How many of you really, really grew in your Christian life when everything was just fine? But how many of you really grew in your Christian life when you had trouble and heartache and pressure and pain and misunderstanding and bewilderment, how many of you grew then when you had no where to go but to God and you had to keep searching your heart and saying, O God, what's wrong? God what are you trying to tell me? What are you trying to teach me? What do you want me to confess? And, God begins to take the heat of the furnace and to cause that gold ore to bubble and the scum to come to the top and then He begins to take the scum off. They say that a refiner of silver, a refiner of gold knows when the gold is pure when he can see his own face reflected in it and so our Lord wants to see His character reflected in us.

Job chapter twenty-three, verse ten: he knoweth the way that I take; he hath tried me, and when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold. Job knew what it was to be in the furnace of affliction. He knew what pressure was, but he also knew what endurance was, and, my dear friend, he knew what purity was.

Malachi chapter three, verse three: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver,

and He—God—shall purify the sons of Levi. Somewhere I heard these words: 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 her, when sorrow walked with me. Yeah.

#### **IV. Prospect**

You see, God wants to build men. God wants to build women. God wants to build Christian character. How does God do it? Not by scrubbing a dirt floor my dear friend, but by getting you saved and putting the likeness of Jesus Christ into you and then God brings pressure and that pressure causes patience and that patience, my dear friend, then brings purity—purity. And that purity gives prospect, my dear friend, and a persuasion that we call hope.

Look if you will now: and experience, hope—H-O-P-E—hope. God now has come to this fourth quality in Christian character. And, what is the word hope? It doesn't mean wish, desire. It means rock ribbed assurance based on the Word of God and the character of God. You see, how do we get hope out of affliction, pressure, perseverance, and purity? Well, when we go through these things and we come out the other side, we have learned that God is faithful. God is faithful. God did not fail. God did see us through. And, when that happens, then we can say with the apostle Paul in Romans chapter eight, verses thirty-eight and thirty-nine: 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. My friend, that is hope.

I looked up some definitions of hope the other day in my study. Let me tell you some wonderful ones I've heard. I love this one. Hope is faith in the future tense. That's what hope is. Hope is faith in the future tense. Thomas Brooks said, hope can see heaven through the thickest clouds. John Bunyan said this, hope is never sick when faith is well. Hope—hope. My dear friend, if you don't have hope, you don't have anything. Oh, listen. Hope is one of the greatest assets that you have. Faith believes, but hope expects and hope, a person who lives by confidence in God, God alone and looks to God alone, no matter what, has my friend, Christian character. The devil wants to blow out the light of hope in your heart, in your mind. He tells you you're too sick. He tells you you're too bad or he tells you the situation is too desperate.

He wants to blow out every light of hope. I was reading recently about World War II in the Atlantic Ocean. There was an aircraft carrier out there and they sent up six pilots with their planes to scout for enemy submarines. The night came, the captain aboard that ship said, we're in danger. I issue this command: every light on this carrier shall be turned off. Every one. They said, well, what about our boys that are up there? He said,

turn off every light. These men who'd gone out to reckon finally came back and they radioed to the carrier, turn on the lights so we can land. The man on the radio said, I'm sorry, but we cannot. Another of the six pilots: give us a light so we can land; we can't see. They sent back and said, we are under orders; we cannot turn on a light. A third pilot radioed in and said, give us one light, just one; we don't know where you are. And, they sent back and said, I'm sorry, we cannot give you one light. Those are our orders. Six brave American pilots went down in the cold North Atlantic Ocean because they could not find one light in the darkness.

My dear friend, there are a lot of people like that who are circling and saying, oh, someone, somehow, somewhere, give us a light. Where is the light of hope? I want to tell you that Jesus Christ is that light, but the Bible speaks of those in Ephesians chapter two who are without hope in this world, because they know not the Lord Jesus Christ, but oh, I said in my study last night late last night, almost midnight and I opened my Bible and I turned to Hebrews chapter six and verse nineteen where the Bible speaks of hope and it says, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul. Stick fast and sure.

Oh, which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, steadfast and sure. A great ship will put down a huge steel iron anchor, with those prongs of that anchor and one of those prongs will go under a rock and get hold of that rock, anchored to that rock, steadfast and sure. The writer of the book of Hebrews said that's what our hope is like. Let the storm rage; let the waves buffet us. Let the wind blow. My anchor holds.

Recently I went to Russia and preached in Moscow. On Easter Sunday I was there. What an experience! What an experience! I told Joyce, I will not be in Moscow on Easter Sunday if I can help it, without visiting the tomb of Lenin. I want to see Lenin; I want to see his body. And I want to see it on Easter morning. And, so we lined up and walked through that tomb there in Red Square where the body of Linen lies in tomb. He is there in a crystal casket, crystal sarcophagus. He died in 1924 but that had his body so embalmed it looks as though he had died yesterday and on that casket, on that crystal sarcophagus are engraved these words—I want you to listen to them. He was the greatest leader of all peoples, of all countries, of all times; he was the lord of the new humanity. He was the savior of the world. And there he lay dead. He was. He was. He was, my dear friend. He is. He is. He is. Oh, there is that man, dead, and I thank God for my precious wife who always wants to do everything right and never break the rules, and they say, when you go to Lenin's tomb, you're not supposed to speak; you're supposed to have all of that respect, don't say a word. There's a guard in each corner of that dead body. And, when my precious wife who normally obeys the rules walked past each one of those guards, she just simply said, Christ is risen—Christ is risen, Christ is risen, Christ is risen. And, my dear friend, that is our hope. That is an anchor of the soul, steadfast and sure. A man had taught his daughter, there is no God. He was one of

these intellectuals, pseudo-intellectuals—no real intellectual, in my estimation, can be an atheist, a pseudo-intellectual—he taught his little daughter that God does not exist. A Salvation Army girl reported this story. She had been witnessing to that family, but this man was witnessing on the other side, saying, don't listen to this Salvation Army girl. There is no God. God does not exist. The girl in the family of the atheist was taken with a sudden illness. She got worse and worse, was about to die. The Salvation Army girl had gone to the upstairs apartment where they were, was about to knock on their door and this is the conversation that she heard, the father was saying to his daughter, the atheist was saying to his daughter. Darling, daddy loves you. Darling, daddy is so sorry that you're sick. Daddy wants you to be better but you're getting worse. Daddy has heard from the doctor that you're going to die, but sweetheart, just hold on. Just hold on. Hold on, darling. Please hold on. For Daddy's sake, just hold on. And, that dying girl said to her atheistic father, Father, you've told me there's no God; you've told me there's no Bible; you've told me there's no life after death; you have told me there's no hope; and now you tell me to hold on. But Daddy, there's nothing to hold on to—nothing to hold onto. I thank God my anchor holds—my anchor holds. Which hope, my dear friend, we have as an anchor of the soul. And my anchor holds. Now, here's what God wants to do. He wants to give you that kind of hope. I mean, He wants to give you that faith in the future tense.

## **Conclusion**

So, here's the plan; here's the way it works. First of all, pressure. That's tribulation; and then patience; and then, after patience, purity, character; and, after that, prospect, persuasion, rock-ribbed trust, confidence in Almighty God. The Bible calls it hope. My hope is built on what? Nothing less than Jesus blood and righteousness. It begins there, when we're saved. And, it ends there, when we go to heaven.

Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. Oh, my friend, aren't you tired of just scrubbing a dirt floor? Aren't you tired of scrubbing a dirt floor, trying to get better, trying to be better—no matter how much you scrub, nothing really happens? You need Jesus. You need to receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord and be born again. Romans 5:1 says, therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. And if you would pray a prayer like this, God would save you today—pray like this: God, I believe that you exist. I know that you love me. I know that you want to save me. Jesus, I believe you're the Son of God. I believe you died for my sins. I believe you were buried. I believe you were raised from the dead by the power of God. I believe it with all of my heart. You told me, if I would trust you, you would save me. I do trust you, Lord Jesus. Right now, this moment, like a child, I commit my life to you by faith, and I receive you into my heart as my Lord, my Savior, my master, my friend, my God

forever. You say, Pastor, I can't remember all of that. Just say, Lord save me. He knows what you mean. Lord Jesus, come into my heart and save me. Father, I pray that many today, many in this building, will say yes to Christ and be saved. In His dear name. Amen.

# There Is So Much More

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 22, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 5:6–9

*“Much more than, being now justified by his blood,  
we shall be saved from wrath through him.”*

ROMANS 5:9

## Outline

Introduction

I. What We Lost in Adam

- A. We Lost Strength and Display Weakness
- B. We Lost Godliness and Devise Wickedness
- C. We Lost Peace and Deserve Wrath

II. What We Gained in Jesus

- A. We Gained the Much More of His Redeeming Blood
- B. We Gained The Much More of His Reconciling Death
- C. We Gained the Much More of His Renewing Gift
- D. We Gained the Much More of His Reigning Power
- E. We Gained the Much More of His Restoring Grace

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you be finding Romans chapter 5, and when you've found it, look up here—Romans chapter 5. A friend told me years ago about traveling with another friend to California. The one man had never seen an ocean, not any kind; he'd not seen the Atlantic Ocean, he'd not seen the Pacific Ocean. He was waiting for that day when he would see that great Pacific Ocean. And so, the two of them went together—my friend was telling me about this—and they came over the brow of the hill, and there was the Pacific Ocean. They sat there for a while, and my friend said, I was waiting for the man who'd seen the ocean for the first time to say something. And, after a while, he said, Well, what do you think? He said, Well, somehow it's not as big as I thought it would be. Well, he had a limited view. There's only so much he could see, but, friend, there was so much more. And that's what I want to talk to you about today: is the gospel. And I'm afraid that many of us only have a limited view of the gospel, and I want you to see just how much more there is.

Now, you know that the word gospel means good news, and the word gospel is used

some ninety times in the Bible, because the Bible is the good news of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But I remind you that there is no good news without bad news. It's the bad news that makes the good news good. And so many of us have failed to tell the bad news, so people are not ready for the good news.

I heard of a preacher and his son who were traveling down a street, and they saw a house that was on fire, and they realized that there may be danger inside the house, and so they went and knocked on the door, and nobody came to the door. And they wondered whether people were in there, and what was their responsibility. And, finally, they just broke the door down—wasn't their house, but they broke the door down—the preacher and his son, they went in, couldn't find anybody in the house, but they took all the furniture out of the house, and set the furniture outside the house while the fire department was coming, because they also notified the fire department. Later on, the preacher thought that was a great illustration, and so he was using it in his sermon, and so he was telling everybody about how he and his son had gone down the road, seen this house, broke down the door, went in and carried the furniture out and set it on the street. He said the people looked at him kind of strange. When he got home, he did as preachers are wont to do—he discussed the sermon with his wife. He said, You know, somehow, I thought that was a good illustration, but it just fell flat. She said, I'll tell you why. You forgot to tell them the house was on fire. If you go and break down somebody's door, and put all their furniture on the front lawn, and don't tell them the house is on fire, it kind of sounds strange, doesn't it?

Now, friend, it's the bad news—the house on fire—that makes the good news—that we saved the furniture. And, you see, we have failed today to tell people the bad news that makes the good news good. And, people don't want to hear the word sin anymore. That sin is the bad news, but can you imagine somebody standing up in one of our great universities today and saying, Gentlemen, the problem in society is sin. We don't like the word sin; it's so old-fashioned. Today we have substituted, found euphemisms, for sin. We call it error; we call it misjudgment; we call it weakness; we call it psychological maladjustment. The evolutionists would call it a stumble upward. We have all kinds of new labels for old poison. We don't call a woman a harlot or a prostitute—she's a lady of the evening or call girl. A man is not a thief—he's an embezzler. A person is not a drunkard—they're an alcoholic. A person is not a pervert—they have an alternative lifestyle. We just don't want to call sin sin. We have a behavioristic school of psychology today that says that man is just the sum total of the chemistry that makes up his body and his environment. So, whatever happens to him, he may be pitied, but he's certainly not to be blamed. Maybe he was reared in the wrong neighborhood. Maybe he had an unhappy childhood, he couldn't push his oatmeal off the high chair, maybe he had a domineering mother; he's just the sum total of his genes and chromosomes, the

chemistry inside his body, and the environment in which he was living.

And the evolutionist—the evolutionist—tells us that man is an accident of nature, that he came out of some primordial soup, some fortuitous confluence of atoms, and out of this pre-biotic soup, man came. If that's true, he's gone from soup to nuts. And that's the idea, that since man is an accident, since he evolved, then there's no need for God. And if there's no God, there's no fixed standard of right or wrong, and since there can be no fixed standard of right and wrong, ipso facto, there can be no sin. And so, if there's no sin, you don't need the gospel. There's no bad news, so who needs the good news? And so, the humanists would tell you that sin is the invention of the church to keep everybody in line. And that's the reason the liberal preachers today don't preach on sin anymore, because they don't want to be blamed that way. As a matter of fact, one liberal preacher said this—and I want to quote—he said, “After preaching for fifty years, I cannot help but feeling the church harps far too much on sin.” And then, he went on to say, “Paul's words, ‘that through one man sin entered into the world and death by sin’ can be dismissed as nonsense.” He said you just take what Paul said about sin entering into the world, he said, just call it nonsense. Friend, that man may call himself a theologian. You know, the word theologian comes from two words: theos, which means God, and logos, which means the word. That man doesn't believe the Word, he doesn't know God; so why should he call himself a theologian? He's like grape nuts, neither grapes nor nuts.

I'm telling you, folks, that we have a generation of people who are spurred on by behavioristic psychology, evolution, humanistic thinking, which makes man the center of everything, and people, they don't understand the bad news, so they're not ready for the good news. Now, it's the bad news that makes the good news good.

And what is the good news? Well, last week we left off with Romans 5, verse 5. Let's begin in Romans 5, verse 6, and here's the good news: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly, for scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure, for a good man some would even dare to die, but God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,"—now, here's our word—"much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Verse 9: "much more." The title of the message: There is So Much More.

Now, I want you to think with me for the next few minutes; if you don't think for the next few minutes, you're going to miss everything I'm trying to say. There are three words or phrases that are key in the rest of this passage on down to the end of the chapter. One key word is the word o-n-e—one. It is used eleven times. Now, I'm going to go in a hurry. Take your Bibles—stare at it, look in verse 12: "by one man." Look, if you will, in verse 15: "the offense of one." Look at the last part of verse 15: "which is by

one man." Look in verse 16: "it was by one that sinned." The middle of verse 16: "was by one to condemnation." Look at the beginning of verse 17: "for by one man's offense." Look at the end of verse 17: "reign in life by one Jesus Christ." Look at verse 18: "therefore by the offense of one." Look at the last part of verse 18: "the righteousness of one." Look at the beginning of verse 19: "for as by one man's disobedience." Look in the last part of verse 19: "the obedience of one." Well, you say, I don't understand what that means. I don't want you to understand it right now; I'll tell you later. All I want you to notice is one, one. When he starts repeating something that much, you begin to listen. So, the key word is one. Now, what he's saying is that you are identified with one man. That one man may be Adam, and you may be lost and on your road to hell, or that one man may be Jesus. You may be saved and on your road to heaven, but everybody is related, linked to one man. That's what all of this is saying. You are linked to one man. In Adam, all die; in Christ, all are made alive.

Now, you are in Adam, that one man, by your first birth. You get into Jesus, one man, by your new birth. Everybody was born into Adam, and then you are born again into the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if you're without Christ today, let me tell you that you are not now in the image of God. You are now in the image of Adam; you are in Adam. Adam was made in the image of God, but then the image of God was marred and ruined in Adam, and then the Bible says that Adam brought forth a son after his likeness and in his image—that's in Genesis 5, verse 3. And so, when we talk about man today being in the image of God—no! I mean, folks, be reasonable. Do you think we're in the image of God? Well look around. Do you think God's in this shape? I mean, no. Adam was in the image of God, and that image was marred and ruined by sin, and now we're in the image of Adam.

Let me illustrate it. I illustrated this to my class last Wednesday night. Suppose you'd never seen a train, not in all of your life, never seen a railroad train. And then, I take you to see a train wreck. The cars are all tumbled over, the steam is rising, there's fire, there's bent metal, chaos, and I say, There's a train. Well, have you seen a train? What you've seen is a train wreck. Now, over here, that man right there, is that a man? No, that's a wreck! I mean, he's in the image of Adam. So are you, and so am I, and so are we. You see, look: what God created has been wrecked and ruined; there's been a fall, and everybody that is of Adam's progeny, we are in the image of one man, Adam. We get that by our first birth. But when we're born again, we take on now a new image, the spiritual image of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, somebody says, Now, wait a minute; that's not fair—that's not fair. Why should I get in trouble because of Adam? In the first place, I had absolutely nothing to do with Adam, and Adam had nothing to do with me. You don't really believe that. Listen. If

Adam had died without children, you wouldn't be here. I mean, Adam had a lot to do with you. And you are in the image of Adam, you have the idiosyncrasies and the proclivities and the sinful disposition of Adam that you have inherited from Adam, and all of us are in Adam. Adam did have something to do with you. But you say, Wait a minute; it's not fair that I should go to hell for Adam's sin. Well, don't worry about that—you've sinned enough yourself, haven't you? Don't worry about Adam's sin; you'd better be grateful that God deals with one man, because, not only was it fair; it was wise and gracious, because, if we are condemned by Adam, one man, thank God we can be saved by Jesus, one man. Now, you think about it. You think about it. You see, it is wise and gracious that God allowed Adam, our federal head, to stand for us, that Jesus, our resurrected Lord, might also stand for us. So, one key word here is the word one.

Now, let me give you another key word—are you still following after me? I want you to see now, there's a second key word, and that second key word is the word reign—r-e-i-g-n—which means to rule. Look, if you will, and this word is used five times. Look in verse 14: "nevertheless death reigned." Look, if you will, in verse 17: "for if by one man's offense death reigned." Look, if you will, in the bottom of verse 17: "and the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by Jesus Christ." Look in verse 21: "that his sin reigned unto death so might death reign through righteousness unto eternal life." Not only are there two men, and you are, you are linked to one man or the other man, but there are two kingdoms. There's a kingdom of death and destruction, and there's a kingdom of love and light and life, and you are in one of those two kingdoms today. You are ruling and reigning. Adam is the head of that old kingdom. Jesus is the head of that new kingdom. Now, you get into the new kingdom by being born into that new kingdom.

Now, here's the third word, and now we're coming to the title of the message. Remember the title of the message is There's So Much More. Now, remember, you're in one man, either Adam or Christ. And because you're in Adam, or because you're in Christ, you're in the kingdom of death, or you're in the kingdom of life; you're in the kingdom of darkness or the kingdom of light. Third word—and actually it's two words—is much more. Now, watch this, and get ready for a blessing. This is used five times. Look in verse 9: "much more than." Look in verse 10—the end of verse 10: "much more, being reconciled." Look in verse 15: "much more." The middle of verse 15: "much more, the grace of God." Look, if you will, in verse 17, first sentence: "much more, they which received the abundance of grace." Look in the end of verse 20: "much more, abound." Much more, much more, much more, much more, much more. That fellow said, I was expecting more when I saw the Pacific Ocean. Friend, there is much more, much more.

Now, I want you to see this. Listen. Here's the point. Don't miss it. You were in Adam; you got saved, and you came into Christ. Not that one man, but this one man. You came from the kingdom and the reign of death into the kingdom and the reign of

life. And when you came out of Adam and you came into Jesus—here's the point and don't miss it—you gained much more in Jesus than you ever lost in Adam. Now, that's the point. Give God a hand if you want to, but don't just patty-cake. All right now, listen—listen. Here's the point. Don't miss it. You gained much more in Jesus than you ever lost in Adam. That's the reason—that's the reason—I had rather live in Romans 5 than in the Garden of Eden. I had rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. Friend, we have so much more in the Lord Jesus Christ than Adam ever lost. That's the good news of the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now, let's look at it. First of all, we're going to see, number one, what we lost in Adam. Number two, we're going to see what we gained in Jesus. Have you got that? Number one, what did we lose in Adam; number two, what did we gain in Jesus. And you're going to see that we gained so much more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam.

## **I. What We Lost in Adam**

All right now, what did we lose in Adam? Look in verse 6: "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

### **A. We Lost Strength and Display Weakness**

In Adam, we lost strength, and now we display weakness. In Adam, we lost strength. Now, you see, today the sinner is without strength. We're not talking about physical strength, we're not talking about financial strength, we're not talking about intellectual strength; we're talking about moral and spiritual strength. You see, you do not have in Adam what it takes to be what God made you to be. We are just simply without strength. I mean, don't tell an unsaved man, Do right, live right, be good. Folks, he can't—he can't—he is without strength. You don't have what it takes. You lost your strength in Adam. So there's the strength—we lost strength and we display weakness. You are completely, totally without power to live the Christian life in Adam.

### **B. We Lost Godliness and Devise Wickedness**

Now, here's the second thing you lost in Adam. We lost strength, and display weakness; we lost godliness, and display wickedness. Look again in this same scripture, beginning in verse 6: "For when we were yet without strength Christ died for the ungodly, for scarcely for a righteous man will one die, yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die; but God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." You see, we lost godliness, and now we display wickedness. The Bible says we're sinners. The word for sin, the Greek word hamartia, means to miss the mark, like if you are an archer, and you're aiming at the bull's eye.

I took a course in archery one time, and I had irritated the instructor ahead of time.

This was in college. I thought it was going to be what we call a crib course. He knew what I was up to. They gave me a bow that Samson couldn't pull, and I'd never tried before. I want to tell you, in those days, I was on the football team. I thought I was tough. I got that bow, and I couldn't pull it, and when I finally got it back, it was going all over like this, and then the arrow went pssst. I made a fool of myself. You see, I didn't have the strength to pull the bow, and I never hit the bull's eye.

Now, the Bible says this word sin means, it literally means, missing the mark. Let me just tell you what the Bible says about sin. You know, there are people sitting here today thinking you're good folks. I mean you think, if you came and gave your heart to Jesus, you'd be doing God a wild favor. You think that you are good. Most of the people in America are egomaniacs, strutting to hell, thinking they are too good to be damned, did you know that? Now, let me tell you what the Bible has to say about our sin and what we lost in Adam. We lost godliness, and now we devise wickedness. Let me tell you what sin is; let me give you some definitions. Number one: sin is the transgression of the law. First John 3 verse 4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin, sin is the transgression of the law." Now, if you have broken one of God's commandments, you're a sinner. If you get stopped for running a red light, you don't tell the policeman, Look, let me tell you all the stop signs I did stop at and all the times I obeyed the speed limit. No, it doesn't matter how much good you've done, you have transgressed the law. And if a man is hanging over a cliff by a chain of ten links, how many links in that chain have to break before he falls—all ten? No, just one. "Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point is guilty of all." Is there anybody here who would say, I have never, ever broken God's law? Sin is the transgression of the law.

Number two: sin is failure to do good. James 4, verse 17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin." Is there anybody here who would say, I have always, without exception, done what I should've done, and never left any good undone? Who can say he's always done good on every occasion? But the Bible says, "To him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

And then, in Romans chapter 14 and verse 23, the Bible says that whatsoever is not of faith is sin. "For whatsoever is not of faith is sin." That is, if you do anything, any course of action, and you're not certain that it is the right course of action, you did not do it by faith, for you it was sin. You say, I don't understand that. Well, you know, most of the time when there's something, we say, is this right or wrong? you say, Well, I'm not sure; so, since I'm not sure, I'll do it. One man was in the back bedroom, his wife was out front talking to a friend, and the man was getting dressed, they were going out to dinner. He hollered out to his wife, he said, Darling, is this shirt clean enough for me to wear? She's talking to a friend; without hesitation, she said, No. And so, he came out in

another shirt. He said, How did you know it wasn't clean enough to wear—you didn't even come back and look? She said, If you had to ask, it wasn't. Now, friend, if it's doubtful, it's dirty. But the Bible says that whatsoever is not of faith is sin. And most of us don't give God the benefit of the doubt; we just go ahead and do it.

Now, here's something that many of us don't realize is sin: human goodness is sin—human goodness is sin. Let me give you two scriptures to show you that—Proverbs 21, verse 4—the Bible says, "A high look and a proud heart and the plowing of the wicked is sin." That is, when a farmer cultivates his field, and he doesn't know Jesus, even the cultivation of that field is sin. Why? Because he's asking God to send the rain to germinate the seed, he is asking God to give life, and he doesn't give God the glory. The plowing of the wicked is sin. Let me give you another verse—Isaiah 64, verse 6: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags"—not our bad thing—our righteousness. I mean, the good deeds that you do, the nice things you do, the charity, the love, the kindness, I mean, in the sight of a righteous and a holy God, human goodness is sin. I've said this many times, the worst form of badness is human goodness when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth. You see, we just don't understand what sin is, and so, think about it. Sin is the transgression of the law; sin is the failure to do good. Whatsoever is not of faith is sin; human goodness without God is sin. Why, the Bible even says the thought of foolishness is sin.

### **C. We Lost Peace and Deserve Wrath**

So, what are we saying? What are we saying? What did we lose in Adam? We lost our strength, and display weakness. We lost our godliness, and display wickedness. And then, what else we lost in Adam: we lost our peace, and we deserve wrath. Look in verses 9 and 10: "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we should be saved from wrath through him." Did you know that the Bible teaches we deserve the wrath of God? Why do we deserve the wrath of God? Look in verse 10: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." You see, what did we lose in Adam? We lost peace with God. We became enemies of God, and because we're enemies of God, we deserve the wrath of God. Do you know what sin is? Sin is high treason against heaven's king. Sin is a clenched fist in the face of God. What did we lose in Adam? We lost strength; we lost godliness; we lost peace. Now, what do we have? We have weakness and wickedness and wrath. That's what we have in Adam. And I'm telling you, if you're in Adam, you're going to face the wrath of God. And I'm not your enemy because I tell you the truth. And don't you let anybody tell you that God is too good to punish sin. God is too good not to punish sin. God is a holy God. And there is, in Adam, the weakness we display, the wickedness we devise, and the wrath we deserve. Now, that's what we lost in Adam.

## **II. What We Gained in Jesus**

Now, I want to show you what we gained in Jesus. I want to show you the much more; friend, the much more. I want to show you that we gain much, very much, more in Jesus than we ever lost in Adam. And now we're just turning over, and we're going to look at these five much mores—five much mores. What did we gain in the Lord Jesus Christ? We saw what we lost in Adam; now, what did we gain in the Lord Jesus?

### **A. We Gained the Much More of His Redeeming Blood**

First of all, there is the much more of His redeeming blood. Look in verses 8 and 9: ""But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we should be saved from wrath through him."

Now, let me tell you, there are three words that come together at Calvary. These three words deal with God's character. One is the word justice; the other is the word mercy; and the other is the word grace. Now, I want you to think about these, as we think about the much more of His redeeming blood: the word justice, the word mercy, and the word grace. Now, justice is God giving us what we deserve. A person says, Well, I hope I get justice. Well, if you get justice, you're going to hell, because God is a just God, and we've all sinned, and the wages of sin is death; and the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die. But justice is God giving us what we deserve. Mercy is God not giving us what we deserve; He just has mercy on us. But grace is God giving us what we don't deserve; it's where God makes us righteous. Three words—you got them? There it is again, listen: justice, mercy, and grace. Now, all of these come together in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Listen, because Jesus took our sins when our sins were laid upon Jesus; God's justice was satisfied, sin was paid for—isn't that wonderful? But now, wait a minute. When my sins were laid upon Jesus, not only was God's justice satisfied, but God's mercy was shown, because I deserved it, but God had mercy upon me. But not only was God's justice satisfied, and God's mercy shown; when my sin was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ, God's grace was given, and I now have become a child of God. I am made righteous in His sight; I am justified by His blood. Look at it in verse 9: "Much more, then, being now justified by his blood." Friend, we gained so much more than Adam ever lost.

### **B. We Gained The Much More of His Reconciling Death**

Now, here's the second much more. First much more—there's the much more of His redeeming blood. Number two: there is the much more of His reconciling death. Verses 9 and 10 again: "Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him, for if, when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son,"—here's the second much more—"much more, being reconciled, we

shall be saved by his life." There is the much more of His reconciling death. Now, here's the wonderful part: Jesus gave himself for us that He might give Himself to us. We are now reconciled. Now, what's the difference? Well, Adam was an enemy, and so when God came in the midst of the garden, Adam beat it to the bushes to hide; he tried to cover himself later on with fig leaves. He could not stand the gaze of a holy God, and he's separated from God. By the way, it was Adam running from God. God never needs to be reconciled; it is man that needs to be reconciled, we're the ones that are reconciled. And so, we have become enemies of God. Now, remember, in the garden of Eden, Adam walked with God, but when you get saved, you don't walk with God; God walks in you. I mean, you are saved by His life, He comes into you; more, there's more—could not be a closer, more intimate relationship. Listen to it. Look at it again in this passage of Scripture—verse 10: "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." He lives in us. That's the reason I said I'd rather live in Romans 5 than in the Garden of Eden.

### **C. We Gained the Much More of His Renewing Gift**

Here's the third much more. Isn't this good? Isn't this good? Listen, here's the third much more. There's the much more of His not only redeeming blood, and reconciling death, but His renewing gift. Look, if you will, in verse 15: "But not as the offense. So also is the free gift"—that is, the free gift is in contrast to the offense—"for the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life"—now, watch this—"for through the offense of one"—that is, Adam—"many be dead, much more the grace of God,"—now, watch this—"and the gift of grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." One man sinned, and got us into trouble; one man died on the cross, and got us all out, and forgave every sin; and it is an absolute, sheer gift. Now, Adam lost and collected wages. Jesus died and gave a gift. The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. This is the much more of God's grace. God doesn't tell us to earn salvation, buy salvation, deserve salvation; we cannot—it is the grace of God.

I may have told you about a little boy who came in the church down an aisle to give his heart to Jesus Christ, and they wanted to make sure the little guy understood. And they said, Son, tell us how you got saved. He said, Well, I did my part and God did His. And they said, Uh-oh, said, Well, tell us about it. He said, I did the sinning, and He did the saving—I did the sinning, and He did the saving. Friend, that is the much more, the much more of His renewing gift—verse 15.

### **D. We Gained the Much More of His Reigning Power**

Now, here in verse 17, here's the much more of His reigning power. Look, if you will,

in verse 17 of this same chapter: "For if by one man's offense death reigned, by one, much more they which received the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness"—we just talked about that—"shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." Adam reigned over an earthly dominion before he fell, but friend, we have a heavenly kingdom. Adam simply ruled the animals. Friend, we're going to judge angels. I mean, we have a kingdom. We reign with the Lord Jesus Christ. And we don't have to wait till we get to heaven to do it. The Bible says we reign in life, right now; not in the sweet by and by, but now. We have moved into His kingdom; we are seated with Jesus in the heavenlies. Adam was never seated in the heavenlies. Adam had a dominion here on earth, and he blew it. And Jesus died, and we got much more when Jesus died.

#### **E. We Gained the Much More of His Restoring Grace**

Now, here's the last of these five much mores, and that's the much more of His restoring grace. Look, if you will, in verse 20: "Moreover, the law entered that the offense might abound, but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Oh, the much more—the much more—of His restoring grace. You see, when Adam sinned, a monster was let loose in the land—a monster. That monster was sin, and that sin abounds and abounds and abounds and abounds, till grace came along. And then grace says, Hold it, right there. Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound—God's amazing grace. Oh, and if we fall, if we fail, if we stumble, if we fail to call upon the grace of God and fall into sin, He never lets us go. He will cleanse us, forgive us, and restore us.

### **Conclusion**

Those are five much mores. One man—Adam or Jesus. Two kingdoms—death and life. A great loss in Adam, and oh, my sweet friend, so much more in Jesus. That'll make you want to fight a bear with a switch, wouldn't it? I mean, you think about it; just think about it. It's God's amazing grace—not cheap, because Jesus suffered and bled and died that you might be saved today.

Will you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, it's time for some in this building right now to do business with God, so don't stir around. Begin to pray for those around you. Now, friend, you could not help being in Adam. You were born in Adam. You had no control over that, but now is your time of decision. You don't have to stay in Adam; you can be born again. You can be born into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus Christ will be the head of that kingdom, and you can rule and reign with Jesus Christ.

If you would like to be saved, I want you to pray this prayer after me. Just pray it out of your heart. Dear God, I need you; I am a sinner. I've lost so much in Adam, but, oh, you want to save me, and give me so much more than I ever lost. Jesus, thank you for

paying for my sin with your blood on the cross. I believe you did. I believe God raised you from the dead. I believe you're the Son of God. And now, I trust my destiny to you. I receive you into my life as my Lord and Savior, my God and my friend. Because you've saved me, I will follow you all the days of my life, and I will not be ashamed of you, my Lord, my Savior. Amen.

# Our One-Man Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** March 24, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 5:6–21

*“But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

ROMANS 5:8

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Bad News

- A. The Weakness We Discover
- B. The Waywardness We Display
- C. The Wickedness We Devise
- D. The War We Have Declared
- E. The Wrath We Deserve

II. The Good News

- A. “One”
- B. “Reign”
- C. “Much More”
  - 1. Much More Redemption
  - 2. Much More Reconciliation
  - 3. Much More Resurrection
  - 4. Much More Righteousness
  - 5. Much More Reign

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s Word and turn, please, to Romans chapter 5—Romans chapter 5. And, in a moment, we’re going to begin reading in verse 6. Romans chapter 5 and verse 6: *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”* (Romans 5:6–9)

I want to talk to you today about our one-man salvation. Now, you know, we talk about preaching the gospel, and the gospel is good news. That’s literally what the word *gospel* means—“good news.” And, dear friend, the best news this world ever heard

came out of a graveyard just outside Jerusalem, and that is that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He was raised again the third day.

## I. The Bad News

But, my dear friend, the good news is not good news until you understand the bad news. It's the bad news that makes the good news good, and, you see, the bad news is that we are sinners. The Bible tells us in Romans 5:8: "*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners*"—that's the bad news—"Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) Hey, folks, that's the good news.

Now, we live in an age that doesn't like that word *sin*. Have you ever noticed how we try to get some substitute for the word *sin*? We'll call it anything but sin. We'll call it an "error." We'll call it a "mistake." We will call it a "glandular malfunction." We will call it "psychological maladjustment." We will call it "a stumble upward." We call it anything but what the Bible calls it—sin. We take the old bottles of poison; we put new labels on. No longer is a man a thief; now he is an "embezzler." No longer is he a drunkard; he's now an "alcoholic." No longer is she a harlot, a whore; she is now a "lady of the evening." We don't like sin.

We don't like to call sin by what it is; and so, we somehow try to explain it away. The behavior psychologist just simply tells us that man is somehow the sum total of his environment and his body chemistry, and so, really, he is a victim of circumstances. And, if he's a victim of circumstances, he's not to be blamed; why, he is to be pitied. Maybe he was born in the ghetto, reared in a poor neighborhood. Maybe he had a domineering mother. Maybe she wouldn't let him push his oatmeal off the high chair when he was little. He's just simply a victim of all of these influences that have molded him. And then, along comes the evolutionist, and he says, "Well, it all just happened anyway; I mean, it all just got together. Some impersonal force created everything and caused everything. And, since there is no God, there is no fixed standard of right or wrong. So, who is to say, 'This is wrong, and this is right. And, this is sin, and this is not sin'? There's no absolute standard." And so, along comes the humanist, and he says, "Well, the idea of sin is just the invention of the Church. These religious bigwigs got together, and they conjured up the idea of sin to keep everybody in line."

The liberal ministers have bought into that. May I tell you what a liberal preacher had to say? This is humorous and pathetic at the same time. He excused bad behavior, and he accounted for it in terms of "infantile environment, traumatic experiences, psychological complexes, and the like." And then, he said, "For after preaching for fifty years, I cannot help but feeling that the Church harps far too much on sin." And then, he went on to say that "Paul's words that '*through* one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,' (Romans 5:12) can be dismissed as nonsense." Now, here's a man who

has preached—he calls it preaching—for fifty years, and he says what the Bible says about sin is nonsense. But, I’m here as a man of God, a minister, a preacher of the Word of God, and as your friend, to tell you that Public Enemy No. 1 is sin—sin, sin, sin. My dear friend, that is the bad news that makes the good news good.

#### A. **The Weakness We Discover**

Now, let’s see how God’s Word describes us. Look, if you will here, in Romans 5:6: the Bible says, *“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.”* (Romans 5:6) First of all, the weakness we discover—the weakness we discover. We are without strength. Now, he’s not talking about physical strength. You may pump iron. He’s not talking about intellectual strength. You may be an Einstein. He’s not talking about emotional strength. You may have calm nerves, and you say, *“When the going gets tough, the tough get going.”* That’s not the kind of strength he’s talking about. He is talking about the fact that you do not have what it takes to be what God wants you to be. You see, God made you for a purpose, and that purpose is to know Him, to love Him, to glorify Him. And, you don’t have the strength to do it. You see, you only have the strength to do what you want to do. You don’t have the strength to do what you ought to do. And so, the very first thing there is the weakness we discover.

#### B. **The Waywardness We Display**

And then, there is the waywardness we display. Look again, if you will, in verse 6: *“For when we were...without strength, in due time Christ died for the”*—do you see the next word?—*“ungodly.”* (Romans 5:6) Now, God made us to be godly. God created us in His image to be like Him. But, the Bible says, *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way.”* (Isaiah 53:6) The weakness, my dear friend, we discover. The waywardness we display. We simply go our own way.

There are thousands of people who sit in churches like this and other churches across America. They don’t think they’re sinners because they have the wrong standard. We evaluate ourselves by one another. *We stretch ourselves out in the gutter alongside some other old, old sinner, and we say, “Well, I’m a little longer than he is. I’m better than he is.”* And, we measure ourselves by others or by ourselves. What fools we are! My dear friend, do you want me to tell you the standard? It is God. Do you know what God’s definition of sin is? *“All have sinned, and come short of”*—what?—*“the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) Now, that dimension between the glory of God and where you are—that’s sin; that’s sin. You see, we have *“all...sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) You don’t have to be anti-godly to be ungodly. You can feel pretty good if you measure yourself by the wrong thing.

You remember that story about those two brothers? They were liars, thieves,

adulterers, perverts—everything bad in the book—moonshiners, drunkards. You just name it—they were into everything. One of the brothers died. He came to a minister of the church and said, “I’ll give you a thousand dollars if you’ll preach a sermon and call my brother a saint.” The preacher said, “You’re on. Give me that thousand.” He stood up in the pulpit, looked down there in the casket, and said, “That man in that casket is a liar, a thief, an adulterer, a drunkard, a pervert, but compared to his brother, he’s a saint.”

My dear friend, we can measure ourselves by other people and feel all right, but let me tell you, the standard is God. *“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* (Romans 3:23) And so, my dear friend, there is the weakness we discover. There’s the waywardness we display.

### C. The Wickedness We Devise

And, there is the wickedness we devise. Look, if you will, in verses 7–8: *“For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners...”* (Romans 5:7–8) First of all, he says, “without strength.” Then, he says, “ungodly.” And now, he says, “sinners.” The word *hamartia* means just simply “missing the mark”—“missing the mark.” It’s a word, really, that’s taken from the idea of archery, and the idea is sin is just failing to hit the bull’s eye every time.

When I was in college, I had a core curriculum that I had to take. And then, after I’d taken all of my basic courses, I had a few electives, and I was looking for what we call in college a “crip course.” I was tired. And, I looked through the curriculum there, and I saw one that said “Teaching Individual Sports.” I said, “Boy, that is for me.” So, I walked over to that department of the college that I attended, the Physical Education Department, and a woman came out. She was dressed in a white shirt and white shorts and white tennis shoes. And, I sauntered up to her, having gone there on a football scholarship, and I sauntered up to her and I said, “Is this the Phys. Ed. building?” She said, “Phys. Ed.? That sounds like a medicine.” She was in charge there, and folks, I was in trouble—I mean, from the time I just stepped up there. She said, “This is the Physical Education Department.” And, I said, “Well, I’m here. I’m in this course teaching individual sports.” My dear friend, that was the hardest course I took that time. They put me through the rigors.

And, one of the things was archery. Got out there on the archery range, and she said, “Now, we’re going to talk about teaching archery.” And folks, I’d never picked up one of those things. She said, “You mean, you don’t know how to shoot archery?” I said, “No, ma’am.” She said, “How are you going to teach something you don’t know?” I said, “You’re going to have to help me.” Well, my dear friend, I picked up that bow and put that arrow in, and I watched everybody else. I couldn’t even pull the thing back. I

thought I was a macho man. I think she gave me a bow made out of wrought iron. And folks, I couldn't get that thing back, and when I could, I couldn't hold it straight. I couldn't hit the bull's eye. I couldn't hit the target. I was without strength. I couldn't hold it straight. Not once did I ever hit the bull's eye. Now, my dear friend, the Bible says that's the way we are spiritually: we simply miss the mark. It is sin.

What is sin? Sin is the transgression of the law. Every time you break one of God's commandments you miss the mark. The Bible says in 1 John 3:4 that "*whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law.*" (1 John 3:4) What is sin? Sin is failure to do good. James 4:17: "*Therefore to him that [knowest] to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.*" (James 4:17) God calls us sinners not only for what we've done, but for what we've left undone. The Bible says, "*Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*" (Romans 14:23) If you've ever taken a course of action that you did not have the clear leadership of God in—or, at least, you felt that you did not have faith in doing it—that is sin. The Bible teaches—listen to this—that human goodness is sin. Proverbs 21:4 says, "*The plowing of the wicked, is sin.*" (Proverbs 21:4) When a farmer over here in Arkansas, or over here in West Tennessee, or down in Mississippi gets in his tractor, revs it up, and plows his cotton patch, if that farmer doesn't know Jesus Christ, he's sinning every furrow he plows. You say, "Wait a minute." Well, wait; don't argue with me. God says, "*The plowing of the wicked, is sin.*" (Proverbs 21:4) What does that mean? He could say, "The carpentry of the wicked carpenter is sin." He could say, "The salesmanship of the wicked salesman is sin."

You contaminate, as a sinner, everything you touch. Let me give you an illustration. Suppose there's a person that has running, open sores on their hands because they have a vile, contagious disease. And, they work in a kitchen, in a restaurant, and they're mixing a fruit salad with their bare hands. They bring it out to serve it to you. Do you want it? Nothing wrong with the fruit—that is, until he touched it.

You see, my dear friend, we are sinners. Human goodness is sin. *The worst form of badness is human goodness that becomes a substitute for the new birth.* You see, the Bible says in Isaiah, "*All [of] our [righteousness]*"—not all of our badness—"*all [of] our [righteousness is] as filthy rags [in His sight].*" (Isaiah 64:6) Enough. Let me tell you what the bad news is. It is the weakness we discover: we're without strength. It is the waywardness we display: we are ungodly. It is the wickedness we devise: we are sinners—sinners by birth, sinners by nature, sinners by choice, sinners by practice. Oh, my dear friend, that's the bad news.

#### **D. The War We Have Declared**

But, wait a minute. Look at the war we have declared—verses 9–10: "*Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For it, when we were enemies.*" (Romans 5:9–10) It's even worse. Not only are we without strength,

not only are we ungodly, not only are we sinners missing the mark, but now, we're enemies—the war we have declared. Do you know what sin is? My dear friend, *sin is a clenched fist in the face of God*. That's what sin is. The Bible says that the carnal man is at warfare with God. Sin is high treason against heaven's King.

### E. The Wrath We Deserve

Now folks, the news is getting bad, but let me just tell you one more thing: not only the war we have declared, but the wrath we deserve. Look in verse 9: *“Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath”*—“wrath.” (Romans 5:9) Is God a God of wrath? You'd better read your Bible. You say, “God is love. God is love. God is love.” Yes, God is love, but God's also a God of wrath. I hope you believe that. You know, there are people today who say, “Now pastor, God is love.” They are right—incredibly right, one hundred percent right. They couldn't be more right to say that God is love. But, my dear friend, that is only one part of the nature of God, and when you take part of the truth and make part of the truth all of the truth, you make that part of the truth an untruth. Do you understand what I'm saying? If you try to take part of the truth and say, “That's all of the truth,” then that part of the truth is an untruth. God is a God of love, but He's also a God of wrath. And, God punishes sin. There is the wrath we deserve.

You have all kinds of ideas about what's going to happen to a man who's a sinner who dies without the Lord Jesus. Now, there are a lot of theories. There's the theory of the reincarnation—you know, that we just keep coming back until we get it right. There are people who believe that. One of these days, we're going to get it right, and then we're going to merge with cosmic something. So, don't step on that bug because she may be your grandmother. You know, you just—that's the idea. I mean, hey, folks, a lot of people believe that. To me, I call reincarnation “putting the milk back in the can.” Now, you'll get it. All right. Now listen, there are other people who just—they don't believe in reincarnation; they just believe in eradication. They just believe that you die. You're like a dog, like a cow: you just simply die, and you just perish. And then, there are those who believe in universalism—that God is just going to save everybody somehow, some way; that God is too good to punish sin. God, my friend, is too good not to punish sin. But, the Bible doesn't teach any of these things. The Bible says, *“[It's] appointed unto [man] once to die, [and] after this the judgment.”* (Hebrews 9:27) Look in verse 18: *“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation.”* (Romans 5:18) That's the wrath of God—the Judgment. *“[It's] appointed unto [man] once to die, [and] after this the judgment.”* (Hebrews 9:27)

## II. The Good News

Well, enough of the bad news. I don't want to spend all my time on the bad news and

not get to the good news. But, my friend, it is the bad news that makes the good news so gloriously wonderful. Now, would you pay attention? Because what I have to say right now is going to be a little technical, but I can guarantee you, if you'll listen—oh, if you'll listen—you'll understand why I call this a “one-man salvation,” “our one-man salvation.”

#### A. “One”

Now, in this chapter, there are several words that are used a number of times. For example, if you were to begin with, say, about verse 12, you would find the word *one* used eleven times. Notice in verse 12: “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world...*” (Romans 5:12) Look, if you will, in verse 15: “*But not as the offence...also is the free gift. If through the offence of one many [are] dead...*” (Romans 5:15) Look in verse 16: “*And not as it was by one that sinned, so...the gift [of] judgment was by one.*” (Romans 5:16) Look in verse 17: “*For...by one man's offence death reigned by one.*” (Romans 5:17) And, I'm not going to read them all to you, but eleven times in these verses he uses *one*.

#### B. “Reign”

Now, there's another word—and I'm going to let you find these for yourself. I'll point some of them out a little bit later—but there's another word that's used over and over and over, and that word is the word *reign*, like a rule, like a dominion. It's used five times, the word *reign*.

#### C. “Much More”

And then, there's another phrase that is used five times, and it is “much more.” Okay, now you've got the word *one* that's used over and over again. Then, you've got the word *reign*—or *rule* or *dominion*—that's used over and over again. And then, you have the phrase “much more” that is used five times in this Romans chapter 5.

Now, what's he saying? Well, he's saying over here is one man; he is Adam. Over here is another man; He is Christ. And, that's the reason he keeps on using the word *one*—one man here, one man here, one man here, one man here; Adam and Christ, Adam and Christ, Adam and Christ, Adam and Christ; one and one, one and one, one and one, one and one. Okay, now, he is saying that both Adam and Christ were kings. Adam reigned over the natural world. God made Adam to have dominion. Jesus reigns over a kingdom of grace. So, he's talking about the rule of Adam, the first man, and the rule of Christ, the last man, the last Adam from above. Now, the third phrase is “much more.” He shows what we lost in Adam and what we gained in Christ, and he says, “Friend, it is so much more.” Now, you got it? It is so much more. What he is saying is it is better to be a saved sinner in Christ than an innocent man who had never sinned. *We gain more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam.*

Now, O God, help me to get this in our hearts and minds today. I just pray God you'll understand this—what we have in the Lord Jesus. This is the glorious good news of the gospel. But, you have to see the bad news in order for the good news to be good. By the way, there are some people who say, "Well, you know, I just don't like the idea that I'm lost because of Adam. You know, in the first place, Adam didn't have anything to do with me and I didn't have anything to do with Adam." How many of you believe you didn't have anything to do with Adam? If there had been no Adam, do you think you'd be here? Don't tell me that Adam didn't have anything to do with you; you don't have anything to do with Adam. I mean, without Adam you wouldn't be here. I mean, it's reasonable. You are connected to Adam. You are a descendant of Adam.

I was preaching in a meeting one time, and a lady came up to me and she said, "Oh, you're a Rogers, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, ma'am." She said, "Oh, so am I." She said, "Oh, I have traced our ancestry back." Said, "We Rogers came over on the Mayflower." I said, "Lady, I traced it back further than that." Boy, she lit up. She was so excited. I said, "We go all the way back to a crooked farmer and a drunken sailor. The farmer was Adam and the sailor was Noah. That's how far back we go."

My dear friend, we go way back in Adam. *"In Adam all die."* (1 Corinthians 15:22) "Well," you say, "that's not fair." You better thank your God that in Adam all die. I'll tell you why: because if we were not accounted sinners by one man, we could never be saved by one man. Now, you think—that's what he's saying. He's saying, dear friend, that it is by the obedience of one—by one, the Lord Jesus Christ. Suppose you just simply had your own little Garden of Eden? My dear friend, Jesus would have had to come to earth just to save this generation five billion times. Do you understand what I'm saying? Oh, my dear friend, *"by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin."* (Romans 5:12) And, even so, by one—by one. His name is Jesus. We're saved.

But now, listen—listen. We gain so much more in Christ than we ever lost in Adam. That's the exciting thing. Listen, let me just give you—I'm going to tick them off—five things, and I'll be finished—five "much mores." Are you ready for them?

### **1. Much More Redemption**

First of all, there's the "much more" of redemption. Look, if you will, in verses 8–9 of this chapter: *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him"* (Romans 5:8–9)—much more! You see, Adam was only innocent. When you get saved, you're justified. Well, what's the difference? Oh, it's much better to be justified than to be innocent. You have something that Adam did not have before he sinned.

You see, there are three attributes of God. Well, there are many attributes of God but three that I want to mention this morning: justice, mercy, and grace. Right? Justice,

mercy, and grace. Now, God's justice gives us what we deserve. Nobody wants justice. You better hope you don't get justice. God's justice gives us what we deserve. God's mercy doesn't give us what we deserve. God's grace gives us what we don't deserve. Do you understand that? God's justice gives us what we deserve: punishment. God's mercy doesn't give us what we deserve; we're not punished. And, God's grace gives us what we don't deserve, and that is righteousness. Now, all of these are blended together at Calvary. You see, when Jesus died on the cross, He satisfied God's justice and absorbed God's wrath. And so, the justice of God is satisfied; therefore, I don't have to go to hell, and, therefore, the mercy of God is shown. But, beyond all of that, God makes me righteous, and that is the grace of God—all in Calvary, all in Calvary. What a wonderful salvation we have! There's the "much more" of redemption.

## **2. Much More Reconciliation**

And then, there's the "much more" of reconciliation. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."* (Romans 5:10) Now, old Adam walked in the Garden of Eden with God, but Jesus has given us His very life. We're reconciled to God. Oh, we have something that Adam never had. Yes, Adam had fellowship with God. Yes, Adam walked in the cool of the garden with God. But, the Lord Jesus Christ lives in me. The Bible says, *"We [are] saved by his life."* (Romans 5:10) You say, "Wait a minute, Adrian. I thought we were saved by His death." Well, you were. He died, dear friend, to take away the penalty of sin, but He lives so you can overcome the power of sin. Listen, Jesus Christ gave Himself for me, that He might give Himself to me. Do you understand that? We're reconciled by His death. And then, the Bible says we are saved by His life (verse 10). He lives—He lives, He lives—in me. There's the "much more" of reconciliation.

## **3. Much More Resurrection**

Then, there's the "much more" of resurrection. Look in verse 15: *"But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many [are] dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many."* (Romans 5:15) Now folks, I want to confess that's one of the most enigmatic, hard to understand verses in all of the Bible because it just sounds obtuse. This morning I came in early, and I looked this verse up in several different translations that give it a little bit better, in my estimation—at least, more clearly. I think this is absolutely correct, but it could be more clear in my estimation. Romans 5:15 says, by one translation, "But far greater is the gift than the transgression." I like that. Or, the New English Bible puts it this way: "But God's act of grace is out of all proportion to Adam's wrongdoing."

Now, he says, *“In Adam [we] die.”* (1 Corinthians 15:22) But, God not only gives us life—listen, folks—He gives us abundant life. Look at it again, if you will, in verse 15: the Bible says, *“But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For...through the offence of one many [are] dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift [of] grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ”—*now, look at this next word—*“hath abounded”—“hath abounded.”* (Romans 5:15) You see, Jesus said, *“[I’ve] come that [you] might have life, and...have it...abundantly.”* (John 10:10) Abounding life! Adam had life, but he didn’t have the kind of life, dear friend, that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ—our resurrection life, our eternal life. The Bible teaches that when we are raised—oh, my dear friend, Philippians 3:21—He’s going to *“change our vile [bodies] like unto his glorious body.”* (Philippians 3:21) Adam had a body, but he didn’t have a body like the resurrected Christ. That’s what I’m going to have. He’s going to *“change [my] vile body...like unto his glorious body.”* (Philippians 3:21) First John 3:2: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be [like]: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”* (1 John 3:2)

#### **4. Much More Righteousness**

I wish I had more time to talk about that, but let’s move on to the fourth “much more.” Look, if you will, in verse 16, here of this same chapter, and it’s the “much more” of our righteousness. Now, look in verse 16: *“[But] not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For...by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they who receive abundance of grace and...the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, [Christ] Jesus.”* (Romans 5:16–17) Now folks, I know that’s obtuse. I know it’s hard to understand. But, just read it and read it, and understand, dear friend, that God, when He saves you, puts you in a place where no sin can ever be marked against you. Not one half of one sin can ever be put on your account. When Adam sinned, it was put on Adam’s account. But, when you sin, it can’t be put on your account.

Just go back to Romans 4:6: *“[For] even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man [to] whom God [imputed] righteousness [apart from] works”—*that’s the grace I was talking about. God just, by His grace, just imputes righteousness—*“Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven”—*aren’t you glad your sins are forgiven? But, that’s not the best part. Look—*“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered”—*well, that’s wonderful, but that’s not the best part. Look—*“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”* (Romans 4:6–8) Hey, folks, did you read it? *“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”* (Romans 4:8) If I sin, God never puts that on my account. Oh, He’ll carry me to the woodshed and beat the daylights out of me. *“Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he [receives].”* (Hebrews 12:6) But, it is never put on my account.

We've got something, folks. That's good news. Listen, folks, that is good news.

### 5. Much More Reign

Now, the last “much more”—not only the “much more” of our righteousness, but the “much more” of our reign. Look, we're going to rule and reign with the Lord Jesus. Look, if you will, in verse 20. Now, here's the last time he uses this: *“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness.”* (Romans 5:20–21) Oh, Adam had a kingdom, and he lost it. But, my dear friend, I have been born into the kingdom of heaven. Adam had dominion over this earth. The saints are going to judge angels. Adam had an earthly inheritance. Jesus says, “All things—all things—are yours.”

### Conclusion

I hope—I just hope—that you understood ten percent of the message this morning. If you just dipped in, you can't help but be blessed—to understand what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, it's the bad news—what we are in Adam—that makes the good news so good. Folks, you cannot help that you're in Adam. You were born into Adam. You didn't choose to be born. You were born in Adam. But, you have another choice now: you can choose Christ and be born again. You can step out of Adam and all that belongs to Adam, and you can step into Jesus and all that belongs to Jesus. *“By one [man] many were made sinners...by...one [man]”*—His name is Jesus—*“many [can] be made righteous.”* (Romans 5:19) That's the reason Jesus said, *“[You] must be born again.”* (John 3:7)

# This Thing Called Sin

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 5, 1979**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 5:12**

*“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”*

ROMANS 5:12

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Explanation of Sin

II. The Entrance of Sin

III. The Extent of Sin

IV. The Effects of Sin

V. The Emancipation from Sin

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to Romans chapter 5—Romans chapter 5—and let’s look in verse 12 this morning—chapter 5 and verse 12—we’ll wait for a moment for you to find it—Romans 5 and verse 12. The Bible says, *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned”* (Romans 5:12).

I want to speak to you this morning on this subject: “This Thing Called Sin.” And if ever an age needed to hear a message on sin, our sophisticated but sin-sick age needs to hear a message on sin. We have almost done away with the idea of sin. The word is so old-fashioned, to speak today of sin. And so we have taken away the word *sin* and we’ve gotten some new words and brought them into our vocabularies, some high-sounding phrases such as *error, mistake, misjudgment, weakness, psychological maladjustment, glandular malfunction, a stumble upward*, anything but *sin*. And we’ve gone through the medicine cabinet and we’ve put new labels on the old bottles of poison. And so we have new terminology. No longer is a man a *drunkard* today; he’s an *alcoholic*. No longer is a woman a *harlot* or a *prostitute*; today she’s a *call girl* or a *lady of the evening*. No longer is a man a *thief*; today he is an *embezzler*. And we have just somehow by word tried to change things. But they’ve not really been changed at all. We have some eggA headed people today who have with all of their learnedness and

intelligence somehow made sin to be out-of-date.

There is a school of behavioristic psychology, and the behavioristic psychologist says that man is but the sum total of his environment and of his body chemistry, and if he does wrong it's because he's like a computer that has been programmed wrongly. And he's not to be blamed if he was raised in a bad neighborhood if he breaks into stores or smokes dope; after all, he was raised in that kind of neighborhood. Or if he has a vile temper, perhaps he had an overbearing mother who made him clean up his room and wouldn't let him push his pabulum off the high chair when he was a baby. And so he may be pitied, but he's not to be blamed. He may be sick, but he's not sinful. He may be weak, but he's not wicked. He may be perhaps guided and helped, but he needs some sort of a psychological adjustment rather than salvation. There are many people who believe this about today's society, and I would not say that there are not factors that shape us all.

But I would say this, ladies and gentlemen: We must come back to a place of accountability. And people have a nature that is a sinful nature and they do wrong because they're wrong. And then you take the behavioristic psychologist and you compound that with the idea of the evolutionist. And the evolutionists just tell us that we came into being by chance, by the fortuitous concurrence of atoms, that we are the product of an impersonal force and accident of nature, an orphan of the ape. And when man believes that he's an orphan of the ape, he generally ends up making a monkey of himself. And one of the greatest ways that he can do that is to deny that there is such a thing as sin. But if evolution is true, there is no such thing as sin, because right and wrong will change, and what might have been sin yesterday wouldn't be sin today, and so forth. And if the man is the product of blind chance, then there is no God. And if there is no God, there is no ultimate standard of right and wrong.

And then, that is compounded by the humanists today. The humanists are these people who come along and they're trying to remodel our educational system in America. And they're telling our young people, "Now don't get all hung up about this thing called sin, because, after all, sin is the invention of the church. It is the product of priestcraft. It is something that some people have conjured up to whip everybody into line." And so they try to get us to downplay the idea of sin. And now the problem has been compounded also by a liberal clergy who no longer believes the Word of God.

One minister said—and I want to quote—that, "Bad behavior is the result of infantile environment, traumatic experiences, psychological complexes, and the like." And then he went on to say, "After preaching for 50 years, I cannot help feeling that the church harps far too much on sin." And then, he went on to say that "Paul's words that I've just read to you, that through *'one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,'* (Romans 5:12)" he said, "those words can be dismissed as nonsense." Can you

imagine a so-called minister of the Bible saying such a thing?

And friend, when you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpits across this land, because Satan many times is not fighting churches; he is joining them. But what I'm trying to say is this: that the idea of sin is out-of-date. But I want to tell you, friend, sin is a reality, and public enemy number one is sin, and your great enemy is sin. But if we don't make a proper diagnosis, we'll certainly never come up with the right cure. And the thing wrong with our society today is we're spending too much time sweeping down cobwebs when we need to be killing spiders. The spider is sin; the cobwebs are the result that we see in society around about us.

Now in the text in Romans chapter 5 and verse 12 there are three or four things I want us to see about this thing called sin: first of all, the explanation of sin; secondly, the entrance of sin; thirdly, the extent of sin; fourthly, the effects of sin; and fifthly and finally, the emancipation from sin.

## I. The Explanation of Sin

Now first of all, the explanation of sin. The word *sin*—look at it: “*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world...*” The Greek word for *sin* here means “missing the mark”—“missing the mark.” Here’s a target out here, and we shoot at it and miss it; or here’s a goal, and we reach for it and we come short of it. That’s the reason the Bible says in Romans chapter 3, verse 23, “*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23).

Now suppose we were to have a contest to see who could jump over the Mississippi River today, and we go down to the Mississippi River, and Brother Tommy Lane, being athletic as he is, and long-legged and ex-basketball star, goes down to jump over the Mississippi River, and takes a running bound down the bank and leaps out into the water 10 whole feet. And now he gives a mighty leap. And he does real well, but he just jumps 10 feet. Now Brother Clayton over here, well... Let's say I jump next, and I jump 9 feet. I'm just not quite as good as Brother Lane, my legs are not quite as long, but I'm fairly good athlete, so I jump 9 feet. Brother Clayton over here jumps 4 feet into the water. And now so we compare ourselves, and Brother Lane says, “Well, I'm better than Dr. Rogers,” and I say, “Well, I'm better than Rev. Clayton,” and so forth.

Well, what difference does it make? There's the bank way over there, you see. Sometimes we come to people, and some people will stretch themselves out in the gutter alongside some other hypocrite, and say, “I'm a little longer than he is.” So what? The Bible says, “*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23).

Sometimes people say, “Well, I'm just as good as those folks down there at the church.” I've been waiting for a man honest enough to say, “I'm just as bad as those folks at the church.” A church *is but a* society *of* sinners *who finally* realized *it*. The

Bible says, *“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,”* so sin is just simply missing the mark. God’s standard is perfection, and none of us live up to it. But God gives another definition of sin. While we’re on the explanation of sin—and you might jot this down in the margin of your Bible: 1 John 3, verse 4, where the Bible says, *“Sin is the transgression of the law”* (1 John 3:4). God says, “Thou shalt,” and you say, “I will not”; and God says, “Thou shalt not,” and you say, “I will,” and so you transgress God’s law, you break God’s law, and the Bible says, *“Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all”* (James 2:10).

On coming to church this morning, I saw some boys who were stopped by the policeman there on Poplar Avenue, and evidently they were breaking the speed law and he was writing them a ticket. They were dressed up so nicely. I believe they were coming to church. And it just broke my heart to see that. But suppose those boys said, “Now officer, let me tell you about all the laws I didn’t break.” Well, he was not interested in that; he was interested evidently in the one law that they did break. And you see, dear friend, the Bible says, if we keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, we’re guilty of all.

Now people say, “Well, I don’t understand that.” Well, suppose you are dangling over a fire by a chain of 10 links. How many links in that chain have to break before you fall in the fire? All 10? No, just one.

And what James is saying is you don’t have to break all 10 of God’s commandments to be a sinner in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. *“Sin is the transgression of the law.”*

And then God gives us another definition of sin. God says that sin is failure to do good. Put this verse down in the margin—James 4 and verse 17: *“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”* (James 4:17). So sin is not only doing what you ought not to have done; it’s not doing what you ought to have done. You see, if there was ever a time when you ought to have prayed and you didn’t pray, if there was ever a time when you ought to have loved and you didn’t love, if there was ever a time when you ought to have spoken and you did not speak, if there was ever a time when you ought to give and you did not give, if there was ever a time when you should have showed kindness and you did not, then you also sinned. *“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”*

Now I think all of us are understanding therefore that we ourselves are sinners. Look in Romans chapter 14 and verse 23, and let me give you another definition of sin. We’re just talking about the explanation of sin. In Romans chapter 14 and verse 23 here the Bible says, *“For whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* (Romans 14:23). Now what does that mean? It means any action that is not engendered, motivated, and done by complete faith in God is sin. Any time you do anything that you’re not absolutely confident that it is

God's will for you to do, if you have a doubt about doing that thing, you've sinned, whether the thing in and of itself is right or wrong, you've sinned. The Bible says, "He that doubteth is condemned" (Romans 14:23).

Now I'll give you an illustration of that. So many times we're wondering whether the course of action is right or wrong, we're not quite sure whether it's right or wrong, so since we don't know absolutely that it's wrong, we do it anyway, and we don't give God the benefit of the doubt. Friend, we ought to give God the benefit of the doubt, and if we think it may be wrong, we leave it alone until we're sure that it's right.

A man was in the back bedroom getting dressed. His wife was out in the parlor talking with another lady. He yelled out to her, "Is this shirt clean enough for me to wear?" She said "no," and without hesitation went on talking in her conversation. After a while, he came out buttoning up another shirt. He said, "Say, how did you know that shirt was not clean without looking at it?" She said, "If you had to ask, it wasn't."

Now that's what God is saying here, that "*whatsoever is not of faith*," that you don't have confidence in, is dirty. If it's doubtful, it's dirty. Leave it alone. That's what God is saying.

But then God gives another definition of sin in Proverbs chapter 21 and verse 4. And perhaps this is the strangest definition of sin in all of the Bible. It says this: "*The plowing of the wicked, is sin*"—"the plowing of the wicked, is sin" (Proverbs 21:4). When a wicked man plows, it is sin; when a wicked man plants a crop, it is sin.

Now what on earth does that mean? There's nothing wrong with farming; there's nothing wrong with plowing. Thank God for the farmers, thank God for those who are willing to plow, but God says when a man without Christ plows a field, the sum total is sin.

Now we could say that working in a service station is sin, or the working in an office is sin, or the driving an automobile is sin: anything—anything—that a man does without God is sin. You say, "Well, I don't understand that. It seems like that's a good thing, so therefore why would you call it sin?" Well, let me give you another verse right on the heels of Proverbs 21, verse 4: it's Isaiah 64 and verse 6—and the Bible says, "*But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*" (Isaiah 64:6).

Now notice God doesn't say all of our vices and all of our bad things are like filthy rags, but God says all of our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. Now do you know what the word *filthy rags* means here? It refers to the loathsome bandage that was wrapped around the leper's vile, runny sores. And after that bandage was taken away, the term for *filthy rag* is used of it, and it's meant a bandage that is completely unclean and cast into the fire and burned. Now God says, "That's what I think of your righteousness: not what I think of your bad doing; that's what I think of your good doing." You say, "Brother Rogers, I don't understand that." What God is saying is that apart from Him you can't do

anything good—you can't do anything good—and even what you do may be good in and of itself, but because you do it, you contaminate it.

Now we all love a salad. I suppose you'd like a lovely fruit salad. We'll make it of cantaloupe and watermelons and peaches, and we'll put some lovely cream in it and so forth, and mix it together. Sounds good so far, but suppose the person who is making that salad has vile, running, open sores on their hands and they're just mixing that salad for you. Here—you want any? You don't. No. Why not? Because there's nothing wrong with the ingredients, but, you see, the person who mixes the salad contaminates it. And what God is saying is that an unsaved man contaminates everything he touches.

*"The plowing of the wicked, is sin."* Even our righteousness is sin in His sight. Our righteousness is as filthy rags in the sight of the Lord. You see, for an unsaved man to go out here and plow a field and not give thanks to God who gives the rain, the sunshine, and God who causes things to grow, for a man to plow God's green earth, to breathe God's fresh air, to plow, the body that God has given him, to eat the fruit of the ground, and still not love that God, that's a sin. He may say it's all right, but God says, "Even your righteousness is as filthy rags in my sight."

So think about what sin is. Sin is missing the mark. *"Sin is the transgression of the law."* Sin is failing to do what we ought to do that we know that we ought to do, and whatever we do out of lack of faith is sin. *"Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."* And even good works, apart from the Lord Jesus Christ, are sins.

Listen to me. *The* worst form of badness *is* human goodness *when that human goodness becomes a* substitute *for the* new birth. The worst form of goodness is human goodness when that human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth. So many people are trusting their own goodness and they won't trust God's goodness. Most of the people in America are egomaniacs strutting to hell thinking they're too good to be damned. They need to go back and read God's Word where it says, *"The plowing of the wicked, is sin,"* and even our righteousness is as filthy rags in His sight.

## **II. The Entrance of Sin**

Now that's the explanation of sin. Now the next thing I want us to notice the entrance of sin. Look again in Romans chapter 5 and verse 12: *"Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world..."*

Now sin first found lodging in the heart of Satan, and Satan with burning eloquence persuaded the angels of light to rebel against God. Satan was not happy with his first estate, and Satan said, *"I will be like the most High"* (Isaiah 14:14), but no sooner had those angels unsheathed their swords of rebellion than the thunders of God's wrath rolled down the corridors of heaven, and Satan fell from heaven, he was banished from heaven, and Satan, Lucifer, the son of the morning, became Satan, the father of the

night, and he was turned by his sin into a liar and a murderer. And Jesus described Satan, in John chapter 8 and verse 44, with these words: *“Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it”* (John 8:44).

And Jesus tells us two things about Satan: his motives and his methods. His motive is murder; his method is the lie. Satan is a liar and Satan is a murderer, and Satan came into the Garden of Eden, that pristine holy garden that God had created, and Satan crawled his slimy, corroding path into the pages of history, and there Satan beguiled Eve, and there Satan tempted Adam, and both of them sinned and rebelled against God. And it was through Adam that sin entered into this world, and the Bible says it was through Adam that sin came. Listen to it again: *“Wherefore, as by one man”—that’s Adam—“sin entered into the world.”* Sin did not originate with Adam; sin just simply entered through Adam.

Now somebody asked a question: How did sin ever get started? How could God, a perfect God, a holy God, ever create a universe or a situation where there could be such a thing as sin? Now that’s a real question, and I want to tell you very frankly the question of the origin of sin is one that theologians have debated through the centuries, and they have raced their theological motors talking about the origin of sin. But here we’re not talking about the origin of sin in verse 12; we’re talking about the entrance of sin.

Now friend, there will always be some questions that I can’t answer, and that you can’t answer, and that no one can answer, and one of the questions that is very hard to answer deals with the origin of sin. But we do know about the entrance of sin: Sin entered through Adam.

Now here is a man in a burning building, the building is on fire and the flames are leaping at his feet, and here is a fire escape. And the firemen are down there with their megaphones and they are telling this man, “Make your way to the fire escape, and we’re spraying the hoses on you. You’ll be safe; step out the window onto the fire escape and you will be saved.” But here is the man inside the apartment building saying, “No siree, I’m not about to get on that fire escape until I figure out how this fire started; and until somebody can explain to me the origin of the fire I’m not going to take the escape.” Well, he’s kind of ridiculous, isn’t he?

I want to tell you, ladies and gentleman, we know that Jesus Christ is God’s divine fire escape. He is more than that, but He’s God’s exit out of this dilemma. And don’t you go to hell sitting around trying to figure the origin of this thing called sin. We know that sin entered through this man called Adam. That is what I call the entrance of sin.

### III. The Extent of Sin

Now the next thing I want you to notice is the extent of this sin. Look again, if you will, please, in verse 12: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”* What is the extent of sin? The entire human race is guilty. There’s not a man born of women that has not sinned: *“All have sinned,”* the Bible says, *“and have come short of the glory of God.”*

You see, you were in Adam, and Adam was the federal head of the human race, and when Adam sinned, you sinned. You say, “Wait a minute.” It doesn’t make any difference. I didn’t vote for my parents. I have brown eyes because my dad had brown eyes, I suppose. I have his facial characteristics, because he has them. I inherit those things from my parents. I didn’t get to vote about it. But you see, not only do we inherit physical characteristics—we have legs because Adam had legs; we have arms because Adam had arms. He didn’t have wings, he had arms; therefore we have arms. We inherit physical characteristics, we inherit psychological characteristics, and we also inherit spiritual characteristics. And we inherited from Adam the sinful nature of Adam.

So many times people are saying that man is made in the image of God. Man was created in the image of God, but you’re not now in the image of God. Adam was in the image of God. You are now in the image of Adam. And the image of God has been marred and defaced and disfigured in Adam. And so now therefore, the Bible says Adam brought forth a son in his image and in his likeness (Genesis 5:3). You now are in the image of Adam himself, and that is a sinful image, and therefore you are a sinner. You say “Well, I’m free to do as I want.” That’s absolutely true. You are free to do as you want: You’re free to sin and not to sin. But do you know, have you noticed, that all people do sin? You see, man is free to do as he wants, but he’s not free to do as he ought. I hear people say, “Well, I can take it or leave it,” or say, “Big deal, that’s all anybody can do; you know, take it or leave it.” But have you noticed they always take it? I mean, they always sin—they always sin. Why? Because we have a sinful nature.

Jot down these scriptures. Psalm 51 and verse 5: *“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me”* (Psalm 51:5). That means that we were conceived in sin. That doesn’t mean that our parents were not married when we were conceived; that isn’t what it means. He’s not here talking, David is not saying, “I’m an illegitimate child”—and by the way, *there are no* illegitimate children, *just illegitimate* parents—but God here is not saying that he was an illegitimate child when he was born; that’s not what David was saying. Rather, he’s saying he was born with a sinful nature—Psalm 51, verse 5. He describes that further in Psalm 58, verse 3: *“The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies”* (Psalm 58:3). And then, Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 3: We are *“by nature the children of wrath, even as others”* (Ephesians 2:3). You have a sinful nature. Where did

you get it? You got it from your parents. Where did they get it? They got it from their parents. Where did they get it? They got it from their parents. And where did they get it? They got it from Adam.

I told you before about a lady who met me one time on a preaching visit where I was in some church, and she said, “Oh, you’re a Rogers.” I said, “Yes, I am.” She said, “So was I. My maiden name was Rogers.” And she said, “I’ve done some research.” She said, “I’ve traced back our family tree.” I said, “You have?” She said, “Yes, you’ll be happy to know that we Rogers are descendants of people who came over on the Mayflower.” She was so proud of that. I had a little mean streak, and I said, “Well, I’ve traced it back further than that.” She was delighted at first. I said, “I traced it all the way back, and you’ll be surprised to know that we have a crooked farmer and a drunken sailor as our ancestors. The farmer was Adam and the sailor was Noah.” That’s just how far back we go. You see, the Bible says, *“In Adam all die”* (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Now see, look. We have a sinful nature. A man’s not a sinner because he sins; he sins because he is a sinner. Men take to sin like a duck takes to water. And the Bible says in 1 John 1:8, *“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.”*

#### **IV. The Effects of Sin**

Now the next thing I want you to notice is the effects of this sin. Look again, please, in Romans chapter 5 and verse 12—Romans chapter 5 and verse 12: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”*

Now listen. *“Sin is the transgression of the law,”* and the law without penalty is only advice, and God wasn’t giving advice when He gave His Ten Commandments. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23); there is a penalty with sin. And so I want you to notice here the effects of this sin: It is death. Now we need to understand what death He’s talking about. He’s not talking about mere physical death. If you think that the only wages of sin is physical death, then that’s awfully confusing, because all men die, the saved and the lost, physically—that’s not what He’s talking about. Don’t think that death ends it all—don’t think that death ends it all. Don’t think you can crawl up in the grave and pull the dirt over your face and hide from God. Oh, dear friend, you can’t do it.

One man told his pastor, he said he was going to take a gun and blow his brains out and end it all. And the pastor said, *“You can’t end it all; and if you had any brains to blow out, you’d know it.”*

You’re going to live on and on and on. And so then, the Bible says, *“The wages of sin is death.”* It’s not talking, primarily, about physical death; He’s talking about spiritual death. You see, death means separation, and when a person is a sinner he is separated from God. Remember that God told Adam in the Garden of Eden, *“In the day*

that you eat you'll surely die" (Genesis 2:17). Well, Adam disobeyed God, but did he die that day? Well, he didn't physically; he went on to live for hundreds of years. He died spiritually. Death is not the separation of the soul from the body; death is the separation of the soul from God.

Now if I were to have a stroke or a heart attack or something and fall down here, and some doctor comes up here and examines me, and all of my bodily functions are not functioning, he might say, "I have an announcement to make: The pastor is dead." But he'd be wrong. I'd never be more alive, for Jesus said, He that "*believeth in me shall never die*" (John 11:26). I can never die, because, you see, I can never be separated from God—never separated. Paul said there's nothing that can "*separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*" (Romans 8:35–39).

So death is not the separation of the soul from the body; death is the separation of the spirit from God. That's the reason the Bible says, "*He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life*" (1 John 5:12). There are a lot of dead people who will go to work tomorrow in Memphis, Tennessee. They have existence, but they don't have life, you see, because God no longer dwells in them. "*The wages of sin is death*": separation from God.

Do you remember that scripture in John 1 concerning our Lord? The Bible says, "*In him was life; and the life was the light of men*" (John 1:4). Now when the word went out, the life went out; and when the life went out, the light went out. When the Lord went out, man was depraved. When the life went out, man is dead. When the light went out, man is darkened. And man is not in depravity and death and darkness, because he is separated from God. "*The wages of sin is death*": This is the effect of sin.

Now this separation from God shows itself in the way we live. Man is meant to live in direct communion and union with Almighty God, and the Holy Spirit and man's spirit is to be in man what instinct is to an animal. What would happen if you took the instinct away from the beehive? The same thing that has happened in our society and in Memphis, Tennessee when men try to live together without the Spirit of God leading them, men in deadness and depravity and darkness. And they are not led by the Spirit of God but by their own carnal minds and their own imaginations.

## **V. The Emancipation from Sin**

And so the extent of sin is this: that all men have sinned. The effects of sin is death: spiritual death, mental death, physical death, moral death, eternal death, the second death, which is the lake of fire and brimstone. Now I want you to notice one last thing here with me: the emancipation from sin, because you need to be emancipated from sin; you need to be set free from sin. You say, "Well, I'm not all that bad. I think I'm going to make it okay." Friend, if you think for one moment that you can go to heaven

without something being done about your soul, you're grossly ignorant of two things. Number one: You don't know how holy God is. And number two: You don't know how sinful your heart is. You must be emancipated; you must be set free.

Now chapter 5, verse 12, tells us of the problem, but verse 20 tells us of the provision. Look in verse 20—Romans 5, verse 20: *“Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound”* (Romans 5:20).

Now what does that mean? It means that God gave us His holy law so that we might see that we're sinners. That's why God gave us the Bible: *“The law entered, that the offence might abound.”* That is, if there's no law, there can be no transgression of the law, so God gave a law to reveal our wicked hearts to us, to show us what we are. Now you're not a sinner because I say you're a sinner. God holds up His standard, and we measure ourselves by God's holy commandments, and then we bow our heads and say, “Guilty.” Look, friend. You break God's laws, you're broken on God's laws. God's laws are fixed. And I'm not the one who originates them. I'm just the messenger boy, that's all. And *“the law entered...”*—the Bible says, that we might understand because of the law—*“the law entered that the offence might abound,”*—that we might see clearly, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure that we're sinners. But wait a minute, but wait a minute. Look at it: *“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”* (Romans 5:20).

Now here's a very happy spot in our message, because thus far we've been talking about sin, and we haven't enjoyed that very much, but I want to enjoy this point as we talk about the emancipation. And notice what it says: *“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.”* And dear friend, it is God's grace that abounds; not even God's mercy, but God's grace.

Do you know the difference between mercy and grace? Let me tell you the difference between mercy and grace. I thank God for mercy, and if all I received was mercy, that would be wonderful—far more than I deserve. But what is mercy? Mercy is God not giving to us what we do deserve. But what is grace? Grace is God giving to us what we don't deserve.

Now listen. God's mercy is God not giving to us what we do deserve, but God's grace is God giving to us what we don't deserve. Now if it were just mercy that we got, if God just said, “All right, I'll be merciful on you, and I won't put you in hell; I'll just annihilate you and destroy you, and that's all,” that would be merciful. Just annihilation would be merciful. But listen, friend. God gives us more than mercy: God gives us grace. Grace means that not only does God forgive my sins—that's mercy; but grace means that God makes me positively righteous—positively righteous. Oh, “where sin did abound, grace did much more abound.” It's not that God just forgives our sin—listen friend—God, He comes into me and gives me a brand new nature.

You can go down here to Walgreens and one of the drug stores and buy some crazy glue, super glue—they have different names for it, but they advertise it this way: They say, “If you have anything that’s broken, put a drop of this glue on it and stick it together, and,” they say, “it will be stronger at that point than any other point.” Now that’s unusual, isn’t it? At the point where it was broken now becomes the strongest point.

Now that’s what the grace of God does for you. I want to tell you, dear friend, that at the point where we’ve been saved and redeemed, our lives are there the strongest—at the point where we were broken.

Did you know, dear friend, that we have a stronger relationship with God than Adam did? You see, Adam was only innocent, but once I’m saved by the grace of God, I have become positively righteous. Do you understand what I’m trying to say? I am stronger at that point than at any point. By the grace of God, I’d rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. You see, angels never knew the joy that our salvation brings. Oh, “where sin did abound”—look at that—“grace did much more abound.” It’s much more; it’s that superabundant part that the grace of God gives. You know, if people could understand what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, I don’t believe that you could keep them away with a machine gun.

Now as I say, the behavioristic psychologist, and the Freudian psychiatrist, and others, he doesn’t understand this. He’s always taking about guilt complexes—guilt complexes—and he says, “Now you need to get rid of your complexes.” And so they say, “The reason a man has a complex is that he’s gotten all of these desires within him and he’s been held in by old memories and everything, and these things squeeze him in, and what he needs to do is quit repressing himself. If he gets all repressed, he will come up with a neurosis and a psychosis, so he needs to quit repressing himself.” And so what he says is, “Express yourself; live it up; do your thing; whatever feels good to you, whatever is meaningful to you, express yourself.” And so he says the opposite of repression is expression. No, friend. Let me tell you: It is not repression, and it is not expression; it is confession. *“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). And the Bible says, *“The blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). And “where sin did abound, grace does much more abound.”

## Conclusion

I heard a story years ago, and I’m not sure that I have all of the tale exactly correct, but something like this: A boy was lying on a battlefield. He had been mortally wounded. And the chaplain was there, and the chaplain was cradling this boy’s head tenderly in his hands and looking down into those languid eyes. And the chaplain was trying to give comfort. And the boy looked at the chaplain and he said, “Chaplain, am I going to live?”

And the chaplain looked down at that grievous wound and saw the lifeblood ebbing out in the soil, and the chaplain knew that in just a matter of a few minutes the boy would be dead. But the chaplain tried to change the subject. And the boy said, “Chaplain, will I live?” And he said to the boy, “Son, are you a Christian?” And the boy gave a weak smile, and he said, “Sir, the happiest day in my life was in my little church back yonder in North Carolina when I walked down the aisle of that church and gave my hand to my pastor and gave my heart to Jesus Christ. Yes, chaplain, I’m a Christian.” And the chaplain lay the dying head of that boy back down on the ground and said, “Then, my son, you’ll live—you’ll live.”

And indeed he will, for Jesus said He that *“liveth and believeth in me shall never die.”* Life is short; death is sure; sin is the cause, and Christ is the cure.

Oh dear friend, the emancipation of sin is this: “Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound.” And I want to tell you today, if today by faith you will admit you’re a sinner, then you are well on the road to being saved. If you offer God an alibi and an excuse for sin, you’ll never be saved. We must confess our sins. But if today you are willing to admit that you are a sinner—you may be a righteous sinner; you may be a moral sinner; you may be a church member sinner; you may be a fine upstanding sinner; you may be an educated sinner; but you’re a sinner. *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.”* And until you confess your sinnership, you’ll never be saved.

But if today you’ll say, “O God, I know that I’m a sinner,” then, step number two, you must believe that Jesus is the Savior. And the Bible says that Jesus and Jesus alone is God’s answer to man’s sin. And without Jesus Christ, nothing *can be done for your* sin. *With Jesus Christ, nothing else need be done.* And the Bible says, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31). And then, *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be like wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). And when a man—any man, any women, any boy, any girl, anywhere—calls out to Jesus Christ, and says, “Lord Jesus, I’m a sinner, and Lord Jesus, I believe that thou art the Savior, and right now with all of my heart, once and for all, now and forever, I trust you,” the Bible says that that man will be saved. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* The angel said, *“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21).

Will you call on Him today? Will you ask Him to save you? Will you by faith receive the grace of God? “Where sin did abound, grace did much more abound.” What I’m going to ask you to do is this: I’m going to ask you today now to receive Christ as your personal Savior.

# How to Live in Victory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 29, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 6:1–2**

## Outline

Introduction

I. Know

II. Reckon

III. Yield

A. The Dethronement of Sin

B. The Enthronement of the Savior

C. The Enslavement of the Siant

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and be finding your place in Romans chapter 6. By the way, how many Bibles do we have here today? If you have a Bible in your hand, would you just lift it up and wave it at me. Oh, isn't that wonderful! Look at that! Praise the Lord! That is just wonderful. And if you did not bring one with you this morning, your neighbor perhaps has a Bible you can look on with because, in my sincere opinion, you will receive about 25 percent more out of any message if you'll have the Word of God there in front of you. The kind of Bible study that we try to do here on Sunday is the kind where you can just keep your Bible right there in front of you and study with us. Today we're talking about God's amazing grace and how to turn grace into victory.

Now, folks, we are saved by grace. That means there's absolutely nothing that we do in order to earn our salvation. As a matter of fact, Dwight L. Moody, who was an evangelist very much like Billy Graham who lived in another era, said he heard a man stand up in a testimony meeting, and this man said, I have lived, I've been 42 years learning three things—42 years learning three things. Well, Moody said to himself, if this man took 42 years learning those three things, I'd better pay attention. And here are the three things the man said he'd learned. Number one: I can do nothing to earn salvation. Number two: God doesn't require me to do anything. Number three: Jesus has done it all. Now, well, that's wonderful, but it doesn't take 42 years to learn that. You can learn it in 30 minutes or less this morning. We are saved by the sheer grace of God. But, let me say this, folks, because salvation is a gift, and it roots not in the merit of man but in the mercy of God, not in the goodness of man but in the grace of God, does that mean,

therefore, it doesn't make any difference how we live? Well, Paul puts the death to that lie. Look in chapter 6, verse 1: "What shall we say, then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" Paul says, "God forbid!" That is, any Christian who's saved by grace who continues to live a life of sin is a disgrace to grace. Now, we are saved by the grace of God, but after we're saved by the grace of God, we need to learn to live in victory. And so, the grace of God is an inducement to live a godly life and it also supplies the power to live a godly life.

Now, we're talking to you today about victory—constant victory, conscious victory, conspicuous victory. Are you ready for it? Now, there are three basic words that I want you to see today in God's Word in the passage we have before us. And if you get these three words down in your heart, you're going to learn how to walk in victory. So don't miss it, are you ready? Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 6: "Knowing this..."—underscore the word, the phrase, knowing. I have a circle drawn around it in my Bible, and I also have it highlighted in yellow—"Knowing this." And then, skip on down to verse 11: "Likewise, reckon also yourselves to be dead unto sin, to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God." Underscore the word reckon. First of all, the word knowing; secondly, the word reckon. And then, finally, I want you to look on over to verse 13, if you will, and underscore the word yield: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God." Know. Reckon. Yield. Now, just write that on your heart; get that in your mind. Don't check me out; don't say, That doesn't make sense to me. Well, it may not now, but you listen. Know. Reckon. Yield. Know. Reckon. Yield. Now, if you will get these three words in your heart, in your mind, you're going to learn the secret of living in victory. And, as grace abounds, righteousness will also abound, and that imputed righteousness will become imparted and practical righteousness in your life, and you will live day by day, week by week, year by year, in victory, the kind of life that you really want to live and perhaps have not yet found the secret to living.

Now, I was pastoring a church before I discovered this truth. To be very honest, I loved the Lord and I wasn't living what you would call a bad life, but I had not really learned how to walk in victory. So I want to share these three words.

## **I. Know**

Now, let's take the first one—are you ready for it? Look at the word know. Now, that word know deals with your identification with Jesus, who gave Himself for you. Now, say that again: it deals with your identification with Jesus, who gave Himself for you.

Now, what does identification mean? Well, it just simply means that we are in Jesus; He has acted on our behalf. He is our representative, and what happened to the Lord

Jesus happened to us. He chose to be one with us. It is a tremendous blessing, because, you see, when Jesus came to this earth, suffered, bled and died, we suffered, bled, and died with Him, because Jesus died for us. Now, you've got to know that.

Notice verses 6 and 7 of this chapter. Look at it, if you will: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him." You see the word with—that's identification. Our old man, that is, the old Adrian, is crucified with Him, with Jesus, "that the body of sin might be destroyed and henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is free from sin." Now, what does that mean? Well it means that when Jesus died He died for me, He died as my substitute. His death had my name on it.

I've told you before about the erstwhile pastor of our church, Dr. Robert G. Lee, who went to the Holy Land for the first time, and he came to the place called Calvary, and the guide was giving a lecture, and he asked, How many of you have ever been here before? Now, remember it was Dr. Lee's first trip to the Holy Land, they were standing at Calvary, and he said, How many of you have ever been here before? Dr. Lee lifted his hand. And he said, When were you here? And he said, Two thousand years ago—two thousand years ago. You see, when Jesus died for me, I died with Him. That's the reason the apostle Paul says, in Galatians 2, verse 20, "I am crucified with Christ." Now, here's the key to this whole thing. Look, if you will, in verse 7: "For he that is dead is freed from sin." Now, you see, sin has been our past master, and sin not only has been our master, our dictator, but also you and I have a penalty that has to be paid.

Now, when a man dies, what happens? Suppose a man is a cripple. Let's take James MacDougal. Remember James MacDougal in the Whitewater thing who just recently died over there in prison? Well, Kenneth Starr had a lot of charges and things against Mr. James MacDougal. And all of these facts he's gathering, and so forth, and James MacDougal is in prison, but there are more charges coming, and all of this. Folks, let me tell you something. When James MacDougal died, all of that is forgotten. They cannot prosecute that man anymore; it doesn't matter what he's done. When he has died, the charges are dropped. Whether he's guilty or whether he's innocent is not even the fact. He is now dead. Do you understand that?

Now, folks, all of the charges that have been brought against us—Satan has sued us, or God has sued us for damages—but all those charges are dropped when we die—when we die. Well, not only that, but suppose you're a slave, and you have a cruel master, and he owns you. He tells you when to wake up, he tells you when to go to bed, he tells you what to eat, he tells you what to wear, he tells you what to work, where to work and how long, what to do. He is your master. But when you die, he's not your master anymore. You're dead. Your old master has no more control over you when you die. Now, our old master has been Satan and the flesh and the world, and the charges

have been leveled against us. Our sins have brought us into jeopardy, but, folks, in Jesus we died. Now, does that make sense to you? You see, we are crucified with Christ. When Jesus died, I died. His death had my name on it.

Not only did we die with Jesus, verses 6 and 7, but we were buried with Jesus. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: “Know ye not that so many of us that were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore, we are buried with Him by baptism into death.” When Jesus was buried, I was buried. Well you say, why is the burial so important? Did you know that the burial of Jesus is part of the gospel? And put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 3 and 4—Paul said, “For I delivered unto you that which I also, first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures and that He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures.” Not only is the death of Jesus a part of the gospel, the burial of Jesus is part of the gospel.

Now, in Bible times, when a man would die, or a woman would die, the dead were put quickly out of sight. They were buried. Now, why does the Bible say not only did we die with Jesus, we were buried with Jesus? Because, you see, Jesus carried our sins into the grave of God’s forgetfulness. The devil would love to intimidate you with the bones of your old life, but your sins are in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, and when Satan comes looking for the old Adrian, he says, Where’s my buddy Adrian? I haven’t seen him in a while. Well, he’s dead. Satan, you don’t have any more power over him. Well, where’s his body? I want to torment it. You can’t torment it; it is buried, it, it is gone.

Now, you see, look. We died with Jesus, we were buried with Jesus, and we have been raised with Jesus. Look again in verses 4 and 5 of this same chapter. And it goes on to say in the last part of verse 4, “that as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Now, Jesus had a life that the grave could not keep, and while He carried my sins to the grave and left them there, Jesus came out of that grave, living, risen, victorious; and when Jesus rose for me two thousand years ago, I rose with the Lord Jesus Christ. And now the Bible says, “I am crucified with Christ,”—that’s Galatians 2:20—“nevertheless I live. Yet not I, but Christ that lives in me.” Now, Christians are not just nice people; they’re new creatures. We have the same power that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. We have that power in us. We are new people. We have come out of the grave of the old life, our old master has no more hold over us, the old debt has no more penalty that we have to pay, our sins are buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. And then, when Jesus came out that Easter morning of that grave, we came out with Him, and we’ve been raised to walk in a new life.

Augustine, for whom the city of St. Augustine is named, was a profligate, a sinful

young man; he lived wild and wicked. He had a mother that was praying for him. Her name was Monica. One day, Augustine got saved, and he was walking down the street after having met the Lord, and a prostitute saw him. He saw the prostitute first, and she was a woman that he'd consorted with. And it was a part of that old life. So Augustine just ducked his head, crossed the street, put his head down, and began to walk—didn't want to say a word to her. She recognized him, and she said, Augustine, Augustine, it is I. He said, Yes, but it is not I, and kept on walking. What he meant by that was the old Augustine was dead. I've been raised to walk in a new life.

Now, folks, that's something; that is a fact, and you need to know it. And so, what's the first thing? Knowing that our old man is crucified with Him, that we were buried with Him, we were raised with Him. That is an f-a-c-t—fact—and you've got to know that—you've got to know that. That's the first thing. That's not victory yet, but, first of all, you know this, you know it. I hope you know it now; I hope you believe it. It is the precious doctrine of identification that Jesus Christ gave Himself for us and His death had our name on it, His burial had our name on it, His resurrection had our name on it. When He died, we died with Him; when He was buried, we were buried with Him; when He rose, we rose with Him. That is the doctrine of identification. Got it? Got it.

Now, let's move to the second word here, and I want you to see it. Now, not only must you know—that's your identification with Jesus who gave Himself for us—but, by the way, before we get to the next point, let me tell you why we baptize the way we baptize.

Now, our baptistry, if you're here for the first time, is behind that curtain; it's all covered up because there's more scenery back there. We have a beautiful baptistry there where we baptize people by immersion. Now, why do we baptize people by immersion? Well look again in verses 3 and 4: "Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For we have been planted in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection."

What does baptism teach—what does it symbolize? The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. That baptistry is a liquid tomb. When you give your heart to Jesus, we take you and immerse you beneath the water. We bury you beneath the water. We are buried with Him by baptism. That's why you can't call sprinkling baptism; you can't bury a man with a few drops of water any more than you can bury him with a few grains of sand. Suppose I die, you haul me out to the cemetery, and said, Now, we're going to bury the old pastor, put a few grains of sand on my forehead, and left me out there to bake in the sun. That'd be disgraceful. We're buried with Him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father,

even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Baptism is a picture of a death, a burial, and a resurrection. Well, you say, Well, Pastor, it really doesn't matter; it just pictures Jesus, just any old picture will do. Oh? Suppose you'd never seen a picture of my wife, and you say, Adrian, you have a picture of Joyce? And I pull out a picture out of my billfold, maybe it's a picture of a racing boat or a fire hydrant or a polo pony. You say, is that Joyce? Doesn't look like her. I say, well, any old picture will do.

No, listen. If there's one message that the devil would like to take out of the church, what do you think it would be—just one? If he had to just say there's just one message I want to take out of the church, it'd be the gospel message—the gospel message—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And that is why every time somebody gets saved we put them in that baptistry, put them beneath the water, raise them up out of that water: that pictures our identification with Christ. “We are buried with Him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Now, folks, that is a fact. You know it.

## **II. Reckon**

But now, look. What's the second word? Reckon. First word, knowing. The second word is reckon. Let's look at that second word now, and if knowing deals with our identification with Jesus, reckon deals with our appropriation of Jesus. Now, you have to know your identification before you can make that appropriation. This follows one, two, three.

Now, look if you will, at the scripture here, and he says this in verse 11: “Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God.” Now, the word reckon here is a bookkeeping term. What it literally means is that you count on it, not because you feel it, not because you guess about it, not because you desire it or because you imagine it; you reckon on it because it is true. This word reckon means count on it. This word reckon means calculate up on it.

Now, reckoning is not just closing your eyes and pretending it to be true; it is acting by faith, it is acting on what you know to be true, it is appropriating what you know to be true. Now, if you have some money in the bank, and you get your bank statement, and it says you have x number of dollars in the bank, then it doesn't matter if you feel you have more, or if think you don't have anything. You just look at the bank statement, and you reckon on that, not a matter of feeling.

You know, so many of us want to say, whether I feel victorious or not. Hey, folks, your feelings are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of

God. He doesn't do the deepest work in the shallowest part. He doesn't say, feel it. He says, calculate it; reckon it to be true. Remember now, this is a bookkeeping term. And your feelings don't matter.

A woman woke up one morning, and the alarm clock went off, and it seemed like she'd just gone to sleep. Have you ever had one of those nights that just passes just like that, and you're sleeping especially sound, and it seemed like you just closed your eyes, and the alarm clock goes off? She says, It could not be six o'clock in the morning. But she looked at the alarm clock; it said six. She turned on the radio—the six o'clock programs were playing. She opened the window and looked out, and the sun was coming up, and the radio said it was six, the clocks said it was six, the sun in the east said it was six o'clock in the morning. Now, folks, I submit to you it didn't really matter how it felt. All of these facts were just something she just had to reckon on. I, it, it's a fact, no matter how you feel about it.

Now, we need to get our salvation out of the realm of fickle emotions, and begin to reckon and to count on God's facts. You see, the fact of the matter is you have been dead for two thousand years. Don't you think it's time you had your funeral? Now, look, if you will, in verse 6—look at it: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Him." Now, that—and I don't want to get too technical—but that is in the Greek tense the aorist tense. Now, what does that mean? What it means is it is done, it is once for all, never to be repeated. That happened; that is a fact, that is done, it is finished.

But now notice, as we continue to read here, reckon, the word reckon, is in the present tense. Now, what does that mean? Well, that means that day by day you count on what happened two thousand years ago. Day by day, every morning, you wake up, and you say, Hey, I am dead to sin, I'm alive in Christ, I know it is a fact, He died for me; now I reckon it, not only by my identification with Christ, but now just by my appropriation of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not only gave Himself for me, but Jesus now has given Himself to me, and the life I now live I live by the faith in the Son of God. Now, I must count on the life of Christ in me daily. Are you with me so far?

### **III. Yield**

Now, let's move on to the third word, because here is where the rubber meets the road. This is where most of us fail. Most of us get two-thirds of the way there, and we never ever live in victory. The first word is knowing, and that deals with our identification with Christ who gave Himself for us. The second word is the word reckon. That deals with our appropriation of Christ who gave Himself to us. You see, He gave Himself for us that He might give Himself to us. He lives in us now. We are alive in Him, and He in us. Now, the third word is yield, and that word deals with our emancipation through

Christ who lives His life in us. He gave Himself for us, that He might give Himself to us, that He might live His life through us.

Now, how does this become real in our hearts? Because you say, Pastor Rogers, if I am dead, if I've been crucified with Christ and I have been buried with Him, how come that old man won't lie down? I mean, how come the old Adrian, or the old Billy, or the old Susie, or the old Bob, the old Jim, how come he keeps coming up? I thought he was dead. Why am I having so much difficulty? I know it as a fact that I died with Christ. I reckon it to be true, but why is it that I do not have victory day by day? It is because you've not learned to yield and be emancipated. When you yield, then your imputed righteousness becomes imparted righteousness. Now, the victorious life is this it is God's work. You cannot do it without Him; He will not do it without you. A country preacher prayed one time, Lord, help me to cooperate with you so you won't have to operate on me. Now, you need to learn to cooperate with God. You do this by yielding.

#### **A. The Dethronement of Sin**

Now, how do you yield? Well, let me mention three things. First of all, there is the dethronement of sin. Look, if you will, in verses 12 and through 13 now of this same chapter: "Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body." Now, just look at the first two words, let not—do you see that? "Let not sin reign therefore in your mortal body," that is, you don't have to—you don't have to. That means that there is a way for you. "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body." Why can't sin reign? Because, when you died, your old master lost all control over you and you have to dethrone sin. You must choose against your old master. You have to say, Satan, no longer will these eyes be your tools. No longer will these ears be your instruments. No longer will these hands do your bidding. I am not going to let you have your way in me.

Now, Satan doesn't want you to learn what I'm teaching today, and Satan will say, Oh, that's just preacher talk; you don't have to pay any attention to that. Rogers is just going through the book of Romans, and this is all just religious gobbledygook. Now, you listen to me. You don't have to let Satan have his way in your life. Now, before Calvary, before your identification with the Lord Jesus, and before your appropriation of the Lord Jesus, there's no possible way that you could live the victorious life, even if you wanted to. Now, you don't have to let sin rule in your body; you just don't have to. You have within you all it takes; it is there, but you're going to have to use your power of authority; you're going to have to know it, and you're going to have to reckon it, and you're going to have to yield to it.

I was reading a while back about a woman, I believe, in St. Louis. She wasn't married to a particular man, but they thought that they would be a nice arrangement if

the two of them lived in an apartment together. There wasn't anything particularly sexual about it; they weren't married, however. They thought, well, we can just share this apartment, and it will be a nice arrangement. And so, she let this man move in with her, and she realized soon after she let this man move in with her that she'd made a serious mistake. And, she didn't want him in her apartment anymore. I guess she was convicted she was doing wrong, letting a man live there with her, and besides that, she didn't like him, and he really wasn't doing all that he was supposed to do. So she said to him, you're going to have to move out. He said to her, I'm not going to move out. She said, Oh, yes, you will. He said, You invited me here, and I am not moving out.

Well, she didn't know what to do. She didn't have the physical strength to throw him out. She got a lawyer. A lawyer went to the court. She got a court order; she got an injunction. She came back to him, and said, You're going to have to move out. I have legal papers that say that you must go, or else you'll be thrown in jail. He said, I'm not moving out. And she said, Oh, yes you are. And he moved out—he moved out.

Now, Satan is very much like that man. Satan will come into your life, and you'll say, Satan, I don't have to obey you. He says, Oh, yes you do. You know who you are, you know how weak you are, you know my power over you, you know my control over you, you invited me into your life, you and I have been friends for a long time, you know what we've done in the past, and I'm not moving. You say, Satan, please be gone. He says, No, I'm not going to go, I'm not going. Listen, folks. You take the power of attorney. You take the Word of God. You say, Here is something that I know to be true. And then, you say, Here is something that I reckon; I count upon what I know, I calculate upon what I know. I know my identification with Christ, I reckon my appropriation with Christ, and so now I dethrone sin in my life. Satan, I don't have to let you rule my life. I just don't have to do it, and you are not going to stay and ruin my life.

## **B. The Enthronement of the Savior**

But number two, not only is there the dethronement of sin, but there is the enthronement of the Savior. Look now, if you will, in verse 13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourself to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." Now, it's not just enough to say, Satan, be gone. Not only do you dethrone sin; you enthrone the Savior. You say, Lord Jesus, right now, this moment, I enthrone you; I put you upon the throne of my life.

Now, this word yield is an interesting word. As a matter of fact, over in Romans chapter 12 and verse 1 that we'll get to later, the Bible says, "Present your bodies unto God a living sacrifice." The word present there in Romans 12:1 and the word yield here

in Romans 6 is the same word. You just come to the Lord, and you say, Lord, here I am. I just present myself to you. Satan, I will not obey you. I don't have to obey you, the world. I don't have to obey you, the flesh. I don't have to obey you. I am dead; your hold on me has been gone. I was crucified with Christ; your old servant is dead and buried, and all of the charges against me are gone, because Jesus died for my sins, and I died with Him, and the law cannot bring me into double jeopardy, and it is done, and I don't have to obey you. And now, Lord Jesus, I present myself to you; I yield myself to you.

### **C. The Enslavement of the Siant**

Now, here's the third thing. First of all, the dethronement of sin. Number two: the enthronement of the Savior. And number three: the enslavement—now, listen carefully—the enslavement of the saint—the enslavement of the saint. Now, look, if you will, in verses 17 and 18 of this same chapter. Are you reading with me? “But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin,”—and the word servant there means bonds slave of sin—“but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you, being then made free from sin, ye became the slaves of righteousness.” Now, there's the dethronement of sin, the enthronement of the Savior, and the enslavement of the saint. You become Jesus' slave.

You say, Well, Pastor, I don't think I want to be a slave. Well, you're going to be a slave of Jesus or a slave of Satan. Everybody's a slave to something; everybody is either in Adam or in Christ. But when you say, Lord Jesus, I yield myself to you, I become your bonds slave, you have a right to tell me what to do, you have a right to tell me when to wake up, when to go to bed, what to eat, what not to eat, what to wear, what not to wear, you have a right to tell me anything you want, you have a right to all of my possessions; I am a bonds slave. Remember, Paul began this epistle by calling himself a bonds slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, it is that enslavement—listen carefully—that brings perfect liberty.

Now, what do you get when you enslave yourself to the Lord Jesus? Well, you get a new freedom, because look in verse 18: “Then made free from sin.” Sin doesn't have any more dominion over you. You get a new faithfulness. Look, if you will, in verse 19. He says, “Even so now yield your members, servants to righteousness unto holiness.” You have a new fruitfulness. Look in verse, 21: “What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now, being made free from sin and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.” So, when you become a slave to the Lord, you get a new freedom, you get a new faithfulness, you get a new fruitfulness. Is this making sense to you? I hope so. Now, you know, I realize that we could be talking about prophecy or something, you'd be all

ears. But, folks, this is where we live.

## Conclusion

Now, listen—three words. You know it—that is your identification with Christ who gave Himself for you. Number two: you reckon it—that is your appropriation of Christ who gave Himself for you. And then, number three: you yield—that is your emancipation through Christ who lives His life in you.

Do you know what I do a lot of mornings when I wake up? I kind of feel silly telling you this, but I've told enough folks now, I've let the cat out of the bag. Let me tell you something to do in the mornings, and it deals with these three words. When you wake up in the morning—I mean when you get out of bed, on your way into the bathroom or wherever—just lift your hands to God and praise Him; I mean, first thing, just praise Him, and say, Lord, I praise you that you gave yourself for me. Okay, that's knowing.

And then, take those same hands, and turn them up, and say, Lord, not only did you give yourself for me, but you gave yourself to me. Lord, this morning, I receive of your fullness. Oh, fullness of you—God, I just receive your fullness. Identification is, Lord, I praise you; you gave yourself for me. But appropriation is, Lord, you gave yourself to me. And, Lord, what I know now I reckon; I just receive, Lord, of your fullness. Thank you, Lord, you're pouring your life into me.

And then do this: then put your hands up like somebody put a gun on you, and bow your head, and surrender, and say, Now, Lord, I yield to you. Live your life through me. You see, He gave Himself for you, that He might give Himself to you, that He might live His life through you. Just say, I'm yours; I am your slave. Live your life through me today. And when you've done that, just spread out your hands, and say, It's going to be a great day—it's going to be a great day.

There is something to know. There is something to reckon. And then, you must yield to what you know. You must dethrone sin; you must say, Satan, I'm not going to let you do that. You have no right. You're trespassing on my Father's property. And, in the name of Jesus, and the authority of the Word of God, leave me alone. And then, you say, Lord Jesus, I put you on the throne of my life today, and Lord, I am your slave. I'm here to do your will.

And you're going to find out, friend, that God will begin to live—bless His name—He'll begin to live His life in you in ways that you've never dreamt of, and it will be supernatural all the way. He didn't save you, and say, Now, go out there and do the best you can. There's something to know—identification. There's something to reckon—appropriation. There's something to yield—emancipation. God help you to understand this.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Would you say, Lord, teach me these lessons? Lord, help me to understand my identification with you, and your death, burial, and resurrection. Lord, help me to count on it. Help me to know that it goes far beyond my feelings, that I can reckon it to be true, no matter how I feel. And now, Lord, help me to yield to what I know, to dethrone sin, enthrone the Savior, and enslave myself. I am now your slave, Lord Jesus, ready to do your will. Would you do that?

Father, I pray in the name of Jesus that you'll make this real in our lives. In your holy name. Amen.

# Living Victoriously

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: August 6, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 6:1–13**

*“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

ROMANS 6:6

## Outline

Introduction

I. Know: Identification

II. Reckon: Appropriation

III. Yield: Emancipation

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Romans chapter 6, if you will, please. I want to talk to you today about living victoriously. I know that's a theme that we talk about often because it's a theme that often needs to be talked about. As a matter of fact I want to ask you a question: How many really victorious Christians do you know—really victorious? Well, let me narrow the focus just a little bit. How many in this building today, and those of you who are listening by television, can say, “Pastor Rogers, I am living day by day in constant, conspicuous victory”?

Now, we know that we're saved by grace. And I thank God for that. I thank God for the grace of God. And grace—g-r-a-c-e—has been described as, in an acrostic, God's Riches At Christ's Expense. There's absolutely nothing we can do to save ourselves or to help save ourselves. We're saved by the grace of God. You understand that, don't you? If you come to God as a prince, you'll go away a beggar, but if you come to God as a beggar, you'll go away as a prince. He will save you by His grace. Now, we're not saved by works of any kind. Good deeds cannot save us. Does that mean, however, that it makes no difference how we live? Of course not! Look in Romans chapter 6 and verse 1: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” That is, if we're saved by grace, shall we sin more so that grace will be all the richer? That's a foolish thing. Paul answers that question, “God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

Now that's a very interesting thing. God saves us by grace, but the way God saves

us by grace is to make us dead to sin. Now that may be a concept that's hard to understand today, and very frankly, the message today is a tad philosophical. It's a little deep, and you may miss it. And I've thought about this, and I have actually prayed about it, and I've said, "God, help me to make this clear, and help me to make it plain." Because there are a lot of people who are listening, and, and very frankly I know that some will just check me out. They'll say, "That's all religious jargon. I don't understand what he's saying. It doesn't apply to me. It's beyond me." And you'll check me out. I hope that no one will, but I'm afraid that some might. But I have taken a calculated risk because of the necessity of this message. How vital it is! How important it is. I can tell you that what I am sharing with you today, and I'll give you this testimony, has radically changed my own life.

This, what I'm going to share with you today is something that I learned early in the ministry. I had already been saved, already been preaching before I learned what I'm going to share with you today. And it changed my life; the message that I'm going to share with you today has changed my life more than any other truth in the Word of God. And I'm praying that God the Holy Spirit will help me to communicate this to you. Now, when I say, "It's changed my life," I don't mean to say I, that I have arrived. I'm in progress, and He is changing me. But, "Oh, God, help me today to communicate this to hearts." And I pray that you'll just keep your heart open, and don't let the devil take your mind and run away with it as we study today.

Now, in the sixth chapter of Romans is the key to the victorious life, and there are three key words. Actually I say the key. There are three key words in this sixth chapter.

Now take the sixth chapter, and look at it. In verse 6, this word knowing—k-n-o-w-l-n-g—"Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him." Now, folks, that is a fact. I'm going to talk about that in a moment, but right now I just want you to see it. "Knowing this"—do you see that? Underscore or circle the word knowing. In my Bible, the word knowing is circled and is also colored in yellow to make it stand out.

Now skip down to verse 11: "Likewise reckon"—r-e-c-k-o-n—reckon. In my Bible, that's highlighted in yellow and it's got a circle around it. All right now, go on down to verse 13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of righteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God." The word yield in my Bible is highlighted in yellow and it is circled. Now those are three words, know, reckon, yield. Did you hear them? Say the first one—know. Second one—reckon. Third one—yield. Let's say it again. Know. Reckon. Yield. One more time. Know. Reckon. Yield. Now, if you get this in your heart and in your mind—I mean, let God the Holy Spirit emblazon it into your heart and mind, etch it upon your soul till it reverberates through your consciousness, you will find that day by day by day by day, and night by night by night, you will by living, walking, waking, and sleeping in victory.

These three words: the first word, know—that deals with fact; the second word, reckon—that deals with faith; the third word, yield—that deals with function. That tells you how you put the fact and the faith into action. And, when you get the fact that is there, you understand the fact, you put your faith in that fact; that is, you reckon, and then you yield to it; you function, then, ipso facto, you begin to live victoriously. And, when you live victoriously, this thing called Christianity will become a bright, living reality to you. It's not just something you do on Sunday morning when you come sit on a pew on Sunday morning, thinking you've done God a wild favor.

Now, let's see if God the Holy Spirit will open our hearts and our minds and teach us today how to live in victory.

## **I. Know: Identification**

Now, look at the first word, know. And the key to the first word, it is a fact. There's something you are to know. And what you're to know is your identification—listen—your identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, don't check out the word identification. It's a very clear word. Think of the word. There is a fact, and that fact is your identification with the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now, read verses 6 through 10. Here's what you're supposed to know. Look at it: "Knowing this, that our old man"—he's not talking about your daddy now; he's talking about you, what you used to be before you were saved—"...that our old man is crucified with him"—with whom? With Jesus—"...that the body of sin—that's the old man—might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Now, before we were saved, we were slaves—servants—of sin. But he says that our old man, that old slave, was crucified with Jesus. "For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ—underscore that, dead with Christ—we believe that we shall also live with him. Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."

Now, I understand you're saying, "Pastor, already my mind's beginning to fuzz. I mean, there's just too much there. I can't take it in." Well, stay with me now, and listen. Let me give you some facts. We're talking about a fact. We're talking about something you should know, and what you should know is your identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, let me tell you what he's saying. First of all, when Jesus died on the cross, you died with Him because He died for you. He died as your substitute, so He took you to the cross, and on the cross when He died you died. His death had your name on it. Look at it again. It's very clear. Look in verse 6: "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him"—with Him. Now, when He died on the cross, He not only died to take

away your sin, He died to take away you—I mean, not only your sin, but your self was nailed to the cross. Your sin—that deals with sin’s penalty; but when He took you to the cross—that deals with sin’s power. Now, you died on that cross. He died for you, and therefore you died with Him.

I’ve told you before about Dr. Robert G. Lee, the former pastor of this church, who went to the Holy Land for the first time, and went to that place that we all want to go to, Calvary. And he stood there, and the guide was talking away about Calvary, and then he looked at those Holy Land pilgrims, and he said, “Have any of you ever been here before?” Now, remember it was Dr. Lee’s first visit to the Holy Land. And he said, “Have any of you ever been here before?” Dr. Lee said, “I’ve been here before.” He said, “When?” He said, “Two thousand years ago.” And he was right. Two thousand years ago, he was there. When Jesus died, he was there. When Jesus died, you were there, and you were there, and you were there. And on that cross, we died with Him. Now, He died for us. We died with Him. You need to be identified with His death.

Now, why is that important? Well now, let’s suppose that a man has committed a crime. Let’s take someone that we all suppose is guilty. No, not who you’re thinking about. Let’s take someone else. Let’s take Lee Harvey Oswald. I think it’s pretty well, you know, most folks believe Lee Harvey Oswald shot President Kennedy. All right now, they had him arrested, they had him in jail, and he would’ve been put on trial, but what happened? Jack Ruby—you saw it—Jack Ruby came up, put that gun on him, and shot him. He died. The law says, “Then forget it. You can’t put a dead man on trial. It’s over. That’s it.” I mean, he died! You can’t put him on trial anymore. Now, we’re guilty of our sins, but, when we died, what can the law do to a dead man? Do you get that? What can the law do to a dead man?

Now, let’s suppose that Lee Harvey Oswald was a slave. Let’s suppose he had a master who told him when to go to bed, when to get up, what to eat, what to do, how to work, how many hours to work, and so forth. He has a master. Now, when he dies, his master can’t say, go to bed, get up, do this, do that. What power does his master have over him? None! He is dead. Now, when you die with Christ, what power does the law have to condemn you? None. You’re dead. What power does Satan have over your life—your old master? None. You see, before, we were slaves to sin, but we died, and so our old master has absolutely no more power over us. You see, when He died for us, that deals with sin’s penalty; but, when we died with Him, that deals with sin’s power. The law has no more power over us, and Satan has no more power over us. That’s good news, isn’t it? That’s good news.

Now, you just have to know that. That’s something you have to know. But not only did we die with Him; we were buried with Him. Now, go back up, look in verse 3 for a moment: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were

baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him.” We are buried with Him. Not only did I die with Him; His death had my name on it, but His burial had my name on it. Now, did you know that the burial of Jesus Christ is part of the Gospel? Put in your margin 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 3 and 4: “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried.” He was buried. You say, “What does the burial have to do with the Gospel?” Well, what do you do when somebody dies? You bury them, because the body, the corpse, will decay, and purification will take place. And so, you take that dead body, that thing that can be polluted and putrefy, and you put it out of the way. You bury it.

Folks, when Jesus died, He dealt with the power of sin over me. I’m no longer sin’s slave. He dealt with the penalty of sin—the law can do nothing to me any more. And He also deals with the pollution of sin—the pollution of sin. The old Adrian is put away! I mean, my sin, though it was red like scarlet, has become white as snow. All of the stench, all of the putrefication, all of the rottenness, all of the decay of the old man—it is buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. Not only did He take you and remove you from the power of sin, and not only did He remove you from the penalty of sin, but, by His death and burial, He removed you of the pollution of sin. I mean, He is of sin the double cure, save from wrath, and make you pure. You see, you have been buried with the Lord Jesus Christ and you don’t need to be haunted any more by the ghost of guilt. It’s not over yet. It’s not over yet.

Not only did He die for us, we died with Him; not only was He buried for us, and we’re buried with Him; but what else happened? What else? He was raised. Look again in verses 4 and 5 of this same chapter: “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so—oh, underscore this—we also—we also, that’s you and you and you, we also—should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” We are raised with Him. What incredible power brought Jesus from that grave! And did you know that that power is available to me today? The power that raised up Jesus Christ? That’s the reason the Apostle Paul said that, “Oh, that I may know him and the power of his resurrection.” Did you know that the very resurrection power that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead is available to you today? Think of it. Think of it. When He died, we died with Him. When He was buried, we were buried. When He rose, we arose. That is an f-a-c-t—fact! Now, you need to know it. You need to know it. That’s what Paul says—first of all, you need to know this.

Now, that’s the reason we have baptism. Baptism doesn’t make it so. It shows that it is so. That’s the reason we baptize by immersion, because biblical baptism is by

immersion, not by sprinkling. Look at it. Look at it, folks; it's so clear. Verse 4: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." That baptistry is a liquid tomb. When you go under the water, that pictures a burial. The old Adrian is gone. When you come up out of the water, that pictures a resurrection. I'm raised to walk in newness of life. You don't picture that by sprinkling. You can't picture that by sprinkling. It is a death, a burial, and a resurrection. Now that only declares it. It only shows it. It doesn't make it so. It has to happen in your heart before it ever happens out there. That's the outward expression of the inward reality, but it is a picture. Don't you think the devil would love to remove that picture from the church? I believe he would—of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—for this is the Gospel, how that Christ died for our sins, how that He was buried, how that He was raised again the third day. And that's the reason these people were baptized this morning, to say, "When Jesus died, I died. When He was buried, I was buried. When He came up, I came up. Not a resurrection someday. I'm already, right now, walking in resurrection life." There will be a resurrection someday, thank God for that. But friend, you don't get eternal life when you die; you get eternal life when you believe—the moment you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that moment you have eternal life.

## **II. Reckon: Appropriation**

Now, there is a fact. Know it. Secondly, look at the next word: reckon. Do you see the word reckon? That deals with faith. Now, this word reckon, look at it in verse 11: "Likewise reckon yourselves, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin." Now, he's already said, "You're dead," but now it says reckon. Now, look at the word reckon. Do you know what that word reckon means? It literally means to calculate—calculate. It's a bookkeeping term. You are to calculate on this fact. You are to count on this fact. It doesn't deal with feelings. You say, "Pastor Rogers, if I am dead, buried, and raised, how come I feel the way I feel?" Because the devil's pulled the wool over your eyes. I mean it can be a fact, but if you don't reckon on it, what good does it do you? You need to act upon this fact. And, how do you act upon this fact? You reckon on it as an act of faith. Now, reckoning is not just closing your eyes and pretending; but faith is acting, reckoning is acting on what you know to be true.

Now, you already know how to reckon if you're saved. You see, we do a pretty good job of reckoning to the fact that He died for our sins. We say, "Okay, my sins are paid for." But you also need to learn how to reckon that you died with Him. That's where we're weak. That's where we're weak. Most of us have the idea of substitution. We've

got that down. But we don't have the idea of identification—that we died with Him, you see. That's where we're weak. Now, you need to count on this. It's not a matter of feeling. Feelings are deceptive.

We were in London the other day, in Gatwick Airport, and had about an hour and a half before our plane took off. Joyce had a few extra pounds—now wait, that doesn't sound good. Pounds is what they buy things with over there. She had some extra money that had not been translated back to United States money. She's there in the terminal, buying a few little things in the gift shop there, the duty-free shop, and I'm looking around for something to pass the time. I see this little theater in there, and this theater is kind of one of these virtual reality things. It's a theater that seats about 25 people, and they had a motorcycle ride, and you go, and I needed to lose two pounds, so I gave them two pounds, and I went in this thing. And they said, "Sit down in this chair, and buckle the seat belt." I should've known something was about to happen. "You buckle the seat belt." And, he said, "Put both feet on the floor." And then, the screen comes on, and, Jim, I was on a motorcycle, and that guy took off in that motorcycle. Listen, folks—I still believe I was on a motorcycle. I mean it—it was incredible! This thing was going nine billion miles an hour through warehouses, plate glass windows, up on sidewalks, through fruit stands, over jumps. My heart was going, "Boom! Boom! Boom! Rrbb-bb-bb-bb." And the seat was going like this, and I'm holding on. Incredible! I wasn't on a motorcycle at all. I was just shifting in a room. But everything in me said I was riding a motorcycle. I mean the vibration, the sound, I thought I was smelling the fumes. It was incredible. And people in there were screaming. I wasn't screaming, not me. But listen—they were all screaming.

Now, what am I saying? You know, we get something in our mind, and our mind tells us something is true, when it's not true at all, and sometimes when there is something true, we fail to believe that it is true. The truth of the matter is that you have been dead for 2,000 years. Don't you think it's time you had a funeral? You've been dead for 2,000 years. Reckon on it! It's a matter of faith! No matter how you feel about it, it's a matter of faith.

Now, in verse 6, the word crucified is in the aorist tense in the Greek. That doesn't mean a thing in the world to you if you don't know Greek, but it means it's a once-for-all happening. But in verse 5, the word reckon is in the present tense, and that means it's something you are to be doing constantly. He died for you; you died with Him—that's once for all. But day by day by day by day, you need to take that fact and turn it into faith, and reckon on it. Daily, I must reckon that the old Adrian is dead—dead to his plans, his wishes, his will; I'm dead to Satan's slavery over me; I'm dead to sin's power over me—I must reckon it.

### III. Yield: Emancipation

Now, here's the third word. It's not over yet. I mean, if you don't know it, it won't do you any good. That's a fact, okay? That's identification. But not only must you know it, you must reckon on it. That's faith. You say, "Yes, I believe that fact. I put that fact into action." That is appropriation. Identification, appropriation. But, oh, here's where so many people come two-thirds of the way, and then they stop. Here's the third word—the third word—look at it again. It is the word yield—yield—and that word is emancipation. Listen: identification, appropriation, and now, emancipation. But there is something you must do.

Now, there's a fact. You put your faith in that fact. But there is a function that you must fulfill. Look in verse 12—chapter 6 and verse 12—look at it: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof." That means there's something you should do. Verse 13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God." Do you see that? You must yield. Look in verse 16: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey." Look, if you will, in verse 19: "I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so, now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." Yield. Yield. Yield. Now this imputed righteousness becomes practical righteousness when you begin to cooperate with God and you yield.

Now, this is not simply self-effort, but there is something you must do. You must, when temptation comes, yield yourself to God. That's what most of us don't want to do. And it's such a simple thing. Just simply say, "Here I am, Lord. I make myself available to You. I just yield." When temptation comes, there's only one thing to do. There's only one thing you will do—and that's yield. Either you'll yield to the temptation, or you'll yield to God. But you will yield. When any temptation comes, only one thing to do, and that's yield. When it comes, and you feel that old lust coming—you want to read that pornographic literature, you want to drink that, you want to smoke that, you want to say that, you want to do that—just say, "I don't have to do that. I don't have to do that. That old nature is dead. I have been buried with Christ. I have been raised with Christ. Resurrection power is available to me. I count on it. Here, God! I yield myself to You!" And don't say it won't work, if you haven't tried it. I'll guarantee you on the Word of God it will happen.

But now, listen. Satan doesn't want you to learn this. Satan doesn't want you to know this. And he'll try and tell you, "You don't have any right to do this. You don't have any power to do this. You're so weak; you're going down. I've got you just where I want you. Your old flesh—you've always done this, and you still will." And he'll begin to lie to

you.

Down in Florida I had a little sailboat, a beautiful little sailboat, little Boston Whaler-type sailboat, one little sail on it. It was about as big as from here to you, Brother Bob. I put my little kids in that sailboat. We lived just near the Indian River—Indian River, a beautiful salt water lagoon, about a mile wide. And I'd come in from work, and kick off my shoes, and put on an old pair of trousers, and hoist the sail on that little sailboat, and sail around the sunset with the kids in there, and we'd laugh and joke and tell stories and come in for suppertime. Just wonderful—enjoyed that little boat so much. I came out there one day to get my little boat. I'd just left it pulled up on the shore, right there behind the house. It was gone. Somebody had stolen my sailboat. I mean, it was a treasure. Wasn't worth that much money, but I just loved that boat, Jim. It was gone. Somebody had taken that boat, right down there behind Doyle's house; my little boat was gone. Well, I didn't do anything. I just told Jesus on them, and, nothing else I could do. But I was driving down the road, and I passed a boat place—I mean, where they sold boats. And out there on the corner, featured, sitting up on a pedestal, was my boat. It had all been polished and cleaned, but I knew it was my boat sitting up there for sale; it belonged to me. I pulled in. I said, "Hey, that's a nice-looking boat out there. How much is it?" And he told me. I said, "That's very interesting." And then I said, "Sir, that's my boat." He said, "Oh, no, no. That's not your boat. That's, no." I said, "Fine." But I said, "I'll be back in a minute. I'm going to get my trailer." Very interesting episode there. So he didn't know me as the pastor of the First Baptist Church. He just knew me as crazy, I guess. But I just pulled up with my automobile, backed my trailer up to that boat, and began to load it up. He came out, and he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "Just loading this boat on this trailer." He said, "Mister, get your hands off that boat. That's not your boat" "Oh," I said, "no, it's my boat." He said, "Mister, leave that boat alone." I said, "You know what I'd do if I were you, sir?" He said, "What?" I said, "I'd call the police." I said, "Why don't you call the police and tell the police that there's a man down here stealing a boat?" I said, "Go on in to your phone and call the police." And I loaded the boat up and drove off with it, and I have not yet heard from him or the police.

Now, I could've let him keep that boat, but I didn't have to. It was not his. How he got it—I don't know who sold it to him or whatever. I don't know. But I know it was mine. It was legally mine. There was no way he could keep it. And all he could do was intimidate me, and I just simply refused to be intimidated.

The devil will try to do the same thing to you. The devil will tell you, "You can't have victory. You can't live in victory. That's not yours. Get your hands off of that." You say, "Devil, it's mine, and I'm taking it." I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, and I don't have to let that dirty devil rule over me! Look at it again in verse 12: "Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it to the lusts thereof." You don't have to do it!

You have resurrection power. “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” Just yield.

Abraham Lincoln set the slaves free, but unfortunately, many slaves continued to stay on the plantation. Do you know why? Some slaves never got the word. They didn’t know it. Other slaves knew it, but they just couldn’t take it in. They just could not really believe it. And other slaves heard it, and knew it, but they were still intimidated by their old master, and they just continued to yield. Tragic. You have to know it—that’s a fact. You have to reckon on it—that’s faith. And you have to yield to it—that’s function. And you say, “Satan, I don’t belong to you anymore. You’re not my master anymore. And, Adrian, that old man is dead and crucified. Now you’re a new man in Jesus.”

## Conclusion

Isn’t that wonderful? Now, folks, that’s just going to sound like so much religious gobbledy-gook until you begin to put it into practice. What’s the first word? Know. What’s the second word? What’s the third word? Know, reckon, and yield. Identification. Appropriation. Emancipation.

Let’s pray. Father God, I pray today that many in this building will give their hearts to Jesus and be saved, and, Lord, that those who are saved will recognize that they have life and liberty through Jesus, and that we will walk in victory in His name.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you’re not certain that you’re saved, or you’re certain that you’re not saved, and you want to be saved, I want to help you to pray. Would you pray a prayer like this; if you want to be saved, if you want to know that you’re not going to go to hell, if you want to know that you have peace and power and victory, fellowship with God, I want you to pray this prayer: “Dear God, I know that You love me. I know You want to save me. Jesus, I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe You paid my sin debt with Your blood on that cross. I now by faith receive You as my Lord and Master and my Savior. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me, Jesus.” Now, pray that prayer. Pray it and mean it. Don’t just repeat words. Say it and mean it. “Save me, Jesus. Right now, today, in this chair, save me!” Now, by audacious faith, thank Him. If you were sincere, and you give all you know of you to all you know of Him, just thank Him, and say this, “Thank You for saving me. I don’t deserve it. I receive it by faith like a child. You’re now my Lord and Master. Begin now, this moment, to make me what You want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of You, because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, or you want to pray that prayer and need a little more help, I’m going to ask you when we stand and sing to leave your seat and come forward. There’s something about coming forward that settles it, and seals it,

and shames the devil, and gives glory to God. Standing at the head of each of these aisles will be a man of God to welcome you. In the aisle way up in the balcony, you needn't come all the way down here; there'll be somebody up there in that aisle way if you'll just look for him to welcome you. If you're giving your heart to Jesus, when you come forward you just tell the minister, "I'm trusting Jesus—I'm trusting Jesus."

Now, others of you have already been saved, and you know it and you need a church home. If you believe as we believe, want to be a growing, fellowshiping member of Bellevue Baptist Church, I invite you to come forward, and tell the minister that you'd like to place your membership here, and he'll talk with you, and tell you how you may become a member of Bellevue Baptist Church. Some are coming saying, "I'm trusting Christ." Others are coming saying, "I want to place my membership here." Now, there may be somebody else here, you just have a prayer burden; you just say, "I have a need. I want somebody to pray with me." We'll be glad to do that, just pray with you. Just come and say, "I need somebody to pray with me and to pray for me." Now, don't look around to see what someone else is going to do. You come if no one else comes. You come if all of us do. You do what God would have you to do. No one should leave during the invitation, unless it is an emergency. Let's stand together as we sing.

# Liberated Living

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 7, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 6:1–19**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. There Is Something to Know
- II. There Is Something to Reckon
- III. There Is Something to Yield
  - A. The Dethronement of Sin
  - B. The Enthronement of the Savior
  - C. The Enslavement of the Saint

Conclusion

## Introduction

Amen. His strength is perfect.

Are you ready for some liberated living? That's the title of our message tonight: "Liberated Living." Are you tired of being a slave to the world, the flesh, and the devil? Good news! You can be emancipated. You can be set free. Now, before you say, "I've heard that before," I want you to listen tonight, and I want you to open the Bible, and I want you to learn some of the greatest basic truths of the Christian life that are in the Word of God.

This morning we talked about the passion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And in that passion we talked about His substitutionary death, that He gave Himself for us. That is redemption. Now, tonight, we're going to learn our purpose as related to His passion, and how the One who gave Himself for us gave Himself also to us. Now, if you don't understand that, you don't understand the full meaning of the passion.

Now, look, if you will, here in Romans chapter 6, and look, if you will, in verse 1: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" He's been talking about God's amazing, wonderful grace, and grace that is greater than all of our sin. And, friend, if you live the Christian life, it will be because you have received the grace of God—God's riches at Christ's expense. If you come to God, swaggering to God, if you come as a prince, you'll go away as a beggar. But if you come this morning, as I said, as a beggar, "In my hand no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling," if you come as a beggar, you will go away as a prince.

Now, the Billy Graham of his day was a man named Dwight L. Moody. And if you

have been to seminary or studied the Bible at all, or studied the history of evangelism, you'll know that Dwight L. Moody was one of the greatest Christians and greatest preachers who ever lived. The Moody Bible Institute is named after Dwight L. Moody. But Dwight L. Moody said on one occasion, "I heard a man say, 'I have been 42 years learning three things.'" Moody said to himself, "Well, if it took that man 42 years to learn three things, I'd better listen and hear what they are." And here were those three things that man said that it took him 42 years to learn. Number one: I learned that I could do nothing to earn salvation. Number two: I learned that God does not require me to do anything. Number three: I learned that Jesus Christ did it all. Moody said, "Well, it took that man 42 years to learn that." Well, friend, you don't have to take 42 years to learn those three things. If you're going to be saved, and if you are saved, you are going to be, or you are saved by grace. But now what is Paul saying here in Romans chapter 6 and verse 1? The fact that we're saved by grace, that we could do nothing to save ourselves, God doesn't expect us to do anything, and Christ has done it all is not an excuse for sin or for living in defeat. As a matter of fact, grace is an inducement to live a righteous and a holy life. Would you agree with that? Oh, to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be.

But not only is grace an inducement—listen—to live a holy life, grace also supplies the power to live a holy life. "What shall we save then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." God forbid that any mother's child in this auditorium this evening should be a slave to sin. God's plan for you is victory, constant victory, conscious victory, conspicuous victory. Now, don't answer out loud, but may I ask you this question—are you living day by day in constant victory? Is it conspicuous victory? Can others see it? Is it conscious victory? Do you know that you're living that way?

Now, in the 6th chapter of Romans there are three key words. If you've been around this church very long, you've heard me reference these three words before. But I want to rivet them into your heart. I want to indelibly, by the grace of God, stamp them upon your consciousness that you will never, ever again look at Romans chapter 6 and not have these three words to come to your mind. If you know these three words, if you understand the import of these three words, if you can let these three words come into your heart and mind and understand all that is involved in them, I guarantee you'll live in victory, no ifs, ands, and buts, no stutter, no stammer, no equivocation, no fine print—you will live in victory.

The first word is the word know—K-N-O-W. Look, if you will, in verse 6: "Knowing this—knowing this—that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." That is, we should not be slaves of sin. That's wonderful. All right, there's something to know.

The second word is reckon—R-E-C-K-O-N—reckon. Look in verse 11: “Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.” Now, never mind the rest of that verse. We’ll get to it in a moment. All I’m doing right now is pointing out the words. The first word, know; second word, reckon.

Third word is yield—yield—Y-I-E-L-D. Look now in verse 13: “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members—talking about the members of your body: your eyes, your ears, your feet, your hands—as instruments of righteousness unto God.”

Now, these three things, these three words—know, reckon, and yield—deal with fact, faith, and function. There’s a fact to know. There’s a reckoning to put your faith in. There is a function as you yield.

Now, I want to say this: Confession is good. A man said, “It took me 42 years to learn about salvation by grace.” I was pastoring a church before I learned what I’m going to teach you tonight. Now, I loved God, but I did not know how to live in victory. So lend me your ears. Don’t let the devil cause your mind to run away with you tonight. Rivet your attention on what I’m saying tonight. And let’s break it down into three major categories under the heading of Know, Reckon, and Yield.

## **I. There Is Something to Know**

First of all, there is something to know. And what is it you are to know? You are to know your identification with Jesus who gave Himself for you. Your identification—the key word: identification. Now, look, if you will, beginning in verse 6: “Knowing this...—this is what you’re to know—Knowing this, that our old man...—now, lady, he’s not talking about your husband—that our old man is crucified with him”—did you hear that? Crucified with Him! That when Jesus died, I died with Him. Your old man is crucified with Him—“that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” No longer slaves of sin. “For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him, knowing that Christ, being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”

Now, what is the doctrine of identification? Know your identification with Jesus who gave Himself for you. That means that, when Jesus was crucified, when Jesus had that agony, that passion upon the cross, not only was Christ on that cross, but since He was your substitute, you were on that cross. Since He died for you, the old person you used to be died with Him, and now you have become one with Him in His death. You are no

longer in Adam. Now, you are in Christ. You are now identified with Christ. Everybody in the world is either in Adam or in Christ. Because of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, and your faith in that, when Jesus died, the old man that you used to be died.

Now, think of the significance of it—first of all. First of all, that we have died with Him. Look again in verse 6: “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed.” He died for me. Therefore, His death had my name on it. His death had your name on it. The old person that you were was nailed to the cross with Jesus Christ. You see, Calvary not only deals—listen carefully now—Calvary not only deals with the sin—now, listen—it also deals with the sinner. You see, if all He did was to forgive my sin and doesn’t deal with me, He has not delivered me from my worse enemy. Hello. Are you listening? Calvary not only deals with the sin; Calvary deals with the sinner. We were crucified with the Lord Jesus Christ. An ancillary verse that makes this clear is Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” You see, Adrian was nailed to that cross when Jesus was nailed there. Why? Because He was taking my place. Again, His death was for me. It had my name on it.

I love to tell the story of one of the former pastors of our church, a great man I loved and admired so very much, Dr. Robert G. Lee. Dr. Lee visited Israel. He was so in anticipation of going there. And the place that Dr. Lee wanted to see was Calvary. He’d never been to the Holy Land before. And he stood there with a little group at Calvary, and the guide was talking. And then the guide asked a question, “Have any of us ever been here before?” Dr. Lee lifted his hand. He said, “When were you here, sir?” He said, “2,000 years ago”—“2,000 years ago.” What did he mean? He meant that when Jesus died upon that cross, he was there, and so were you. He was nailed up to that cross for you, and the old man that you used to be was crucified with Him. Now, what does that mean? “He that is dead is freed from sin.” Sin has no more dominion over him.

Now, if a criminal is guilty—I mean guilty, adjudicated guilty, proven to be guilty, prima facie evidence, he is guilty and he’s in jail waiting for the crime to be sentenced, and the man dies in jail—what happens? Forget it. Case closed. It’s over. You can’t prosecute a dead man, can you?

Do you remember in the Whitewater investigation, James McDougal over in Arkansas, the man that they thought they had some things against? And they were investigating James McDougal. But one thing happened. James McDougal died in jail, or died in incarceration somehow. Whether he was in jail or not, I’m not quite certain. But when he died, it’s over—it’s over. Case closed. Friend, I don’t know what charges the devil has against you, but I can tell you one thing. When you died upon Calvary, the

case is closed. Case is closed. Death has no more dominion over a dead man.

Suppose a man is a slave, he's owned by someone. And slavery, as it was practiced in the United States, was unspeakably immoral. But suppose a man had a slave. And the slave tells him when to go to bed, or the master tells him when to go to bed, when to get up, what to eat, how to dress, what to do, where to go, where to come. And then the slave dies. What then can his master do? Nothing. He is dead.

You're no longer Satan's slave because of Calvary. Now, you have to understand that. You see, the death of Jesus Christ changed that. We have been crucified with Christ.

Now, not only did we die with Him, but—now, listen—we were also buried with Him. Look now in verses 3 and 4: “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him—underscore that—we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection.” Buried with Him—not only have you died with Jesus, but you were buried with Jesus.

Did you know there is an emphasis in the Bible upon the burial of Jesus Christ? Did you know that it's part of the gospel? Put in your margin an ancillary verse—1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 3 through 4. Paul is talking about the gospel, and he says, “For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received”—and when he says “first of all,” he doesn't mean first in order. He means of first importance. This is number one. This is priority, first of all—“how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures—that's what I preached this morning—and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” The burial of Jesus Christ is part of the gospel. Not only did His death have your name on it; His burial had your name on it. You see, He died for you. And the old man that you used to be died when He died for you, and now you are buried with Him.

In Bible times, the Jews put the dead quickly out of sight. They buried the dead. They did not embalm them as we embalm today and keep them around. They were quickly buried. Now, that's what baptism symbolizes—that the old person you used to be is no longer. You have been buried in a liquid tomb and your sins are in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Now, listen. When you die with Christ, the devil would love to haunt you with the bones of your old life. But you need to understand that he can't do that. You not only have died with Christ; you've been buried with Christ. And when the devil comes looking for the old Adrian, I can say, “He's not here.” “Well, where is he?” “He's buried. Weren't you there at his funeral?” You see, my funeral was my baptism. I hope

you've had a funeral. I hope you have been baptized by immersion—dead and buried. We are buried with Him by baptism unto death.

Now, look again. Not only did we die with Jesus, not only are we buried with Jesus and our sins, and the old man in the grave of God's forgetfulness, but, thirdly—listen—hallelujah, we're raised with Him. Look again in verses 4 and 5: "Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also...—don't miss that; underscore it—we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection."

Now, when He died, I died. When He was buried, I was buried. But I'm not with Him in the grave, because He's no longer in the grave. He came up out of the tomb. He has the life that the grave cannot keep, and He has given that life to me, and I am a new person. Now, that's the significance of it.

What is the symbolism of it? The symbolism of it is baptism. Look again in verses 3 and 4: "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."

What is baptism? It is a picture of a death, a burial, and resurrection. That's the reason it's by immersion. That's the reason we put this baptistry up there. Now, some people call sprinkling baptism, but the very Greek word, *baptizo*, means to dip, to immerse. If I were to die and you come up here and take the vital signs, and you say, "Well, he died preaching"—and, by the way, that would be a good way to die—and you take my vital signs, and Ken says, "He's dead," and Jim says, "He's dead," and Mark says, "He's dead," well, you say, "Well, we've got to bury the old preacher." And you took me out to the graveyard, or should I say cemetery, and you sprinkle a few grains of sands on my head, and leave me out there to bake in the sun, that wouldn't be nice. Put me under. Bury me in the good, clean earth. Make sure I'm dead. Don't just trust these three. Friend, baptism pictures a burial. That's the reason why I believe in baptism by immersion. And, by the way, if you were the devil and wanted to remove any message from the church, what would it be? The gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Every time somebody goes into that watery grave, every time somebody is baptized, they picture the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. "This is the gospel that we preached unto you; that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried and He raised again the third day." That, my friend, is the gospel truth. That's the gospel. And that's the picture of the gospel. That is the

symbolism of it. Now, that doesn't save you. You could be baptized so many times the tadpoles have your social security number and not be saved. Water, whether a spoonful or a tankful, can't take the sin out of your heart, out of your life, but it is a symbol of it. And I'm proud of the symbol, grateful, for it is, I guess, the best word is going to be used.

I may have told you about a man who used to work for our denomination, took his family to Washington to the Smithsonian. They went in that section of the Smithsonian Institute, the museum of American history, where the first ladies of our country have waxed figures there dressed in their beautiful gowns, a special gown maybe worn at a state dinner or the inauguration, or something like that. This was back when Lyndon Johnson was the President of the United States. And Lady Bird Johnson was being featured. They had just put the waxed figure of Lady Bird Johnson there. And this man and his children were there in the Smithsonian looking at Lady Bird Johnson, at least the waxed figure. And a lady came up alongside of them and began to talk, and said, "Well, how do you like it? What do you think?" and so forth. And they turned to look. Would you believe, it was Lady Bird. They said, "Wow, wait till we get home." And she was so nice to them. They talked and discussed, and they had their pictures made. They said, "This is the greatest thing. We never dreamed this would happen to us." But while they were talking, another photographer came up, and he had all these things strapped around him. You know how these photographers are. They've got all this stuff. And he came up and he said to them, "People, would you mind standing aside. I want to get a picture of Lady Bird." And so the wife of the President stepped aside, and he took a picture of that waxed figurine, and there she was standing right there. You think about it. Here he missed the reality and just centered on the symbol. Don't do that with baptism. Now, baptism is a wonderful symbol, but that's all it is. Jesus is the reality. I hope you'll understand that. But, you see, what is the significance of this? That I died with Jesus, I was buried with Jesus, I have been raised with Jesus. The symbol of it is baptism.

Now, folks, remember that the Lord's Supper speaks about Jesus' death for us. Baptism speaks of our death with Him. Those are two very vital things that God has put into the church.

Now, here's the question that you're asking if you're a thinking person. You're saying, "Okay, Pastor, okay, theologically I know that. I know that when He died, I died; when He was buried, I was buried; when He arose, I arose. But now, Pastor, I want to ask you a question. If I have been crucified with Christ, why won't my old man lie down? Why won't he be still? Why am I having so much trouble with the old person I used to be, if I have been crucified with Christ, if I've been buried with Christ? If I've been raised

with Christ, why, tell me why, is my old man giving me so much trouble? Because you haven't gone to the next step.

## **II. There Is Something to Reckon**

First of all, there's something to know. Now, if you don't know it, you can't go any further. You've got to know it. It is a F-A-C-T—fact. But not only is there something to know; secondly, there is something to reckon. Now, what you are to know is your identification with Christ. What you reckon is your appropriation—not only your identification, but your appropriation of Jesus who gave Himself for you. Now, folks, you can know it and know it and know it, and you need to know it; but you must appropriate it. Look now in Romans 6, verse 11: “Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin...”—he said know it, but now reckon it—“reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ, our Lord.” Remember our words? First word: know. The second word is reckon. Now, let's talk about that word reckon.

Reckon is a bookkeeping term. It does not mean to think or to feel or to guess, but it speaks of something that you can count on, something that is not a matter of feeling, but a matter of fact. It is something you can calculate on. It is not a matter of closing your eyes and pretending. It is not a matter of clenching your fists and trying to do better. Now, listen carefully. Reckoning is acting on faith what you know to be a fact. First is fact, and then faith. Faith must always be in fact. The fact is that Christ died for you, and you died with Him. Now, you must reckon on it. You say, “Well, what does that mean to reckon?” Well, if you're saved, you already know how to reckon. That's how you got saved. You believe that Jesus Christ died for your cross, and you put your faith where God put your sins: on Jesus. You said, “Lord Jesus, You died for me. You died to forgive me. I trust You. Thank You. Save me. Thank You. I am saved.” Were you there when it happened? Did you see it with your eyes? No. But you know it to be true, and you reckoned on it for salvation. Now, in the same way, you reckon for sanctification—the same way. As you receive the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in him. You're not told to feel it. You're not even told really to understand it. You are told to reckon on it.

I've read of a woman one day who woke up, and I've done the same thing. Sometimes when your sleep is especially sweet, you close your eyes and you wake up and the whole night has gone through. I mean, just like that. You think, it couldn't be morning. I just laid down. And the alarm clock goes off. She said, “It can't be six in the morning. It just can't be.” But she got up and looked at the clock. It said 6 a.m. She looked at another clock, and it said 6 a.m. She opened the window and the sun was coming up. Now, she said, “Okay, it's six.” Now, she would have been quite foolish to go

against every clock in the house and the sun, moon, and stars, right? I mean, there are the facts—there are the facts. Now, it doesn't matter how she felt. It doesn't matter what she thought. It doesn't matter whether she says it doesn't feel like it. That has nothing to do with it. Reckoning does not deal with feeling. It deals with F-A-C-T—fact. It is a fact that you were crucified with Christ. It is a fact that you were buried with Christ. It is a fact that you've been raised with Christ. Know it and then reckon on it. Remember that's a bookkeeping term. That means to count on this fact by faith. I must reckon that the old Adrian is dead; dead to his plans to his own wishes and to his own will. And I must daily reckon that Jesus Christ is alive and well in me.

Put these verses down, ancillary verses—Colossians 3, verses 3 through 5: “For ye are dead”—now, he doesn't say you could be, might be: you are dead. That is your old person. You're dead—“and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.” Now, I'm dead. I'm dead. Right? Right. That's what he said. Well, now look at the next verse: “Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth...”—that means put them to death. Well, I thought I was dead. You see, what he's talking about here now, it's not double talk. He is talking about reckoning what you know to be true. He is talking about appropriating what is already a fact. Now, reckon it, appropriate it—“Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth—talking about your members: your eyes, your hands, your feet, your tongue—Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness (which is idolatry).” Put these things to death. You don't have to obey the old man, because that old man is dead.

Dr. Stephen Olford, a beloved member of our church, said, “There is no demand upon your life that God places upon you that is not really a demand upon the Jesus Christ who lives in you.” Jesus Christ is alive in you. You are alive with Him. You must reckon it to be true.

### **III. There Is Something to Yield**

Third thing. Third word. Are you following me? Say, “Yes, Pastor.” Okay now, listen. First of all, there's something to know. This is theological fact. Secondly, there is something to reckon. Now, thirdly, there's something to yield. Yielding deals not with identification or appropriation, but now, thank God, it deals with emancipation, being set free. Something to yield, and that is your emancipation through Jesus who lives His life in you.

Now, let's look in verses 12 through 13: “Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye—there's our word—

your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield—there’s our word again—yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as the instruments of righteousness unto God.” Yield yourself to God. Yield. Now, look in verse 16: “Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves—here’s the word—servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” Now, look in verse 19: “I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh; for as ye have yielded you members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity, unto iniquity; and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now—here’s the word—yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness.” Now, here’s the thing. When He died for you, that is imputed righteousness. When you yield to Him, that is imparted and practical righteousness. It cannot be done without Him. He will not do it without you.

#### A. **The Dethronement of Sin**

Now, we told you how to reckon. Now, how do you yield? What does it mean to yield? First of all, there must be the dethronement of sin. You’re making notes, write it down: the dethronement of sin. Look now in verses 12 and 13: “Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body...”—you don’t have to let sin have its way. You don’t have to. Don’t let it do it—“Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body”—don’t let sin be on the throne. Dethrone sin. There is the dethronement of sin—“that ye should obey it in the lust thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourself unto God, as those who are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” What does this mean? Let not sin reign. You see, it’s up to you. You have the right, you have the authority, to impeach sin. You have the authority to dethrone sin. You have the authority to evict sin. You can choose. You can say, “Satan, you are a liar. I don’t belong to you. I’m no longer your slave. The person I used to be is dead and buried with Christ, and I have resurrection life. Therefore, Satan, you are an imposter. You have no right nor authority in my life, and I will no longer allow these members of mine to be your tools.”

Now, listen to me, folks. Satan hopes that you’re not listening right now. Satan hopes that your mind is gathering wool right now. Or Satan hopes, if you hear it, that you will not believe it. He has no authority in your life. You don’t have to let him. Let not sin reign in your body. You don’t have to do it.

There was a woman who thought it would be economically feasible if she let a man that she was not married to move into her apartment. She was a widow, living on an annuity and a pension, or whatever. She didn’t have much. She had an apartment. And the man said, “Look, we’re not married, but we can live together. We don’t have to live

as husband and wife. We can just share this apartment. Economically, it'll work out. We can have some companionship." Foolishly, she allowed him to move in. Her conscience began to smite her. Not only was her conscience smiting her, but she realized it was a foolish thing. He was obnoxious and rude. He wasn't carrying his part of the bargain anyway. She made a bad decision.

She said, "I don't want to do this anymore. I want you to move out." He said, "I'm not moving out. You invited me in here. I have a right to be here, and I am not going to leave." She said, "Please leave." Said, "I'm not going to do it." She said, "I command you to leave." He said, "No, I'm not leaving." She didn't know what to do. She went to a lawyer. The lawyer took her to a judge. They got a restraining order from this man, an order of eviction that said he had to leave, a court order. She took that in her hand, and she went back to him and said, "Now, you see this? You're going to go." He said, "I'm not leaving." She said, "You are leaving or I'm bringing the law in." And he left. He left.

Now, what did she do? She did the same thing you're going have to do to Satan. You've been saying you've given Satan a place in your life. You've been saying, "Now, here, Satan, you and I have got some little cozy deal here. I've compromised here and I've compromised there." And then you finally say, "Now, Satan, I'm sick of it. I'm tired of it. I don't want you in here anymore!"

He says, "I'm not going!"

"Oh, Satan, please."

"I'm not going!"

"Satan, I don't want you in my life. I choose against you."

"I'm not going!"

Then, friend, you take God's court order and you say, "Satan, in the name of Jesus Christ, you're out of here." And, friend, he'll leave. What I'm saying is this: You don't have to let him. You have authority.

## **B. The Enthronement of the Savior**

There must be the dethronement of sin. But that's not enough. There must be the enthronement of the Savior. Look now in verse 13: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as the instruments of righteousness unto God." That is, you yield to God.

Now, what does it mean to yield? It may interest you to know that in Romans chapter 12 and verse 1 this same word is used, and it's translated there present. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." The word

present is the same word in the Greek as the word yield, and it means to turn something over to another. You present yourself to God. Now, when you kick Satan out, you dethrone sin, then you enthrone Jesus. Nature abhors a vacuum. And you simply enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, when self and Satan is on the throne, Christ is on the cross; but when self is on the cross, Christ is on the throne. You need to enthrone Christ. You need to yield to Him. It means just to turn it over to Him. And you do that consciously as you yield to the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **C. The Enslavement of the Saint**

Now, look. There must be—now, we’re talking about yielding—there must be the dethronement of sin. There must be the enthronement of the Savior. And then—now, you may not like this—but the enslavement of the saint. I used the word enslavement purposefully. Listen to this now. Look in verses 17 and 18: “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin”—and the word here for servant literally means slave. You were the slaves of sin—“but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you.” And I hope you’re listening and will obey from your heart. “Being, then, made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” And that word servant literally means bond slave. You became a bond slave. “Well,” you say, “I thought I was going to be free?” No. You become a slave to Jesus Christ. You died with Him. You were buried with Him. You rose with Him. Your life is with Him, and you are forever bound to Him as a bond slave of the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “I don’t want enslavement.” Friend, this enslavement brings liberty.

Let me tell you what you get when you become a slave of Jesus, and I’ll be finished. First of all, you get a new freedom. Look in verse 18: “Being, then, made free from sin”—free from sin. Free! Free! Free from sin!—“ye became the slaves of righteousness.” Set free from the devil. Now, if you don’t want to be set free, I can’t help you. But if you’re saying, “Adrian, I would like to live in victory,” if there is something you will know, reckon, and yield, then you will see a new freedom. And not only will there be a new freedom, it will show up as a new faithfulness. Notice verse 19: “for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and unto iniquity; even now yield your members servants to righteousness, unto holiness.”

How would you like to be righteous and holy in a practical way? There’s a new freedom. There’ll be a new faithfulness. And it follows, as night follows day, if there’s a new freedom and a new faithfulness, there will be a new fruitfulness. Look in verse 22: “But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness.”

Would you like to have a fruitful life? Would you? Would you like to be free from

Satan? Would you like to be faithful to God? Would you like to be fruitful in the things of God? Then yield. Listen. When temptation comes, there's only one thing to do, and it is to yield; and not to sin, but to Jesus—to yield. Present yourself. Just say, 'Here I am.'

Folks, is this making sense to you? Are you listening to this? Something to know, something to reckon, and something to yield. Fact: you know it. Faith: you reckon it. Yield: you function that way. And as you yield yourself to Him now, the fact that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross, what good is that to you, so far as your daily walk is concerned, if you don't bring it into practice?

## Conclusion

You see, thank God for His passion, but what about our purpose? How do we react to what He did on the cross? How does that apply to us?

Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and that freed the slaves, and I'm grateful for it. But did you know the historians tell us there were some slaves who continued to live in slavery? They stayed on the plantation. Do you know why? Some of them never even heard about the Emancipation Proclamation. Others of them heard it but they only heard it intellectually. They couldn't reckon it to be true. They couldn't believe that it was possible. Sadly and tragically, they continued because it could not get into their consciousness that they were indeed free. And others who heard it and knew it to be true still failed to act upon it to dethrone the old master and say, "I no longer belong to you. You have no right nor authority in my life."

I'm telling you, the devil does not want you to hear what I preached tonight. He doesn't want you to hear it. He doesn't want you to understand it. He does not want you to act upon it. He wants you to hear it as a sermon until you get to Chili's or El Chico, or wherever you're going. It's gone.

Would you ask God the Holy Spirit to rivet this into your heart? And God wants you to live, blessed friend, in victory. And God's people said amen.

Now, let's pray. You pray for a moment and ask God to teach you this, as I'm praying, because, friend, I am a fellow pilgrim, and I am still, after all of these years, still learning fully the truth that I am preaching tonight. And none in this building has arrived ultimately. Something to know, something to reckon, and something to yield to. The dethronement of Satan, the enthronement of the Savior, and the enslavement of the saints.

Lord Jesus, I belong to You. And now I have a new freedom, a new faithfulness, and a new fruitfulness. Just pray for a moment.

Now, Father, what these are praying for themselves, doubtless, I'm praying for my own heart. Forbid, Lord, that I should preach something I do not believe nor be unwilling

to practice. Lord, as a church, help us, dear Lord, to practice practical holiness because of our identification with You. Thank You, Lord Jesus, that You gave Yourself for us that You might give Yourself to you that You might live Your life through us. In Your holy name. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you've never openly, publicly received Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, tonight is a wonderful time for you to do that. He has died for you. His death had your name on it. Your sin debt has already been paid, but that does not apply to you. It is not put on your account until you receive it. To the contrary, if you refuse it, it only increases your judgment. But if you will receive Him by faith, not by feeling, not by emotionalism—that's fine if you have feeling and emotions, I'm not against that—but it goes far beyond that. If you will trust Christ with a simple, childlike faith, and say, "Lord, I believe Your Word; Jesus, You died for me, and tonight I'm coming over on Your side, tonight I'm receiving You as my Lord and Savior and Master and Friend and God," I want you, when we stand and sing in a moment, to leave your seat and come forward, and just tell the minister, "I'm trusting Jesus," or, "I need to be saved," or, "I'm giving my heart to Christ." Say it however you want to say it. I think he'll know what you mean. And we'll take a Bible and guide you in this decision and seal it in prayer, and you can go away tonight a child of God. There'll be someone at the head of each of these aisles to receive those of you who will be coming forward.

Others of you tonight need a church home. I invite you to be a part of Bellevue. If you're saved, if you believe as we believe and want to be a growing Christian—not a perfect Christian; we don't have perfect Christians in this church, not a one, including the pastor—but if you want to be a growing Christian, I invite you to the Bellevue fellowship. Every member, every Christian ought to be a member of a local New Testament church. You come down the aisle and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here." And we'll tell you how you may become a member of this church.

Others in the place tonight have made some decisions in your heart. And you don't have to do it, but it might impress it upon your memory and psyche and honor God if you just come and kneel here at the front. These altar benches go all the way across. Or you can use the steps. And don't even go to a minister. Just go kneel and say, "God, this is symbolizing what I've done in my heart. I just want to do business with You. And somehow, Lord, I want to memorialize it by coming openly and publicly and getting on my knees." Now, you don't have to do it that way. God knows your heart. You can do the same thing in your seat. But I've found sometimes it does good just to get on our knees. I don't know what there is in all that, but I've been around long enough to know that sometimes that's a blessing.

Some are coming, saying to the minister, “I’m trusting Jesus.” Now, friend, if that’s what you need to do, that’s number one: do that. Others may need to come and say, “I want to place my membership here.” Others may just want to come, kneel and pray, and go back to their seat.

Let’s stand together as we sing.

# The Conquering Christian

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 10, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 6:1–22

*“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”*

ROMANS 6:14

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Comprehension
  - A. We Died with Christ
  - B. We Were Buried with Christ
  - C. We Have Been Raised with Christ
- II. Calculation
- III. Cooperation
  - A. How to Cooperate with the Lord
    - 1. The Dethronement of Sin
    - 2. The Enthronement of the Savior
  - B. The Results of the Emancipation from Sin
    - 1. A New Freedom
    - 2. A New Faithfulness
    - 3. A New Fruitfulness

Conclusion

## Introduction

Let me just say something here even before we read the scripture this evening—that you were created to be a servant. Man was created to serve. He must have a master. He cannot serve two, but he must serve one. And, you’re going to either serve Christ or the devil, but you will serve. Man must have a master.

Have you ever thought that mankind in its fallen state is really not on the plane with the animals but, in a real sense, he’s lower than the animals? Even the animals follow their master, and even the animals obey the Lord. You can read there in the Bible of how, when the Lord Jesus Christ was here on the earth, even the animals obeyed Him. When He rode into Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday on the back of that wild Syrian ass, *“whereon never [a] man [had ridden],”* (Mark 11:2) that untamed colt, why, it was as docile as a little lamb as the Lord Jesus rode upon him.

The Lord Jesus needed money to pay His taxes. He told Peter to go cast a hook in the sea, and He had a particular fish there that had already swum...swam around—I guess that's a word: *swum*. Is that a word?—and had picked up a coin that had, evidently, fallen out of the pocket of some hapless fisherman, and there was a coin in his mouth. Now, that fish went like a guided fish, like a submarine, right to that particular hook.

The Lord Jesus told Simon Peter, *“Before the cock crow, [you’ll] deny me thrice,”* (Matthew 26:34, 75; Luke 22:61) and that rooster had lock-beak or lockjaw or whatever it is until that particular moment when he would crow. I’m trying to say that man who doesn’t serve the Lord is really lower than an animal, but our Lord has created us to serve Him. Now remember, no man can serve two masters; he must serve one. And, you’re either going to be a servant of sin or you’re going to be a servant of the Lord Jesus.

Now, having said that, let’s look here in Romans 6, and I want to read, as we begin our study tonight, the first ten verses: *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?”* (Romans 6:1) Now, there are so many people who talk about the fact that we’re saved by grace, that they just live in sin, and they say, “Well, it doesn’t really make any difference how I live. I’m saved by grace.” Anybody who lives that way is a disgrace to grace—a disgrace to grace. *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid”*—and God forbid that any member of Bellevue Baptist Church should continue in sin, amen? God forbid it. God forbid that you, sir; or me; or you, sir; or you, lady, should continue in sin—*“God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, continue any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin”*—now, you’re not to serve sin. You’re to be a servant, but you’re not to serve sin—*“For he that is dead is [emancipated; he is] freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.”* (Romans 6:1–10)

Now, there are three key words that I have already pointed out to you in this chapter. I pointed them out this morning. I want to just point them out again before I get started in this message so that you’ll have these three key words in mind. Look in chapter 6:6 and underscore the verb *knowing*—*knowing*. (Romans 6:6) Just underscore that. All

right, that's the first key word. And then, secondly, in chapter 6:11, underscore the word *reckon*. (Romans 6:11) That's the second key word—*reckon*. And then, in chapter 6:12, if you would, please, underscore the word—or, excuse me, verse 13—underscore the word *yield*: *“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead.”* (Romans 6:13) Now, this matter of living victorious, therefore, is a matter, number one, of knowing—that is, comprehension. There's something you're going to have to comprehend. And then, it's a matter of reckoning—calculation. And then, thirdly, it is a matter of yielding—cooperation. Now, those are the things that are necessary if we are to live this kind of victorious life.

## I. Comprehension

First of all, there must be a comprehension of it. You must know it. That's the reason why I'm preaching on it tonight. That's why Paul wrote it here. There's something that you need to know, and what you need to know is the wonderful, marvelous, biblical doctrine of identification. That is, we are identified with the Lord Jesus Christ in His death, in His burial, and in His resurrection. We have become one with Him. That is, we have become united with Him, one with Him, because He became one with us.

### A. We Died with Christ

Now, the doctrine of substitution is that He died for me. The doctrine of identification is that I died with Him. Galatians 2:20: *“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.”* (Galatians 2:20) Now, we hear a lot of people who talk about crucifying themselves. I hear people say, “Well, you're just got to crucify yourself.” Well, friend, may I submit to you that's absurd? How are you going to crucify yourself? You may hang yourself, shoot yourself, but you'll never crucify yourself. About the best you'll ever do is get one hand nailed up, amen? You're not going to crucify yourself, you see, and you don't need to crucify yourself. You've already been crucified. What you need to do is to comprehend that it's already taken place. *“I am crucified with Christ.”* (Galatians 2:20) Not will be, need to be, or need to crucify myself—I'm crucified with Christ. It is an accomplished fact. You have been crucified. When Jesus died, you died. You died with Him.

Let me point that out. Look in verse 3: *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his”—what?—“death?”* (Romans 6:3) All right, look in verse 6: *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him.”* (Romans 6:6) Not shall be—is already done. Look again in verse 7: *“For he that is dead is freed from sin.”* (Romans 6:7) Friend, you've been baptized into His death. You were crucified with Him. And, because you're dead, you are free from sin.

Now, His death had your name on it. I told you about Dr. Lee who went to the place

called Calvary the first time he visited the Holy Land. There was a man up there giving a lecture—said, “This is Calvary, and this is where our Lord was crucified.” And, he said, “Anybody ever been here before?” And, Dr. Lee said, “Yeah, I’ve been here.” He said, “Well, when?” He said, “Two thousand years ago,” and that’s true—it’s true. Two thousand years ago he was there; and so was I, and so were you, because when Jesus died, we died. We were in Christ. We were there when they crucified our Lord. Not only did we help crucify Him—that’s the sad part of it—but the glorious part of it is that we died with Him. He died for us.

### **B. We Were Buried with Christ**

But, not only did we die with Him; we were also buried with Him. Look in verse 4: *“Therefore we are buried with him”—“we are buried with him”—“by baptism into death.”* (Romans 6:4) Now, the Bible puts a great emphasis upon the burial of Jesus. Some people think that’s incidental, but if you’ll read 1 Corinthians 15, the Bible says, *“[This is] the gospel [that we] preached unto you...how that Christ died for our sins...that he was buried...that he rose again the third day.”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–4) Did you know that the burial of Christ is part of the gospel? See, not only did we die with Him; friend, we were buried with Him.

Well, what’s the significance? Why does the Bible put this emphasis upon the burial of Jesus Christ? Well, in biblical times—and it’s not without significance that we have a nice Jewish rhythm tonight—that the Jewish people, when someone would die, they put the dead quickly out of sight. They buried the dead quickly. Now, the old man, therefore, not only has died, but that old man is buried. Now, that’s wonderful to know that the old Adrian, the one I used to be, not only has been put to death, but he’s been put out of the way; he has been buried. And, I don’t have to let the devil intimidate me with the bones of my old life. I mean, I don’t have to be haunted by the ghost of guilt. Not only did Jesus die, but Jesus was buried. And friend, we’re buried, and we’re going to show you in a moment how baptism is a symbol of our death with Christ, but primarily our burial with Christ.

You know, there are some churches—they mean well. They want to have better Christians; and so, they say, “We’re not going to baptize a person right away. We’re going to keep him around and put him through a class, and so forth, and if they pass that class after a month or six months or a year, then they show themselves worthy—we’re going to baptize them.” Well, that sounds pretty good, but friend, would you take a corpse and keep it around for a year to see if it’s dead? Now listen, you don’t do that—you don’t do that. As a matter of fact, you study baptism in the Bible... When was it? The Day of Pentecost—the same day—baptized about three thousand. The Philippian jailor was baptized the same night. The Ethiopian eunuch said, *“See, [here’s] water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”* (Acts 8:36) Baptized immediately. Why? Because

when someone dies, you take that body—and especially in biblical times—and get it out of the way. And, if the devil ever comes looking for the old Adrian, I can just say, “He’s dead.” “Well,” he says, “show me the corpse.” I said, “I can’t see it. It’s put out of the way. It’s buried. It’s gone, and you’re not going to drag it out and mock me over it.” I want to tell you—thank God! Hallelujah!—that old life not only is killed but put away. Amen. Don’t go fishing around for the bones. God has taken that old life, and we are buried with Christ.

### C. We Have Been Raised with Christ

But now, listen, not only have we died with Him, not only were we buried with Him, but, correspondingly and gloriously, we have been raised with Him. Look again in verse 4: *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall [also] be...in the likeness of his resurrection.”* (Romans 6:4–5) You see, I’m not still with Jesus in the tomb. He has a life that the grave could not keep, and, therefore, I have that life by my union and communion with Him—the same kind of life. When He died, I died. When He was buried, I was buried. When He arose, I arose. Now, this is a marvelous doctrine. It is the doctrine of my identification with the Lord Jesus.

Now, it is symbolized by baptism—water baptism. Look again in verses 3–4: *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:3–4) Now, that’s the reason that baptism in the Bible is by immersion—total immersion. You cannot baptize people by pouring water on them or sprinkling them any more than you could bury a man with a few grains of sand. You can’t baptize him with a few drops of water.

You say, “Well, it doesn’t make all that much difference.” Folks, it makes a tremendous amount of difference. You see, the Lord Jesus gave His Great Commission, and what is it? *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: [And] teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have”—what’s that next word?—“commanded you.”* (Matthew 28:19–20) Now, who are you to say that doesn’t make any difference? *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”* (Matthew 28:19)

Well, you say, “Well, then it doesn’t make any difference how you do it.” Well, friend, why do you think that Jesus took all of the difficulty to go all the way from the place where He went, from Nazareth, out into the wilderness there by the River Jordan to be baptized if it doesn’t make any difference how you’re baptized? Friend, listen, there’s

only one kind of Bible water baptism: it is by immersion. I say this with no fear of contradiction. I'm not trying to swagger about it; I'm not trying to boast about it. Baptists didn't think it up. It's not a Baptist doctrine; it's a Bible doctrine. And, anybody who just wants to obey the Bible is going to have to come in line with this matter of baptism by immersion because it pictures clearly and plainly the burial and resurrection of our dear Savior.

Now, we have two ordinances in the Church that the Bible has commanded us to keep: one is the Lord's Supper and the other is baptism. The Lord's Supper pictures Christ's death for the believer. *"This is my body, which is broken for you...this cup is the new testament in my blood: [which is shed for you]."* (1 Corinthians 11:24–25) The Lord's Supper represents Christ's death for the believer. Baptism represents Christ's death with the believer and the believer's death with Christ. Now listen, baptism—excuse me, the Lord's Supper: Christ for the believer. Baptism—the believer with Christ. And, when you get both of them together, you see such a marvelously wonderful picture of what the gospel is all about.

I believe the devil is behind this idea of not having people baptized by immersion. I'll tell you why: the devil doesn't care what I preach as long as I don't preach the gospel. Is that right? He doesn't care what he preach. I mean, I can preach against sin until I'm blue in the face. I can preach against communism, liquor, pornography; he'll even help me to do it as long as I leave out the gospel. Now, what is the gospel? The gospel is that *"Christ died for our sins...that he was buried...that he [was raised] again the third day."* (1 Corinthians 15:3–4) That's what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15. That's the gospel. Now, the thing that symbolizes the gospel more than anything else is baptism, and that's the reason why we have that baptistery right there raised up in the center. Some churches have moved the baptistery off to the side. I like it right there in the center. And, some people have made a little fount or a little thing where they take a rose petal and sprinkle a little water on somebody's head. You don't—you don't—picture a death, burial, and resurrection that way. Friend, the devil would love to get that symbolism out of the Church—the symbolism of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. When He died, we died. When He was buried, we were buried. When He arose, we arose. And so, that baptistery, as I've already told you, is a liquid tomb, and it shows that the old Adrian is dead. And, when the devil comes to me and says, "Adrian, I want you to do this or that," I can say to him, "I don't have to do that. I'm no longer your servant. The servant you used to have named Adrian is dead. Didn't you know that? Why, he was buried, and you have no more control over him. You have no right in his life. You have no rule in his life. You have no authority in his life. And, he owes you absolutely nothing. Your servant is dead!"

Now, you must know this. So, it must be, friend, a matter—it must be a matter of

your knowledge. You must—you must—know it. You must understand it. Look in verse 6: *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him.”* (Romans 6:6) It is a matter of comprehension. Now, you’ve got to comprehend, and only God the Holy Spirit can really help you comprehend it. You can get the facts tonight, but one of these days the Holy Spirit’s going to turn the light on in your soul, and you’re going to say, “You know, that’s really true. When Jesus died, I died. And, when He was buried, I was buried. And, when He arose, I arose. And now, I share a new life with my wonderful Lord.” Now, you say, “Well, Brother Rogers, I comprehend it, and I know I’m dead. But, the only problem is the old man that’s dead won’t lie down. I mean, he’s just that rascal. Even though I mentally believe it, he’s the walking dead and he’s doing all kinds of things. And so, how am I going to get him to lie down in that coffin and be still, because he just won’t do it?” Well, you’ve only come one-third of the way, and one-third of the way is to know it. That’s the comprehension.

## II. Calculation

But, along with the comprehension there has to come a calculation. Now, once you know it, then you have to calculate it. You have to start reckoning upon it. Look in verse 13—excuse me, look, if you will, in verse 11 now, where we left off reading. *“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (Romans 6:11) Now, to *reckon* does not mean “to think.” It does not mean “to guess.” It is a bookkeeping term. As I told you this morning, it’s the kind of reckoning that a man does that—it’s literally what it means when a man adds up figures and comes to the bottom line, and he gets a balance and he says, “That’s the balance. That’s the reckoning that I’ve done.” And, emotions have nothing to do with it. It’s not a matter of feelings. It’s not a matter of fable. It’s not a matter of “hope so,” “wish so,” “maybe so.” It is a fact. And, as that television ad says, “Bank on it”—“Bank on it.” Reckon it to be so. You can calculate it to be so. That’s what the word *reckon* means.

Now reckoning, as I told you this morning, is not just closing your eyes and pretending. Faith is not, as a little boy said, “believing what you know ain’t so.” This is a fact, and you need to reckon on it. You say, “Well, I don’t think I know how to reckon.” Well, you already have reckoned if you’re saved. I mean, how did you get saved? You reckoned to be saved from the penalty of sin. You said, “I believe Jesus Christ died to take away my sin debt and the penalty of sin,” and you said, “All right, I believe on Him. I trust Him for salvation,” right? You reckoned on what He did. Now friend, just as you reckoned on Jesus Christ to save you from the penalty of sin, you can also reckon on Jesus Christ to save you from the power of sin, see. How did you begin the Christian life? By faith. How did you receive the Lord? By faith. Now, the scripture says, “As we receive the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” (Colossians 2:6) You were saved by faith so if you

begin to walk by faith, you'll learn this victory.

You see, you reckoned on Him for salvation; now you need to reckon on Him for sanctification the same way—the same act of faith. You know, so many people began in the Spirit, and then they want to end in the flesh. They know that they're saved by trusting Christ, but then they think that they live the Christian life by their effort. Now friend, you need to quit trying and start trusting. It is true in salvation and it is true in sanctification that the matter of victory is a matter of reckoning. It is a matter of putting your faith where God says the facts are.

Now, how you feel about it really doesn't make much difference. You say, "Well, Brother Rogers, I really don't feel dead to sin. I mean, really, I feel all kinds of things stirring in me. I just don't feel that my old man was crucified. I know the Bible says it, but honest to goodness, Brother Rogers, if you just knew what's in me..." Well, all right. Now listen, if you did not have the danger of that old life stirring around in you, or at least your believing the wrong way, Paul never would have warned us and Paul never would have instructed us. So, what you have is the normal feeling of a person who has not yet learned how to reckon. And, you're trying to live by feeling, and that's your mistake.

Now, have you ever gone to sleep at nighttime and you slept so quickly—maybe you slept so soundly—it seemed like you'd only be asleep maybe fifteen or twenty minutes, and the alarm goes off, and the whole night's gone past? Do you ever have that experience? Nod your head. Okay, I think we've all had... Boy, that's a kind of sleep that's really sweet. But, we just lie down, and we close our eyes, and the alarm goes off. Now, suppose you did that in the morning. Let's say that you have to be at work at eight; and so, you set the alarm at six, and you say, "That'll give me time to get up, have my quiet time, in the shower, and eat breakfast and just get my day going." So, you set the alarm at six o'clock, and you go to bed tonight. Let's say you get home—pastor's fairly reasonable in the sermon—and so you're home tonight by about twelve o'clock. And so, you go to bed; and then, you just kind of close of eyes, and the alarm goes off. Now, you open your eyes, and you say, "Oh, it could not be morning! I just don't feel like it's morning. I just know it's not morning." But then, you look at the alarm clock, and it says six. And, you look outside, and the sun is coming up. Now friend, I want to ask you a question: Does it... And, you tune the radio on, and the radio says six o'clock a.m. And so, you dial Jam-Jam One and that says it's six o'clock a.m. Now, I want to ask you a question: Does it really make a heap of difference how you feel about it? No. Now, you're going to be late for work if you go by your feelings rather than the sun, the moon, and the stars. And, the whole universe says it's six o'clock in the morning. Now, see, that's a fact. It doesn't matter how you feel about it, right? It doesn't matter how you feel about it. You can yawn if you want, and go back to sleep and say, "Surely, it's not six

o'clock in the morning because I don't feel like it." It hasn't got anything to do with it.

Now, what I'm trying to say—that's what Paul is saying here. Paul is saying, "Reckon on it. Just reckon on it." He doesn't mention the word *feeling*. It hasn't got anything to do with it. Now friend, it is a historical fact that you must comprehend that when Christ died, you died; when Christ was buried, you were buried; when Christ arose, you arose. That is, you must comprehend it. But, not only must you comprehend it; you must calculate thereby. You must reckon yourself, just like a bookkeeping term, that it is true.

Now, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, setting the slaves free. And, I'm talking here about being emancipated, being set free from sin. Now, in order for those who were slaves when Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation to be set free, three things were necessary—I mean, for them to really be free. Number one: They had to know of the Emancipation Proclamation. Suppose there's some slave out there somewhere on somebody's farm, and he never hears about the emancipation of the slaves. What good's it going to do him? That's, first of all, that's the reason why I'm preaching. So, you've got to know—you've got to know it. Paul says, "You've got to know this. Know that your old man was crucified with Christ. Know it." (Romans 6:6)

All right, but second, suppose he knows it but he doesn't believe it? He says, "No such thing ever happened," or, "All the other slaves may be set free, but I'll never be set free; I'm a slave. I have a slave mentality. I'm just going to be a slave. I was born a slave; I'm going to die a slave." There are a lot of people feel that way about their sin. I mean, really, honestly, folks, some of you, when I'm preaching right here tonight, you think, "Boy, that's a good sermon, but I'm a slave to sin. I'll be tomorrow morning a slave to sin, too." I mean, you just feel that way. You just got a slave mentality. And, the Bible says that "*sin [is] not [to] have dominion over you.*" (Romans 6:14) You're not to be a slave of sin, but you just think of yourself as a slave. So, not only must that slave have known about the Emancipation Proclamation; he had to believe it.

### III. Cooperation

But, wait a minute; there's one more thing: not only did he have to know about it and not only did he have to believe it, but because he knew about it, that's the comprehension; because he believed it, that's the calculation. Then, what else did he need to do? He'd need to act on it, right? I mean, what good is it going to do him if he knows it and believes it and then refuses to act on it? So, that brings us to our third word, which is *yield—yield*. You see, first word is *know*. The second word is *reckon*. The third word is *yield*. Now, we know that when Christ died for us, He took our sin and we took His righteousness. But, imputed righteousness becomes imparted righteousness and practical righteousness when we begin to cooperate with the truth that we know.

Now, look again in verses 12 and following: *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body”*—that indicates that you could let it; you could let it. Now, you see, you’re the key. I mean, you can know it, and you can believe it; and still, you can let sin just make you its dirty plaything. But, you don’t need to—*“Let not sin therefore [rule]”*—reign—*“in your mortal body”*—your earthly body—*“that [you] should obey it [to] the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”* (Romans 6:12–13) I told you this morning this victory cannot be done without Jesus, but it will not be done without you. Now, it is a matter, therefore, when you know and when you reckon. If you don’t go this third step and obey the truth and act upon the truth and yield yourself to the Lord, you’re not going to have the victory that God wants you to have.

#### **A. How to Cooperate with the Lord**

Now, how do we cooperate with the Lord? Remember what I told you this morning? That man prayed, “Lord, help me to cooperate with you so you won’t have to operate on me.” How do we cooperate with the Lord? Now, you must cooperate. It must be a matter, first of all, of consideration, calculation, and cooperation, okay? You consider it: you did die. You calculate it. You reckon on it. Now, you cooperate with what you know. Now, how do you do it?

##### **1. The Dethronement of Sin**

Well, first of all, there must be the dethronement of sin—there must be the dethronement of sin. You must make a choice. *“Let not sin”*—verse 12—*“let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness [to] sin.”* (Romans 6:12–13) You must make a choice. Have you ever really just chosen? Have you ever really chosen against King Sin? Have you ever said to Sin, “I don’t have to obey you, and, therefore, I choose not to obey you. And, these members of my body are no longer going to be your tools. You’re not going to have my hands any more. You’re not going to have my eyes any more. You’re not going to have this brain any more. You’re not going to have this tongue any more. I do not yield it to you. Sin, I dethrone you, and I have a right to do so because I have resurrection life living in me. I am not your slave, and you cannot make me obey you. And, these members of mine are not going to be instruments”? Have you ever done that? Now, that’s the reason why many of us just fail. We have never really said to Sin, “You have no right. I take from you the right. I will not yield to you.” There must be the dethronement of sin.

##### **2. The Enthronement of the Savior**

But, that’s not enough. Now, you’ll never know victory until you do that. But secondly,

there must be the enthronement of the Savior. Now, both of these things are twin truths. You say, “Which is more important?” Well, which wing of an airplane is the most important? Now listen, you must dethrone sin. You must choose against sin. I’m not talking about in your own strength. I’ve already told you it is the strength of Christ. *“Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ [that] liveth in me.”* (Galatians 2:20) But, that will do you no good unless you yield—unless you yield.

All right, you must choose against King Sin; you must dethrone sin. And then, you must enthrone the Savior. Look again in these same verses—verse 12: *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body”—*that is, just say, “Sin, I’m finished with you”—*“that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin”—*that’s the dethronement of sin. But now, watch the enthronement of the Savior—*“but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”* (Romans 6:12–13)

Now, you say, “Well, how do you yield?” You know, in Romans 12:1, the Bible says, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies.”* (Romans 12:1) Did you know that the word *yield* and the word *present* are exactly the same word, just translated differently? Now, what is a present? You present your bodies? The word *present* and the word *present* are linked. It’s just giving someone a gift. I just take my body, my instruments, my mind, my hands, my feet—all there is of me—and I present myself to the Lord. *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy”* (Romans 12:1)—that means “completely to the Lord.” And, that’s not unreasonable that He should ask me to do that. That’s my reasonable sacrifice. That’s my reasonable service.

Now, that word *present* and this word *yield* are exactly the same. It just means, “Here, Lord. I just hand it over to you.” Now, this word *yield* here is in a tense that means it’s a once-for-all yielding. I mean, just totally, I yield. It’s not an experiment. It’s not just something I’m going to try tomorrow morning. It’s not an experiment; it’s an execution—I mean, when I just say, “I’m done with that old life.” You see, most of us never have meant business with God. We just sort of want to dabble in it. But, here is a total, complete, once-and-for-all, now-and-forever enthronement of the Lord Jesus and a dethronement of sin. Now, God does business with those that mean business. Many of us just kind of dabble at this, and we think, “Well, let’s see if it works tomorrow morning. I’ll try it a little bit. If it doesn’t work...” No, no, no. Listen...

“Well,” you say, “Brother Rogers, does that mean that I can never ever sin again?” Oh, no, you may sin, but you don’t have to. And, you see, this is an act that is followed by an attitude. It is a once-and-for-all-act, but there’s a continual attitude of yielding—just like salvation. How did you get saved? You trusted the Lord. Now you trust Him

once and for all, now and forever. Does that mean, therefore, tomorrow you stop trusting Him because you once trusted Him? No, just as you trusted Him to save you, you continue to trust Him. And, just as you once yielded to Jesus completely, totally, you just keep yielding day after day. But, it is a crisis followed by a process. It is an act followed by an attitude of this. I say, “Lord, I choose you. I dethrone sin. I enthrone you.” Now, when you do this, friend, when you really do it, get ready for God to move in on your life and get ready for God to show you the truth of Romans 6—that *“sin [will] not have dominion over you.”* (Romans 6:14) Sin says, “Jump”; you don’t have to say, “How high?” You’re going to be liberated. Jesus came to set you free. He came to save you from your sin, not to save you in your sin.

## **B. The Results of the Emancipation from Sin**

Now, what are the results of this emancipation, this freedom that we’re going to have? Well, let me—my time is gone—let me just mention them briefly, and you’ll go home and search them out.

### **1. A New Freedom**

First of all, there’s going to be a new freedom. Look in verse 18: *“Being...made free from sin, ye became...servants of righteousness.”* (Romans 6:18) Now remember, I said that you were made to serve. You were created to serve. *“No man can serve two masters”* (Matthew 6:24); he will serve one. And, when you know, when you reckon, and when you yield, then you will be made free from sin and you will become a servant of righteousness. There will be a new freedom.

### **2. A New Faithfulness**

And, because of that new freedom (in verse 18), there’ll be a new faithfulness (in verse 19). He goes on to say, *“I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even...now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.”* (Romans 6:19) Now, you see, you can’t really be a servant of righteousness and a slave of sin—you can’t be faithful to the Lord. You say, “Why is my Bible study so fruitless? And, why is my witness so dull? And, why is my service so ineffective?” Well, friend, you’ve been trying to serve Christ and the devil at the same time. You’ve been facing both ways. But, along with that new freedom will come that new faithfulness, and you will become the servant of Christ—the powerful servant that our Lord wants you to be. And, it follows as night follows day, when there follows a new freedom, there follows a new faithfulness.

### **3. A New Fruitfulness**

And, when there follows a new faithfulness, there will follow a new fruitfulness. And so,

continue to read. Look in verse 20: *“For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness”*—that is, you weren’t a servant of righteousness. Now, here’s the question in verse 21—*“What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?”*—just look at the life so many have lived since they’ve come to Christ. Aren’t you ashamed of it? And, what do you have to count for? I mean, what’s it going to amount to at the Judgment Seat of Christ but wood, hay, and stubble?—*“What fruit had ye then in those things [wherein you] are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death”*—but now, notice in verse 22—*“But now being made free from sin, and”*—that’s the new freedom—*“and become servants to God”*—that’s the new faithfulness—*“ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.”* (Romans 6:20–22) That’s the new fruitfulness. Friend, when we deal with the sin problem, then we’re going to see this fruitfulness in our heart and in our life.

Don’t you yield—I mean, don’t you yearn to have this kind of fruitfulness, to be able to see your Christianity put into practice? Know it, reckon it, yield—comprehension, or consideration; calculation; cooperation. Take this chapter when you go home, or maybe tomorrow morning in your devotions, and read it over and over. And, ask the Holy Spirit to teach it to you, because you know what I’m afraid of? What’s going to happen to you is what happened to me. I knew these facts, but somehow it just didn’t gel. I mean, it’s a now-you-see-it-now-you-don’t type of thing. Do you ever have that experience in Romans 6? So, you just pray, “Lord, turn the light on in my soul. Make this truth a bright, living reality to me, that I am not going to be the servant of sin. I’m tired of that old way. I want the liberty that belongs to the children of God.” *“Sin shall not have dominion over you.”* (Romans 6:14)

## Conclusion

Now, let’s bow together in prayer. Father, thank you for your Word. It’s been, Lord, just a blessing to me tonight to preach it. And Lord, I know that I needed to hear it again, and Lord, to come to this matter, Lord, of a consideration of the fact that I was crucified, buried, and I’ve been raised with Christ. And Lord, I don’t want to just consider it; I want, Lord, to calculate it. I want to reckon on it, Lord; to bank on it; to know that I do not have to obey sin, and Satan, and self. Then, Lord, I want to cooperate with you. Lord, I just, before my people as pastor tonight, Lord, just one more time, I present myself to you. Lord, I yield to you. I take back any ground that the devil may ever have had. And, I do not yield this mind, these hands, these eyes, this tongue, these feet to him, but I yield them, Lord, to you. And Lord, what I’m doing I just believe that many are doing.

Now, your heads are still bowed, but mine my head’s been lifted now. And, you keep yours bowed, but if you’d like to say, “Pastor, the way you prayed is the way I want to pray tonight and the way I am praying. And, I just want you to know as my pastor, as

best I know how, as much as in me is, I believe it to be true. I've considered it tonight, and I've calculated it tonight; and now, I'm going to cooperate with it. And, I want you to know right here in my seat tonight, as much as in me is, I take back any ground, any territory that I've ignorantly given to the devil. And, I want you to know tonight I present myself to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ anew and afresh," would you just like to lift your hand as a testimony if you feel that way? Praise the Lord. Amen. Just hold it up 'til it feels good for a minute so you can think about it. And, just hold it up to the Lord now. "Lord, I'm yielding." As a matter of fact, you know, when a man surrenders, he lifts both hands. Maybe you want to do that. Say, "Lord, I surrender. Lord, here, I just yield to you, Lord. I just yield to you. I surrender, Lord."

*All to Jesus, I surrender;*

*All to Him I freely give.*

—JUDSON W. VAN DEVENTER

# Three Steps to Victory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 14, 1984

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 6:3–6, 11–18

*“For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.”*

ROMANS 6:14

## Outline

Introduction

- A. Know
- B. Reckon
- C. Yield
- I. There Is Something That You Must Realize
  - A. We Died with Christ
  - B. We Were Buried with Christ
  - C. We Rose with Him
- II. There Is Something That You Must Rely On
- III. There Is Something That You Must Release
  - A. The Dethronement of Sin
  - B. The Enthronement of the Savior

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and open them to Romans 6—Romans 6. The book of Romans has been called “the Emancipation Proclamation of the Bible.” That is, it is God’s way to a life of liberty. And, we’re going to be talking today on this subject: “Three Steps to Victory.” Romans 6—and let’s look in verse 14 here for a moment: “*For sin shall not have dominion over you.*” (Romans 6:14) That is, you are not going to be a slave of sin. And, look, if you will, in verse 17: “*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered [unto] you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*” (Romans 6:17–18) Free from sin!

I wonder today how many people in this congregation are living a life of liberty and a life of victory, and that you are enjoying in your heart conscious, continuous, conspicuous victory over self and over Satan and over sin? Now, don’t answer that out loud because I’m afraid that some would not be telling the truth. “Well,” you say, “pastor,

God doesn't expect us to live that way. Nobody can live that way." That's where you're wrong. God not only expects us to live that way, but if we're not living that way, we're disappointing God, living beneath our privileges, and are a poor witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Every Christian every day in every way ought to be living a life of victory over self, Satan, and sin. "*Sin shall not have dominion over you.*" (Romans 6:14)

Now, every one must serve someone. Either you're going to be a slave of Satan or a servant to the Lord Jesus Christ. "*No man can serve two masters.*" (Matthew 6:24) Every one must serve at least one. No one can serve two; every one will serve one. And, either you are going to be a slave of Satan or you're going to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you're a slave of Satan, you're in defeat. If you're a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and a bond-slave to the Lord Jesus Christ, you're going to be living a life of victory. Now, it's easier to sing about victory and talk about victory for some of us than it is to experience victory. And, many times, people are talking about victory who don't have it.

I'm reminded of a man who was on the battlefield, and he told his commander, "I've taken a prisoner." So, the commander said, "Wonderful! Bring him with you." The man said, "Well, he won't come." So, the commander said, "Well, leave him then, and you come." He said, "Well, he won't let me go." Now, we wonder, who has taken who? And, we sing about victory over Satan, and we talk about it. But, I wonder today—I honestly wonder—how many in this room today are experiencing conscious, continuous, conspicuous victory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I said I'm going to speak to you about three steps to victory. So many times when you hear a sermon that talks about ten rules, or seven ways, or three steps, or something, it sounds good to begin with. Then, after you listen to it and analyze it for a while and let all the air out of it, you say, "Well, it was filled with clichés and half-truths, or somehow just doesn't work for me." Now, are you ready for this? I will guarantee you, on the authority of the Word of God, that if you will take the truths that I'm going to teach you through the Bible today—not because I'm teaching them but because of the truth of that truth that I will be teaching—if you will take these truths into your mind and into your heart and act upon them, you will have victory; it is guaranteed. There is no way that you can escape living a life of victory if you will do what I'm going to tell you. These are not just three things that somebody has made up out of his mind. These are not things that originated with me, but these are rock-ribbed, guaranteed, iron-clad truths that, if you practice them, if you get them into your mind and into your heart and into your will, you will know the life of liberty and you will know victory over self, over Satan, and over sin.

Now, there are three key words in this passage that I want you to learn. And, I want you to take a business card—I want you to take a slip of paper somewhere—and write

these three words down and put them in your pocket. Or else, put them on your mirror so you'll watch them when you shave or put on your makeup. I want you to put them on the dashboard of your automobile. I want you to put them on your desk at school. I want you to put them, perhaps, on the front of your notebook. Put them somewhere where you will be reminded of them. Carry them with you. Put them in your Bible, and get these things somehow emblazoned in your mind, etched upon your consciousness, distilled in your soul until you know these three words, because the thoughts—the steps—that I'm going to give you are wrapped around these three words. And, these are the three prominent words here in the sixth chapter of the book of Romans.

#### A. **Know**

The very first word is the word *know*—K-N-O-W. Look, if you will, in verse 3: “*Know ye not...*” (Romans 6:3) Look again in verse 6: “*Knowing this...*” (Romans 6:6) Look again in verse 9: “*Knowing that Christ...*” (Romans 6:9) Now the key phrase, the key word, rather, not even a phrase, is the word *know* or *knowing*.

#### B. **Reckon**

All right, now, the second word—the second word that I want you to put on your little card that you're going to keep on your desk, or wherever it is—is the word *reckon*. Look, if you will, in verse 11: “*Likewise reckon*” (Romans 6:11)—R-E-C-K-O-N, reckon. Write that word down under the word *know*. It is the word *reckon*. It is the second step in three steps to victory.

#### C. **Yield**

All right, now, the third word is the word *yield*. Look in verse 13: “*Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness until sin: but yield yourselves unto God.*” (Romans 6:13) Verse 16: “*Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants [you] are.*” (Romans 6:16)

Now, those are the three words, and they deal with three steps to victory. The first word is a word of realization. There is something you must realize. There's something you must know. And so, he uses the word *know*. There's something that you realize. The second word is the word of *reliance*. It is something that you reckon on. There's something that you trust. There's something that you count on, as we're going to see in a moment. And, the third word is the word of *release* or *relinquishment*. There's something that you yield to.

Now, when you get these words—*know*, *reckon*, and *yield*—you have not from some Baptist preacher, but from the Apostle Paul, three steps to living the life where Paul says, “[*And*] *sin shall not have dominion over you.*” (Romans 6:14) Say, wouldn't you like to live that way? Wouldn't you like to know all of this victory that we sing about and talk about, this life of liberty, this life of victory in the Lord Jesus Christ, where you can

say, “Sin shall not have dominion over me. I am living today a life of liberty and a life of victory, which is a life of praise and a life of power and a life of joy, day by day, for the Lord Jesus Christ”? Now, let’s look at it. Let’s look at it even closer.

## **I. There Is Something That You Must Realize**

Step number one is this idea of realization. There’s something that you must realize. There’s something that you must know, and what you must know is the doctrine of identification. Now, you say, “Pastor, what is the doctrine of identification?” Many of us who are Baptists and evangelical Christians know quite well the doctrine the substitution. The doctrine of substitution is this doctrine: that Jesus Christ died for me. He became my substitute. He took my sins upon Him; carried my sins to the cross; there, in agony and blood, suffered, bled, and died as my substitute. He paid my sin debt. And, when Jesus Christ died as my substitute, He delivered me from the penalty of sin. I will not go to hell because I have a substitute. That is the doctrine of substitution. But, there’s another doctrine—and we’re going to see it in a moment—and that is the doctrine of identification: not only did Jesus Christ die for me, but I died with Him. My life is so identified with the Lord Jesus that when Jesus died, I died; when Jesus was buried, I was buried; when Jesus rose, I arose.

Now, the doctrine of substitution saves me from the penalty of sin, but the doctrine of identification, as we’re going to see, saves me from the power of sin. And, by the way, listen: Jesus Christ did not come to save you from hell. Oh, we say, “Oh, get saved so you can be saved from hell.” He didn’t—He didn’t—come to save you from hell. Now, if you’re saved, you’re not going to hell. I want to make that very clear. But, Jesus Christ did not come to save you from hell. What did the angel say to Mary? *“Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21) He came to save you from sin. And, if He cannot save you from sin, He cannot save you from hell. Now, He came to save you from your sins. And, a saved person is a person who knows the life of victory over sin. Jesus came to save you from your sin. And, if you’re saved from your sin, then you’re saved from the penalty of your sin, which is hell. Now, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ for me—that’s substitution. But, my death with Jesus—that is identification.

### **A. We Died with Christ**

Now, all of this is under the heading of “something that you must know,” “something that you must realize.” Paul says, “Know it.” Let’s look in the Bible and see what we’re talking about. Look, if you will, in chapter 6:3: *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?”* (Romans 6:3) Look, if you will again, in verse 6: *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him.”* (Romans 6:6) The old man is the old Adrian I used to be. Now, the Bible says that the old Adrian is

crucified—not shall be, not might be, not could be; is. When Jesus died, I died. He died for me, but He died as me. And, I died with Him, and His death had my name upon it. And, when Jesus died, I died because I was in Christ when Christ died, and Christ took my sins. But, not only my sins; Christ took my self to the cross. And, we are crucified with Christ. Our old man is crucified with Him. Now, it's very, very important that you understand this—that when He died, you died.

I remember an old classic story about Dr. Robert G. Lee, former pastor of this church, great and noble man. He went to the Holy Land for the first time and went to that place called Calvary, and the guide there was talking about Calvary and talked about all of those things. And then, he asked a question. He said this: “How many of you have ever been here before?” And, Dr. Lee lifted his hand. The guide said, “When was that?” He said, “Two thousand years ago.” What did he mean by that? He meant that when Jesus was there upon that cross, Robert G. Lee was there upon that cross—and so was Bob Sorrell, and so was Adrian Rogers, and so was Tommy Lane, and so was every child of God. We are crucified with Christ. Look again in verse 6: *“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him.”* (Romans 6:6) He died for me; I died with Him.

“Well,” you say, “what’s so important about that?” Oh, my dear friend, my dear friend, if the law has something against me... Suppose I had been to the grand jury and now I’m about to come to court, and I’m about to be adjudicated guilty and cast into prison for some crime that I’ve done. And, let’s say that I’m guilty. But, before I can be called into court, I die. Now, what happens to that case? Case dismissed. Can’t bring a dead man into court, right? The law has no more dominion over me because I have died. Now, dear friend, what happens to a man who happens to be a slave to someone and that man’s slave dies? Well, what authority does a slave owner have over a dead man? He’s dead. You see, the law can no longer condemn me, and Satan can no longer control me. Why? I am dead. I died with Christ. And, the law does not have dominion over me, and Satan does not have dominion over me; and, therefore, sin does not have dominion over me because I died with the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **B. We Were Buried with Christ**

But, not only did I die with Him; I was buried with Him. Now, notice this, if you will, in verse 4: *“Therefore we are buried with him.”* (Romans 6:4) That is, when Jesus Christ was buried, I was buried. And, you know, it’s an amazing thing that the Bible makes much of the burial of the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, part of the gospel is the burial of the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is talking about the gospel, and he says, *“Moreover, brethren, [this is] the gospel [that] I preached unto you...how that Christ died for our sins...And that he was buried, and that he [was raised] again the third day.”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–4) The burial of Jesus Christ is part of the gospel. Why?

Because, you see, dear friend, not only did I die with Him, but I have been put in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Those sins, and that old, old reeking carcass of my old life, is buried. And, I do not have, dear friend, to be intimidated by the bones of my old life. That has been put in the grave. And, the devil may come looking for his old slave, and we have to say, "He's not here." "Well, where is he?" "He's gone. He is buried, and you cannot haunt him with the ghost of guilt." Listen, I died with Him. I was buried with Him.

### C. We Rose with Him

But, not only did I die with Him and not only was I buried with Him—hallelujah! praise God!—I rose with Him. Verses 4–5: *"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also"*—underscore "we also"—*"should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection."* (Romans 6:4–5) When Jesus rose, I arose. He had a life that the grave could not control. And, Christ came out of that grave with a resurrection life, and the sins of the world were no longer upon Him. He has paid in full, and now He has a resurrected life. And so, dear friend, I have a new life. *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I [that lives], but Christ [that lives] in me: and the life...I now live...I live by the faith of the Son of God."* (Galatians 2:20)

You say, "Pastor, that's kind of hard to get my hands on. That's hard to apply." Just stay listening now. Just don't tune me out. *I came to preach; you came to listen. You don't get finished before I do, okay?* Now, just keep on listening because you're going to learn something that is very, very wonderful. Now, I'm talking to you about the truth of identification. And, by the way, that is the importance of believer's baptism. You see, the Bible says here—look at it in verse 3: *"Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?"* (Romans 6:3) Now, water baptism symbolizes our being baptized into the death of the Lord Jesus. We are baptized into the death of the Lord Jesus by faith. I mean, we're saved by faith, and by the Holy Spirit of God we're baptized into the Body of Christ. That's Spirit baptism, but water baptism pictures that; water baptism symbolizes that. And, that's why water baptism is so very, very, very important, and that's what baptism by immersion is so very, very important.

Now, in the New Testament church we have two ordinances, the Lord's Supper and baptism, right? Now, what does the Lord's Supper picture? The Lord's Supper pictures Christ our substitute. *"This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for [the ransom of many]."* (Luke 22:20) This is Christ dying for us to remove us from the penalty of sin. "It is my blood, which is shed for you"—that's what the cup represents. *"My body, which is broken for you."* (1 Corinthians 11:24) This is the substitutionary death of the

Lord Jesus Christ—the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Table. But, what about that? What about baptism? Baptism does not picture the substitutionary death of the Lord Jesus Christ. It pictures, dear friend, along with that, the great corollary truth and the great wonderful truth that we died with Him. That is the picture of not substitution, but identification. *“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism [unto] death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead...we also should walk in newness of life.”* (Romans 6:4) And, baptism pictures that, and you’ll never have victory until you understand the message of identification.

Say, have you ever wondered why this doctrine of baptism by immersion has been taken out of so many churches? I’ll tell you why: the devil doesn’t want people to understand what I’m preaching today. And, God has given us a divine object lesson, and God has commanded that everybody that gets saved be baptized by immersion. It’s not optional. It’s a requirement, a command of God: *“[Teach] them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you,”* (Matthew 28:20) the Lord Jesus said, *“baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”* (Matthew 28:19) because it is God’s divine object lesson to teach you the vital truth that I’m teaching today—that when He died, you died; when He was buried, you were buried; and when He came up out of the grave, you came out of the grave. A baptismal service pictures a death, burial, and resurrection, and you cannot picture a burial by sprinkling.

If I were to die and you carried me out in the graveyard and sprinkled a few grains of sand on my head, that would be a disgrace—leave me out there to bake in the sun. Man, when I die, bury me—but make sure I’m dead—but bury me; put me under. We are buried with Him by baptism. “Well,” you say, “pastor, the Bible teaches all kinds of ways to baptize.” No, it doesn’t—no, it doesn’t. Never in the Bible any place will you ever find where sprinkling is taught for baptism. You’re not going to find it. Now, if I’m wrong, somebody in this building just stand up right now and give me chapter and verse. You say, “How can you be so bold?” Because it’s not there—it is not there. The New Testament teaches baptism by immersion.

Now, the devil is very clever that that has been taken out of so many churches, because the devil does not want us to learn the truth that I’m teaching you today—that we are buried with Him by baptism; that as Christ was raised, we are raised; that there is this life of identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. It is something that you must know. I want to make something crystal clear: I do not believe that you have to be baptized by immersion to be saved. I don’t believe the Bible teaches that. A person is saved not by any act, not by any ritual. When he repents of his sin, believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, at that moment that person is saved; he becomes a child of God.

*Salvation is in Christ, not in the creek.* And, water, whether a spoonful or a tankful, is not going to take away your sin. I want you to understand that. And, *I’m not trying to*

*act like I think that only Baptists are the only ones going to heaven. I'm more narrow-minded than that: I don't think a lot of Baptists are going.* And, I think a lot of people who are not Baptist are going. But, nobody's going who's not repented of his sin and received Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior. But, dear friend, I want to tell you something: while baptism is not necessary for salvation, it is necessary for obedience. And, obedience is necessary for victory in the Christian life.

Dr. B. R. Lakin on one occasion—a great preacher of the gospel—was talking to a man who was a beloved brother who was straight in everything else, was saved, going to heaven, but he did not practice baptism by immersion. And, Dr. Lakin said to this man, “Dear friend, the only thing that separates you and me is the River Jordan.” He said, “I’ll come over if you’ll come under.” Amen. Oh, listen, dear friend, I want to tell you the Bible teaches—not some Baptist preacher. It’s not a Baptist doctrine; it is a Bible doctrine—“*we are buried with him by baptism [unto] death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in [the] newness of life.*” (Romans 6:4) That is so very important that we understand what baptism pictures.

And so, when the devil comes and he says to me, “Adrian, my old slave, do this for me,” I say, “Satan, I don’t have to obey you.” “Why not?” “Because I’m dead. You have no more dominion.” “How do you know you’re so dead, Adrian?” “Well, Satan, didn’t you come to my funeral? Weren’t you there when I was laid in that liquid tomb? You were there, devil, and you were the only mourner. You hated to see the old Adrian die. I’m not your slave. I am dead. I am buried with Christ.” And, baptism symbolizes that burial. And, it is God’s divine psychology to make real to you what happened to you, and it is God’s method of preaching. And, every time we have this Lord’s Supper we say that “Christ for us.” Every time we have baptism we say, “We died with Him.” That is a truth—a truth of identification, something that you must realize, something that you must know. It’s a fact—a fact. Now, that’s the first thing: know this; know that you died with Him.

## **II. There Is Something That You Must Rely On**

Now, the second word is the word *reckon*. Look again, if you will, in verse 11: “*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin.*” (Romans 6:11) It’s one thing to know that you’re dead; it’s another thing to be reckoned that your dead, indeed. You see, the word *reckon* here is not a word like we use down south as sort of a colloquial expression: “You going to the ball game tonight?” “I reckon so.” What we mean by that is “maybe so, maybe not. I’m not quite sure.” But, that’s not what the word *reckon* means here. The word *reckon* here is a very strong word. It’s got concrete and spiritual steel in it. It is a bookkeeping term, like a man who is doing some reckoning, balancing

books and getting to the bottom and so forth. It actually is a word that means “to calculate,” or as we’d say today, “Bank on it”—“bank on it.” You see, not only is there something that you must realize, but there’s something you must rely on. There’s something that you must count on. You must reckon it to be true. It is not a matter of fable. It is not a matter of feeling. It is a matter of fact, and because it is a matter of fact, then you count on it; you reckon on it. And, when you reckon on it, it begins to be true in your own life. Now, the problem with so many of us is that we are trying to live in the realm of feeling, and reckoning and feeling are not the same thing.

Now, let me give you an example of what I’m talking about. I’ll make a confession: this morning, when my alarm clock went off at six o’clock, it didn’t seem like six to me; it seemed like about two in the morning. It was six. I managed to get one eye open. I looked at that alarm clock, and it said six. Now, my feelings told me it was not six, and my feelings told me that it was not time to get that bed off my back but to lie right there. But, I had enough wisdom to look at my watch. My watch also said six. And then, I opened the other eye and looked outside, and it was grey dawn. And, the sun said six, and the moon said six, and the universe said six. My feelings said two. Now, which do you think I ought to obey—my feelings or the facts? Now friends, that’s the reason there’s something you must first know. God has given us His alarm clock. There is something that we must know, and once we know it, then we must reckon it to be true. You see, we know it with our heads, but then we reckon it with our hearts. There’s something that we must not only realize, but there’s something that we must rely on. There’s something we must count on. There’s something we’ll bank on, and that’s the idea of appropriating what we know to be true.

Now, let me give you an illustration. I think this will help make it clear. I told you that the book of Romans was God’s Emancipation Proclamation. Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation for the American slaves, and he set them free. Now, every slave in the United States, when Abraham Lincoln signed that Emancipation Proclamation, was technically free. He was theoretically free, but he was not yet free, indeed. You remember, Jesus said, “I’ve come that you might be free indeed.” (John 8:36) When did he become free indeed? When did a slave become free indeed? Three things had to be necessary. Number one: He had to know of it. It didn’t matter if the President signed it if he didn’t know it, right? He had to know it. But, not only did he have to know it; he had to believe it and count on it. You see, he had to know it, but it had to get out of his head, into his heart. He had to reckon it. He had to count on the fact that it was true. But, not only did he have to know it and not only did he have to reckon it; he then had to act on it. Some slaves could not get it into their heart they were literally free, and they remained slaves when there was no need for them to remain slaves. They stayed on the plantation; they continued to serve because they did not act.

Now, that word *act* is the third word, which is our word *yield*. You see, you have to yield to what you know. You have to cooperate with what you know. Now, look—look, if you will—here in God’s Word. Look at it—verse 13: *“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness”—*that is, as weapons or tools of unrighteousness, as slaves to the devil—*“but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.”* (Romans 6:13) Now, what does he mean by our “members”? By our “members,” he means our eyes, our nose, our lips, our mouths, our hands—all of the parts of our body. We are to offer them up to God, and we are to yield them to God.

Now, you see, there’s something you must do—there is something that you must do: you must cooperate with God. And, don’t tell me this will not work until you’ve done all three things. Now, you cannot do just part. You must know it. You’ll never reckon on it until you know it. But, once you know it, you must reckon on it. But, once you reckon on it, then you must cooperate with what you know, and you must yield yourself. Now, yielding is something that you do freely and voluntarily. Are you listening? God will not do it without you. You cannot do it without Him. You cannot do it until, first of all, you know and reckon. You don’t have any right to do it. You don’t have any authority to do it until you know and reckon. But, once you know and once you reckon, then you’re free.

### **III. There Is Something That You Must Release**

Now, let me tell you how to cooperate with God. Let me tell you how to bring this in, this cooperation with God. I heard about a country preacher who prayed, “Lord, help me to cooperate with me so you won’t have to operate on me.” Okay, now, if you don’t want God to have to operate on you—and friend, He will operate on you. He’ll carry you to the woodshed if you’re not living in victory. And so, if you don’t want God to have to operate on you—let me tell you now how to cooperate with the Lord Jesus Christ and how to have this victory over sin. First of all, there’s that realization. And then, there’s that reliance. And now, we’re coming to that release, where you just yield everything to Him. Now, look at it; look at it right now.

#### **A. The Dethronement of Sin**

First of all, there must be the dethronement of sin. Look in verse 12: *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin.”* (Romans 6:12–13) That is, there must be a decision that you make, and you must say, “Sin, self, Satan, you will not have sway in my life.” I’m not talking about self-effort. On the basis of the fact that you have been raised with Christ—as those, He says, that are alive from the dead—on that basis and that basis alone, you can dethrone sin, self, and Satan.

Now, when the Bible says, *“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body,”* (Romans

6:12) that means what? That you can if you want to. You can let sin reign. Many Christians do. They don't have to. But, it would have been superfluous and foolish for Paul to say, "Let not sin reign," if sin couldn't. Sin can, if you let it. But, it also means that you have the power to say that "sin shall not," or it would have been superfluous and foolish for Paul to say you, "Let not sin reign." What I'm saying there—that Paul is telling you there is the possibility of sin reigning in your body, but no longer the necessity.

"Well," you say, "why couldn't I say that before?" Because you didn't have the freedom before. You didn't have the knowledge before. You did not have the ability before. You see, the unsaved man—he says, "Well, I can do anything I want." Well, he's right. He's free to do as he wants, but he's never free to do as he ought. He always does what he wants, but he never does what he ought because he's a slave to sin. But, not the child of God—he is no longer a slave to sin. He died. And, that slavery to Satan and that slavery to sin—it's done away with by the death of the Lord Jesus. We have a resurrection life, and Christ is in us. And, because Christ is in us, now we're no longer slaves. But, we can act like slaves if we choose to, but we don't have to act like slaves. And, no longer can we let sin reign in our mortal bodies if we don't want to. And so, I can say, "Satan, I don't have to obey you. Self, I don't have to obey you. Sin, I don't have to obey you." And, we can speak with an authority, and when we speak with that authority, all of the power of heaven is behind us. The resurrection life of the Lord Jesus Christ is in us. And, when He rose, we rose, and there is victory. There must be the dethronement of sin.

### **B. The Enthronement of the Savior**

Now, watch it: there must be the enthronement of the Savior. Look again—verse 13: "*Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God.*" (Romans 6:13) Now, this word *yield* means "to surrender"; it means "to present." Do you know in Romans 12:1, where the Bible says, "*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies [as] a living sacrifice*"? (Romans 12:1) That word *present* is exactly the same word that's translated "yield" right here—same word.

How do you yield to God? You just make a present of your life to God. You just present your life to God. And, the word in the Greek means "once for all." I just take my life, and I just present my life to God. I say, "Here it is." Have you done that? Listen, friend, hardly a day goes by—I doubt that a day goes by—that I don't say to the devil and to sin and self, "I don't have to obey you. I renounce you, Satan. I renounce sin. I renounce self. I will not let you reign in my life—I will not! Lord Jesus, I yield. I give you my life. I present my life to you." And, what I present to Him, He takes. And, what He takes, He cleanses. And, what He cleanses, He fills. And, what He fills, He uses. When

you present yourself to Him, when you yield to the Lord Jesus Christ, there's an enthronement of Christ. And, when you enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ, then His resurrection power begins to live in you, and you begin to live a life of victory.

I was reading this past week, again, the story of F. B. Meyer, great man of God; Bible scholar; brilliant, scintillating man; deep for his piety and love for the Lord Jesus Christ. Many of you have read the devotional books of F. B. Meyer. F. B. Meyer told how he came to know that life of freedom and that life of power. He had gone to a meeting where seven students from Cambridge University were saying farewell. They were leaving England and going to China as missionaries—seven young men. Among those young men was a man named C. T. Studd. C. T. Studd was the leading athlete in all England. He was a cricketer. Now, we don't play cricket over here. They play cricket over there. It's like baseball is to us. I mean, it's the national sport. And, he was the leading cricketer in all of England. I mean, he was the idol. He was handsome, tall, big, charming, witty, wealthy. But, he said, "I'm going to China as a missionary." F. B. Meyer said, "I watched. I saw something in the life of that young man so real, so transparent, so full of power, that I knew that he had something I did not have." And, he said, "I made it my business to talk to C. T. Studd, and I said to him, 'There's something about your life that's not in my life. What is the secret of your life?'" F. B. Meyer said that "C. T. Studd fixed his eyes upon me and asked this question: 'Have you given everything to Jesus Christ?'" He said, "I have. But, he said, 'The Holy Spirit said within me that's a lie,' and I knew it was."

He said, "I went to my bedroom that night, and I got on my knees, determined that I was going to have it out with the Lord. And, I said to the Lord, "Lord, I want you to have sway over my life. I want to yield everything to you." And, F. B. Meyer said, "It seemed as though the Lord was in that room, and the Lord said, 'All right, hand over the keys of your life.'" And, F. B. Meyer took his key ring, said, "Here, Lord. Here are the keys to my life"—not an actual key ring, but in his mind, in his heart, he said, "Here are the keys of my life." And, he said, "The Lord took that key ring, and the Lord began to count the keys." And, He said, "There's one missing." F. B. Meyer said, "Well, it's just a little key, Lord. It's a very small cabinet." He said, "The Lord put the keys down and started to walk out of the room, and I said, 'Don't go, Lord. Come back. Why are you leaving?'" And, the Lord said, "If I am not Lord of all, I will not be Lord at all." And, Meyer said, "But it's just such a little thing." The Lord turned and started to walk out again. He said, "Lord, come back. Here's the other key." And, at that moment his life, his life was filled with the light and the power of God.

## Conclusion

Now, I want to ask you this question today—and I asked it for myself last night on my

knees, and I'm asking again as I preach: Have you given to Jesus Christ the key to every room and closet in your life? That's what the word *yield* means. It means "to yield." He is Lord—He is Lord. And, don't you tell me there's no such thing as a life of victory, and don't you tell me you cannot live in victory if you have not yielded to Christ. Yield it. Give it to Him. And, when you give it to Him, He'll take it. And, don't be afraid to give Him every key. He loves you more than you love you, and He'll do with your life things you never dreamed when you say, "Take my life, Lord. I give it to you." You put those three words down on your dresser—*know*, *reckon*, and *yield*—and I will guarantee you you'll know the life of victory.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. No one is stirring. No one is looking around. And, I'm going to ask God's people right now to be searching their hearts. Better than that, the Holy Spirit will search your heart. Lord, is there an area of my life that's unyielded? Something I've not given? Now, in this congregation, there may be those who are not saved. I want you to know Jesus, and I'm going to pray for you right now.

Lord God, I pray for many in this congregation today that today, they will come to know the Lord Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. And Lord, give victory today as many decisions are made for Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

# Abounding Victory Through Amazing Grace, Part 1

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 6, 1994

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 6:6–7

*“Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.”*

ROMANS 6:6

## Outline

Introduction

I. Know: Identification

II. Reckon: Appropriation

III. Yield: Emancipation

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Romans chapter six—Romans chapter six. We're speaking today on this subject: Abounding Victory through Amazing Grace. I hope you know by now that we are saved by God's Amazing Grace. 'Tis nothing that we do. He does it all. If you come to God as a prince, He'll send you away as a beggar. But if you come to God as a beggar, He'll send you away a prince. When you come to God and say, in my hand no price I bring. Simply to thy cross I cling. Then you will be saved, as you trust Him by God's Amazing Grace.

Dwight L. Moody, a famous evangelist of yesteryear, said he was in a meeting. The man stood up and said, I want to tell you briefly what it has taken me forty-two years to learn. Moody said, well, I think I'll listen. If I can learn in three minutes what it took him forty-two years to learn, I think I'll listen. And, he said, this is what I've learned—three things: number one, I can do nothing to earn salvation; number two, God does not require me to do anything; number three, Jesus Christ has done it all.

Now, friend, one man had to take forty-two years to learn that, and you have just heard it and learned it in about one minute. That is grace. That's salvation by grace. But being saved by grace is not a license to sin. It is not sinning that proves grace. It is not sinning that recognizes grace.

Now, look, if you will, in Romans chapter six and verse one: What shall we say then?

Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. God forbid. So many people think that when we preach the message of grace that we're being light on sin. You have missed it a hundred and eighty degrees. There is nothing that liberates you from a life of sin like God's Amazing Grace. So, what we're going to be talking about today is abounding victory through Amazing Grace. Look up here and let me tell you something. God's plan for you today, tomorrow and the rest of your life is victory. Not victory sometimes, victory all times. Not victory some places, victory every place. You are to have continual victory, conscious victory and conspicuous victory. Do you have it? You are to have continual victory. You're to have contagious victory. You're to have conspicuous victory. You are to have victory every day and every way.

Now, there three key words in Romans chapter six. I have pointed these to you before; I do it again. I want you to look at these three words. If you'll understand these three words, you'll understand the abounding victory that comes through amazing grace. Chapter six, verse six: knowing—just put a circle around the word knowing. We'll come back to it in a moment. But it is a key word. Romans six, verse six: knowing—there is something to know. And then, verse eleven: Reckoned—likewise, reckoned. Put a circle around the word reckon. And then, chapter six and verse thirteen: yield. Now, do you have it? Those are the three words: knowing, reckoning, and yield. To know, to reckon, and to yield, is to have victory—I mean abounding victory—only because of God's Amazing Grace. Knowing deals with fact. Reckoning deals with faith. Yielding deals with function. And these follow as night follows day: fact, faith, and function; knowing, reckoning, and yielding. We do not continue in sin that grace may abound, but abounding grace gives us amazing victory through the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **I. Know: Identification**

Now, I want us to look at these three things. The very first word, knowing, deals with something that we're going to call your identification with Christ. Did you get it down? Get it in your head—your identification with Christ. That is a matter of fact that you must know.

Now, look, if you will here, beginning in verse six: Knowing this—knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin, that is, we should not be slaves of sin.

Now, what does identification mean? Identification with Christ—it means that we have become one with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have become one with Him, because He became one with us. He took humanity that we might take His deity. Not that we're gods; that God lives in us. He came to earth that we might go to heaven. He took of our nature that we might take of His nature. We are identified with Him.

You see, identification tells us that when Christ died, we died with Him. And that

deals with sin's power. Get that. That deals with sin's power. Now, think of the significance of it. Look in verses six and seven—look at it: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him.

Now, when Jesus died, the old Adrian died, and hallelujah, Calvary—Calvary—doesn't just deal with my sin. Jesus didn't just take my sin to the cross. Are you listening? Jesus didn't just take my sin to the cross. He took me to the cross. You see, if He had simply died for my sin, that would still leave me. I'm the problem. Does that sink in? If He just took my sin to the cross, that still leaves me, and I'm the problem. The cross does not merely deal with my sin; it deals with me, the source of my sin. Now, look at that verse.

Now, folks, this is deep. It is simple, but it is deep. Know this, that our old man is crucified with Him. When He died, He died for me. Therefore, I died with Him on that cross.

Dr. Robert G. Lee, the former pastor of this church, went one time to the Holy Land, and he went to the place called Calvary. It was the first time he'd ever been to Israel, and the guide asked this question: have any of you ever been here before? Dr. Lee raised his hand. The guide said, when was that? He said, 2,000 years ago—2,000 years ago. And he was there. I was there. You were there. Jesus Christ died on that cross. He died for our sins, and we died with Him.

Now, that deals with the penalty of sin, but it also deals with the power of sin. When a man dies, there are two things that are true. If he's a criminal, when he dies, there's no more trial, there's no more punishment. Isn't that right? If he's a criminal. Lee Harvey Oswald shot John F. Kennedy in Dallas, Texas. At least, everybody believes that. Most people believe that. But when Lee Harvey Oswald died, they stopped prosecuting him. There's no criminal court against Lee Harvey Oswald. Why? He's dead. I mean, when he's dead, the penalty of the law fails. I mean, it's over. Nobody's going to put him in jail any more. Drop the case.

Now, there's something else, though. That deals with the penalty of sin; but what about the power of sin? What about a slave who dies? The slave has a master. The master tells him when to go to bed, when to get up; when to go to work, what to do, when to quit; what to eat and what not to eat. Some slave masters even told their slaves who they could marry and all of this. But suppose the slave dies, when the slave dies, then what power does his master have over him?

Do you understand how the cross deals with both the penalty and the power of sin? You see, Satan has been the slave master. When I died on that cross, the penalty of sin has been done with, and the power of sin has been done with. Now, not only have I died with Him; look, if you will, in verses six and seven: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should

not serve sin. We're not slaves of sin, for he that is dead is freed from sin—freed from sin. Say amen. Freed from sin.

Now, watch this. Now, look, if you will, as we continue to read in verses three and four; just go back to verses three and four: Know ye not that so many of us were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death. Now, not only did we die with Him; we were buried with Jesus. When Jesus died, I died. When Jesus was buried, I was buried. Why does the Bible put an emphasis upon the burial of Christ? Did you know that the burial of Jesus Christ is a part of the gospel? First Corinthians chapter fifteen, verses three and four: For I delivered unto you, first of all, that which I received, how that Christ died for our sins, according to the scriptures, that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day. The burial, the burial of Jesus, is a part of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Jews put the dead out of sight as quickly as possible. When a person would die, they would bury him. Now, not only did the old Adrian I used to be die when I got saved, but the old Adrian was buried. I'm buried with Him, and, therefore, Satan cannot intimidate me with the bones of my own life. You know, your sin is in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Now get this. Your sin is buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. And, when Satan comes looking for the old Adrian, I can say, he's not here. Well, where's the corpse? I want to ridicule him. You can't—it's buried. Listen, friend. I am dead and buried. But not only have we died with Him, not only were we buried with Him, but we have been raised with Him.

Look again, if you will, in verses four and five: Therefore, we're buried with him by baptism unto death that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so, we also. Underscore that: Even so, we also. He died. I died. He was buried. I was buried. He arose. I arose. Even so, we also should walk in newness of life. I'm not with Him, still in the grave, because He's not in the grave. He has a life that the tomb could not keep, and when He came out of that grave, I came out of that grave, to walk in newness of life. The life I have now, I'm not just a forgiven, patched-up old person. I'm a brand new person. I have resurrection life.

Augustine, who we call St. Augustine, an early Christian, before he was saved, had a life that he lived, a profligate life. He had many harlots who were friends, and he would commit fornication with those harlots. When Augustine got saved, he had a radical and dramatic change. But after he was saved, he was walking down the street, and one of his old girlfriends saw him. He was on this side of the street and she was on this side of the street, so he walked to that side of the street, and put his head down and just kept on walking. She recognized him. She said, Augustine. He didn't lift his head. She said, Augustine. He kept on walking. She said, Augustine, it is I. He said, yes, but it is no longer I.

You see, I'm crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that lives in me. He had a brand new life. And we need to understand this, friend, that that's the significance of it. I died with Him. I was buried with Him. And I rose with Him.

Now, what's the symbolism of it? The symbolism of it is baptism. Look in verse three: Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into death? Therefore, we're buried with him by baptism unto death, that like as Christ was raised up for the glory of the Father, even so, we also should walk in newness of life.

You see, baptism pictures the death, burial and resurrection that happened when you trusted Christ. Now, baptism doesn't make it so; it shows it so. It is a symbol of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Water baptism is a symbol of our spiritual death, burial, and resurrection. The death, burial, and resurrection doesn't take place up there. The resurrection took place at Calvary. And, it took place when you received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. But that is the symbol of it. That is the emblem of it. And that, dear friend, is why we baptize by immersion, because you can't bury a corpse with a few grains of sand, and you can't bury a corpse with a few drops of water. We are buried with Him by baptism. The only baptism taught in the Bible—water baptism—is by immersion, because that pictures the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is a liquid tomb. That is where that old person is buried symbolically. And, you go into that water to say good-bye to the old man, come out of that water to say, hallelujah, I've been raised to walk in newness of life with the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, we have two wonderful ordinances in our church. We have the Lord's Supper and we have baptism. Now, the Lord's Supper pictures Christ death for the believer. Baptism pictures our death with Him. The Lord's Supper, His death for us; baptism, our death with Him—both of those wonderful, beautiful symbols.

And so, the very first thing I want you to notice. There is a fact—I mean a fact—to believe; something you must know. Paul says—look at it now, in verse six: Know this—know it; know it. I have given you truth. Know it. When Jesus died, you died. When Jesus was buried, you were buried. When Christ came out of that grave, you came out of that grave. That is identification. You're to know it. There's a fact to know, okay?

## **II. Reckon: Appropriation**

Now, are you ready for the next word? The first word is something you are to know. Now, look, if you will, in verse eleven: Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ.

Now, the first point deals with identification. This point deals with appropriation. Your identification—that's a matter of fact. The appropriation of it is a matter of faith. Now, you heard it with your head; now I want to get it in your heart. Now, I want you to reckon it. What does the word reckon mean? The word reckon is a bookkeeping term. You

figure. It's not a matter of feelings, but it is a matter of fact. Once you get the fact, then you begin to calculate on that fact. You began to act according to that fact. Reckoning is not closing your eyes and pretending. It is faith acting on what you know to be true.

Now, first of all, knowing. That, friend, is a matter of fact. Reckoning is a matter of faith in that fact. Now, you already know how to reckon. You did it when you got saved. I'm talking to saved people. When you got saved, you said, I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins. You weren't there when it happened. You didn't see it literally with your own eyes. But you say, it is the truth. You say, He died for my sins. Therefore, I reckon, I stand on the fact that my sin has been paid for. Well, friend, not only did He die for you; you died with Him. Reckon that also—reckon that also.

You say, if my old man is dead, why can't I make him lie down? I mean, why is it? I mean, yes, I know what you say is true, but I'm still having a struggle. I'm not living in victory. Why is it? Well, you have to get the fact, and then you have to learn how to reckon on that fact.

A woman set her alarm clock, and it went off at six in the morning. But when she awakened, she thought it just can't possibly be six. Why, it just seems like I've been asleep a few minutes. Have you ever done that, slept so soundly, and it seems like the whole night has gone in a few minutes? But she looked at the clock. The clock said six. She looked outside; the sun was up. She looked at the other clocks, and all of the other clocks said it was six in the morning.

Well, friend, if the sun, moon, and stars, and every other clock says it's six, don't you think she'd better set aside her feelings and go by what she knows to be true? You reckon. Well, it doesn't matter whether you feel like it's six in the morning or not. That's not going to change it. You see, the fact of the matter is that you've been dead for 2,000 years. Don't you think it's time you had your funeral? I mean, listen. What he's saying is, this is a fact; I was crucified with Christ. I was buried. I've been raised again. Now, therefore, reckon on it. That is a matter of faith. Now, the word crucified is in the aorist tense in the Greek language, which means it took place once and for all. That's never to be repeated. The word reckon is in the present tense, and that means that's something you're to continually do. Continually, day after day, you're to reckon yourself dead unto sin and alive unto God. You're to say that sin's penalty does not stand against me, and sin's power is broken over me. I, by faith, believe that. Now, if you don't believe it, you'll never have victory. You must believe what he tells you to believe. Likewise, reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ. Friend, I want to tell you, if that thought ever really gets into your heart, if you ever really say, hallelujah, it is true, and I stand on it, you're about to be delivered.

Why is it, Brother David, this cannot get in people's hearts? There is a fact to know. But, friend, there is a reckoning to believe, to put into your heart by faith. Now, when

you understand this, that Jesus Christ is alive in you, you're dead to sin but alive to God. The Bible says, in Colossians 3:3, for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.

### **III. Yield: Emancipation**

Now, here's the third word. The first word is what? Know. The second word is what? Reckon. That's a bookkeeping term. That means to bank on it, to calculate on it. Now, here's the third thing. Your submission to Christ is a matter of function. You must yield to it. Fact. Faith. Function. Now, here's where the rubber meets the road. This completes the thing. This is how God's Amazing Grace becomes abounding victory.

Look, if you will now, beginning in verse twelve: Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body. If it does, it's only because you let it. It doesn't have to any more. The power of sin has been broken. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof. Neither yield ye your members, as instruments of unrighteousness—when he says your members, he's talking about your hands, your feet, your eyes, your tongue—your members, as instruments of unrighteousness, unto sin—but now, watch this—but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members, as instruments of righteousness, unto God.

Now, here's the key. Look at it. For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace. Hallelujah. Praise God. Folks, listen to this now. Get it in your heart. This is the most glorious truth. This is what will deliver you. This is amazing grace that gives abounding victory. What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. Read verse fourteen: for sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law, but under grace.

Now, when you trust Christ, you get imputed righteousness, but what you need also is practical righteousness. And it is done when, first of all, there's a matter of fact, something you know, and then, you reckon on that fact. You say, that is true; I reckon; I believe that; I take it by faith. That is a matter of faith. I take that fact. I get that fact in here. I stand on it. I calculate on it. And then, the matter of function. Here's where the victory is: begin to yield to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, how do you yield? Well, there's a negative and a positive. Look at the negative, in verses twelve through thirteen. Look at it Romans six, verse twelve: Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it to the lust thereof. Neither yield ye your members, as instruments of unrighteousness, unto sin.

You can say to the devil, I don't have to obey you. Now, before you were saved, you could never say that—you could never say that. You can say to the flesh, I don't have to obey you. Before you were saved, you could never say that. You were a slave of Satan, and you were a slave to your flesh. Now, you don't have to obey the devil. You don't

have to obey the flesh. You can choose. You can yield. You must choose against King Satan, and King Self, and King Sin. And, you can say to the devil, no longer will these hands; no longer will these eyes; will these members, be your tools.

A man was on a train one time. He's been saved—as a godly man and a Christian. Some other men were sitting there drinking liquor and gambling with cards. They asked him if he would sit in. They needed a fourth man. He said, well, I can't play cards. And, they said, well, why not? He said, I don't have any hands. Those hands were right there. They said, you've got hands. He said, no, those are not mine; those belong to Jesus. Those, His hands—I don't have any hands. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I but Christ liveth in me. I will not yield these members. I will not do it. I won't do it. Before that, you had no power to do that, but now that you know this, now that you reckon this, now, there's a matter of function. You can say, I will not yield my members as the instruments of unrighteousness.

There's the dethronement of sin. There's the enthronement of the Savior. Look in verse thirteen again: Neither yield ye our members, as the instruments of unrighteousness, unto sin. Now watch. But yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead.

Now, get this down big and plain and straight. In this matter of victory, it is not your ability that counts. It is not your responsibility, but it is your response to His ability. Your responsibility is your response to His ability. Now, you must choose. Listen. You can't do it without Him. He will not do it without you. You must yield.

I heard about a country man who came out of one of these side roads on Interstate 40 over here somewhere in Arkansas, and a little pick-up truck covered with dust just shot out, never slowed down. The big 18-wheeler pulled over, almost wrecked, and the driver leaned out the window, and said, hey, didn't you see that sign? He said, what sign? He said, that sign that said, Yield. He said, well, I opened the window, and yelled as loud as I could.

Friend, you are to yield with all of your heart. Just yield. Yield to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I'm going to sum it up, and I'm going to tell you something that has absolutely gripped my heart, one of the greatest truths I know. Are you listening? When temptation comes, you must yield, and you will yield. When temptation comes, you must yield, and you will yield. That much is settled. The only question is: which way will you yield? Will you yield to Satan? Will you yield to Christ? That's it. That's the only question. When temptation comes, you must yield. You must, and you will. The only question is: to whom will you yield? That's the only question. Stop fighting temptation. Why fight a battle already lost, when you can enjoy a victory already won. Don't fight temptation. Yield to Jesus. Did that get it? Yield to Jesus.

When temptation comes, you say, hey, that old Adrian is dead. I don't have to obey him. I'm no longer Satan's slave. I died. I was buried. I was raised. Christ lives in me. Jesus, I yield. And, brother, I want to tell you that incredible power will come into your life the moment you yield to Jesus Christ. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. God forbid. Amazing grace gives abounding victory.

Verse fourteen: For sin shall not have dominion over you. Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and the scourge and the blot of slavery began to be erased in this country. We still bear the scars of it. But you know the sad thing? When Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, potentially—potentially—every slave was freed. But, you know, in actuality, every slave wasn't freed. Do you know why? Some of them didn't know it. Some of them didn't know it. And, do you know what else? Some of them who knew it, it was too big. They couldn't take it in. They just could not take it in. I mean they'd been slaves so long, they just could not take it in. They could not believe it. So, while they knew it here, they didn't know how to reckon it here. And then, some of them continued to serve as slaves, because they'd served as slaves so long they were intimidated by their own master. And, he would tell them to do this and that, and they would yield to him, when they didn't have to. You see? Do you see, friend? What good is the gospel of Jesus Christ? What good is the gospel of grace? What good is God's Emancipation Proclamation, if you don't know it, if you don't reckon to it, and if you don't yield on it? But, when you yield, you'll be free indeed. To know it is the matter of the head. To reckon it is a matter of the heart. And to yield is a matter of the will. Get those in you, my friend. Get those in you.

## Conclusion

There is our identification with Christ. That's the fact you're to know. There is, friend, our appropriation of Christ. That is the faith you're to reckon with. There is our submission to Christ. That is, friend, the function that you're to obey. And, when you do that, you'll have victory. Wouldn't you like victory? Amazing grace and abounding victory. Isn't grace wonderful? Just say amen. Jim let's just sing one more stanza of Amazing Grace. Let's just stand and sing just Amazing Grace. Let's just stand and sing, Amazing Grace. Just think about it: Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound.

### HYMN

Bow your heads in prayer. Father, thank you for Amazing Grace and abounding victory.

Now, while your head is bowed, if you've never received Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, God loves you, and because salvation is by grace, He will save you this very moment, if you'll trust Him. Why don't you pray a prayer like this:

O God, I know you love me, and I know it's your grace that causes you to love me.

Jesus, I believe you died for my sins. I believe you paid my sin debt. I want to reckon that true for me today. I want to believe by faith and trust you. Come into my heart; forgive my sin; save me, Lord Jesus.

Would you ask Him that? Save me, Lord Jesus. If you asked Him, then pray this way: Lord Jesus, thank you for saving me. I stand by faith. I don't ask for a sign. I don't look for a feeling. I stand on your Word. And now, Lord Jesus, because you died for me, I will live for you. And, give me the courage to make this public. In your holy name. Amen.

# Abounding Victory Through Amazing Grace, Part 2

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 6, 1994

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 7:1–4

*“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”*

ROMANS 7:4

## Outline

Introduction

- I. There Is a Death to Reckon
- II. There Is a Deficiency to Realize
- III. There Is a Dynamic to Receive
- IV. There Is a Discipline to Remember

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, would you turn please to Romans chapter seven, and we're going to continue where we left off in a sense this morning, where we we're speaking about Abounding Victory Through Amazing Grace. And so, we'll just call this Part 2 of that message. And turn here to Romans chapter seven. We were in Romans chapter six. Have you ever noticed that sometimes there seems to be a contradiction in what the Bible says about us and what we know about us—gap between what God says we are and what we appear to be?

For example, the Bible says that we are complete in Him, and yet most of us feel incomplete. The Bible says that we are overcomers, and yet many of us are overcome. The Bible says that we have peace that passes understanding, and many of us are worried, and distraught, and upset. Jesus said, if we would come to Him and drink, we would never thirst again, and yet many of us are dissatisfied, on a quest, can't seem to be satisfied. There is deep thirst in our hearts, and yet Jesus said, if we'll come to Him, we'll never thirst again. He said that we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us, and yet many of us are living lives of defeat. He says that by faith we have overcome the world, and yet the world seems to be overcoming us.

The Bible says one thing about us, and yet our experience says something else about us. Now, what are we going to do? Are we going to bring the Bible down to the level of our experience, or are we going to bring our experience up to the level of the Bible? Now, somehow, there's a contradiction, and there's a gap that we have to deal with.

The Bible describes us one way, but experience tells us that we're not that way. Well now, there are two words that are very, very important to us. One is provision, and the other is appropriation. God has provided all of these things, but we have not appropriated all of these things.

You see, anything God does, He does absolutely, He does completely, He does fully; yet, we have to appropriate what God has done. Now, let me give you an example, and I think I can clear that up.

For example, Jesus Christ on the cross has already paid for the sins of the whole world. I mean, He died for everybody, and the sins of all people have been paid for, and atonement is made. First John 2:2 says, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. And John the Baptist, in John chapter one, verse twenty-nine, He pointed to Jesus, and He said, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away"—what?—"the sin of the world." Now, has the sin of the world been taken away? Well, yes and no. Did Jesus die for our sins? Yes. Is He the propitiation for the sins of the whole world? Yes. But is the whole world saved? No. Why? Because they have not appropriated what our Lord has already done. There's a lot of sin still around. And yet, Christ died for that sin, paid for that sin, took it away; but it's not taken away. And why is it not taken away, when He took it away? That's because people have not appropriated what He has done.

Now, for example, the Bible says, in John chapter three, verse eighteen, "He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed." That is, his sin has been paid for. The condemnation now is not that he's sinned, but the condemnation is he's not received what he's supposed to have. He has not appropriated it.

Now, the same is true in the Christian's life. There seems to be a contradiction. Remember today, this morning, I talked to you about reckoning yourselves to be dead? Do you have even a faint glimmer of the message this morning? Just kind of nod your head. You remember we're talking about that. We reckon ourselves to be dead. And, we said, that was done. I mean, when did you die? You died when Jesus died. His death had your name on it. Remember that? All right. We are crucified with Christ.

But now, let me show you something. Now, we're going to get to Romans seven in just a moment. All of this just to get you ready for it. In Colossians 3:3, the Bible says, "for ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." That's Colossians 3:3. But in

Colossians 3:5, it says, "mortify therefore your members"—put them to death. Now, wait a minute, Paul. Make up your mind. You say, in 3:3, we're dead, and then in 3:5, you tell us to put the members of our flesh to death. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry. Now, this sounds like a contradiction. How can we put to death that which is already dead?

Well, the truth of the matter is, it has been done, absolutely by the Lord Jesus Christ, but it is not ours in reality until we appropriate what God has done. So, is it so? Well, it is so in the fact that God has done it, but it will not be so in your life until you appropriate what God has given you.

The classic example of that is when God gave to the Jews the Promised Land we call the Land of Canaan, and He told Joshua this—Joshua, who was leading the children of Israel out of the wilderness and into the Land of Canaan. He said to Joshua, every place that the sole of your foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto you. Very interesting. He said, go in there and possess your possessions. He didn't say, every place that the sole of your foot tread upon will I give you. He said, it's already yours. Well, was it theirs? Well, it was, and it wasn't. I mean, they were outside; they had not possessed it. Was it theirs? God had given it to them, but yet they did not have it in reality, they did not have it in actuality, until they put the foot of faith on the work of God, till they possessed their possessions.

You may have books in your library. Are they yours? Well, I guess. Have you read them? No. Well, if you haven't read them, you haven't possessed your possessions. They are yours potentially. The book is yours, but you have not actually entered into that which is really yours.

Now, all of these things that the Bible says about us—we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God—that is true, but then, now we must actualize what God has realized, and possess our possessions.

Now, tonight, we're going to slow down just a little bit, but I want you to learn, as we talk about victory through amazing grace, I want you to learn how to appropriate the freedom that the Holy Spirit has made you free with.

Now, let's look here in Romans chapter seven. We're moving out of Romans chapter six. Romans chapter seven, verses one through four: "Know ye not brethren for I speak unto them that know the law how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he lives."

Remember what I told you this morning—when a man dies, the law can't do anything to him? Isn't that true? When he dies—I don't care what kind of a crime he's committed—the law has no more dominion over him. The law hath dominion over a man as long as he lives, for the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law to her

husband as long as he liveth, but if the husband be dead, she's loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man.

Now, here's an interesting thing. Here Paul is talking about living a life of victory, and then all of a sudden he starts talking about a man and a woman, and marriage, and death, and adultery, and all of this. Why is Paul trying to teach us about marriage right here in this particular passage? He's not trying to teach us about marriage. He's only illustrating what he's teaching, by marriage, and what he's saying here is the story of a woman who falls in love with a man, and she marries a man, and we're going to call him a perfect man. Anybody here ever married a perfect man?

They were having a testimonial meeting, and the pastor asked, does anybody know a perfect man? And you know he's teaching that all have sinned, and one man stood up, and said, yes. I didn't know him, but I knew of him. Said, well, who was it? Said, it was my wife's first husband. But the truth of the matter is that no man is perfect, but God's law is perfect. And Paul makes an analogy here. He's saying, before we had victory, we were married to the law, and the law is perfect. Now, if a woman married a perfect man, at first, she'd think she's really getting something wonderful. But I don't think there's a woman here that would want to be married to a perfect man. I mean, he never makes a mistake; not one mistake does Mr. Law make. She's married to Mr. Law, and he has the most rigid standards. He has the most holy character. He never makes a mistake. He never deviates. Every thing that he says is profoundly true, perfectly righteous, and totally absolute. She says, I have married the perfect man. But then she understands this: that the standard that he holds for himself, he holds for her. He expects her to do everything just right.

And so he says, now, wife, we're married. You do this, and this, and this, and this, and this; and don't do this, and don't do this, and don't do this, and don't do this. Do you understand? Yes, beloved. I understand. He goes off to work. He comes back home, and he says, report. Did you do thus and thus and thus and thus and thus, and did you not do thus and thus and thus and thus and thus? She said, well, husband, I'm sorry. I tried, but I failed. And so, he scolds her, and she feels badly, but she can't really complain too much, because he's not asked her to do a single thing she ought not to do, nor has he told her not do a thing that she really ought to do. And so, she says, husband, I have failed. You're such a wonderful man. Give me another chance. I'll do better. And she rededicates her life to Mr. Perfect.

The next day he says, do this, and do this, and do this, and do this; and don't do this, and don't do this, and don't do this. She says, husband, it's gonna be a wonderful day. But when he comes home, she's failed again. One day, two days, three days, four days.

One week, two weeks, one month, three months. One year, two years, and after a while she has had it up to here with Mr. Perfect. She can't please him. She absolutely can't please him. And yet, she can't criticize him. Everything he says is right. To make matters worse, she's been noticing another man. This man is not Mr. Law. He's Mr. Love. He also is righteous and holy, but there's something different about Mr. Love. He seems so understanding. He seems so kind. He seems so compassionate. As over against Mr. Law, who's so judgmental, and so rigid, and so demanding, and she just can't please him. So, she has an idea. She says, I'll divorce Mr. Law, and I'll marry Mr. Love. No, she's, oh no, I can't do that. Why, I'm bound to my husband by the law, as long as he lives. Well, she says, I know what I'll do. I'll stick it out until Mr. Law dies, and then I'll be free. But she finds out the rascal's not gonna die. He's got an iron constitution—"till heaven and earth pass not a jot nor a tittle will fail from the law. The law is there, and she's married to him, and she can't please him, and she can't measure up. Her life is miserable, and she doesn't know how to get out of it.

And, then, she has an idea. She says, I know how I get out. He won't die, but I can die. And if I die, I am free from the law.

Now, you say, Pastor, that's kind of strange. Well, that's exactly what Paul is doing. Look at it here, verses one through four: Know ye not brethren, for I speak unto them that know the law, how the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth; for the woman which hath a husband is bound by the law through her husband as long as he liveth, but if the husband be dead, she is loose from the law of her husband. Now, that's the illustration.

Now, notice verse three: "so then, if while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress, but if her husband be dead, she's free from that law so that she be no adulteress though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law. This is the death I'm talking about. The only release is death.

## **I. There Is a Death to Reckon**

Now, go back and remember what I told you there in Romans six. When Jesus died, we died with Him. When Jesus was buried, we were buried with Him. When Jesus was raised, we were raised with Him. And, we need to reckon on that fact. There is a death to reckon. There is a death to reckon. Now, she has died. So, now she can marry Mr. Love. We say, how can a dead woman marry anybody? Because she's also been raised—she's also been raised. We died with Jesus; we're raised with Jesus. And so, look at it again. See what he's saying here. Now, I know this is deep, but look, if you will, in verse four: "wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ that ye should be married to another." Here's a dead woman who gets married.

Well, how does a dead woman get married? “Even to him who is raised from the dead, Jesus, that we should bring forth fruit from the dead.”

Do you see what Paul is doing here? Do you see why he has jammed this thing about marriage right in here, only as an illustration? Now, certainly there are some wonderful truths about marriage, but he's using it, not to teach about marriage; he's using it to teach about victory, so that we can learn how to reckon ourselves dead to the law—the law has no more dominion over us—and not only dead to the law, but dead to self, dead to Satan, dead to sin, that we might be alive unto God.

## **II. There Is a Deficiency to Realize**

Now, first of all, there is a death to reckon. Secondly, there is a deficiency to realize. Now, she gets married now to Mr. Love, and, of course, you know Mr. Love is Jesus. She is married to Mr. Love. We are the Bride of Christ, and we're married to the Lord Jesus Christ. And she says, oh, this is going to be wonderful, just wonderful. No longer am I married to Mr. Law; I'm now married to Mr. Love. But she finds out that Mr. Love has the same requirements that Mr. Law had. Jesus didn't come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them. And, Mr. Law would say, do this and this and this, why, Jesus, Mr. Love, would even say more. Mr. Law said, one mile. Mr. Love says, two miles.

Mr. Law says, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and Mr. Love says, love your enemies. Why, she says, oh no, it's getting worse. I thought it would get better, but now it's worse. I can't please Mr. Love. But then she notices something very different about Mr. Love. Mr. Love does what Mr. Law never did do. Mr. Love would not just tell her to do things and leave her. Mr. Love would stand there and do it for her. Everything He demanded, He did Himself. They had a joint bank account. He's incredibly wealthy. Honey, you have a need, just write a check. You need some strength—I'm here for you. Oh, he never diminished the demands, but he's right there to do these things for her, and through her, and in her, but, you see, she had to understand that even though she's married to Mr. Love, she couldn't do it herself.

Look here in Romans chapter seven, and beginning in verse eighteen. Here she is now. She discovered that the old man, the old woman, could not suffice, but now she understands that the saved person cannot do it in his or her own strength.

Look in verse eighteen. Paul says, for I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing. Have you found that out yet? I hope you have. In my flesh. He did not come to remodel the flesh, but to cause you to renounce it. Because in my flesh is no good thing, for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now, if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law

that when I would do good, evil is present with me, for I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into the captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Now, what's all of this talking about? Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? Now, she comes, she's married now to Mr. Love, and she so wants to please him also, even more than she did Mr. Law, but she finds this law in here every time she's trying to do good she's still failing. I mean, she delights in the law of God in the inward person, but you see, her inward person makes contracts that her outward members can't fulfill. She just can't do it. I'm not going to do this. And then, she does it. Well, I will do this. And she fails to do it. And, friend, there's hardly a Christian who hasn't been right there. And, the apostle Paul was talking about himself right now, if it's any comfort to you.

After he got saved, he was trying and failing, and trying and failing, and trying and trying, and failing and failing, and He loved God with all of his heart. He said, I delight in the law of God.

And yet, there's another law that just keeps pulling me down. So there's a death to reckon. There is a deficiency to realize. You see, what happens is, when you get saved, there are two conflicting principles in your heart. Now, if this is confusing, please pay attention, because it will jell in a moment. But you have two conflicting principles. Look, if you will now, in verses twenty-one and following: "I find then a law that when I would do good, evil is present with me; for I delight in the law of God after the inward man, but I see another law in my members warring against the law of my mind." You see, you've got these conflicts, those of you, I believe that the great majority of you here tonight want to serve God here with all of your heart, and yet there's something else in you that just wants to do evil. Isn't that right? Nod your head. I mean, don't you look so holy. I mean, you know that is true. I mean, Paul is writing about himself. You find that civil war, and you say, but I was dead and crucified with Christ. I'm now married to Mr. Love, and yet, I still feel that, and that deficiency brings misery. Paul says, in verse twenty-four: "oh, wretched man that I am!"

You see, there is a law called the law of God, which is righteous and holy, and then there's a law called the law of sin. Now, they don't study about the law of sin at Memphis State. They don't study about the law of sin in the great universities. What is the law of sin? The law of sin is the law that tells why people behave like they do. It is an inward predisposition to sin, and it is in every one of us. It's very much like the law of gravity. There is a constant downward pull. A constant prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love. That law of sin is there. We want to serve God. We get all charged up in a preaching service, we hear the pastor preach, we rededicate our lives, re-consecrate our lives, and say, I'm going to live for Jesus, walk right outside the

church building, and fall on our face spiritually. Delighting to do the law of God in the inward man, but finding that other law, that civil war. I'm not talking about unsaved people now. I'm talking about saved people. Man says, I'm going to live for God, and then his eyes look with lust, his tongue wags with gossip, his ears strain to hear unclean things, and he's a saved man, she's a saved woman. And, that brings misery. All right now, look. There's death to reckon, but there is a deficiency to recognize.

### **III. There Is a Dynamic to Receive**

Now, thirdly, and here's where it gets good, there is a dynamic to receive. Look, if you will now, in chapter eight, verses one and two: There is, therefore, now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit; for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. Now, there's a new law. He introduces now a new law, and it is the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Verse three: "for what the law could not do—that is, Mosaic law—in that it was weak through the flesh." You see, he's talking about the Mosaic law. He's talking about the law of sin and death warring in your members, and he's talking now about the law of the spirit in Christ Jesus. Keep all that straight in your mind, if you can. For what the Mosaic law, verse three, could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh—that is, weak through our flesh—God, sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh—now, pay very much attention to verse four—that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us—not by us, but in us—who walk, not after the flesh, but after the spirit.

Remember I said that Mr. Love now comes in and does it through you, and for you, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit.

Now, let me illustrate this. We're talking about the Mosaic law. That's a standard of perfect righteousness. Well, Paul said, I died to that law, and I married the Lord Jesus. Fine. But now I started to live for the Lord Jesus, I found another law—that was the law of sin and death. Even when I wanted to serve Jesus, the good I would, I don't do. The bad I don't want to do, that I do. The law of sin and death is in me. But now, he discovers another law. And, that's the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Now, how does that law work? Well, let me illustrate this.

An airplane flies, and there's a big chunk of metal. I get on those things all the time. I'm going to get on one, God willing, early in the morning. And, when you look at that thing, it's really not supposed to fly. I mean, you think about it. That thing weighs tons. As a matter of fact, I was reading about an airplane on the designing board, whether they'll build it or not, I don't know. A commercial airliner will seat one thousand people plus luggage. You know, you kind of wonder if you want to get on something like that. I

mean, how is it going to get off the ground? And, it gets there, and it gets the engines running, gets at the end of that runway, and it begins to go through there, and the law of gravity says, I'm not going to let you go; I'm not going to let you go; I'm not going to let you go; I'm not going to let you go. But there's another law of aerodynamics that overcomes the law of gravity, and that airplane begins to lift off the ground, and the law of aerodynamics makes it free from the law of gravity. Now, the law of gravity is still there. If you don't believe it, just step outside for a stroll. The law of gravity is still there. But as long as you abide in that airplane, the law of aerodynamics is making you free from the law of gravity, and you're cruising along there 30,000 feet in the air, hundreds of miles an hour, because a new law has superseded the old law.

Now, that's what he's saying. Look at it here. He says in verse two,, For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

Now, you know what keeps the law of gravity from taking over on me right now? I've got life. If I were to die, I'd fall down. The law of gravity is pulling on me right now. If I were to die right now, I would crumple to the floor, because there is a law of gravity that is pulling on me right now. But I've got life. And, my physical life is helping me right now to overcome the law of gravity. That's the reason why I can stand. I've got life in me. Without any life, I cannot overcome this downward pull, this pull of gravity. And so, I've got to find some way that I can get the law of the spirit of life in me to overcome the law of sin and death that is in me.

Now, how does that happen? How does the law of the Word of life take over? When I yield to it. Go back to Romans chapter six, and look at it. Look in verse sixteen: "Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourself service to obey his servants ye are to whom ye obey, whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness.

I said this morning, when temptation comes, you must yield, but not to the temptation—to Jesus. Just yield. Don't fight the temptation, and don't yield to the temptation—yield to Jesus Christ. There is a law. It is the law of the Word of life in Christ Jesus. When you say, I am dead to the law, the penalty of the law and the power of sin, I am married to the Lord Jesus, and though I'm married to the Lord Jesus, I still find this old law in me, the law of sin and death, but the righteousness of the law is now fulfilled in me by Mr. Love.

Some people get the idea, you know, they say, well, Pastor Rogers, I've been saved by grace. I don't think I want to tithe; that was the Old Testament law. You've missed it, friend. Jesus said, not a jot nor a tittle shall fail from the law till all be fulfilled." Jesus did not come to diminish righteous demands; He came to give you power to live, that the righteousness of the law would be fulfilled in us, not by us. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Now, you just have to appropriate this by faith. He's done it already. I mean the law of the Word of life in Christ Jesus is there, but you need to appropriate what is

yours. Is this making sense? I'm just up here talking. Believe me, when I listen to it, it's confusing, and I'm trying to explain it. There's so much to learn. It's so wonderful. How to live the Christian life. Friend, there is victory in the Lord Jesus Christ, and it all comes by the grace of God. You're married to Mr. Love—Mr. Grace, the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **IV. There Is a Discipline to Remember**

Now, I've talked to you about a death. I've talked to you about a deficiency. I've talked to you about a dynamic. One thing, and I'll be finished. I want to talk to you about a discipline. There is a discipline to remember. Now, what is the discipline? How are you going to have this law working in you? Well, begin now reading in chapter eight, verse five: For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Word, the things of the Word. Now watch this: to be carnally minded is death. He's not talking about eternal death now. He's just talking about, you're living a deadly dead life, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be.

Now, what's he saying? He's saying, where your mind is, your feet will follow. You tell me what you think about all day long, and I'll tell you how you walk. What he's saying here is that you need to be occupied and centered on the things of the Spirit. Verse six: "to be carnally minded is death; to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Now, he's going to say, in chapter twelve, verse one, that we present our bodies a living sacrifice. Did you know that that's what we are? We are sacrifices. Well, if you were to take a dead sacrifice, a sacrifice that had been slain, you know what they would do? They would take that bloody piece of meat and they would put it on the altar. But, you know, it's slippery. Freshly butchered meat is very slippery. So, they had two flesh hooks that hold it on the altar to keep it from sliding off. Have you ever slid off the altar? Nod your head. Most of us have. I mean we say, all to thee Jesus I surrender. We place ourselves on the altar. But we slip off. Why do we slip off? Because we failed to have the two flesh hooks. You know what they are? Discipline and devotion—discipline and devotion: those are the two flesh hooks that keep you on the altar.

Now, this discipline and this devotion is what I call being spiritually minded. That's the reason you've got to have a quiet time. You have got to have that discipline and that devotion. Sorry about that, folks. You just thought you could do it without any discipline, didn't you? Because when I said that Jesus does it all. But remember we said that your responsibility is your response to His ability, and you've got to have that time where you center your mind on Him.

Now, if you wake up in the morning, and all through the day, and you don't think about Him, and you don't pray, and you don't put your foot of faith on the promises of God, and you do not reckon day by day by day—remember it when He said, you're

crucified with Christ, that's the aorist tense—that's done, that's finished—but He says, reckon yourself—that is, present tense—over and over again. Get up every morning; think about the Lord Jesus Christ; say, Lord, I am yours. I am yours. I am married to you, and every demand upon my life is upon the Jesus Christ in me, and the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled, not by me, but in me. The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. But you step out of that airplane, you're going down. You abide in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Now, folks, I've given you more than enough. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, seal the message to my heart and to our hearts. Thank you, Lord, thank you that we can reckon ourselves dead unto sin, and alive unto You. Thank you, Lord, that we're the bride of Christ. And, thank you, Lord, that we're married to another that we might bring forth fruit to you. Thank you, Lord that the law of the Word of life in Christ Jesus has made us free from the law of sin and death. And, Lord, give us victory upon victory. In Jesus' name. Amen.

# Learning to Possess Your Possessions

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 5, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 7:1–4

*“Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.”*

ROMANS 7:4

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Learn Dying and Start Living
  - II. Stop Trying and Start Trusting
  - III. Quit Crying and Start Praising
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word, turn to Romans chapter 7, and the title of our message today is Learning to Possess Your Possessions. Many of us are not living up to our profession in Christ. A little boy had a dog and somebody said, Son, what kind of dog is that? Really, the dog was just a mongrel, but the little boy, proud of his dog, said, He's a police dog. And someone said, Well, he doesn't look like a police dog. And the little guy said, Well, he's in the secret service. Now, I know a lot of Christians who are saved, but they don't act like it; they don't behave like it, they're not living victorious lives; and there's something wrong, there's something missing. There seems to be a contradiction between what the Bible says they are in Christ and what they are in reality. There seems to be a gap. For example, the Bible says, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, that we are complete in Him—that is, we don't have need of anything in the spiritual realm in the Lord Jesus. But how many Christians would remind you of somebody like that?

The Bible says, concerning those of us who are saved, we are overcomers. Most believers I know are overcome; they are victims rather than victors. The Bible says that, when we're saved, we have the peace that passeth understanding, and joy unspeakable and full of glory. How many Christians would you say, I know a man, I know a woman, a boy and a girl, a great deal of them that have peace that passeth understanding, that

have joy unspeakable and full of glory? Jesus said, If you'll drink of the water that I will give you, you will never thirst again. How many satisfied people in this congregation would say, I am completely satisfied in the Lord Jesus? The Bible teaches in Romans chapter 8—we're going to get to the first part of that chapter this morning—that in Christ we are more than conquerors. Well, I wonder if we're conquerors at all. And we could just go on and on and on and talk about what the Bible says we are, and then what reality shows that we are.

Now, where's the problem? I mean, what about this contradiction? Do you think you're right and the Bible is wrong? So what are we going to do—we're just going to dumb down the Bible, are we just going to adjust the Bible, and lower the Bible to match our lives? Incidentally, Easter is next Sunday. The bookstore manager told me in Florida one time, said, Pastor, do you know what happened to me? Said, A lady came in here and wanted to know if I had a lavender Bible. She said next Sunday was Easter, and she was going to wear a lavender dress, and she wanted a Bible to match her dress. Now, nothing really wrong with that, but I got to thinking how many of us want a Bible to match our lives, don't we? We want to somehow bring the Bible down to our lives, rather than bring our lives up to the Bible. The flag got out ahead of the regiment in a battle, and the man said, Sergeant, the flag's out ahead of the regiment—Shall I bring it back? He said, No, bring the regiment up to the flag. And that's what we need to do in our Christian life. We need to bring our lives up to the standard that God has for us. The truth of the matter is that we are all of these things that I just described. We are overcomers; we do have peace that passeth understanding. Jesus Christ is made into this wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. But somehow we need to bring the regiment up to the flag, and we need not to make the Bible match our lives, but to make our lives match the Bible.

Now, what is the key? What is the answer to this riddle, this problem? Well, you need to understand there are two key words, and the first key thing that we're thinking about is what God does—we'll call that provision. God has made provision for us. That's one key word. But the other key word is appropriation. Now, God has made the provision for us, but that provision does us no good until we appropriate what God has done for us. That's the reason I've called this message Learning to Possess Your Possessions.

I think I can illustrate what I'm talking about in the difference between provision and appropriation. For example, behind me are these crosses. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, represented by the center cross there, He died for the world. And the Bible says, in 1 John chapter 2 and verse 2, that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins—that's a double-jointed word which means satisfaction. He's the satisfaction for our sins. And not for ours only, but for the sin of the whole world. And, as we saw in the Passion

Play, John the Baptist saw Jesus coming: "Behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world!" Jesus died for the sin of the world. Yes, but is there still sin in the world? Of course! Why? Because people have not appropriated what Jesus did on the cross, right? They have not possessed their possessions. That's the reason the Bible says, in John 3:18, "He that believeth on him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he hath not believed." I mean provision has been made, but he has not appropriated that which is his. See, provision on the one hand; appropriation on the other hand.

Let me give you another example. Once you get saved—as we preached last Sunday, remember?—the Bible says that we died with Christ. We are crucified with Christ, that, when Jesus died, His death had our name on it. And so, the Bible teaches clearly, in Colossians 3, verse 3, "For ye are dead, ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God." Now, that is true about every mother's child who's saved. You are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Jesus died, you died with Him. Well, that is true—that's Colossians 3:3; but Colossians 3:5 says, "Mortify, therefore, your members, which are upon the earth." The word mortify means put to death. Well, wait a minute—wait a minute. Doesn't the Bible say we're already dead? Isn't that a contradiction? No! What he's saying is, yes, technically, you are dead with Christ, but practically, you must appropriate what you have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me give you another example. I think you can understand this one. Remember when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, they were going into Canaan, they were coming out of the land of bondage into the land of blessing, and God told Joshua in Joshua chapter 1—I love this—he said, Joshua, every place—every place—that the sole of your foot shall tread upon,"—now, listen to this—"every place have I given you." Not will I give it to you—I have already given it to you. Every place that you put your foot down—it's yours, it's already yours, it's already yours. Now, it was theirs, but they had to possess their possessions. God didn't say, If you put your foot on it, I will give it to you. God said, I have given it to you. Now, go in and possess your possessions. Are you following me, folks? Are you listening to me? Now, what I'm trying to tell you is that you have so much that you have not yet possessed. There is God's provision, but there must be your appropriation. And it doesn't matter what God has done for you—if you don't appropriate it, it won't be yours.

I think I can give you one more illustration about what it means to possess your possessions. How many of you—now, be honest with me—have books in your library at home that you haven't read yet? Let me see your hands. That's most of us. You've got books, but you haven't read them yet. Now, is that book yours? Well, yes. But you haven't possessed your possessions. I mean, it's doing you no good. It is there—it's your book; but you have not appropriated that which is yours. So remember, on the one

hand, there is the word provision. On the other hand, there's the word appropriation.

Now, with that in mind, in Romans chapter 7, we're going to learn how to appropriate; we're going to learn how to possess our possessions. Now, let's read in Romans chapter 7, verse 1: "Know ye not, brethren, for I speak unto them that know the law, how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which has an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth, but if the husband be dead she's loosed from the law of her husband. So then, if while her husband liveth she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But if her husband be dead, she's free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ, that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God."

Good night, Pastor, what does that have to do with living victoriously? Why did Paul, right in the middle of this passage, why does he start talking about marriage and divorce and dying and remarrying? What on earth is this? Well, he's giving us an incredible lesson, an object lesson, and I'm amazed at the genius of the apostle Paul—of course, he did it by divine inspiration—as he gives this story. Here's the story of a woman who is married to a man. Now, don't miss the analogy that Paul is making. That man's name, we're going to call him Mr. Law—Mr. Law. She is married to Mr. Law. Now, you know that the law of the Lord is perfect, and so, she is married to a perfect man. That leaves out every other woman here today, except Joyce. She's married to a perfect man. Now, you might think it would be wonderful to be married to a perfect man. She thinks, I've got the catch; well, I've got the best guy; I am married to a man, a gentleman, named Mr. Law. And she says, What a wonderful, noble husband I have, Mr. Law! And Mr. Law is a very rigid man. Mr. Law has extremely high standards. And each day before Mr. Law goes off to work, he tells his wife what to do. He says, Do this and this and this and this. And he says, Don't do this, and don't do this, and don't do this. She says, Yes, beloved husband, gives him a kiss. Her intentions are so good. She's going to obey him and do everything that he tells her to do. But, in the course of the day, she finds out that she did not do everything he told her to do, and there's some things he told her not to do that she slipped up and did. When he comes home and checks up on her, he finds out that she did not do everything that she was supposed to do, and she did some things she was not supposed to do, and he scolds her, and she feels guilty over it. But she says, I'll do better tomorrow. And he gives her instructions tomorrow: Do this, do this, do this; and don't do that, don't do that, don't do that. She says, Yes, husband, you're so, you're so wise, you're so strong, and everything you've told me to do is right. And then when he comes home, she's failed again and again and again and again, and after a while, she said, I'm sick of being married to him. I don't want to be married to a perfect

man. I can't please him!

Like the woman who made up her mind one day she was going to please her husband no matter what he said. But she said, Sweetheart, what would you like for breakfast? He said, Eggs. She said, How would you like them fixed, sweetheart. He said, I want one fried and one scrambled. She said, All right, went in the kitchen, and fried an egg, and scrambled an egg, and put them on the table. He still had a pout. She said, Now, what's wrong? He said, You scrambled the wrong egg. Now, there are some people that you just can't please. And she couldn't please Mr. Law. And so, she says, I wish I could get out of this thing, but I can't get out of it; I'm married to him, as long as we live. I'm not free to go off and marry some other man. God's plan is not that way. I'm stuck with this guy. And then, she says, Oh, wait a minute, though. I'll wait till he dies. I'll wait till Mr. Law dies, and then, when Mr. Law dies, I'll be free. Because she'd been looking at another man already. That man's name is Mr. Love. She says, I'm tired of Mr. Law; I want to marry Mr. Love. But I can't marry Mr. Love because I'm already hooked to Mr. Law. But I'll wait—when Mr. Law dies; but then it dawns on her, Mr. Law is not going to die. This man has an iron constitution. As a matter of a fact, the Bible says about him, "Till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or one tittle will fail from the law." She says, He's not going to die! I am stuck with him. And then, she has an idea. Ah, maybe he won't die, but maybe I'll die. Maybe I can die, and then, if I die, then I can be married to Mr. Love. I know what you're thinking, how can a dead woman marry anybody?

Well, here's a wonderful story. Here's what the apostle Paul is saying. Watch this, now, in chapter 7—look in verse 4: "Wherefore my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law,"—now, watch this—"by the body of Christ,"—he's talking now about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ—"that ye should be married to another, even to him that is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Is this getting through? Is this not a great illustration? What Paul is saying is this: that, yes, by nature we're married to the law, and the law makes demands upon us that we cannot meet, no matter how hard we try. But when Jesus Christ died, we died with Him; we became dead to the law by the body of Christ. His death had our name on it. His burial had our name on it. His resurrection had our name on it. And we died with Him, we were buried with Him, we are raised with Him, and we have a new life. And now, friend, we're the bride of Christ—we're the bride of Christ. Isn't that a good analogy?

## **I. Learn Dying and Start Living**

All right now, here's the first step, now, in possessing your possessions. Are you ready for it? Learn dying and start living. That's not contradictory. Learn dying and start living. You will never possess your possessions until you come to the end of your self.

Remember this woman had to die. Now, you say, Well, I don't want to die, Pastor. Well, I'm not being morbid. I didn't say just learn dying; I said learn dying, and start living—die to the old ways. That's the reason Jesus Christ said, "If any man will come after me, let him take up his cross." A cross is not for wearing around your neck; it's for dying on. You die! We said only, it's the old man that dies; it's the old woman that dies, so that you can become a new person. Jesus said, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall find it." When we were little boys, we used to play finders keepers, losers weepers. Did you ever play that? With Jesus, it's keepers weepers, losers finders. When you lose your life for His sake and the gospel's, then you find it. You say, I'm sick and tired of the old life; I'm sick and tired of trying; I'm sick and tired of trying to please the law. I can't do it, Jesus. You died for me; I died with you; I come to the end of that old way. Learn dying, and then you'll start living.

Now, I'll admit nobody wants to say, I want to die. You know, everybody wants to go to heaven, but nobody wants to die, isn't that right? But you've got to go through something to get to something. You have to go through something to get to something. You have to go through death to get to heaven, and friend, you have to go through death to yourself to get to the victorious life. The reason that so many of us are not filled with the Spirit is, very frankly, we're so stuffed full of ourselves there's not room for the Spirit. We have to come to the end of ourselves and learn dying—learn dying—so we can start living. I am not being morbid. I am being joyful, because Jesus didn't say, I have come that you might have death. Jesus said, "I have come that you might have life, and have it abundantly"—but not until you're sick and tired of that old life, not until you say, Yes, Jesus, because you died, I died with you, and, thank God, when you rose, I rose with you.

## **II. Stop Trying and Start Trusting**

So, we're talking about possessing your possessions. Number one, learn dying so you can start living. Number two, second principle—you ready for it? Stop trying and start trusting. Learn dying and start living. Stop trying and start trusting. Now, what the apostle Paul is going to do right here is to give you his biography as an early Christian. Begin now in verse 7, and look at verse 7: "What shall we say, then? Is the law sin?" No, there's nothing wrong with Mr. Law. "God forbid. May I not known sin except but by the law"—he kept telling me to do this and not to do that. And now I want you to notice something very interesting. From chapter 7, verse 7 on through verse 24, there are three words that stand out over and over and over again. One word that stands out more than any other—and it's the shortest word, it is the little perpendicular pronoun I. I've taken my Bible—I want to show you, Brother Bob—I've taken my Bible, and every

place that the word I is, or me, or my, I've done in lavender. You see that, over forty times. It looks like a polka dotted dress. I'm just going to read a little bit, and I want you to listen to how many times he says I in verse 7: "What shall we say, then, is the law sin? God forbid. May I have not known sin but by the law, for I have not known lust except the law had said." Verse 9: "For I was alive and I died." Verse 10: "I found thee." Verse 11: "deceived me and slew me." Verse 13: "me." Verse 14: "I am carnal." Verse 15: "that which I do I allow not, what I would, that I do not and what I hate, that I do." I, I, I, I—forty times! He's talking about himself.

The next major word is the word law. That's used in this passage some twenty times. Now, what is the key? It's Paul and the law. Now, he's already said, All right, I'm not married to Mr. Love. Well wait a minute; let me tell you what happens to this woman. She says, I can't please Mr. Law. Now, I'm married to Mr. Love; it's going to be wonderful. Mr. Love is so kind. Mr. Love is so compassionate. Mr. Love is not rigid like Mr. Law. Thank God I'm now married to Mr. Love. And then, do you know what happens to her? She finds out that Mr. Love's requirements are higher than Mr. Law's requirements. Mr. Law said, go a mile; Mr. Love says go two miles. Mr. Law said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"; Mr. Love says, "Love your enemies; do good to them that persecute you." She said, Man, this is worse than before. I'm out of the frying pan into the fire. I thought it was going to get better married to Mr. Love. And then, she finds out—and here's what I want you to find out; here's what most of us don't understand—that a lost man cannot keep the law of God, and neither can a saved man by himself. Now, most of us don't understand that. We think when we get saved, boy, I came down the aisle, I gave my heart to Jesus Christ, I got baptized up there in that baptistry—I am saved, hallelujah. I won't sin any more; I'm married to Mr. Love. We go along for a while, and then something happens, and that old flesh rises up. We do something, say something, think something, and we say, Oh, I thought I was saved. Where'd that come from? Oh, God, I'm sorry. Forgive me, Lord. I re-consecrate my life to you. I'll never do that again, Lord. And we fall flat on our face. We get in a preaching service, and the preacher will preach. We get under conviction; we'll say, I haven't been the kind of a Christian I need to be and I ought to be, and we rededicate and re-consecrate our lives. and we say, I will do better. And we fail again. I mean, have you ever been there? I've been there. I think almost every new Christian has been there. And then the devil—you know what the devil does? Boy, you've got a real buddy in the devil. If you were in quicksand, he'd pat you on the head. The devil comes to you, and the devil says to you, Well, maybe you weren't saved at all; maybe you don't have the real thing. But anyway, don't go down there to Bellevue and be a hypocrite. Don't sit there and sing, because you know what a rotten life you're living. Why don't you just lay out of church? Why don't you just stop going for a while? Maybe you could never be like

those other people. And you find out that you don't have what it takes.

Now, folks, I'm telling you that a lost man cannot keep the law of God, and I'm telling you also that a saved man cannot keep the law of God, in his own strength. Here's what Paul found out—look in verse 18: "For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me but how to perform that which I, which is good, I find not." You been there? Every one of us has. I want to serve God, I delight in the law of God in the inward man; but I find another law present in me. Now, there are two laws that I want you to look at here, beginning in verse 21—and folks, listen—we are just hitting the top; we're skimming the surface. Listen. Here's Paul's testimony now as a young carnal Christian: "I find, then, a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me." Anybody say, Been there, done that"—let me see your hand? I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man." Paul wasn't a hypocrite; he loved God in his heart. He did: "But I see another law warring in my members against the law of my mind," the law of his mind was the love that he had for God. But there's another war in his members—his eyes, his ears, his tongue—"a war bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members." So Paul says there are two laws. First of all, there is the law of sin. You know what the law of sin is? The law of sin is the law that makes you do what you do. You are a sinner; there is a principle that's in you and in me, and it's called the flesh, and every one of us has it; there's not a one of us that does not have it; it's working in us. I don't care how pious you look, and how nice you look, you have in you a law, a predisposition, called the law of sin. It's like the law of gravity; it's working all the time. You may not be aware of the law of gravity right now, but if it weren't for that, you wouldn't be held on that seat right now, and you'd go spinning off this earth. The law of gravity is that downward pull. That's what happens to us as we get older; that's the law of gravity. And if you really get sick, it really takes over. You won't be able to navigate, you'll get down flat, and if you die, it'll take over completely; you'll just keep on going down and down and down. That is the law of gravity. And so, there are two sins, two laws, that are working constantly in you.

Now, what did Paul discover? Well, he came to the place where he was almost brokenhearted. And he says in verse 24—now, here's the man who's no longer married to Mr. Law, he's married to Mr. Love, and he says, "Oh, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Well, there's the question—and, thank God, he gives the answer in verse 25: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." That is, deliverance comes through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now, let me tell you what this woman discovered who married Mr. Law. Are you following me? Am I just up here talking? Is it making sense? You nod your head—make me feel good anyway. Now, listen. This is a little complicated, but it's worth it, folks;

don't check me out. Now, listen. You learn dying so you can start living. You stop trying and start trusting. Now, the way that you live the victorious life is not by trying. It is not you and the law, but God has provided a victory for you, and that victory is with the new person that you're married to—that's Jesus Christ. Now, let's go back. This Mr. Love says, go two miles. Mr. Love says, do this, and do this, and do this. But you know what she discovers? They now have a joint banking account. Do you know what she also discovers? That everything Mr. Love tells her to do, he just turns around and does it with her or for her. She says, This is wonderful. He says, I want the bed made this way. And he says, Come, I'll show you how to do it; I'll help you to do it. He puts his hands on her hands, and he guides her, and everything she needs, every demand—oh, listen to me, precious friend—every demand of God upon your life is a demand on the Jesus Christ who lives in you. That was a good place for an Amen. Why, I'll give you another chance. Every demand upon your life is a demand upon Jesus who lives in you, okay? Now, you see, listen. You can't do it. The sooner you throw up your hands and you say, Oh, wretched man that I am; who shall deliver me from this dead body? And then hear the answer. I thank God deliverance comes through Jesus Christ.

Now, I want to show you something else, and we're running out of time, so listen in a hurry. Now, look in chapter 8. Notice how he says in verse 25, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then, with the mind, I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh, the law of sin." But now, notice the change beginning in verse 8: "There is therefore no condemnation to those who in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh,"—that is the old nature—"but after the Spirit." And now, here's a new word that you're going to find out. In chapter 7, from 7:24, the Spirit is not mentioned at all. But now, notice the change, the atmosphere in verse 8: "There is now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, for the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." And then, notice in verse 4: "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Look down in verse 9: "For ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. It shall be that the Spirit of God dwell in you, and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." So therefore, how do you live the Christian life? Friend, it is the Holy Spirit of God in you: "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."

Now, remember there's the law of sin and death. There's the law of God, the righteous law of Moses; but there's another law—another law. Listen to me now. In Romans chapter 8, "The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Now, let me illustrate that to you. Have you ever seen an airplane, a big one? Of course you have. Matter of fact, I was reading the other day in a magazine where they're building now an airplane—I'm talking about a commercial

airliner—that will seat one thousand people and carry their luggage. One thousand people—that is a monster airplane. You'd think it'd never get off the ground because what holds it to a ground is a law; it's called the law of gravity. But there's another law, and that is the law of aerodynamics. And somehow the wind flowing over those wings gives a lift to that thing, and you can get on that thing—it weighs tons and tons and tons, but there's another power that is greater than the law of gravity, and lifts that monster off the ground. Now, the downward pull in your life is like gravity, but there's a new law—it's the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus: "Unto those who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." When you say, Oh, God, I can't, you never said I could; but oh, God, you can, and you always said you would; and now, Lord, I stop trying, and I start trusting. And when you stop trying, and when you bow your head, and say, I can't—oh, wretched man that I am, I can't do it—then, Lord, I trust you, then, at that time, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes you free from the law of sin and death.

### **III. Quit Crying and Start Praising**

I'll just tell you the third point, because time is gone. Learn dying and start living. Stop trying and start trusting. The third law is quit crying and start praising. Oh, wretched man that I am—that's verse 24—will quit that crying and start praising. I thank God through Jesus Christ. Begin to say, God, you didn't save me to have me to live a failing life. Lord, you saved me that I might live a victorious life. And Lord, you have given all of this to me. And now, by your grace, and for your glory, I, Lord, am going to possess my possessions. Do you know what? Look at this crowd this morning. What would happen if everyone of us in Christ were to really lay hold of our possessions and not bring the flag back to the regiment, but bring the regiment up to the flag? Not to get a Bible that will match our lives, but let our lives match the Bible.

### **Conclusion**

Let me show you something and I'm going to give an invitation. Everything I've said today is for Christians, believers. This is not for an unbeliever. No unbeliever can live a victorious life. No unbeliever can have the Spirit of God in him. You've got to be saved—you've got to be saved. And, to be saved, you must receive the gift of salvation, the Lord Jesus Christ. Pastor, would Jesus save me this morning? Oh, yes, He will. Pastor, are you certain? I'll tell you how certain I am. If you were to come to Jesus in repentance and faith, and ask Him to save you, and He didn't save you, I would close my Bible and never preach again. I am telling you—you listen to me. He will save you today, and He'll keep you saved, if you trust Him. For the Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. And if you

need Jesus, I want you to pray this prayer: Lord Jesus, I need you. I'm tired of struggling and failing. I need to be saved. Thank you, Jesus, that you paid for my sin with your blood on the cross. My sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. Have mercy on me. Forgive my sin. Take control of my life. Save me, Lord Jesus. Pray that from your heart: Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then, pray this way. Thank you for saving me, Jesus. I believe that you have. I've receive it by faith like a child. Now, Lord Jesus, I'll make it public. Tell Him that right now: I'll make it public. I'll not be ashamed of you, because you died for me. In your name I pray. Amen.

# The Grace, the Groan, and the Glory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 16, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy  
to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

ROMANS 8:18

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Grace We Experience
  - A. There Is No More Condemnation for Sin
  - B. There Is No Control by Sin
  - C. There Need Not Be Any Continuation in Sin
- II. The Groanings We Endure
  - A. The Groaning of Creation
  - B. The Groaning of the Christian
  - C. The Groaning of the Comforter
- III. The Glory We Expect
  - A. We Are Predestined for Glory
  - B. We Are Preserved for Glory

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now I want you to turn to that eighth chapter of the Book of Romans. I want us to look at it because, as I was studying the other day, three words came to my mind. The first word is the word *grace*. The second word is the word *groan*. And the third word is the word *glory*. And I want us to think today on this subject, “The Grace, the Groan, and the Glory.” The grace we experience, the groans we endure, and the glory we expect. I believe all of those are found here in the eighth chapter of Romans. And, of course, we could preach a year from this one chapter. And we’re just going to give an overview today, because I want you to pick up this wonderful strand of truth that’s found here in Romans 8. What a wonderful, wonderful book it is. And it deals with God’s remedy and God’s anecdote for man’s sin.

I know you were horrified, as I was horrified, to read in our daily newspaper the other

day the story of a pet python, and eight-foot snake, that slithered out of an aquarium and into the bedroom of a little infant baby and wrapped itself around that baby and squeezed the life out of that infant. And I had intended maybe even to read that story. But then, as I read it over several times, it was too horrible to read, and I really don't want to read it. But just to bring it up, and I know it's a horrible story, but, you know, sin is a horrible thing. And as I read that story, I thought, *How much like sin that serpent is.* Even when you say the word *sin*, you can hear the hiss of the serpent. It, it was a serpent that first introduced sin into the world and Satan as he took upon him that form of a serpent. But I thought, *Here's something that this family had taken as a pet, something to admire, something to feed, something to stroke and cuddle that had crushed and squeezed the life out of something they held to be so much more dear and of greater worth.* Sin is like that. Sin is like that. Oh, so many times we think that these sins are so harmless or so beautiful or so tantalizing, but they will squeeze and crush the life out of the things that we hold the nearest and the dearest. The wages of sin is death. And I thank God, however, that Romans chapter eight tells us of God's marvelous, wonderful remedy and God's dealing with this thing called sin.

## **I. The Grace We Experience**

So, first of all, I want you to notice with me the grace we experience and as God deals with our sin. And as we're thinking about the grace that we experience, I want you to notice three things that God says about our sin in these first several verses of Romans 8. First of all, He tells us there's no more condemnation for sin. Secondly, He tells us there need be no more control by sin. And, thirdly, He tells us there need to be no more, ah, continuation in sin. I want you to see if that's not true, if that's not what Paul is telling us here.

### **A. There Is No More Condemnation for Sin**

First of all, there's no more condemnation for sin. Look in Romans chapter 8 and verse 1: "There is therefore now no condemnation, no judgment, to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." Now the word *condemnation* means judgment. Praise God, I'll never be condemned because I'm in Christ Jesus. Jesus said, "He that believeth in Me shall never parish, perish." "There is therefore now no condemnation..." Ah, I have passed from death unto life because I have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. I'll never face the judgment for my sins.

You know, sometimes I hear people say, they pray something like this: "Well, Lord, grant that one day we may stand before Thy great white throne." Well, friend, don't pray that prayer for me, and don't pray it for you if you have any sense. Those who stand before the great white throne are those who are going to face condemnation and judgment. My judgment's already passed. My judgment took place two thousand years

ago at Calvary. Jesus died for me. And I'm in Christ. And since He took my debt, and I'm in Him, there is therefore now no condemnation. For me to ever be judged for my sin would be to place me in double jeopardy. It would be like for a man to be adjudicated guilty to pay the full price for his crime and then to be hauled into court again. God will never demand payment twice for my sin. I am in Christ Jesus.

But, listen, that phrase, "in Christ Jesus" is so hard to get hold of. And, you know, sometimes we read things like, "There's therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus," and we just pass over the phrase, "in Christ Jesus," ah, so easily, so glibly. We just pass over it. But what does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? I thank God that the best book of illustrations for preaching is the Bible itself. And one of the illustrations of what it means to be in Christ Jesus is Noah's ark.

Simon Peter told us that that ark was a type, that is, an Old Testament picture, a prophesy, of the Lord Jesus Christ. What did it mean for Noah to be in the ark? You remember the ark was prepared. And God said to Noah, "Noah, come thou into the ark." Now He didn't say, "Noah, go into the ark." He said, "Noah, come into the ark." Aren't you glad He said, "Noah, come into the ark?" Why? Because that meant God was in there. If, if He had said, "Noah, go into the ark," that meant God's out here. You go in there. But when He said, "Come into the ark," that means, "Noah, you come in here where I am." God was in the ark, and God said to Noah, "Noah, come into the ark." And then, the Bible says, and you remember the story in Genesis chapter 7, how God shut him in. God sealed the door. Now that is a picture of our coming into the Lord Jesus Christ and being sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, as the Bible tells us in the Book of Ephesians. Now Noah was shut in and the water was shut out. But here's the interesting thing. What did that water represent? That water represented the judgment of God, for judgment was being poured out upon that world.

But when the ark was built, God gave these instructions to Noah: He said, "Noah, I want you to put pitch on the outside and on the inside of the ark. Pitch it within and without. Now this was a thick, gummy, tar-like substance that was to make the wa, the ark waterproof. And the pitch was put on the outside and the pitch was put on the inside. That's the he, two, Hebrew word *kaphar*. And it is translated other places in the Bible, atonement. Now that's not by accident because, you see, the pitch was a covering and atonement is a covering. The atonement is a covering for our sin, just like that pitch was a covering for that ark. Now what was the pitch there for? It was to keep the water out. And what was the water? It was God's judgment. And where was Noah? On the in, inside of that ark. Now do you get the picture? Do you get the picture, dear friend, that while the raging water of God's wrath beat furiously upon that ark, not one drop of that judgment came through to Noah because he was on the inside.

And that's exactly the way we are in the Lord Jesus Christ. We're in Christ, and

God's wrath fell upon Him. But we are safe because He is our atonement within and without, pitched within and without. Be of sin, the double cure, save from wrath and make me pure. Oh, that's so exciting to be in Christ Jesus. You know, sometimes we stumble. Sometimes we fall, just like the little lady saying, "For it's just a, a while back????." But, thank God, Noah may have fallen down many times in that ark, but he never fell out of it, amen? He couldn't fall out. And, and the water couldn't get to him, and the judgment couldn't get to him because he was in that ark. Now that's a very good picture of what it means to be in Christ Jesus. No condemnation, no judgment can get through.

### **B. There Is No Control by Sin**

Now, secondly, not only is there no condemnation for sin, but there is no control by sin. Look, if you will, in verse 2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." There are two laws that are in operation in the world. There's the law of the Spirit of life, and there's the law of sin and death. And either of those laws, one of those laws is working in you right now. Either the law of the Spirit of life or the law of sin and death. Now that's another hard concept to get to, and I've tried to find a way to illustrate that so you could understand what he's talking about.

Think of the law of sin and death. Like the law of gravity, the law of sin and death is that downward pull in our nature. Do you ever feel a downward pull? Do you ever feel a tendency to do wrong? Nod your head. Don't look so holy. Of course, you have. Of course, you have. We, we sing about it. Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love. There is that constant downward pull. That is the law of sin and death. It's like the law of gravity, and the law of gravity operates at all times.

But there are some other laws in physics. For example, when I was making the notes for this sermon, I was on an airplane coming back from, ah, Michigan. I, I left, ah, the other day in Marquette, Michigan. I was up there speaking at their convention in a snowstorm. And, and I came down here. Well, I was sitting on an airplane. I said, "Lord, I need an illustration for this." And the Lord said, "Well, the law of the Spirit of life is like the law of aerodynamics." Now that airplane – here it is – several tons, flying along in the air. I was sitting there very comfortable, very safe, because I was in that airplane again, like Noah was in the ark, and there was another law. Now the law of gravity had not ceased to operate, but there was another law, a stronger law, a greater law that was keeping me aloft and keeping me in flight. It was the law, for want of a better word, I'll call the law of aerodynamic. And here I am just flying along. And there's that downward pull, but, thank God, there was that upward thrust that kept me from falling. Now that's the law that's in you, dear friend, when you receive the Lord Jesus Christ. God cancels out, well, not really cancels out, but overcomes that old law of sin and death.

Now, you say, "Well, why, then, do Christians sin?" Because sometimes they

willingly choose to step out of the control of that new law of the Spirit of life in Christ. Now suppose I said about that airplane, “You know, it’s a little stuffy in here. I think I’ll step outside.” Well, I wouldn’t, ah, break the law of gravity; I’d demonstrate it, amen? Because the law of gravity is still there. There is that downward pull. And anytime you consciously, knowingly, willingly step outside the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, that old law takes over. But listen to what Paul is telling us. There is no condemnation for sin. There need be no control by sin, because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ hath made me free from that downward pull, that law of sin and death.

### **C. There Need Not Be Any Continuation in Sin**

And, thirdly, therefore, there need be no continuance in sin. Continue to read now in verse 3: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh...” Now that doesn’t mean there was anything wrong with the law. It just means that our old human flesh can’t keep the law. “...God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.” Now Jesus did not come to condemn the sinner, but He did come to condemn sin in the flesh.

Now how did Jesus, in the flesh, condemn sin in the flesh? You know, the more liberal people get, the, ah, the more, the further they get away from the truth of God’s Word, the less they make of the death of Jesus and the more they make of His beautiful life. The liberals make a lot of the life of Jesus. They talk about the peasant from Galilee, the humble man of Nazareth. They talk about Jesus and the, the Sermon on the Mount, and all of these things. And they say, “Now, if we could just be more like Him.” Dear friend, that is sheer foolishness if that’s all the further it goes. Some of these more liberal denominations have even gone through the hymnals and taken out the songs concerning the blood of Jesus. Did you know that? Why, they would be appalled for us to stand and sing, “There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel’s vein, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.” They would be repugnant at, “There’s power, power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.” They don’t like to think about that. They call that a slaughter-house religion. But I want to tell you the Bible says, “Without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins.” And the Bible tells us here that His life in the flesh did not save us. His life in the flesh condemns us. He condemned the sin in the flesh. What does that mean? It means that His sinless, spotless life tells us how rotten ours is when we put our lives alongside of His. And we might brag about our goodness until we measure ourselves by Him.

I heard of a woman who was very proud of her wash, and she lorded it over all the ladies in her neighborhood how clean and how white her sheets were when she hung them out. But one day, she hung out her wash and then it snowed. And she looked at those dingy, grey sheets silhouetted against God’s snow, and she said, “What can a poor woman do in contrast to God’s snow?”

Oh, dear friend, when we see our lives in comparison to His life, our so-called goodness becomes badness. And so He condemns sin in the flesh by His very life. That's what He's saying here in verse 3. Remember this: Pay attention. The Bible says, look at it now. "...God sending his Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin..." Now what does that mean, "for sin?" That means that He died on the cross. God commendeth His love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. For sin. He condemns sin in the flesh. That "for sin" means that He died on the cross for us. And salvation, mister, who's trying to work your way to heaven; lady, who thinks you're going to get by by your culture and your religion and all of the rest of it, let me tell you something. Salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ. Salvation comes by receiving life from the death of Christ. Now understand it. Not learning lessons about the life of Christ, but receiving life from the death of Christ. Christ condemns sin in the flesh. And, therefore, He died for sin, that we might live through Him. But what, what am I trying to say? I'm saying that there need be no more continuance in sin, for look at verse 4 now. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled (now slow up, way up right now and come to a complete stop), That the righteous, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled (what's that next little word? What is it? Say it out loud), in, in us..." This righteousness is not fulfilled by us. It is fulfilled in us because, learned people, not only are we in Christ, but, bless God, He's in us. That's great! That's exciting! You see, the life I live I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me, and it is not I, but Christ, that liveth in me. And the righteousness. Any righteousness that Adrian Rogers does that amounts to anything is Christ in me. The righteousness of the law is not fulfilled by me. It is fulfilled in me.

And because of these three marvelous things about the grace of God, there's no condemnation for sin because Christ took my judgment. No control by sin, for the law of the Spirit of life hath made me free from the law of sin and death. And, therefore, no continuance in sin because Christ is in me, and the righteousness of the law is being fulfilled – not by me, but in me. Friend, this matter of being a Christian is a supernatural thing. It is not trying harder. It is trusting Christ and being born again so that He gives you this new, wonderful, glorious life. And so that's what I want us to see as we look, first of all, at the grace we experience.

## **II. The Groanings We Endure**

But now, secondly, let's move on to something else. Begin in verse 18, if you will, and I wish I had time just to go verse by verse, but I'm going to have to skip to verse 18. Paul says, "For I reckon..." And, by the way, that word *reckon* is a bookkeep, a bookkeeping term. Paul had been balancing his books, and he says, "For I reckon that

the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature..." Now for the word *creature* you might put down in your margin the word *creation*, and some of you have translations that read creation, which is a better translation, talking about all of God's created world. "For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God." In plain English, that means that all of nature is waiting for Jesus to come again. "And for the creature, or the creation, was made subject to vanity, not willingly..." In other words, the, the creation didn't do anything wrong. "...but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Now here comes our word. "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

### A. The Groaning of Creation

The whole creation groans. All nature is living in a minor key. And if you look around, dear friend, and, ah, if you look past just the sunshine and the bluebirds and the flowers, if you look closely enough, you'll find that all creation has a curse on it. The mineral kingdom, the animal kingdom, the vegetable kingdom. Cursed is the ground for thy sake. Cursed are the animals, and all are cursed because of sin. And look around you and what do you see? Moan and groan and pain and pang and sighing and crying and dying. And the foul breath of decay and the gnawing tooth of time and the mossy fingers of corruption are just pulling everything apart. Oh, you say, "Brother Rogers, how gloomy for a Sunday morning." But it's true. It is true. Dear friend, all of creation has a curse on it. There's something wrong. The Bible calls it in these verses the bondage of corruption, the bondage of corruption. And what Darwin might have called the survival of the fittest is really nothing more than creation in bondage. It is tooth and claw and fang and death that marks everything. All of creation is out of whack. And verse 20 calls it vanity, vanity.

Now what does that word *vanity* mean? It literally means that that's not the way God intended for it to be. That was not its original intention. That's really what the word means. And so these things have become subject to vanity in verse 20 is what we read. But, but the Bible tells us that, ah, it wasn't the creation's fault. It was Adam's fault. Adam sinned, or the birds, the bees, the trees, and the fleas didn't sin; Adam sinned. And so the creation is made subject to vanity. That is, it is not fulfilling its original purpose. But one day it will be. One day the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as waters that cover the sea. One day, dear friend, the desert will blossom as a rose. One day the lamb and the lion will lie down together. One day there will be peace in the valley for you and for me. That's in the millennial reign of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that is coming. But there is the groaning of creation.

## B. The Groaning of the Christian

But now, wait a minute. There are three groanings that are mentioned. I want to give them to you now so you'll not miss them. There is the groaning of the creation. There is the groaning of the Christian. And there is the groaning of the Comforter. I want you to see all three. We've just talked about the groaning of the creation. Now I want you to notice the **second groaning, the groaning of the Christian**. Notice, if you will, in verse 23: "And not only they (that is, not only the creatures), but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit (that is, those of us who are born again), even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." We Christians groan. Now, folks, pay attention to your pastor. More, more importantly, pay attention to the Word of God because if you don't, the devil's going to pull the rug out from underneath you. Are you ready for this? You're going to suffer (noise). That's it! You're going to suffer. And if you think getting saved is going to excuse you from suffering, you're wrong. You're going to suffer. We ourselves, which have been born again, we groan within ourselves. You say, "Well, if that's the case, I'll not get saved." Okay, don't get saved. I've got news for you. You're going to suffer. Saved or lost makes no difference, no difference. Man that is born of woman is full of trouble. It's a part of our experience. There is no way out you'll never find. Jesus said, "In this world, ye shall have tribulation." Peter said, "Think it not strange concerning the fiery trials that come upon you as though some strange thing happened unto you." And you can be right with God, living, walking in the Spirit, and you have the first-fruits of the Spirit, but you're going to groan within yourselves. The Spanish have a proverb, "There is no home without its hush." I'm not trying to be morbid. I'm just trying to be realistic. And if you've lived very long, you're already saying amen to what I'm saying 'cause you know it's true. You know it is true. It's not altogether bad. Why do Christians suffer? Because we are a part of this creation. We're caught up in it. We live in it. We eat and breathe and, and, and drink the germs that all around us as a part of a corrupted creation. We live in a world where what someone else does affects us, and we ourselves have the seeds of, of death in our body. And so we groan, too. There is the groaning of the Christian. But, wait a minute. I don't mean to be morbid. This is not morbid, so let's just go on and look at it here, for the Bible says, ah, in verse 23 that we groan, but we're "...waiting the redemption of our body." And verse 44, 24 says, "Therefore, we are saved by hope..." Now you say, "Wait a minute. I thought we were saved by grace through faith and now it says we're saved by hope." Ha. Well, the salvation he's talking about here is not the salvation of our souls. It's the salvation of our body. The, the redemption of the body is what he's talking about here, not the redemption of the spirit. And it is that blessed hope that's going to redeem the body. You see, look.

When I got saved, I was immediately justified in my spirit. I'm being progressively

sanctified in my body. I will be ultimately glorified.... I'm, I'm progressively sanctified in my soul. I will be ultimately glorified in my body, you see. Ah, I've got a blessed hope.

You know, I was down in Florida, ah, on my vacation this past August, and a man talked to me; incidentally, he lives in Memphis and we met there. He's not a member of this church. He watches sometimes on television. Was very nice to say some nice things. But he said, "I'd like to say a word of advise to you and other preachers." I said, "What is that?" He said, "When you come to a funeral, or so forth," he said, "don't talk about hope. Talk about certainty." He said, "I hear these preachers talk about the believer's hope." Well, friend, he didn't understand how the Bible uses the word hope. When the Bible uses the word hope, it means certainty. It doesn't mean uncertainty. A hope in the Bible is not something that might happen, like a woman gets a hope chest so she can get married, perhaps. You know, puts all those goodies in it. That's not what we're talking about at all. When the Bible use, talks about the blessed hope, it means the blessed certainty. Jesus is coming again. But it means, listen, more than a certainty, it means a glad certainty. If, when I was a kid, my dad said, "I'm going to whip you this afternoon," and you were to ask me, "Is your Dad going to whip you?" I'd say, "I know so," but I wouldn't say, "I hope so."

Now, look. What I'm trying to say is this is a hope means something that we know is going to happen and we can hardly wait for it to get here. We are saved by that hope. And are you groaning? Are you moaning? Are you feeling pain, heartache, disappointments, sorrow? Are you? Then, why don't you pray with the apostle John, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." That is the Christian's hope. That's our way out. You know, sometimes we have it so streamlined, air-conditioned, upholstered, everything is so fine that we're not yearning, learning, and, and pleading for the second coming of Jesus. You let us go through a little more difficulty and perhaps that blessed hope will become as blessed to you as it was to those early Christians, huh? Okay. There is that blessed hope.

### C. **The Groaning of the Comforter**

All right, so there is the groaning of creation, number one. Number two: There's the groaning of the Christian, because we're part of that creation. But not only the groaning of creation and the groaning of the Christian - thirdly, there is the **groaning, thank God, of the Comforter**. Now notice, if you will, please, ah, as we continue to read in verses 26 and following. "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself (should be translated "but the Spirit Himself" maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." There's the third time he uses groanings. Now here's the groaning of the Comforter.

Now why do I call the Holy Spirit the Comforter? Because that's what Jesus called Him, the Comforter. It's the Greek word *paraclete*, and it means one who is called

alongside of you to help your weaknesses, just as a doctor stands beside your sick bed, just as a lawyer stands beside you in a courtroom, just as a fireman may stand beside you when your house is burning to help you. The Holy Spirit is the one given of God who stands alongside of us in our weakness, in our infirmities, when our heart is breaking, when a body is aching. He is there, and He prays and He intercedes and He helps, because God knows that we need something to stand between the grace and the glory to help us through the groanings. And He's given us that dear Holy Spirit of God who is in us and who takes help alongside of us and just helps us and, and prays for us. I like the way Phillips' translation gives this verse. Let me give it to you from Phillips' translation. "His Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those longing, agonizings which never find words." Oh, dear friend, He is the one who is making intercession for you and through you to the Father. Thank God for that.

### III. The Glory We Expect

And so, are you following our, our line of thought? First of all, there's the grace we experience. And then, there are the groanings we endure. But there's something more wonderful yet coming. There's the glory that we expect.

Now I want you to back up with me to verse 18 and I want to get that verse and then come back down right where we are. But look in verse 18 again because that's the first verse that mentions this glory, I believe, or one of the first. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time (that's the groaning) are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." And now skip on down to verse, ah, 28, excuse me, ah, skip on down to, yeah, 28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, and to them that are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow (are you ready to get theological? Okay. Put on your theological thinking cap), for whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he (Jesus) 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." There's our glory again, the glory that's not even worthy to be compared with the sufferings that we, ah, have right now.

#### A. We Are Predestined for Glory

Friend, listen. We are going to glory. Two reasons: Number one: We are **predestined for glory**. Number two: **We are preserved for glory**. Are you ready? We're predestined for glory. Now I'm not all sure what all predestination means. I know it doesn't mean what some people think it means, that whatever is going to happen is going to happen, and whatever you do about it makes no difference. If I believed that, I wouldn't look both ways when I cross the street. I'm not like that little old lady who

believed that kind of predestination, fell down the cellar store, ah, stairs, got up and brushed herself off, and said, "I'm glad that's over with." Now I don't, I don't believe that. But I do believe that God in His foreknowledge has set His affection upon us. And because He set His affection upon us, He calls us. Because, because He calls us, He justifies us. And, and, ah, He, He predestinates us and then He calls us and then He justifies us. But now, wait a minute. I don't have time to go through all of that, but, but just start reading with me again at the last part of verse 30. Now watch it. "...them he also called (that's the Holy Spirit saying 'You belong to Me.'), and, and, ah, whom He called, them He justified (that's when you got saved), and whom He justified, them He also will glorify." Did I read that right? No. Make me say it right. Don't let me pull anything fast on you. Ha, ha. "...them he justify, ah, and whom He justified, them He also (what?) glorified." Not will glorify. Friend, it's already done. Ha, ha.

Now listen. If you're one of God's called ones, if you're one of God's justified ones, if you're one of God's predestined ones, you're already glorified in the heart and mind of God. God lives in eternity, and God says, "It's as good as done - your glorification." Friend, you don't have to wait till you die to see if you're going to heaven. God says you're already glorified. Did, did that sink in? I mean, are you getting that? You are already glorified in the heart and mind of God. And, friend, what has been settled in eternity can never be undone in time. That's why you have to believe in the eternal security of the believer. What has been decreed by heaven can never be set aside by hell. I can't see how anybody could read this and not believe in the security of the believer. We are predestined for glory. Whatever else it means, dear friend, it means that in the heart and mind of God it is DONE, done, done. It is finished. Hallelujah. That's a wonderful salvation, isn't it? I mean, it is, folks. You believe that and you understand, that'll make you want to get up and walk around a little bit. Kind of maybe lift your hands and say, "Hallelujah. Praise the Lord." What a wonderful salvation we have in the Lord Jesus.

But now, watch. Not only are we, oh-oh, I just looked at the watch when I said watch. Okay, we're going to say goodbye to our television audience. Let me say to our television audience, let me say to you we're delighted that you're watching. I'll do better next week. And if you want to be saved, if you want to be a part of this wonderful salvation, experience this grace of God that'll help you through the groans, I want you to call the number given to you on the television screen. Somebody's standing right by right now to pray with you and to lead you to Jesus. You just call that number that's given to you. And just call the church number. I hope they'll be able to flash it up on the screen for you before we go off the air. If not, look it up in the phone book and call us. We'll be standing by to pray with you.

## B. We Are Preserved for Glory

Now, friends, not only are we predestined for glory, but we are also preserved for glory. Look, if you will, now in verse 31 and following. The Bible says here, “What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” Now watch verse 33: “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.” You know what that means? It means now fault can defile us. No fault can defile us. I may sin, and I do sin, and you sin, but, you know, that sin is never written up on my account in heaven. The Bible says, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” I’m one of God’s elect. And when I sin, God may carry me to the woodshed, but on His record in heaven not one entry is ever made. Did you know that? The Bible says, “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.” It doesn’t mean you can sin and stay out of the woodshed. He’ll beat the tar out of you, friend. If, if you sin, listen. “Whom the Lord loves, He chastens...” But it does mean there’s never a charge written against you. There’s no fault that can defile you. Secondly, look at it, there is no foe that can destroy you. Look in verse, ah, ah, 35: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ all tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we’re counted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” Now he mentions seven enemies and they can’t destroy us. All seven of them tried to destroyed the apostle Paul, and Paul knew from experience there is no foe that can destroy us. You know, these enemies of the Christian don’t drive him from the Lord; they drive him to the Lord, amen. Bring him closer if he’s a real Christian. And we’re more than conquerors, super conquerors. But there’s no fault that can defile us. There’s no foe that can destroy us.

And, therefore, there need be no fear to dismay us, for he goes on to say in verse 38: “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.”

Because this chapter begins with no condemnation, it ends with no separation. There’s nothing can take us out of the hand of our dear Lord. I wish I had time to talk about this, but I just don’t.

## Conclusion

I’m reminded of a little story, though, about a young man who got saved. He was so

happy for his security in the Lord Jesus. And someone said to him, said, “Aren’t you afraid you’ll lose your salvation? Aren’t you afraid that you might not be able to hold on?” He said, “No, it’s not a matter of me of holding on to God. God holds on to me. I’m in His hand. I’m in the hollow of His hand.” And this man, who was a very wicked man, said, “Yes, but what if you slip through His fingers?” “Oh,” he said, “I forgot to tell you that. I’m also one of the fingers.”

We are members of His body, dear friend. For me to perish and go to hell would be for a part of Jesus to perish and go to hell. I’m a part of His body now. I am in Christ Jesus. “And I’m 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.” You see, that’s the glory we expect. We are predestined for glory. We are preserved for glory. Don’t you want to get in on it? Wouldn’t you like to be saved? Wouldn’t you like to experience the grace of God? No more condemnation for sin. No more control by sin. No more continuance in sin. The Holy Spirit here to help you through your sorrows, and to be as certain for heaven as though you were already there. It’s all possible by receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

I want every head bowed and every eye closed. No one moving, stirring about. Don’t get your coats. Don’t put your things in your pocketbook. Just bow your head. And I want you to pray for those around you who may not know Jesus. And if you don’t know Jesus, I want you to pray for yourself. And I want you to pray a 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. And, Lord Jesus, I trust You to save me right now with all of my heart like a little child. Come into my heart, forgive my sins, and save me. And He will save you, for the Bible says, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

Father, I pray that many now today will trust Jesus and be saved. In His name I pray, amen.

# The Grace, the Groan, and the Glory

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 3, 1987**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8**

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

ROMANS 8:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Grace We Experience
  - A. There Is No Condemnation for Sin
  - B. There Is No More Control by Sin
  - C. There Is No More Continuance of Sin
- II. The Groans We Endure
  - A. There Is the Groaning of Creation
  - B. There Is the Groaning of the Christian
  - C. There Is the Groaning of the Comforter
- III. The Glory We Pay Expect
  - A. God Has Prepared Us for Glory
  - B. God Has Predestined Us for Glory
  - C. God Has Preserved Us for Glory
    - 1. No Fault Can Condemn Us
    - 2. No Foe Can Conquer Us

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, the last month or so I've been preaching in and out, around Romans 8. I just can't get rid of Romans 8, and I don't want to. What a blessing this book is. I've told you that Romans has been called the constitution of Christianity, and it is God's constitution and my friend, I want to tell you, it has no bill of rights, nothing that we can demand, but it does tell us not of the bill of rights, but of God's gifts of grace. What a great book this is. Tonight I want us to look in Romans chapter 8, and I want us to be thinking together about God's answer to man's sin.

And, as we get into the message—and before we read the scripture I want to read to

you a horrible story, it is horrible, it is terrible. I even reasoned with myself as to whether or not I ought to read it. But, I said it so well illustrates what I want to say that I'm going to read it.

This is something I clipped from the paper a while back. The title of the article is this: "Python Crushes Sleeping Infant," and then here's the story: "A pet eight-foot long python—that's a huge snake—apparently in search of food slithered into the crib of a sleeping baby and crushed the girl to death in a vice like squeeze authorities said. Seven-month-old Toni Lynn Duboe probably never uttered a cry, because as the victim tries to breathe the snake squeezes tighter around the body, said a spokesman for the Dallas County Medical Examiner. The baby, whose body was covered by dozens of needle-fine tooth marks, was found by her mother about eight a.m. Saturday, authorities said. The snake was curled on a ledge above the crib. Alerted by his wife, Robert Eugene Duboe, a thirty five year old machinist, rushed into his daughter's bedroom, grabbed the snake and wrestled it into another bedroom. Duboe, near hysteria, shot the snake with a twenty-five caliber pistol, and partially severed his head with a kitchen knife, said Dallas police Sergeant Gus Rose. Officers said the non-poisonous snake. Which has tremendous strength, forced its way out of a thirty gallon aquarium in the living room, where it had been kept since Duboe bought it in California one and a half years ago. The medical examiner's office ruled the child died from traumatic asphyxia as a result of the snake's wrapping itself around her body and squeezing. It may have taken as long as five minutes for the child to die." That's the end of the story.

Isn't that a tragic thing? Can you imagine how that father must have felt as he took that snake and with a knife tried to sever its head. But you see, that snake was a snake they'd purchased. It was a snake they'd bought. It was a snake they valued. It was a pet and it destroyed what they loved most. And I thought, as I read that, how much like sin that python is. The thing that we treasure, the thing that we coddle, the thing that we admire, is the thing that seems to crush and squeeze the life out of that which is, ultimately, the most precious to us

That's a horrible story. I say again, I started not even to share it and read it, but when I thought about that, I said what better way can I illustrate what sin is and what sin does and how sin brings death, and crushes and squeezes the life out of that which is beautiful and precious and holy. But thank God there is an answer to sin, and I want us to see what it is right here in God's Word. And there are three key words that just jump out at me: one is grace; the other is groan; and the other is glory.

## **I. The Grace We Experience**

First of all, I want you to notice what I'm going to call the grace we experience. Look in Romans 8, verse 1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in

Christ Jesus who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit.”

#### A. **There Is No Condemnation for Sin**

Because of God’s grace, there is no more condemnation for sin. No longer am I condemned; no longer does sin’s condemnation hang over my head. Why? Because I am in Christ Jesus, and you’re in Christ Jesus if you’re saved. You say, what does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? Well, think of Noah in the ark and then you’ll understand what it was to be in Christ Jesus, because the Bible teaches that Noah’s ark is a picture—a type, an illustration—of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, Noah’s ark was covered within and without with pitch, that is a thick, gooey, gummy substance that just coated the outside, and the inside, of that ark to keep it from leaking. The word *pitch* interestingly—and I believe by divine appointment—is the same word that is translated *atonement* in the Old Testament. And, what God said to Noah, when he said put pitch on the inside and on the outside, he also said put atonement on the inside and the outside.

Now, what did the water represent? The water represented judgment. Now, the pitch was there to keep the water out. God’s atonement keeps the waters of God’s judgment out. Now, those waters beat upon the ark, but they never got in. God’s wrath, and God’s justice beat upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and He took that for us. But, we are in Christ, and as Noah was safe in that ark, we are safe inside the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, dear friend, that’s the security that we have, when God put Noah in that ark, God sealed the door, and I’ve told you before Noah may have fallen down inside that ark, but bless God, he couldn’t fall out. Amen.

#### B. **There Is No More Control by Sin**

No more condemnation for sin, but it gets better. Not only is the condemnation gone, look in verse 2: no more control by sin, *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”* (Romans 8:2). There’s a law of sin and death, the law of sin and death is the law that we all feel—that sin just has control over us, and therefore death works in us, but now there’s a new law. It’s called the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. You see, dear friend, not only did God remove the condemnation for my sin, but God began a new law working in me.

Now, again I’m going to try to give you an illustration of what I’m talking about. The law of sin and the law of death is like the law of gravity, the law of gravity is working on us all the time. That’s the reason you’re held to your seat, that’s the reason I stand on this platform. That’s the reason my book and everything lies here, the law of gravity is working all of the time, but there’s another law.

By the way, when I was working—making these sermon notes—I was sitting in an airplane, riding, and I was thinking there’s a law—like the law of aerodynamics—that

keeps an airplane in the air. The law of aerodynamics overcomes the law of gravity, and so the law of gravity always works on an airplane, but there's another law, the law of aerodynamics that keeps that airplane in the air. And, as long as I'm in the airplane, the law of gravity doesn't have any control over me. That is, I am overcoming the law of gravity as I sit in that airplane. But, now wait a minute. Suppose I decide that I'm going to step out for a breath of fresh air. Now, when I do that—if I willingly, stupidly, voluntarily step out—well then, that law takes over again. But, you see, as long as we abide in Christ, sin need not have any control over us.

### C. **There Is No More Continuance of Sin**

Not only is there no more condemnation for sin, there's no more control by sin, and therefore there need be no more continuance of sin. Now, notice verse 3: *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh”*—that is, it doesn't do God any good to give us laws to change us because of our sinful flesh—*“God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh”* (Romans 8:3). Now, what Jesus did, He came, and He died for sin, and He told of how God felt about sin, He condemned sin in the flesh. When you see the cross you understand how God feels about sin, but why did He do that? Notice verse 4: *“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us”*—if you have your Bible, and don't mind marking it, underscore the phrase “in us”—*“who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Romans 8:4).

Now, what happens is this: that Jesus Christ gave Himself for us, that He might give Himself to us. Jesus is God's righteousness, and dear friend, when we get saved the law is not fulfilled by us. Notice, look carefully at what it says, “The law is fulfilled in us, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us.” Who is our righteousness? Jesus. Who lives in us? Jesus, by His Spirit, and that's the exciting thing, *“That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit”* (Romans 8:4).

## II. **The Groans We Endure**

When I got saved, God sent forth His Spirit in my heart, and the life I now live is a supernatural life, and I am experiencing grace. There's no more condemnation for sin, there is no more control of sin, and therefore there need be no more continuance in sin. Hallelujah, that's the first part of God's answer to man's sin, but now I want you to notice not only the grace we experience, but I want you to notice the groans we endure.

I want you to skip down to verse 18, and notice there's a change now. *“For I reckon”*—he says—*“that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of*

*the creature*”—that literally means the creation, everything that God has made—“*waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature*”—or the creation—“*was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God*”—now, watch this—“*For we know that the whole creation groaneth*”—underscore that—“*the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*” (Romans 8:18–22). Now, notice verse 23: “*And not only they*”—that is all of God’s creatures—“*but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan*”—underscore that, we ourselves groan—“*within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it*”—now, watch this, verse 26—“*Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but*”—watch—“*the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us*”—here’s our word again—“*with groanings which cannot be uttered*” (Romans 8:23–26). That’s the third time he mentions groanings.

#### **A. There Is the Groaning of Creation**

Now, we’re moving from the grace to the groan, the grace we experience but the groans we endure. Now, he mentions three kinds of groanings. First of all, there’s the groaning of creation in verses 18 through 22. He says the whole creation is made subject to vanity, the word *vanity* means that it “does not measure up to its original intention.” God did not make the world the way we see it now. You look around at the world today and what do you see? Pain, and pain, and pain, and moan, and groan, and crying, and dying and sighing. Look at nature and you’ll see the law of tooth and fang and claw. Look at the material world and you see everything rotting, and corrupting, and the gnawing tooth of time, and the fowl breath of decay, and the insipient power of death, it’s just working everywhere. That’s not what God made, that’s not what God created, but the Bible says the creation was made subject to vanity—that is, it does not fulfill it’s original intention.

There is a groan in nature. If you listen to the wind blow through the trees it almost seems to sing a song in a minor key. Why is this? God did that. The Bible says the creation was made that way. Why did God make it that way? Because he didn’t want you to live in a world that didn’t groan. God wants you to live in a world that has aches and pains and sorrows. God made it that way. Why? Because man fell in sin, and the worse thing that could happen to man with a sinful heart would be to live in a perfect environment. He’d never know his needs. He’d never know anything was wrong, and so when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, God came into the Garden of Eden

and God said, *“Adam, cursed is the ground for your sake”* (Genesis 3:17). Not for your *judgment*, but for your *sake*, because I love you.

Now, you might think it would be wonderful if you could live a life free from pain, but it would be one of the worse things that could happen to you, wouldn't it? You step on a nail and never know it, your slicing a roast and leave your finger in the plate and never know it. That's a terrible illustration, I'm sorry. Listen—the worse thing that could happen I to you. All right, I apologize; the worse thing that could happen to you would be to live in a world without pain. Whether you know it or not pain is God's gift. What does pain tell you? Pain says something is wrong, get it fixed. Something is wrong.

Now, if you didn't have pain you wouldn't last very long. God gives you pain to show you when something is wrong. Well, God gave the whole universe pain to show something is wrong. He doesn't want us to live without knowing the terrible, horrible condition that we're in, and when you see this pain—this pain, this moan, the groan, this woe, this sorrow, these tears, this tooth, and fang, and claw, and destruction and earth—it's only a symptom to say there's a sickness, and that sickness is sin. Do you know what's wrong with so many people? They're treating the symptom and not dealing with the sickness. When a man gets drunk he's trying to kill the pain. When a man who lives in pleasure, he's trying to kill the pain. He does not—he only deals with the symptom and he doesn't deal with the sickness. But, my dear friend, God did that, God put a moan and a groan in creation, to let us know that something is wrong, and he did it for our sake.

### **B. There Is the Groaning of the Christian**

But, now wait a minute, not only is there the groaning of creation, there's also the groaning of the Christian; you need to learn this. Look in verse 23: *“And not only they”—* that is, the creatures out there—*“but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit”—* those of us who are saved—*“even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body”* (Romans 8:23). Now, what Paul is telling us is that we who are Christians are a part of all of this, and because we're saved that does mean that we have immunity from pain and suffering, that we're a part of it, and we as Christians are caught up in it. Now, notice in verse 24 he says, *“...we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”* (Romans 8:24). Now, what is the hope that he's talking about? Well, he's talking about the redemption of the body in verse 23: *“And we, not only they, but we ourselves which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.”* Now, you see, my body is not yet redeemed—my spirit is redeemed—but my body is not yet redeemed. My body will be redeemed when Jesus comes again.

You know, the faith healers tell us there's healing in the atonement. They're right, they're right, but that comes with the redemption of the body, with the redemption of the body. I am healed by his strife but, you see, when I—one of these days I'm going to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ—but, and then I'll be saved by hope, that is my body is going to be saved out of these groans, and the pains, and these pangs, and everything and you know, we might as well face it folks, as long as we're in this body, we're headed for trouble. Now, you're feeling about as good as you're ever going to feel. It's going to get worse from here on. It doesn't get better, it gets worse, we're just running down to the grave and don't think some strange thing is happening to you. Friend, that's a part of it, but there is a hope. Do you know what that hope is? Our vile bodies are going to be made like unto his glorious body. There's—our body is going to be redeemed.

Now, you say there are a lot of people who know that God redeems the soul and the spirit, but they don't understand that God also redeems the body. You see, when God made us He made us—body, soul and spirit—and when He redeems us, He redeems us body, soul and spirit. Not one wit will the devil get, he won't be able to say to the Father, "Well, you got his soul, but I still got his body." Oh no, listen, when He saves us He saves us all, and we are going to have these bodies redeemed. The Bible calls that the *adoption*, and the Bible calls that *hope*. Now, listen folks, the word hope in the Bible doesn't mean "maybe it will happen and maybe it won't." You know, like a girl gets a hope chest hoping she'll get married. No, no, no, no, the word hope in the Bible means absolute certainty—certainty—that's the Bible word for hope. Like the second coming of Jesus is called the blessed hope, but it means more than certainty, it means certainty with glad expectancy.

When I was a kid and sometimes disobeyed my dad, or something he'd say "Son,"—maybe we'd be out in the car riding on a Sunday afternoon ride and my brother and I would get in a fight in the back seat—he'd say, "When I get home I'm going to whip you." Now, that was a certainty, but it wasn't a hope. I mean, I knew it was going to happen. I mean, if you'd known my dad on the rapture—if the rapture had taken place he'd done it on the way up. I mean, it was a certainty, but not an expectancy. Now, the word hope in the Bible means a certainty and a glass expectancy.

### **C. There Is the Groaning of the Comforter**

Now, there's the groan of creation, there's the groan of a Christian and folks, don't think because you're saved you're not going to be sick, you're not going to have any problems, you're not going to suffer. Paul tells us clearly that we also groan. But, now wait a moment, not only is there the groan of the creator, of the creation, and not only is there the groan of the Christian, but there's a third groan that's mentioned here and it's

the groan of the comforter, the Holy Spirit. What a blessing this is, look here, if you will in verses 26 and 27: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities”*—now, God doesn’t say when you’re saved you’re not going to have any infirmity, God doesn’t take away the infirmity, but God gives a helper, the Holy Spirit—*“for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself”*—a better translation, the Spirit Himself—*“maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Romans 8:26).

Now, the Holy Spirit of God, my dear friend, He’s the one also who groans with us, and for us, and helps us to bear these groanings. We don’t have to bear them alone. J. B. Phillips translates it this way: *“...his Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those agonising longings which never find words”* (J B Phillips New Testament, Romans 8:26). Jesus called the Holy Spirit the comforter, that means someone who is called along side of you to help you. It’s like a doctor along side a sick bed, like a fireman along side a burning building, like a lawyer along side an accused person. Hallelujah, the Holy Spirit is there. Friend, you may suffer, you may have pain, you may have difficulty—you will have—but thank God there is the Holy Spirit Himself who groans along with you, who loves, who intercedes, who helps, who comforts.

### **III. The Glory We Pay Expect**

So, now there’s a third thing I want you to notice tonight, as I’m talking about God’s answer to man’s sin. First of all, I’ve talked about the grace we have experienced. Then I talked about the groanings we endured, but now thirdly, I want to talk to you about the glory that we may expect. You see, it’s not over yet, there’s something very wonderful. We are headed for glory. Notice verse 18: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us”* (Romans 8:18). You take all of the pain that you have and turn it around, and dear friend, the glory is so much greater than all of that pain. You take all of the trouble and turn it around, the glory is so much greater than all of that trouble, you can’t even compare the two. *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

#### **A. God Has Prepared Us for Glory**

I want to say three things about that glory, and I’ll be finished. The very first thing I want to say is that God has prepared us for glory. Notice in verse 28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28). Everything that God is doing down here, dear friend, is preparing you for glory. All things are working together for good to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ, because He goes on to say, *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...”* (Romans 8:29). And,

God will let you groan a little, God will let you suffer some. Why? To make you more like Jesus. He really will. And, so God is preparing you for glory.

## **B. God Has Predestined Us for Glory**

God has you in school and He allows you to suffer. That's all right, He's just preparing you for glory, and why does He prepare you for glory? Because he's predestined your for glory. That's the second thing. Notice in verse 28: *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren"*—now, watch it—*"Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified"*—praise God—*"them he also glorified"* (Romans 8:29–30).

Now, we've been talking on Wednesday nights a little bit about these wonderful words, foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification, a glorification. Notice here that God speaks of glorification in the past tense. Do you know what that means? In God's heart and in God's mind it's already happened. I don't have to wait 'til I die to see if I'm going to Heaven. Friend, in God's heart, in God's mind, I'm already there. In God's eternal counsels we're already glorified. The believer is predestined for glory. I told you before what has been settled in eternity can never be undone in time, and what has been decreed in Heaven can never be set aside by Hell, or by humanity.

## **C. God Has Preserved Us for Glory**

Thank God, we are being prepared for glory, because we're predestined for glory, and therefore we are preserved for glory. Now, what the apostle Paul says here is, "There's nothing, therefore, that can separate us from the love of God" (Romans 8:39).

### **1. No Fault Can Condemn Us**

For example, he says here that no fault can divide us. Notice, if you will, in verses 33 and 34 of this chapter. Romans 8, verse 33: *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ"*—oh listen to this folks—*"It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us"* (Romans 8:33–34). Are you, are you seeing what I am saying? Listen friend, no fault can condemn you if you are saved. I'm talking to you dear friend, about being preserved for glory. Listen to it again, I want to read it. Maybe you didn't hear it, *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."* When you're justified never again can sin be marked up against your name. *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin"* (Romans 4:8). *"Who is he that condemneth?"*—Paul is throwing out a challenge. Who can condemn? And, then he says, *"It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."*

## 2. No Foe Can Conquer Us

Write it down friend, no fault can condemn us, and then write it down no foe can conquer us. Begin now in verse 35: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”*—and Paul is going to mention seven enemies, listen—*“shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things”*—now, notice he doesn’t say without all of these things, but in all of these things—*“we are more than conquerors through him that loved us”* (Romans 8:35–37). He doesn’t say we just seek by, we don’t kick a field goal in the last three seconds, its forty to nothing when the game is over. We are more than conquerors. What’s Paul saying? No fault can condemn us, and no foe can destroy us.

## Conclusion

If you read the life of the Apostle Paul he faced all seven of these enemies, and he knew they could not separate him from Christ. To the contrary, they just draw the believer all the closer to the heart of God. No fault can condemn us, no foe can conquer us, and therefore no fear need control us. Read verses 38 and 39 now, listen to it, *“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). Hallelujah. Oh folks, listen, listen, we are preserved for glory, preserved, no fault can condemn us, no foe can conquer us, no fear need control us, because of what our Lord has done. He has prepared us for glory, He has predestined us for glory, and He protects us and preserves to glory. Yes, yes, there’s the grace we’ve experienced, and thank God for that. Yes, there’s the groans that we endure, He knows what He’s doing. But, yes there’s the glory that we expect, and it is as sure as my name is Adrian Rogers, and even more sure. Let’s bow our heads in prayer.

# Turning Hurts into Hallelujahs

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 12, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Guilt We Express
- II. The Grace We Experience
- III. The Groans We Endure
- IV. The Glory We Expect

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Romans chapter 8. In our journey through Romans we've come through chapter 8. We've called Romans the constitution of Christianity. This past week I was in Washington, D.C., and saw again the original Constitution of the United States. And in the Constitution of the United States there is a Bill of Rights. But in the book of Romans there is no Bill of Rights. We have no rights. In the book of Romans we find the gifts of grace, better than a Bill of Rights. Rights are for people who think they own anything, own something; we own nothing but judgment. But thank God, by the grace of God—by the grace of God—and by the gifts of grace, we are what we are, Amen?

Now, I want to talk to you today about how that grace, how that resurrection, how what happened on that Easter morning, will turn every hurt into a hallelujah. Now, there are people who are hurting. I think of our friends over in Jonesboro—and may God bless them, and this will be a very poignant Easter for families in Jonesboro, Arkansas. I think of dear friends, down in Mississippi, and over in Georgia, who have known that devastating tornado. I think of people in lands—in Bosnia, and other places—where they've gone through something called ethnic cleansing.

I think of a friend that I spoke with last night on the telephone who's had radical surgery for cancer. And I think of people that are here today—some that I know personally—that are hurting. As a matter of fact, there's a heartache on every pew, if you'll think about it; and there's no home without its hush. And we look around, and everywhere, there's death and disease and confusion and pain and pain and moan and groan and sickness and sighing and crying and dying, everywhere. That's the reason this day is so very important.

I want to show you two verses from Romans 8. Look, if you will, in Romans chapter 8 and verse 11: "But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies"—that means give life to your dying flesh. He will "quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." And then, look, if you will, in verse 18 of this same chapter. Paul says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Now, he's talking about Easter, and he's talking about hurts, and he's talking about hallelujahs, and he uses a term that's a bookkeeping term. He's been doing some figuring, and he says, I reckon—I reckon—that the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us. And he says in verse 11—this is true because of Easter. You see, it's Easter.

Listen. It's Easter that turns every hurt into a hallelujah. It's Easter that turns every tear to a pearl. It is Easter that turns every midnight to a sunrise. It is Easter that turns every Calvary to a resurrection. Paul is talking about the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead. And he says if that Spirit—the same Spirit, the Holy Spirit—that raised Christ from that grave, if He dwells in you, then the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.

## **I. The Guilt We Express**

Now, there are several words that I want us to think about. The first is the word guilt—guilt. Think of that word guilt—just jot it down on a piece of paper. Guilt—the guilt we express. Look, if you will, how Romans 8 begins, in verses 1 through 3: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus,"—underscore the word condemnation—"who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit,"—underscore the word flesh—"for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Underscore the word sin and death, and think of those words: condemnation, flesh, sin, death. That's a description of the world today. We're condemned; we are living lives according to the flesh, not the Spirit, and we find ourselves under law that the Bible calls here the law of sin and death. "For the wages of sin is death and the soul that sinneth, it shall surely die."

And that brings up an interesting question. What about this thing called sin? Did you know that there are many people who are not believers, and their problem is not a scientific problem; they're not wrestling with ideas like evolution or creation. Their problem is the problem of history. They say, If there is a God, and that God is a good God, then look at all of the suffering. Why, if God is good, why do we have sin? Why do we have suffering? And they have a little argument, a little syllogism, and here's the way

the syllogism goes: If there be a God, He would be the author of everything; evil is something, so God is the author of evil. What kind of a God is it that has created evil? And so, they say, I can't believe in a God who made everything, and He made it like He did, and therefore He must not be a good God, if He is a God at all. But that's not straight thinking.

Let me tell you the way it truly is: God is the author of everything. God made everything perfect, and when God made man, God made His creature perfectly free. Free will, then—man's perfect free will—is the origin of evil. God did not create evil; God created perfection, and God made man perfectly free. And freedom, therefore, gave rise to this evil. You see, this is what makes us moral creatures.

Somebody says, Well, why didn't God just make us where we couldn't sin? Well, if God had made us where we couldn't sin, He could have no more fellowship with me than I could have with that pulpit or that speaker. Because God made us moral creatures. Love is the highest good and God wants us to love Him. "This is the first and great commandment: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy strength, with all thy mind."

Love is the highest good, but forced love is a contradiction in terms. Forced love is not love at all. In order to love, we must be free to love, to choose to love; and, in order to choose to love, we have to be able to choose not to love. And so, God gave us perfect choice. And Adam chose in the Garden of Eden, and the sons of Adam after him, to sin. And that's where the heartache and the pain and the groan and the moan come from, as we're going to see in a moment.

Well, that brings another question. Why doesn't God just destroy evil? I mean, if He were all powerful, He could; and if He were all love, He would; so why doesn't God just step in, obliterate the devil, cause all sin to be eradicated? Why doesn't God just go into every cancer ward and empty every cancer ward? Why doesn't God just take away the curse from nature? Why doesn't God just destroy evil and make it impossible for people to sin? We're right back to the original question. If God were to destroy evil, just destroy evil, God would destroy every opportunity of choice; and if God were to destroy every opportunity for choice, then God would destroy every opportunity for love; and therefore God would destroy the highest good; and therefore for God to destroy evil would be evil.

No, God doesn't destroy evil, friend; God defeats evil—God defeats evil. And how does God defeat evil? Calvary and the resurrection. And God turns every hurt to a hallelujah, and God says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us." You see, God is not finished yet.

## II. The Grace We Experience

All right, there's the guilt that we express—verses 1 through 3. Oh, but friend, there's the grace that we experience. Again, look in chapter 8, verse 1: "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned to sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." Now, what does this mean? What kind of grace do we experience?

Well, number one: no condemnation for sin, hallelujah. No condemnation for sin—look at it in verse 1: "There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are"—what?—"in Christ Jesus." Now, what does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? Well, God wants us to be saved—He's given so many illustrations of salvation.

One of the illustrations of salvation is Noah's ark. Noah's ark, the Bible teaches us in 2 Peter, is an illustration, a type, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, if you want to know what it is to be in Christ Jesus, know what it was for Noah to be in that ark. And God was going to judge the world, and God said to Noah and his family, Come thou into the ark. And Noah went into that ark, and then the Bible says, "And God shut the door."

Now, the ark was waterproof. How do you know it was waterproof? Well, God said to Noah, Noah, put pitch on the inside and on the outside. Pitch was a black, gooey, sticky substance, and Noah got a broad brush and he and his helpers, whoever it was, they put pitch all over the outside of that ark. And then, they put pitch all over the inside of that ark. That was to waterproof it.

Now, water was an emblem, a symbol, of the judgment of God, the wrath of God, that flood. But not one drop of water could come through that gooey pitch. Do you know what the word pitch is? It's the Hebrew word qafar, and it is exactly the same word that is translated atonement—atonement—when Christ died on the cross, He made an atonement for our sin, and God says, Put atonement on the outside, put atonement on the inside. Not one drop of judgment can come through that atonement. You see, we are in Jesus as Noah was in that ark. And because we are in the Lord Jesus Christ, the wrath, the storms of God's wrath beat upon that ark, and the storms of God's wrath beat upon the Lord Jesus. But I'm on the inside, and not one drop of judgment can come through.

You see, because we're in Christ, there is no more condemnation for sin, and there's no more control of sin. Notice, what he says in verse 2: "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Remember our

illustration last week? We said there are two laws in the natural world; there's the law of gravity and there's the law of aerodynamics.

The law of gravity is constantly pulling on us, pulling on us, pulling on us; it's holding you in your seat. It's causing you to stick to the earth rather than flying off. But there's another law—the engineers call it the law of aerodynamics—and you can take a great airplane like one I was on yesterday and that thing begins to rev up those engines, and it begins to roar, and suck in air through those great engines, and squirt that air out the back, and that thing begins to rumble and roar and vibrate, and then suddenly, it's aloft; it's flying! Ten thousand, twenty thousand, thirty thousand feet; three, four, five hundred miles an hour; going through the air. There is a greater power than the power of gravity—it's the law of aerodynamics.

Now, we are sinners—sinners by birth, sinners by nature, sinners by choice—and there's that downward pull that the Bible calls the law of sin and death. But hallelujah—hallelujah, I say—hallelujah, because of that empty tomb, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

### **III. The Groans We Endure**

So there is the guilt that we exhibit, but there is the grace that we experience. But now watch, pay attention. The third thing: there are the groans—the groans, the groans—that we endure. Continue to read. Look, if you will, in verse 18 of this same chapter here. And he says this: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy—not worthy—to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us, for the earnest expectation of the creature..."—and for the word creature you may write in your margin creation, because that's what it literally means—"for the earnest expectation of the creation"—he's talking about all nature—"waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creation was made subject to vanity,"—that means it is not living up to its original intention—"not willingly, but by reason of him,"—that is, God—"who has subjected the same"—that is, the creation—"in hope. Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know..."—now, listen; here's a key; if you don't understand this, are you paying attention? If you don't understand this, you're going to stumble in your Christian walk—"For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Now, what does he mean by that? The whole creation groans—that means pain and pang and moan and groan and crying and dying and sighing. Look at nature. Bloody tooth, sharp fang, claws, decay, corruption, everything that you see, is dying and crying and sighing. The foul breath of decay, the gnawing tooth of corruption, it's on everything—everything—and it's on you. It's in

creation. Now, what Darwin called the survival of the fittest is really the bondage of corruption.

But there's a better time coming—there's a better time coming. All of creation is standing on tiptoes waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God, and God, when Adam sinned, God said the worst thing that could happen to a sinful creature would be to live in paradise. So, God took Adam out of paradise, and God put Adam in a world that has the curse of sin upon it—thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee. You're going to earn your bread by the sweat of your face. Why? Because I want you to know there's something deadly wrong in this world; and all of the pain and all of the sorrow that we see in creation, that's the fever of the infection, which is sin.

Aren't you glad that God gives you fever when you have an infection? You see, if you didn't have a fever, you wouldn't know you had an infection, would you? So the fever is the symptom of the deeper problem. And so, there's the groaning of creation. Look around at the world today. God didn't make the world this way; God made the world perfect. But we see a world that is marred and scarred, and all of creation is groaning. Listen. Even to the wind as it goes through the trees; it's in a minor key. Everything is groaning and sighing and dying.

There's the groaning of creation. Now, watch this very carefully. There's also the groaning of the Christian. Notice in verse 23; look at it—this is talking about you: "And not only they,"—what? the creatures—"but ourselves also which hath the first fruits of the Spirit. Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption to rid the redemption of the body.

Folks, your body is not yet redeemed. Your spirit is redeemed, but your body is not yet redeemed. You are waiting for the promise of Easter, and so therefore you live in a body that has the curse of sin in it, and because you live in a body that has the curse of sin in it, I hate to tell you this but I need to tell you this: you are not immune to suffering. And if you walk down this aisle, and think if you give your heart to Jesus Christ that suffering is all behind you, and it's going to be all honey and no bees, I'm sorry to tell you, friend, that's wrong. And I don't want to put any fine print in the contract, or fail to tell you that there's the groaning of creation and there's also the groaning of the Christian.

Now, you want me to tell you why we have so much suffering in the world today? I'm talking about those of us who are saved. Well, number one, we live in a creation that has a curse upon it. What happened to those people down there in Mississippi when that tornado came? What happened to those people over there in Atlanta when that tornado came? Were they wicked people? No, God makes it to rain upon the just and the unjust. We just live in a world that has the curse of sin on it. Friend, it's just hereF

that's the way nature is, and that's where we live.

And also, not only do we live in a world that has the curse of sin on it; we live with other sinners. Those children that stepped outside of that school over there in Jonesboro—were they doing anything wrong? No, they were doing something right—answering a fire alarm. But, you see, there are other people in this world, and there are other people who would harm us; there are other people who make choices, and we suffer because not only do we live in a world that has the curse of sin upon it, but we live in a world with other sinners.

And then, I'm going to tell you something else. We live in bodies that have the curse of sin upon them. Your body is not yet redeemed. You are a son, a daughter, of Adam, and you were born out of a polluted gene pool. I'm telling you, folks, you have a polluted gene pool, and so, sooner or later, you're going to get sick. Sooner or later, it's going to get you. Sooner or later, the doctor's going to thump on your chest, at fifty dollars a thump, and say, You've got a problem. Now, I'm telling you this: sooner or later—just sooner or later—it's coming. Hey, you say, Is this Easter or what? It's bad news, Pastor. Well, listen—it's the bad news that makes the good news good.

Now, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us." And I'll tell you something else. Not only do we live in a world that's cursed, not only do we live with other sinners, not only do we have a corrupted body, but sometimes we still choose to do wrong—don't we?—and God has to chastise us. David—I was reading this morning where David said, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray." And whom the Lord loves, He chastens. And then, friend, there are just mysterious reasons why people suffer. I mean, if anybody comes to you, and they say, Well, I just have all the answers, just walk on. Friend, they don't have all the answers. I'm telling you that there are mysteries in this world today.

But put it down big, plain, and straight: there's the groaning of creation; there's the groaning of the Christian; there's also the groaning of the Comforter. Look, if you will, in verse 26. We're talking about groanings, now—look at this: "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities,"—that's our weaknesses—"for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercessions for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."

Now, what does the word Comforter mean? Jesus said, I'll send you the Holy Spirit, and He said, He is the Comforter—that's the Greek word *paraclete*; that means somebody who's called alongside of you, like a doctor alongside a sick bed, like a fireman alongside a fire, like a lawyer alongside a person who's accused. The Holy Spirit comes alongside of us in all of our sorrow. Phillips translates this verse this way: His Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those agonizing longings which can

never find words.

Have you ever hurt so bad you couldn't even pray? I have. All you can do is just groan, but you know, it's the Holy Spirit who says, I will groan with you, and I will pray for you, and I will intercede for you before the Father. And so, we have the Holy Spirit making intercession for us to the throne, and we have the Lord Jesus, on the throne, making intercession for us.

And so, listen—are you following me? There is the guilt that we exhibit, there is the grace that we enjoy, but still there are the groans that we endure—the groaning of creation, the groaning of the Christian, and, thank God, the groaning of the Comforter.

#### **IV. The Glory We Expect**

Now we come to what I'm trying to say about Easter: where Easter turns every hurt into a hallelujah, every tear into a pearl, every midnight into a sunrise, every Calvary to a resurrection. Go back again, now, to verse 18, and look at it.

Now, remember—Paul is doing some figuring, and Paul says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us." So now, the guilt we exhibit, the grace we enjoy, the groans we endure—now, here it comes—the glory we expect. That's verse 18: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." Now, folks, that's what the eighth chapter of Romans is all about. There's not a greater chapter in all of the Bible than the eighth chapter of Romans.

Now, you see, folks, we've been prepared for glory—we've been prepared for glory by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the gospel—that is the gospel. Not just simply by trying to be better people—salvation doesn't come by learning lessons from the life of Christ, but by receiving life from the death of Christ—you understand that?

And so, we are prepared for glory—but watch this; look in verse 28—not only are we prepared for glory, but we are predestined for glory: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God who are the called according to his purpose, 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, whom he did predestinate, then he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified." He puts it in past tense; it's as good as done.

Do you know what predestined means? It means settled. I mean, it means settled. You're looking at a man that's glorified. You say, Well, you don't look glorified. Well, you're just seeing through your eyes. You haven't seen me through God's eyes. In the

heart and mind of God, it is settled. And, friend, what has been decreed in heaven cannot be annulled by hell, and it cannot be annulled by humanity, because predestined means it's done.

I have been prepared for glory—the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus did that. I am predestined for glory—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus did that. And, friend, I, therefore, must be preserved for glory. Look, if you will now, in this same chapter, beginning in verse 31: "What shall we say to these things? Friend, if God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also, not with him also freely give us all things?"

If God loved us enough to give Jesus, He'll give anything else we need. And now, you ask this question: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again." Notice it is in italics. Read it this way. Italics mean that's been supplied by the translator to make it read more smoothly. In this case, it doesn't read more smoothly. He's asking a rhetorical question: "Who is he that condemneth? Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God who also maketh intercession for us?"

He says, do you think my lawyer is going to condemn me? No! No, listen. He is saying that there's nothing that can condemn us. Listen: "Who—who—shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall"—he mentions seven enemies—"tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or sword?" Verse 37: "Nay, in all these things we're more than conquerors." Not just conquerors, we don't kick a field goal the last three seconds and win—super conquerors!

What he's saying is no foe can conquer us, and friend, no fault can condemn us. These seven enemies that Paul mentions have been the enemies of Christians from time immemorial. Paul had experienced every one of these seven enemies—persecution, trial, peril—all of these. He said they can't separate you. Why, all they can do is draw you closer.

Listen, folks: no foe can condemn us, because of Easter. No fear can conquer us, because of Easter. No fault can condemn us, because of Easter. Look in verses 38 and 39—Paul says, "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,"—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." That's the message of Easter, friend.

You know what they would do in Roman times? When a person would be adjudicated guilty of a crime, they would put that person in prison, and then they would

nail on the prison door a list of the crimes he'd committed, and they would put under there the number of days, months, years that he must stay in prison to pay the debt. It was called a certificate of debt, and it was nailed to the prison door.

When that man had paid for his crime against the state, they would take that certificate of debt, the bailiff would go to the judge, and say, Here is John Doe, prisoner. John Doe, prisoner, has paid in full his crime against the state. The judge would take that thing called a certificate of debt, and he would write across it, paid in full. One word in the Greek language; tetalestai, paid in full. He would hand it to the condemned prisoner, and then, if anybody ever tried to bring him into double jeopardy, he could show that certificate of debt, written, paid in full.

Jesus Christ took my sin and your sin to the cross. The Bible tells us, in Colossians 3, that Jesus took the handwriting that was against us, and nailed it to His cross—nailed it to His cross. And then, He bowed His head, and He died, and He said, Paid in full. It is finished. That's exactly the same word—tetalestai, I have paid that sin debt; it's paid in full. He took your certificate of debt and said, It's paid in full. No foe can condemn us, no fear need control us, no fault can separate us, and "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us."

## Conclusion

There's the guilt, there's the grace, there's the grief, and thank God for the glory. That's what Easter's all about. God doesn't destroy evil. If He did, you wouldn't have a choice. God defeats evil with a cross and a resurrection, isn't that good? I don't mean the preaching, I mean, that's good stuff. Friend, that's what Easter is all about, and that's why you need to be saved.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you begin to pray for those round about you who may not know the Lord Jesus? And if you're certain that you're saved, just pray, Lord, bless that brother, that sister, that friend, that neighbor—whatever they need today, if they're not saved, Lord, that they might be saved. And if you'd like to be saved, I don't know of a better day than this day; what a wonderful day to be saved. Why don't you pray a prayer like this? Dear God, I know that you love me—and friend, He does love you. And I know, Lord, that you want to save me—and friend, He does. I'm a sinner. I acknowledge my sin—and friend, you won't be saved unless you acknowledge your sin. For this is the faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance: that Jesus came into the world to save sinners. I acknowledge my sin; my sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. Lord Jesus, I turn from sin to you. Right now, by faith, I receive you into my heart. Right now, right now, I receive you. I'm not asking for a

special feeling. I just put my faith in you, Lord Jesus. I trust you right now, Lord Jesus. I turn from sin to you. I receive you now into my life as my Lord and Savior. Thank you for saving me. I receive it as the gift of your love. Thank you for saving me. And now, Lord Jesus, I will follow you all the days of my life. And help me never to be ashamed of you. In your holy name I pray. Amen.

# Your Spiritual Biography

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 1, 1994**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8**

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”*

ROMANS 8:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Guilt We Exhibit
- II. The Grace We Experience
  - A. There Is No More Condemnation for Sin
  - B. There Is No More Control by Sin
  - C. There Need Be No More Continuance in Sin
    - 1. You're Led by the Spirit
    - 2. You're Loved by the Father
    - 3. You're Lifted by the Son
- III. The Groan That We Endure
  - A. The Groaning of Creation
  - B. The Groaning of the Christian
  - C. The Groaning of the Comforter
- IV. The Glory That We Expect
  - A. We Are Predestined for Glory
  - B. We Are Preserved for Glory
    - 1. No Fault Can Condemn Us
    - 2. No Foe Can Destroy Us
    - 3. No Fear Need Control Us

Conclusion

## Introduction

This morning we spent a great deal of time in Romans chapter 7 and I would like you please to turn to Romans chapter 8. I want to speak to you today, tonight on your spiritual biography. And, your spiritual biography has four chapters in it. And, the reason I want to do this is just to remind you of how good God has been to you and what God has in store for you.

As I've said before, the book of Romans is the constitution of Christianity. But now, may I say this, that this constitution has no Bill of Rights. It doesn't tell us of what we deserve. We have no rights. But it does tell us of the gifts of grace which are better than

a Bill of Rights.

I want you to see what the Lord has done for you and is still doing for you. And, I want to give you tonight four key words. The first word is guilt. The second word is grace. The third word is grief. The fourth word is glory. And, you're going to find all of those right here in Romans chapter 8. And, the very first word I want you to think about is the word guilt.

## I. The Guilt We Exhibit

Now, the Bible says, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus"* (Romans 8:1). Now, however, dear friend, if you're not in Christ Jesus, there is condemnation. And, that condemnation is there because of guilt. We talked about that guilt this morning. Now, if you were to ask the average person, "What is guilt?", he would tell you, "Guilt is the feeling you feel when you do bad." But my friend, that is not guilt. That is guilt feeling. And, the problem with many psychologists, psychiatrists and even some liberal preachers is that they want to deal with guilt feeling. But, you'll never deal with guilt, until you deal with guilt itself and have that guilt washed away by the blood of Jesus.

Now, there's a well-known television pastor on the west coast, in California. I'm not going to call his name, but if you've seen television, you know who he is. And, I just don't want to call his name, lest somebody will think I'm picking on him. But, what he has said, he said in a letter to the editor in Christianity Today, October the 5th, 1984. And this is what he said, and I quote exactly. "I don't think anything has been done in the name of Christ that and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and, hence, counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition."

That's what he said. And, then he went on to say on CBS morning news, January the 17th, 1985. And I quote again, a direct quote. "My number one rule is I don't want to do anything that would turn somebody off, so that they're not opening to listening to my invitation to them to accept Jesus Christ—now watch this—as their best friend."

Now my dear friend, that kind of "feel good" theology, I'm okay, you're okay, don't do anything to turn anybody off, just help us all to go around scratching each other's itches and patting each other on the back. My dear friend, that is not Bible Christianity.

So, I'm going to have to stand before you tonight and be one of those people that he has talked about—that is, crude, uncouth, and unchristian—to tell you if you don't get saved, you're going to hell. My dear friend, I can't put it any plainer than that. And, maybe I said it with almost a sense of levity in my voice. But, I want to say it with a heartbreak and a tear in my voice. If you don't get saved, you're going to hell. You're

going to die. You're going to perish in your sin.

The Bible teaches that there is a condemnation if you're outside of the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a thing called guilt. The Bible says, "*For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23) and "*the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23) and "*the soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (Ezekiel 18:4).

And, if God didn't mean that, He shouldn't have put it in His book. He put it in His holy book. And nobody, nobody has ever been saved until he's seen himself a poor, lost, undone, hell-deserving, sin-bound, hell-bound sinner. And I hope, by the grace of God, that God has pierced through your self-righteousness—if you're a self-righteous person—and pulled away that veil, that flimsy veil of self-righteousness and shown you and shown me for what we are, sinners, as we said this morning, by birth, by nature, by choice, and by practice.

## **II. The Grace We Experience**

Now, I don't want to spend any more time on that particular point but I want to move on to chapter 2 of your spiritual biography. Chapter 1 is the guilt we exhibit. Chapter 2 is the grace we experience. Now, continue to read: *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit*" (Romans 8:1-4).

### **A. There Is No More Condemnation for Sin**

What this means, dear friend, is three things. Number one, there is no more condemnation for sin. There is therefore now no condemnation. That means no judgment to those who are in Christ Jesus. Now, what does it mean to be in Christ Jesus? To be in Christ Jesus means to be in Christ what Noah was to the ark. The Bible teaches us that the ark was a type and a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, after God built that ark, or after Noah built that ark with God's instructions, God said to Noah, "Noah, I want you to put some tar, some resin on the inside and on the outside. I want you to pitch it with pitch inside and outside.

Now, that word that, *kaphar* is the word that is also translated *atonement*. It's interesting, isn't it? And I believe God was making a play on words. He was saying, "Noah, put atonement on the inside and the outside of that ark." Now, that flood represented the judgment of God. And what God was saying is, "My atonement is what keeps the judgment out." You see, not a drop of water could get in because there was atonement. There was that thick, gooey substance that sealed the water out as Noah

was sealed in.

Now my dear friend, Noah may have fallen down many times inside that ark but he never fell out. Thank God, he couldn't because God put him in, God shut the door, and not one drop of water could get in. And so, when the storms of God's wrath beat upon that ark, Noah was safe. There was no condemnation to him. There was to the entire world. The entire world was condemned except for Noah and his family for they were in that ark. And so, if you're in Christ, there's no condemnation for sin. That's verse 1.

### **B. There Is No More Control by Sin**

But, it gets better. There's also no control by sin. And, that's verses 2 through 4. Look at it: *"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death"* (Romans 8:2) Not only did that ark keep the water out, it bouyed Noah up. And, rather than being submerged under the water, he rode up over the water. There is the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus that makes us free from the law of sin and of death. And, we've talked about that.

### **C. There Need Be No More Continuance in Sin**

And, because there is no more condemnation by sin, there is no more control by sin, then there need be no more continuance in sin.

Look if you will in verse 3: *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh"* (Romans 8:3). That is, it doesn't do God any good or you any good for God just simply to say, "Don't do that because you don't have what it takes not to do that. *"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."* Now, Jesus was not sinful flesh just in the likeness of sinful flesh. He was flesh but sinless flesh. And for sin, He came to die as a substitute for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.

Now, Jesus condemned sin that I might not be condemned. He took my sin and your sin and He carried that sin to the cross. He condemned sin in the flesh because it was in the flesh that Adam sinned. It had to be in the flesh that Jesus redeemed Adam. Only a man can redeem a man. And, that's why Jesus took flesh and carried our sins to the cross.

Now, notice verse 4: *"That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"* (Romans 8:4). Now, what does it mean? It doesn't say that the righteousness of the law is fulfilled by us. Pay attention. It says the righteousness is fulfilled in us. Now, what does that mean? It means that when we come into Christ, Christ comes into us. And, the life we now live is not our life it is His life.

I told you a few Sundays ago there's only one person who has ever lived the Christian life. His name is Jesus. And friend, if the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in your life, it will be Christ in you doing it. The righteousness of the law is not fulfilled by

you. It is fulfilled in you. And when that happens, three wonderful things happen to you.

### **1. You're Led by the Spirit**

Let me show you what happens to you. You're led by the Spirit. You're loved by the Father. You are lifted by the Son. Now, look at verses. Let's just continue to read here. Let's skip on down to verse 11 and look at that: *"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. 4For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"* (Romans 8:11-14).

So what happens now? I am led by the Spirit. I'm not left to flounder around like a ship without a rudder; like a mast on a dark and stormy night. But, when God saved me there's no more condemnation for sin, there is no more control by sin. Therefore, there is no more continuance in sin because I am led by the Spirit. And, the Holy Spirit of God who now lives in me says this is the way. Now, but in order to be led by the Spirit; you have to have a quiet time. You see, God's Spirit is a still; small voice and you have to stop and listen.

### **2. You're Loved by the Father**

But you see, not only are you led by the Spirit, you're loved by the Father. Read now in verse 15. And I'm just hurrying to give you an overview. For he says in verse 14: *"We're led by the Spirit, and then in verse 15 He says: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"* (Romans 8:15-16).

O dear friend, God loves us as you love your own children and even more than you love your children. For the Bible says: *"When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up"* (Psalm 27:10). And, when the Holy Spirit comes into us He begins to speak to the Father. And, He puts these words in our spirit, Abba, Father.

Do you know what the word *Abba* means. We have a translation today. It just means daddy, father. da da, Abba, Abba Father. The first words that a little boy would utter in Bible times, when he looked at his daddy wouldn't be Da da but Abba. And, that's what the Holy Spirit is saying to us. He is our daddy, Father. How intimate, how precious.

### **3. You're Lifted by the Son**

You see, friend, listen. This is the grace that we experience. No more condemnation for sin, no more control by sin, no more continuance in sin because we're led by the Spirit. We're loved by the Father and we're lifted by the Son. Look if you will in verse 17: *"And*

*if children”— and we are children, now watch this—“then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”—Don’t miss that” (Romans 8:17). Do you know that Jesus Christ is going to inherit everything? I mean, He’s the heir of everything. People want to know what the world is coming to. It’s coming to Jesus. Friend, it all belongs to Jesus.*

But now, listen. The Bible says, We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Jesus. Now, if somebody leaves their will and you participate in that will. And, they open that will and the lawyer reads all of the names of the people who participate in that will. And, then when he says this, “You share and share alike, that means you get the same portion everybody else gets. Isn’t that right? You are a joint-heir.” My dear friend, what Jesus gets, you get. You are an heir of God and a joint heir with the Lord Jesus.

I was down in another city awhile back and a pastor took me out to show me where the fine homes in the city were. And, we were just riding around. He said, “Look at that.” Then he said, “Look at that and look at that.” And boy, I’m telling you, there were some mansions down there by the riverfront. And I said, “Well, you ought to see my brother’s place.” And he said, “Oh?” Every time he’d show me something big I’d talk about my brother’s place. After awhile, he said, “Who is your brother?” I said, “Jesus Christ.”

Now, dear friend, let me tell you something. He is my brother. The Bible says that He is not ashamed to call us His brothers. He’s not ashamed to call us brethren. And because we’re in the family, because we’re led by the Spirit and loved by the Father we’re lifted by the Son. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **III. The Groan That We Endure**

So I’ve talked to you about two things in your spiritual biography. Number one, the guilt we exhibit. Number two, the grace we experience. But number three, and oh I don’t want to leave this out. Because what I’ve talked to you about thus far has sounded good. But the third thing I want to talk to you about is the groan that we endure.

Continue to read now in verse 18—now here’s a darker note that comes—*“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth—if you’re Bible says, creature, it may be, and should be translated creation—for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God” (Romans 8:18-21). Now watch verse 22: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now” (Romans 8:22).*

Now in verse 22, you have the groaning of creation. And, now look down in verse 26. *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray*

*for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us—now watch the word—with groanings which cannot be uttered* (Romans 8:26). That's the second time He mentions groanings.

And, now I want you to continue to read as we look in God's Word and see that there's also the groaning of the Christian himself in verse 23: *And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*" (Romans 8:23). And, he says that this age that we live in is marked by suffering.

I'd like just to paint the clouds with sunshine and tell you if you get saved it's going to be all honey and no bees, it's going to be all flowers and no weeds, it's going to be all sunshine and no rain, it's going to be all joy and no heartache but I'd be telling you a lie. Dear friend, this is chapter 3 of your spiritual biography. The guilt we exhibit, the grace we enjoy and the groans that we endure. And there is the groaning—first of all—of the creation. Then there, my dear friend, there is the groaning of the Christian. And then, there is the groaning of the Comforter.

#### **A. The Groaning of Creation**

Now, let's look at the groaning of the creation in verse 22. We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. Everything that you see in nature is out of kilt. That hurricane that hit the coast of North Carolina wasn't in God's original intention. God didn't have hurricanes in mind when He spun this world into space.

When I went to the hospital last night to see Jim Moffatt and he was lying there in pain, that wasn't the way God meant for a man's body to operate when God made us. There's something wrong with all creation. I hope you know that. The Bible says, look if you will in verse 20: *"For the creature was made subject to vanity"* (Romans 8:20). And the word vanity means that it does not measure up to its original intention.

Now you just look around at nature. You see pain and pang, and moan and groan, and crying and dying and sighing, and tooth and fang and claw, and decay and corruption. And all around us—everything we see—has the foul breath and the gnawing tooth of decay. Everything is just winding down, everything is corrupting and everything is decaying. And, what the evolutionist calls the survival of the fittest is really the bondage of corruption. That's what it is, what the Bible calls of corruption.

Now, why did God make everything subject to bondage? And, why did God make the whole creation groan and travail in pain? Well, the worst thing that could happen to sinful fallen man would be to live still in the Garden of Eden with no pain and no problems.

You see, God gave us pain, God gave us problems, God gives us heartache, God

gives us tears, God allows sickness, sorrow and disasters. All of these things to show us that something is drastically wrong. And, you see if we lived without any tribulation, if everything was smooth and yet our hearts were wicked, we'd never repent. We'd never see the need of God. And, so God allows these things to come. As He said to Adam in the Garden of Eden after Adam had sinned, "Adam, cursed is the ground for your sake, because I love you."

Now, what happens with many of us is this. We see this groaning of creation. And, what we try to do is just simply kill the pain. And, we're not supposed to kill the pain. What we need to do is deal not with the symptom but with the sickness, which is sin.

And, preachers like that preacher that I just read to you about, all he's trying to do is get rid of the guilt feeling. But, he never deals with the guilt. At least, with that kind of theology, he wouldn't be dealing with the guilt. I hope he's learned how to do it. I really don't know. But, there is the groaning of creation. That's one groaning.

### **B. The Groaning of the Christian**

And, then there's the groaning of the Christian. Look if you will in verse 23: "*And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*" (Romans 8:23). Because you're a Christian, you're a part because you are a human being, you are a part of it. And being saved, being born again does not mean immunity from pain and suffering.

Now, the Bible teaches that we're saved by hope. Look if you will in verse 24: "*For we are saved by hope*" (Romans 8:24). Now, he's not talking here about the salvation of our soul. He's talking now about the redemption of our bodies. You see, our body has not yet been redeemed. You see verse 23? It says: "*waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body*" (Romans 8:23). And, our body is going to be redeemed by the blessed hope when Jesus comes again. Then and only then is the redemption of our bodies. Now, the Bible does teach that we're healed by the stripes of the Lord Jesus. But—this in my estimation is what Isaiah 53 is talking about—when we are healed in eternity, when we are made just like the Lord Jesus.

There's not a person in this room that is not sick. Everybody here has a terminal disease. Did you realize that? I mean, do you know what you're doing, folks? You're sitting there dying. Every moment we live we move one step closer and one heartbeat closer to the grave. Every one of us have the seeds of death, decay and destruction in us. And, if you'll think about it there's probably very few people here not feeling a pain somewhere right now. Did you find yours?

Okay, now, now listen. Being a Christian does not make you immune. Look if you will at verse 18: "*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be*

*compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). But, we’re saved by hope. And what is hope? Hope, in the Bible, means two things. Number one, it means a certain expectancy. And number two, it means a glad expectancy. There’s coming a day when our vile bodies are going to be made unto his glorious body. There’s coming a day when all of the pain, all of the marred marring and ravages of sin will be taken away and lifted away.*

Now, listen folks. Until that time comes there is the groaning of creation. You might as well accept it. This world is an imperfect world. There are going to be floods, tornadoes, droughts, boll weevils, cankerworms, cancer and all of these things in creation. And, those of you who are saved, those of us who are saved, we ourselves also groan. Verse 23, *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23).* Your spirit is saved but your body is yet to be redeemed. And, your body will be redeemed when Jesus comes again. That is the redemption of the body.

### **C. The Groaning of the Comforter**

But there’s a third groaning. Not only the groaning of creation and the groaning of the Christian but there’s the groaning of the Comforter. Look at verse 26: *“Thank God for this. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered” (Romans 8:26).* Thank God, we don’t have to bear these groanings alone. The Holy Spirit is there to help us through.

J. B. Phillips translation gives it this way: *“His Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those agonizing longing which never find words.”* Now, the Holy Spirit is called a comforter. And, the word comforter means somebody who’s called along your side to help, like a doctor beside the bedside of a patient, like a lawyer standing in a courtroom by his client, like a fireman standing alongside a burning building. He is there. When you hurt, he hurts. And, there have been times and I’ve experienced those times when I didn’t even know what to say to God. I prayed everything I knew to pray. And, I just had to say, “O Spirit of God, pray for me. Pray in me.” Words that I could not say—thank God—He has said, does say and He groans within us.

And, so what is your spiritual biography? First of all, the guilt we exhibit, then the grace we enjoy and then the groans that we endure. But, let me give you the fourth chapter. It’s the glory that we expect. Continue to read now: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he 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 8:28-30).*

## **IV. The Glory That We Expect**

Now, dear friend, let me talk to you about the glory that we expect.

### **A. We Are Predestined for Glory**

The first thing I want to say to you is this, that we are predestined for glory. The Bible teaches it very clearly and very plainly here that we are predestined. The Bible says: *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate” (Romans 8:29).*

Now, what does predestinate mean? It means that it’s settled in the mind of God, that you’re going to be like the Lord Jesus. It means it is pre-determined. Now, that doesn’t take away your free will because the Bible teaches the predestination of Almighty God and the sovereignty of God. The Bible also teaches that you must choose but you can only choose Him because He has first chosen you.

Now, notice these wonderful words. First of all, He foreknows. And, those that He foreknows He predestines. And, those that He predestines, He called. And, those that He called, He justified. And, those that he justified, he glorified. And notice He puts it in the past tense. Did you know I’m already glorified? I haven’t been there yet but in the mind of God it’s already happened. It’s in the past tense.

Now, we don’t have to wait ’til we die to see if we’re going to Heaven. Friend, in the eternal councils of God it’s already settled. I am predestined to glory. And, what has been settled in eternity can’t be undone in time. And, what has been decreed by Heaven cannot be annulled by hell or humanity. I thank God that if you’re in Christ, if I’m in Christ—and I am and I trust you are—that you are predestined for glory. Because you’re predestined for glory, you’re preserved for glory.

### **B. We Are Preserved for Glory**

Look if you will now in Romans 8:31 as we continue: *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* Now listen. I want you to see how this works out. First of all there is no fault that can condemn you. Not anything that the devil can raise up against you. Notice in Romans 8:32-34: *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.”*

#### **1. No Fault Can Condemn Us**

Now, what is He saying here? He’s saying, dear friend, that there is absolutely no fault that can condemn us. He’s saying the same thing that he said in verse 1. There is

therefore now no condemnation in Christ Jesus. Well, you say, “Adrian, does that mean that you can just sin and do anything that you want and it makes no difference? No. If I sin, I’ll end up in the wood shed. *“For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth”* (Hebrews 12:6). But I want to tell you, there is nobody who can lay any fault against me. There is nobody who can condemn me.

You see, if sin could condemn us, we’d all be condemned. I mean, we all sin. I wouldn’t trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to Heaven. But you see, the Bible teaches that there’s absolutely no one who can who can condemn us. Look at Romans 8:34: *“Who is he that condemneth?”* You can’t be condemned. Because no matter what happens to you Jesus says, “For those sins I died.”

Now, if there’s somebody here who says, “Well, hallelujah! I’ve got a free ticket then. I can just get saved and sin all I want to.” May I tell you, I sin all I want to. As a matter of fact, I sin more than I want to. As a matter of fact, I don’t want to. And, if you still want to, you need to get saved. I mean, you need to get your wanter fixed. No, you need a brand new wanter. Don’t get the idea that He’s just saying, “Well, you’ve just got to, you’ve got a ticket to sin here.” No, that’s not what He’s saying.

But, he is saying, once we get in Christ, there’s no more condemnation. I’m telling you, dear friend, these people who think they get saved, and then they’re going to live well enough to get to Heaven, they’re so, pardon me, stupid. Don’t you know that one half of one sin would damn you forever if God put it on your account? God demands absolute perfection.

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). And, when you sin it is not marked against your account. Yes, you are chastised. Yes, you may lose reward in Heaven. Yes, you may lose the answer to your prayer. But, you’re standing with God is settled when you receive the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **2. No Foe Can Destroy Us**

And I’m telling you, dear friend, listen. We are predestined for glory and we are preserved for glory. I’m preserved for glory because no fault can condemn me. Number two, no foe can destroy me. Look Romans 8:35: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”*

He mentions seven enemies. And, the apostle Paul himself had faced all seven of these enemies if you’ll read his life. And, these have been common enemies of Christians from the earliest days. But, what the apostle Paul knew from divine revelation and from personal experience is that none of these things can separate us from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at it again. *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation—*

you're going to have tribulation—or *distress?*—you'll have it—or *persecution?*—you'll have it—or *famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*" (Romans 8:35). You may have all of these. But on the contrary, rather than separating you from Jesus, they will draw the true child of God all the closer to his Lord. We are more than conquerors.

Look Romans 8:37: "*Nay, in all these things— not without these things, but in all of these things – we are more than conquerors through him that loved us*" (Romans 8:37). Now, you know what the word more than conqueror means? It doesn't mean super-conqueror. It means supra-conqueror. More than a conqueror. It doesn't mean that we win the last thirty seconds with a field goal. Friend, listen. The devil doesn't even get in the battle. I mean, in the real battle. I mean, he is defeated, he is stripped, shamed, and subdued. We are conquerors in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, friend, this is the glory. I want you to see we are predestined for glory. Not only are we predestined for glory, we are preserved for glory. And because of that, no fault can condemn us, no foe can conquer us and no fear need control us.

### **3. No Fear Need Control Us**

Look if you will now in verses 38 and following: "*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 8:38-40).

This chapter begins with no condemnation and it ends with no separation. What He is saying is this. Friend, neither death nor life can separate you. It doesn't matter if you die, you can't be separated from Him. If you live, you can't be separated from Him. What He is saying is, "Heads I win and tails I win. It makes no difference." Friend, I don't have to worry. No fear needs to control me. I know that I know that I know and there's nothing that can separate me from the love of God.

## **Conclusion**

Now, my dear friend, I've given you your spiritual biography if you're in Christ Jesus from guilt to glory. The guilt we exhibit, the grace we enjoy, the groans we endure and the glory we expect. It's all in one chapter. I've just given a surface overview of that chapter. But I pray that you'll go home, that you'll read it, that you'll absorb it and that you'll receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. I wonder tonight how many in this congregation would say, "Brother Rogers, Pastor, I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, I am born again"? I'm not just asking are you a baptized member of this church but you could say, I am born again. I know that I am saved because I've experienced what the apostle Paul wrote about here in Romans chapter 8. I am in Christ Jesus. God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I have been born again and

the righteousness of the law is being fulfilled in me.”

I’m not talking about somebody who says, “I’m living in sin and I know I’m saved.” As far as I’m concerned, if you’re living in sin, you have no right to know you’re saved. Dear friend, I’m talking about people who are saying, “Pastor, by the grace of God I know that I’m saved, I know that I’m preserved for glory and I know that nothing can separate me from the love of Jesus. I know it.”

If you could give me that testimony, would you slip up your hand and hold it up? All right, take it down. Now, if you couldn’t lift your hand, I want to pray for you right now and I want to help you to pray to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. First of all, I’m going to pray for you and then I’m going to lead you in a prayer. And, in this prayer you can ask Jesus to save you.

Father God, I want to pray tonight for these who are not saved that even tonight they might say an everlasting yes to Christ and be saved. O Spirit of God; bring conviction. Help people to see that outside of Christ there is condemnation, just as those people in that day were condemned who were outside the ark. But Lord, inside of Jesus there is safety and security. And O Father God, because there is no condemnation, there can be no separation. Father, bring this home to their hearts I pray. Open hearts to the Gospel of Christ that men, women, boys and girls might be saved.

Now while heads are bowed, the way to get into Jesus is to come in by faith. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. The word *believe* does not mean mere intellectual belief. It is a Bible word that means commitment and trust. Commit your life to Jesus, trust Him and you’ll be saved.

And, if you couldn’t lift your hand a few moments ago to say I know that I’m saved or if you lifted it and you had a twinge of conscience or if the Holy Spirit said, “You don’t know that you’re saved,” then let me help you to get it settled right now. I want you to pray this kind of a prayer. Pray it silently and fervently in your heart.

“Dear God” – that’s right, just talk to Him – “Dear God, I know that You love me and I know that You want to save me.” – and friend, He does love you so much. Pray this – “Jesus, You died to save me. You paid for my sins on that cross and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Lord Jesus, right now, this moment, with all of my heart, with all of my soul, I trust You. I open my heart. I receive You into my heart as my Lord and as my Savior. Forgive my sin. I turn from my sin. I receive You, Jesus, by faith like a little child. I don’t ask for any special feeling. I just trust You. I take You at your word. You said You would save me. I trust You tonight, Lord Jesus. Thank You for saving me, Jesus. I don’t deserve it. But I have received it by faith and that settles it. Jesus, You’re now my Savior, my Lord, my God forever. And now, Lord Jesus, begin to make me what You want me to be. Thank you, Lord, that I am predestined for glory and therefore I’m preserved for glory. Thank You, Lord Jesus, that nothing can separate me

from You. Thank you, Lord Jesus, because I've trusted You, no one can ever condemn me again, my sins are under the blood, and no sin will ever be marked to my account, because I'm in You and You're in me. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Begin now to fulfill the law in me, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in me as You live Your life in me, Lord Jesus." – and then pray this, if you've prayed all of the rest of that – "Lord Jesus, because You've saved me, because You hung naked on a cross and died for me, help me to live for You. And help me, Jesus, not to be ashamed of You. And Lord Jesus, help me to make it public that I've trusted You. Don't let me be a coward. Don't let me be ashamed of You, Jesus. I will not be ashamed of You, Lord Jesus. I will make it public. I will. By your grace, I will. And in your name I pray. Amen."

# The Agony and the Ecstasy

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 22, 1984

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:1–4, 22–39

*“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”*

ROMANS 8:23

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Grace That We Experience
  - A. There Is No Condemnation for Sin
  - B. There Is No Control By Sin
    - 1. The Law of Sin and Death
    - 2. The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus
  - C. There Need Be No More Continuance in Sin
- II. The Groans That We Endure
  - A. The Groaning of Creation
  - B. The Groaning of the Christian
    - 1. A Certain Expectancy
    - 2. A Glad Expectancy
  - C. The Groaning of the Comforter
- III. The Glory That We Expect
  - A. We Are Prepared for Glory
  - B. We Are Predestined for Glory
  - C. We Are Preserved for Glory
    - 1. No Fault Can Condemn Us
    - 2. No Foe Can Conquer Us
    - 3. No Fear Need Control Us

Conclusion

## Introduction

“The Agony and the Ecstasy.” And, what I want to do is to spend a few moments in this, one of the greatest chapters in all of the Word of God, the eighth chapter of Romans. Now, the book of Romans has been called “the Constitution of Christianity.” You’ll never be a great Christian, in my estimation, until you have a working knowledge of the book of Romans. Now, contrary to the Constitution of the United States of America, this

Constitution of Christianity has no Bill of Rights. We don't have any rights; they're all gifts of grace—not anything that we say we deserve, but, thank God, we have received plenty by God's grace and for God's glory. Now, I'm just going to give us, tonight, just an overview. And, in this message, I want you to see what God has done for us, what He is doing for us, and what God will do for us—I'm talking about those of us who are saved.

## I. The Grace That We Experience

Now, first of all, I want you to think of the grace that we experience. Look, if you will, in verses 1–4: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”* (Romans 8:1–4) Now, there's a lot in those four verses, but three things stand out to me, first of all.

### A. There Is No Condemnation for Sin

First of all, because I'm a Christian, because I've been saved, there is no condemnation for sin. Look at it again in verse 1: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to [those who] are in”*—where?—*“in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 8:1) Now, what does that mean? It means that Christ is my ark of safety and I'm in Him. In the Old Testament, Noah's ark was given not only to preserve Noah but that it might be from time immemorial an illustration of what happens to us when we are saved. As Noah was in the ark, I am in Christ. You see that little preposition *in*? That's where I am. I am in Christ.

Now, when God told Noah to build the ark, God said, *“Noah, put some pitch on the inside of the ark and put some pitch on the outside of the ark.”* (Genesis 6:14) That is, “Make it doubly secure within and without.” Now, pitch was a tar—a gummy substance—that was spread all over that ark. The purpose of it was to make the ark watertight, to make it waterproof, because it had to float. The storm in Noah's day represented the wrath of God. The ark represented the place of safety. The pitch... And, incidentally, the word *kaphar*, which is translated “pitch” in the Bible, is also translated “atonement.” And, you could say that God said to Noah, “Put atonement on the outside and put atonement on the inside,” because it is the atonement that keeps the waters of God's judgment from coming through. You see, not one drop of water could get in, and not one drop of judgment can come to me because I am safe in Christ.

Now, that's one reason I believe in the security of the believer—because as Noah was in that ark, I'm in Christ. Noah may have fallen down many times in the ark, but he could never fall out of the ark—amen?—because God, when He put him in, God sealed

him in that ark. And, because of that—hallelujah!—there is no condemnation for sin. Do you see it? Chapter 8:1: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to [those who] are in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 8:1) I’m not going to be judged for my sins—no judgment, no condemnation. I have settled my case out of court. I am in Christ, and because I’m in Christ, I am safe.

## **B. There Is No Control By Sin**

But, not only can I say that there’s no condemnation for sin, but there’s no control by sin. Look in verse 2, if you will: *“For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* (Romans 8:2)

### **1. The Law of Sin and Death**

Now, there’s a law in the world called “the law of sin and death”—that is, that all of us are sinners by nature, by choice, by practice, and that sin brings death, and there’s a downward pull and we all feel it. We even sing about it:

*Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love.*

—ROBERT ROBINSON

It’s called the law of sin and death. It is a downward pull that’s in everybody’s experience. It’s constantly working. It has never been abrogated. It has never been annulled. The law of sin and death is still alive, and it is working on you this very moment.

### **2. The Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus**

But, there’s another law that’s also working, and according to verse 2, it’s called “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.” Now, you have two forces that are working on you as a Christian: there’s that law of sin and death that pulls you down, and there’s that law of life in Christ Jesus that keeps you from going down.

When I was making these particular sermon notes, I was on an airplane. And, I could study good on an airplane. It must be the oxygen. I don’t know what it is, but I was just doing real good making these sermon notes on an airplane. And, I was thinking, you know, that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus is like the law of aerodynamics. Now, the law of gravity is always working on an airplane, but there’s another law—a stronger law—that supersedes and takes over the law of gravity. It does not cancel the law of gravity, but it overcomes the law of gravity. I don’t know what the real name for that law is; I’m going to call it “the law of aerodynamics”—whatever it is that keeps an airplane aloft that overcomes the law of gravity. Now, the law of gravity is working on that airplane, but the airplane is overcoming the law of gravity. Now, I was sitting in that airplane, and, therefore, the law of gravity had no effect on me—that is, to cause me to fall to the earth some twenty or thirty thousand feet—because I was in a plane and that

plane was overcoming that law, that downward pull, that was pulling on the airplane and pulling on me. But, there was a greater power that was keeping me aloft. Now, therefore, as a Christian, *“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.”* (Romans 8:2) That doesn’t mean that the law of sin and death is not pulling on me. That doesn’t mean that I’m not tempted. That doesn’t mean that there’s not that downward pull. There is, but—hallelujah!—there’s that upward pull. There’s the power of the life in Christ Jesus.

Now, suppose I’m sitting on that airplane, and I say, “You know, it’s kind of getting stuffy in here. I believe I’ll step outside for a little while.” Well, that would be kind of dumb to do because when I consciously take myself out of the control of that airplane by my own choice, which is also my choice to do as a Christian—when I cease to abide in Christ—I go down. That law of gravity is always there—always there. So, I’ve got to stay in that airplane. And, dear friend, I want to tell you, the law of sin and death is always there, but as I abide in the Lord Jesus Christ, there is no more condemnation for sin. There is no more control by sin.

### **C. There Need Be No More Continuance in Sin**

And so, thirdly, there need be no more continuance in sin. Look in verses 3–4: *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”* (Romans 8:3–4)

Now, notice what he points out, and something you need to understand—even though you’re saved, how weak your flesh is. Look in verse 3. Here’s one reason you can’t be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments: *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh...”* (Romans 8:3) That is, there’s nothing wrong with the law, but your flesh is such that the law is weak to save. God can’t just say, “Be good and be saved,” because we are in the flesh and the flesh is weak. Your flesh is weak, and my flesh is weak. And, the life of the Lord Jesus Christ condemns the sin in our flesh.

Look again, if you will: *“For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh”—*now, Jesus was not in sinful flesh but only in the likeness of sinful flesh—*“and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh.”* (Romans 8:3) Now, how did Jesus condemn sin in the flesh? Well, what that means is His righteous life condemns my unrighteous life. I mean, when Jesus Christ was here, He lived as a man ought to live. And, my life, in comparison to His life, is a life that is condemned. His righteous life shows how unrighteous my life is and shows my unrighteous life up for what it is.

**I heard of a woman who was always proud of her wash and how white her sheets**

and how white her pillowcases and towels were until one day she did her wash and hung it out. And, it looked so snowy white. And then, God sent a snow. And, when she looked outside, there was her wash on the line. And, it was against the backdrop of God's snow, and her wash looked drab and grey. And, she said, "What can a woman do in comparison to God's snow?" Now, dear friend, your life may look good until you compare it to the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. And "*God sending his...Son in the likeness of sinful flesh...condemned sin in the flesh.*" (Romans 8:3)

Now, let me tell you something. You need to get it down straight, and the liberals need to understand this: we are not saved by imitating Christ. We're not saved by trying to be like Christ. I mean, if the Bible tells me that I'm to be like Christ in order to be saved, then I'm a goner because all His life did is condemn my life. The goodness of His life points out the badness of my life—and, therefore, He's no Savior; what He does is just simply condemn me, if that's all. Now, I want you to learn this, dear friend: that *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? It's not the life of Christ that saves us; it is the death of Christ that saves us. The Bible says that His righteous life condemns sin in the flesh. (Romans 8:3) And, if all I have is Christ for an example, His example shows me just how rotten I am.

But now, wait a minute—wait a minute. Let's continue to read—though, hallelujah!—as we continue to read here in verse 4. He condemns sin in the flesh; that is, He showed us that we could no longer depend upon ourselves—"*that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled*"—what's that next word?—"in us"—not "by us," but "in us"—"*who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*" (Romans 8:4) Now, what does that mean? It means that God has never done away with His righteousness that's in the law. It's not that God just forgets the law. It's not that God's standard is not important. But, God says, "Look, you can't do it. I'm going to send my Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin. I'm going to condemn sin in the flesh. I'm going to die for sin, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled not by you, but in you." Thank God for it. Now, listen: In Christ, and by God's grace, there's no more condemnation for sin. And, because of that, there need be no more control by sin because "*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.*" (Romans 8:2) And, therefore, there need be no more continuance in sin.

Folks, I wish Baptists were half as afraid of sin as they are sinless perfection. Now, don't get the idea that you're supposed to go around, just because you're saved by grace, that you're living in sin. That's not so. Paul said in Romans 6: "*Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid.*" (Romans 6:1–2) I want to tell you that God expects you to live a righteous and a holy life. Say, "Amen." You're no longer condemned by sin (verse 1). You're no longer controlled by sin (verse 2). Therefore,

you should no longer continue in sin (verses 3–4), *“that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in [you].”* (Romans 8:4) That is, if Christ is in me and He’s living His life in me, that righteousness is going to show. Don’t call yourself a Christian if you’re not living a righteous life. Don’t even say, “Well, I may not be living right, but I believe in eternal security so I’m going to heaven.” You may be going to heaven, but if I were you, I wouldn’t believe I was until I got my life right. I mean, I wouldn’t bank on that.

I’ll tell you, dear friend, there’s something wrong with a person who says, “I know I’m saved, but I’m just not living as I ought to live.” I want to ask you, why not? Why not? No more condemnation for sin, no more control by sin—there need be no more continuance in sin. I believe some people are going to split hell wide open—never been saved. They’re living double lives. They’re just like the people of this world. Jesus didn’t bathe this world with His blood to have you serve the world, the flesh, and the devil. You’re to be different. Are you saved? I’ll tell you, there’s the grace that we experience. That’s the first thing I want you to see.

## **II. The Groans That We Endure**

Now, the second thing I want you to see: the groans that we endure. This is the reason I call this “The Agony and the Ecstasy.” I want you to skip a few verses, and I want you to look, if you will, where this eighth chapter of Romans begins to pick up the word *groan*. Look, if you will, for example, in Romans 8:22: *“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”* (Romans 8:22) And then, look, if you will, in verse 23: *“even we ourselves groan within ourselves.”* (Romans 8:23) Then, skip on down to verse 26: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* (Romans 8:26) Three times Paul mentions groanings—groanings. That’s the reason why I call this “The Agony and the Ecstasy.” You’re going to find three groanings here that we experience.

### **A. The Groaning of Creation**

First of all, there’s the groaning of creation, beginning in verse 18. Let me read about it. Paul says here, *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared [to] the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18) Now, underscore the word *suffering*. Did you ever get the idea that you’re going to get out of this world without suffering? Did you ever think when you joined Bellevue Baptist Church and got baptized, you had a ticket that said, “No more suffering”—all the way into glory with no more suffering? Well, friend, I just want to tell you, that’s not true. The sufferings of this present time Paul speaks of as a fact, but he says they’re *“not worthy to be compared [to] the glory which shall be revealed in us”*—and he goes on to say—*“For the earnest expectation of the creature”*—now, look at that word *creature*. Literally, it is “the

creation”; that is, “all of nature”—“*For the earnest expectation of the [creation] waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God*”—that is, all creation is on tiptoes waiting for God’s people to come into their own when Jesus comes again—“*For the [creation] was made subject to vanity, not willingly*”—that is, they didn’t choose that. All of God’s creatures and all of God’s nature didn’t choose that—“*but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the [creation] itself...shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption [unto] the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know*”—now, watch it. Verse 22—“*that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.*” (Romans 8:18–22)

Now, in verse 20, where he speaks of vanity, look at it: “*For the [creation] was made subject to vanity.*” (Romans 8:20) Vanity does not mean... Well, what it does mean is this: that it does not measure up to its original intention. In other words, God did not create nature this way. This is not what God intended. Record cold, record heat, drought, tornados, floods, pain, pain and tang and moan and groan and crying and dying and sighing, and tooth and fang and claw and decay and corruption—that’s not the way God made this world. “*The [creation] was made subject to vanity.*” (Romans 8:20) What happened is that sin came into the world. And, as I’ve told you before, the worst thing that could happen to sinful man would be for sinful man to live in a perfect environment and never know any sickness, never know any sufferings, never know any pain, never know any disappointment, never know any heartache, never know any drought, never know any tornados, never know any pestilence. If we lived that way, we wouldn’t know anything was wrong.

So, God said to Adam, “*Cursed is the ground for [your] sake*” (Genesis 3:17)—not “for your punishment,” but “for your sake.” “This is what you need, Adam. Because you have a sinful nature, I cannot let the world keep its pristine glory that it had when I created it.” And so, “*the [creation] was made subject to vanity.*” (Romans 8:20) And, “*the whole creation [groans] and [travails] in pain.*” (Romans 8:22) What Darwin would call “the survival of the fittest” is not the survival of the fittest, but it is the creation groaning under the burden of corruption. That’s what it is. The law of tooth and fang is just simply God’s curse on creation.

And so, all creation groans. If you listen to the wind when it blows through the trees, it’s even in a minor key. All creation has a curse on it. Everything—it just decays. And, the foul breath of decay and the gnawing tooth of time are just tearing everything apart. That’s just... You just build a garden and leave it alone—it goes to weeds. Build a house and leave it alone—it tumbles down. Everything is just—it’s built in. That is true about all creation.

## **B. The Groaning of the Christian**

But, not only is there the groaning of creation—now, watch it—there’s also the groaning

of the Christian. Look again, if you will, in verse 23: *“And not only they”—that is, the creatures—“but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit”—that is, the ones who’ve been born again—“even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of [the] body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.”* (Romans 8:23–25) Now, what does that mean? It means that we also are groaning. You see, we are part of this physical universe. There’s a curse on this physical universe, and I happen to live in this physical universe. And, therefore, when the universe groans, and when nature groans, I groan with it. To be a Christian does not mean that I am immune from suffering.

Now, what does verse 24 mean when it says, *“[We’re] saved by hope”*? (Romans 8:24) What does that mean? Well, you need to understand how the Bible used the word *hope*. The hope that he’s talking of here is the redemption of the body, not the redemption of the soul. The soul has already been saved. We already have the first fruits of the Spirit, but the Bible says we are waiting for the adoption—that is, the redemption—of the body. Look at it. Do you see it—verse 23? *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”* (Romans 8:23)

Now, there are some people who tell you that if you’re a Christian, you’re not supposed to be sick. And, they’ll say that “Jesus bore our sickness on the cross, and by His stripes we’re healed.” And, almost every faith healer that you see goes up and down the land telling you that. Well, Jesus did take our sicknesses, and with His stripes we are healed—but not yet. You see, your body is not yet redeemed. You need to understand that. You’re waiting for the redemption of your body. You see, when I got saved, I was instantaneously justified in my spirit. I’m progressively sanctified in my soul. I will be ultimately glorified in my body.

Now, if you don’t understand that, folks, you’re going to get awfully confused. That’s the reason Paul said that there’s going to be sufferings—in verse 18: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared [to] the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18) *“And [we ourselves] which have the firstfruits of the Spirit...we groan within ourselves.”* (Romans 8:23) Now look, folks, if you’ll just think about it, there’s hardly a person sitting in this building that doesn’t feel a pain somewhere right now. Just think about it. Did you find yours? Yes. Say, “He’s sitting next to me.” Now listen, there’s a pain and a groan and a moan—that’s a part of us.

### **1. A Certain Expectancy**

Now, when the Bible says that we have this hope, what’s it talking about? Well, when the Bible uses the word *hope*, it means “a certainty”—it means “a certainty.” You see, when the Bible speaks of the Second Coming of Jesus, the Bible calls the Second

Coming of Jesus the “blessed hope.” (Titus 2:13) Now, it means “a certain expectancy.” It doesn’t mean... We use the word *hope* like, “Well, maybe so and maybe not.” “Is this going to happen?” “Well, I hope so.” But, when we use the Bible word *hope*, it doesn’t mean “maybe so, maybe not.” It means “I know it is coming. It is a certain expectancy.”

## 2. A Glad Expectancy

But now, wait a minute—it is a glad expectancy.

My dad used to say to me something like this: “Adrian, I’m going to whip you.” Well, you know, I knew he would. I mean, he just didn’t change his mind. Now, I knew he would. It was a certainty—but not a glad certainty. I mean, I never called it a “hope,” just a “certainty.”

But, you see, the Second Coming of Christ and the redemption of the body is a glad certainty. A glad certainty is called a “hope” in the Bible. And, see, that’s the reason the Second Coming of Jesus is the “blessed hope.” (Titus 2:13) Now folks, God’s not finished with us yet. I mean, there’s more. There is more to come. Philippians 1:6: “[And] 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) God is not finished with you yet; and so, there is the groaning. There’s the groaning of creation, and then there’s the groaning of the Christian.

### C. The Groaning of the Comforter

But now, thirdly, there’s the groaning of the Comforter. Look, if you will, in verse 26: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit”—and, by the way, the best translation is not “the Spirit Itself,” but “the Spirit Himself”—“maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.” (Romans 8:26) Now, that’s the third groaning—the groaning of creation, the groaning of the Christian, and the groaning of the Comforter.

Now, God knew that while we were down here in a world cursed with groanings—He knew that we were too weak to bear these ourselves so He sent us a Comforter, someone to suffer along with us, someone to bear these groanings with us. And, He is there, the Holy Spirit of God, to agonize with us. I like the way J. B. Phillips translates this verse. It says, “His Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those agonizing longings which never find words.” Thank God—thank God—that the Holy Spirit of God in me right now—He knows I suffer, He knows I have pain, He knows I’ll have more. He knows you have trouble, and He knows you’re going to have more trouble. But, He’s there to groan with you, to pray with you, to agonize with you. Just as a fireman is there alongside a fire to add aid, and just as a doctor is there alongside a deathbed or alongside a sickbed to give comfort and instructions, and just as a lawyer is alongside you in a courtroom to plead your cause, the Holy Spirit of God has been called

alongside of you to intercede for you, to pray with you, to groan for you *“with groanings [that] cannot be uttered.”* (Romans 8:26)

And that, my dear friend, is the agony. It’s real. It’s in everybody’s life, no matter who you are. If you’re saved, you’re going to suffer. If you’re lost, you’re going to suffer. But, if you’re saved, there’s someone to suffer with you. There’s someone to groan with you. There’s someone to help you. And—hallelujah!—what a helper!

### **III. The Glory That We Expect**

Now, I’ve talked about the grace that we experience. I’ve talked about the groans that we endure. Now, let me talk to you about the glory that we expect, as we come to the end of this chapter. I want you to begin reading now in verse 28 of this chapter, and look at it. Paul says, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 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 [brothers]. 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. What shall we...say [then] to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. [And] who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or [persecutions], or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:28–39)

Now, these verses talk about the glory that we expect—not the groans we endure, but the glory that we expect. Remember what verse 18 said? *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18) Now, let me tell you about this glory.

#### **A. We Are Prepared for Glory**

First of all, we’re predestined—well, we’re prepared for glory. That’s the grace. I’ve already talked about that.

## B. We Are Predestined for Glory

But, not only are we prepared for glory, but because we're prepared for glory, we're predestined for glory. Look, if you will, in verses 28–29: the Bible says, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate”*—did you know that I am predestined to glory and so are you?—*“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 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 8:28–30) Now listen, folks, I am predestined for glory; so are you. That's what this passage of Scripture tells us.

You say, “Well, I don't think I understand predestination.” Well, that makes two of us, but I don't worry about it because I can't understand it. As a matter of fact, *I wouldn't have any confidence in a God I could understand.* I'm glad there are some things about God I don't understand. I know that predestination doesn't take away free will because the Bible says, “Whosoever will may come,” (Revelation 22:17) and, *“The Lord is...not willing that any should perish.”* (2 Peter 3:9) But, I know that God chose me in order that I might choose Him, and I chose Him because He first chose me. I love Him because He first loved me. And, I'm so grateful that God, in His infinite wisdom, looked down through the tunnel of time and God predestined me to be saved.

Now, notice the result of these wonderful words. I was foreknown, and because I was foreknown, I was predestined. And, because I was predestined, I was called. And, because I was called, I was justified. And, because I was justified, I am already glorified. That's what it says. Look at it. And, it's just an amazing thing, but look at it—the last part of verse 30: *“and whom he justified, them he also glorified.”* (Romans 8:30) You would expect him to say, “He will glorify,” but it says, “He glorified them.” This verse is in the past tense, just like all of the others. What does that mean? You see, you and I live in time, but God lives in eternity; and God sees it as already done. Do you know what *predestined* means? It's already done. I mean, I'm already glorified. You see, friend, there's no way that I can miss heaven because I'm predestined to be there. I am so predestined to be there, and you are so predestined to be there, that God speaks of it as already done. You are predestined for glory. And friend, what has been decreed and settled in eternity will never be undone in time, and what has been decreed in heaven is not going to be undone by hell or by humanity.

Are you predestined for glory? I am—I am. Hallelujah! Praise God! Listen, I was prepared for glory by His grace. I am predestined for glory by His grace. It's one of the reasons I believe in eternal security of the believer. Listen, you can't be more sure than predestined, can you? I mean, I am predestined. God has predestined me. You say, “I

don't understand that." Well, "*whom [God] foreknow, [them] he also [predestined].*" (Romans 8:29) Now, what does *foreknowledge* mean? Does that mean He decided to save some and decided not to save others? Some feel it means that. Others feel it just simply means that God looked ahead in time and saw who would trust Him. And, when He saw who would trust Him, then God said, "Those who trust me are predestined for glory." Whatever it means, predestined means predestined. However we got there, we're still there. We are predestined. And folks, that means we ain't a gonna lose it. I mean, it is already settled in the heart and mind of God. It is as good as done. God even puts it in the past tense. We are predestined for glory. "*Whom he did foreknow, he [predestined]*" (Romans 8:29)—"whom He predestined, He called; whom He called, He justified; and whom He justified, He glorified." (Romans 8:30)

### C. **We Are Preserved for Glory**

Now, not only are we predestined for glory, but because we're prepared for glory, predestined for glory, therefore, we are preserved for glory. You want me to tell you why I know I'm going to heaven? I'll give you three reasons and the rest of these verses, and then I'll be finished.

#### 1. **No Fault Can Condemn Us**

Number one: No fault can condemn me. You say, "You mean you don't have any faults?" I didn't say that. But, no fault can condemn me. Look, if you will now, in verse 33 as we continue to read. Listen. Well, let's get in verse 31, as we begin to read: "*What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*"—that's a good question, isn't it?—"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"—that is, "Who's going to bring an accusation against one whom God has elected?"—"It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (Romans 8:31–34) Now, what he's saying is this: that there is no fault that condemns us—that can condemn us. I mean, who can lay anything to my charge? You say, "Well, Adrian, you're not perfect." That's right, but in Jesus I'm perfect. I am in Christ Jesus. And, in order, dear friend, for you to lay anything against me, you'd have to lay it against Jesus, because I am in Christ and Christ is in me. And, the Bible says He's the One who justifies and He makes intercession for us in verse 34. (Romans 8:34)

Now, the devil is "*the accuser of [the] brethren.*" (Revelation 12:10) The devil is the prosecuting attorney, and Jesus is the defense attorney. And, the devil's up there in glory. He's saying, "Look at that Adrian Rogers down there. Look at what he did this time. Look at what he did that time. Look how he failed you, God. Look how he

disgraced you, God.” And, he accuses me night and day before the Father. He’s *“the accuser of [the] brethren.”* (Revelation 12:10) But, Jesus is there, according to verse 34, and He’s making intercession. And, He’s saying, “Yes, Father, it is true. He failed in this way, and he failed in that way. But, he’s my elect. He’s predestined. He is justified. And, there’s no one who can lay any charge to one of my elect. I make intercession for him. For those sins I died. My blood now is being applied.” Praise God! The Bible says, *“Blessed is the man [to] whom the LORD [will not impute] iniquity.”* (Psalms 32:2) Thank God! Hallelujah! If you think I’m talking about loose living and just happy-go-lucky living, I’m not. But, I’m telling you that *I wouldn’t trust*—I’ve said this before—*the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven*, but there is no fault that can condemn me.

## 2. No Foe Can Conquer Us

But, not only that—listen, not only is there no fault that can condemn me—but I want to say also that there is no foe that can conquer me. Look, if you will, in verse 35 now: *“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?”*—and now, he mentions seven enemies. Listen to them. Seven foes—*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation”*—you’re going to have tribulation—*“distress”*—you’re going to have distress—*“or persecution”*—you’re going to have persecution—*“or famine”*—you’re going to have famine—*“or nakedness”*—you’re going to know nakedness—*“or peril”*—you’re going to know peril—*“or [the] sword?”* (Romans 8:35) You’re going to know the sword, God tells His people. God’s people are not immune from these enemies. Paul himself faced all of them, and Paul knew from personal experience that none of them had the power to sever a soul from Christ. As a matter of fact, these seven enemies draw the believer all the closer to Jesus Christ. *“We are more than conquerors,”* (Romans 8:37) he says—*“we’re more than conquerors through the Lord Jesus Christ”* in verse 37. *“Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors.”* (Romans 8:37) That literally means “super-conquerors.” Don’t get the idea that the Christians win by kicking a field goal the last three seconds. *“We are more than conquerors.”* (Romans 8:37) We don’t just squeak by.

## 3. No Fear Need Control Us

I’m telling you, no fault can condemn us, no foe can conquer us, and, therefore, no fear need control us. Continue to read here in verse 38: “For I am persuaded”—and, by the way, if you don’t believe in the eternal security of the believer, then you just don’t believe what I’m about to read. As a matter of fact, I’m going to read one of the most inclusive passages of Scripture in all of literature, and I’m going to stop when I finish reading it. And, I’m going to find out if anybody can stand up in this congregation and tell me anything that Paul left out of this statement of the things that he says can’t separate us from Christ. And, if you can, well, I’ll just bow down and worship... No, I

won't worship you. Well, I don't want to worry about it anyway because you can't do it. I'll take you out to dinner tonight if you can, all right? How's that? All right, listen to it. You're not going to get a dinner out of me. Listen to it—*"For I am persuaded"*—are you listening?—*"that neither death, nor life"*—now, he's already covered all the bases, right? I mean, he's already covered all the bases—*"neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities"*—what kind of angels? Good angels, bad angels, fallen angels—*"nor principalities"*—that word *principalities* means "princedoms" or "kingdoms," heavenly kingdoms, earthly kingdoms, hellish kingdoms—*"nor powers"*—what kind of power? White power, black power, atomic power, flower power, electric power, any other kind of power that you can mention—*"nor things present"*—that means anything; I mean, anything that's in existence right now—*"nor things to come"*—anything that's ever going to come into existence—*"Nor height"*—that is, anything in heaven above—*"nor depth"*—that is, anything in hell beneath. And, in case he missed it, in case he left anything else out, he says—*"nor any other creature"*—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) Anybody want to claim your dinner?

Now, let me tell you something, folks: Paul said there is nothing that can separate you from the love of Christ if you're in Christ. Isn't that wonderful? Now folks, that just makes you want to stand up and walk around a little bit. I mean, that's exciting—that is exciting. I'm telling you that there is no fault that can condemn us, there is no foe that can conquer us, and there is no fear that need concern us. *"[There is nothing that can] separate from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."* (Romans 8:39) The grace we experience, the groans we endure, the glory we expect. It's wonderful—wonderful—to be a Christian. Hallelujah!

## Conclusion

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I just wonder, have you experienced God's grace? You remember how this chapter started out? *"There is therefore now no condemnation to [those who] are in Christ Jesus."* (Romans 8:1) Everybody in this building tonight is either in Christ or you're out of Christ. If you're out of Christ, you're in Adam, and *"in Adam all die...in Christ...all [are] made alive."* (1 Corinthians 15:22)

Now, are you saved or lost? Are you in Adam or are you in Christ? Are you saved or are you lost? I mean, as Marvin Mellon gave that testimony, he went around asking people, "Do you know if you died right now, you're absolutely certain you'd go to heaven?" Well, I want to ask you that question: If you died right now, are you absolutely certain you'd go to heaven? Friend, if you have repented of your sin and received Christ, if you are in Christ, there's no more condemnation for sin. There's no more

control by sin. There need be no more continuance in sin because of that grace that you experienced.

Now, if you'd like to be saved tonight, let me tell you how to be saved. You can be saved right where you are. You don't have to come down to the front of the church to be saved. You don't have to join a church to be saved. You don't have to be baptized to be saved. You don't have to keep the Ten Commandments to be saved. You don't have to obey the Golden Rule to be saved. Salvation is a gift. You can be saved right where you are, right this moment. I mean, instantaneously, tonight, you can be saved. You must recognize that you're a sinner. You must repent of your sin. You must believe that Christ died for your sins and by faith receive Him into your heart. The Bible says, *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."* (Acts 16:31)

Now, you might just pray a prayer like this out of your heart; pray it and mean it: "Dear God"—just speak to Him right now out of your heart—"Dear God"—I mean, right now, do it, friend. If you're not absolutely certain you're saved, do it right now—"Dear God, I know you love me, and I know you want to save me"—friend, He does love you. This message is His love crying out and calling out to you—"I know you love me, and I know you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me"—confess that—"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 where you are? I mean, with all of your heart, sincerely, from the depths of your being right now, would you pray that way—"I do trust you, Jesus, right now. I trust you. I open my heart. I receive you, Jesus"—tell Him that—"I receive you, Jesus. I receive you, Jesus. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus"—invite Him in right now. He's standing at your heart's door, knocking, wanting to come in—"Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin, and save me"—ask Him right now, where you are—"Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me, Lord Jesus"—the Bible says, *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* (Romans 10:13) Right where you are—"Save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him to save you? Did you? Then, thank Him for it. Here's where the faith comes in. You ask Him. You meant it. Then, by faith, pray this way: "Thank you for saving me, Jesus. I don't deserve it. I could never earn it, but I receive it now. You promised, and you cannot lie, so I receive it now, Lord Jesus. I receive your grace. I receive you, Jesus. Thank you, Jesus, for forgiving my sin. Thank you for saving me. I receive it by faith like a little child, and that settles it, Jesus. Praise your holy name." Now, speak to Him this way: "You are my Lord, my God, my Savior, and my friend forever. Praise your holy name."

Now, I want you to pray one other thing now, and if you prayed all of this in your own way—you prayed and said, "Lord, come into my heart and save me"—I'm going to ask you to pray something else. Heads are still bowed. I want you to pray this: "Now, Lord

Jesus, because I'm trusting you, give me the courage to make it public." One of the ways that we can know that we mean business is that we're willing to confess Christ before men. 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." (Mark 8:38) The Scripture says, "*Whosoever believeth [in] him shall not be ashamed.*" (Romans 9:33; 10:11) So, I'm going to ask you to pray, "Now, Lord Jesus, give me the courage tonight—give me the courage tonight—to make it public and to give you the glory. In your name I pray."

# Eternal Security of the Believer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 10, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:1–39**

*“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”*

ROMANS 8:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Eight Reasons I Believe in the Eternal Security of the Believer
  - A. The Clear Promise of Scripture
  - B. The Nature of the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross
  - C. The Continuing Work of the Holy Spirit
  - D. The Predestination We Have to Be Like Jesus
  - E. The Relationship We Have with Jesus
  - F. The Eternal Life We Already Have When We Believe in Jesus
  - G. The Constant Prayers of Jesus for His Own
  - H. The Sovereignty of God
- II. Some Answers to Apparently Conflicting Scriptures
  - A. 2 Peter 2:20–22
  - B. Matthew 24:13
  - C. Hebrews 6:4–6

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles, turn to Romans 8 for just a moment, Romans chapter 8. Now, we're going to look at a lot of Scriptures, but we're going to begin in Romans chapter 8. Now, let me ask you a question. And, I know the answer, but I'm going to ask the question and let you just think about it. Question number one, isn't it wonderful that we can be saved? Say, "Amen." It's just wonderful. Is there anything better than being saved? Yes, there is. What is it? Well, it's being saved and knowing that you're saved. Amen? Isn't it wonderful that not only can we be saved, but the Bible teaches that those who are saved can know that they're saved? Well, is there anything better than being saved and knowing that you're saved? Oh yes. What could be better than that? It is being saved, knowing that you're saved and knowing that you can never lose your salvation. Now friend, that is trice wonderful.

Look in Romans chapter 8 verse 1, the Bible teaches in verse 1 that we can be saved. *“There is therefore now no condemnation...”* Hallelujah (Romans 8:1). The word “condemnation” means judgment. Judgment for those who are in Christ Jesus is past, it is over. We will never come into condemnation. Hallelujah we can be saved.

But, there’s something better than that. Look, if you will, in verse 16 of Romans 8, *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* (Romans 8:16). So, that’s the second wonderful thing. Not only can we be saved, we can know that we’re saved. The Holy Spirit of God tells us that we’re saved, born again. But, even more wonderful than that is that we can know that when we’re saved, and know that we’re saved, we can also know that we are eternally secure and can never lose that salvation. Look in Romans 8 verses 38 and 39, the Apostle Paul says, *“For I am persuaded”—this is not some whimsical view—“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).

Do you know why Romans 8 is such a wonderful chapter? It begins with no condemnation, it ends with no separation. Isn’t it a wonderful chapter? You see, Romans 8:1, “There is therefore no condemnation...” And, then in Romans 8 verses 38 and 39, “There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God...” Oh how wonderful it is to be saved, and to know that we are eternally secure in the Lord Jesus.

You say, “Well are you talking about the Baptist doctrine of eternal security?” No. I’m talking about the Bible doctrine of eternal security. If we have any Baptist doctrine, we better get rid of it. And, Presbyterians and Methodists ought to get rid of Presbyterian and Methodist doctrine. Episcopalians get rid of Episcopalian doctrine, and just everybody go to what the Bible says the Word of God.

I’m not talking to you about Baptist doctrine. Well, you say, “You mean, a man can walk down an aisle, shake a hand with a preacher, live like the devil and go to Heaven?” Oh no. He’s going straight to Hell. I’m talking about people who have been twice born. I’m talking about people who have received a new nature. I am saying that a person who has been made a partaker of the divine nature, a person who has been twice born, a person who has been justified, washed in the blood of Christ can never, ever again be a lost soul.

Now, there are many who talk the talk, but have never had the experience. Look with me now, and we’re going to look at a lot of Scriptures tonight, so just get your Bibles out and we’re going to have a good time. Look with me for example, in Matthew chapter 7 for just a moment. Matthew chapter 7, and let me show you a verse of Scripture. The reason I’m going to show you this Scripture is, if I talk to you about eternal security right away, rather than looking in the Word of God, you’re going to parade it all past the

judgment bar of your mind. And, you're going to say, "Now, wait a minute, that doctrine can't be true, because I know someone who was once a Christian and they're no longer a Christian."

May I tell you, that you think you knew someone who was once a Christian and who is no longer a Christian? Number one, they still may be saved, and you don't think they are. Number two, they may never have been saved. Now, look here, there are many people who look like they're saved who are not saved at all. Our Lord is speaking of the judgment and He says in 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*" (Matthew 7:21). You see, there are a lot of people who give lip service to our Lord, but our Lord knows they've never been saved. But, He says, "*Many will say to me in that day*"—Now, this 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?" (Matthew 7:22). In "prophesying His name" means that, they preached.

They cast out devils, or at least to think they cast out devils, means that they were in the business of spiritual service. And, to have done many wonderful works, maybe they sang in the choir, maybe they took the offering, maybe they gave their money. All of these things. But, notice what He says to these people, who sound right and look right, He's going to say to them, "*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*" (Matthew 7:23).

Now, someone would say, "They lost their salvation." But, Jesus said, "They never had it." He didn't say, "I once knew you and then you lapsed from the faith." They looked outwardly like they were saved, but they were not saved. Jesus said, "I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. What you called good works, I call iniquity."

Now, leave Matthew chapter 7 and go to John chapter 10 and let me show you a corresponding verse that is so different that it impinges on the same thing. Now, in John chapter 10, look with me in verse 27, He says, "*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them*"—Notice, He says to the others, "I never knew you." But, He says to His sheep—"I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them"—What?—"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" (John 10:27–30).

So my dear friend, you may see somebody. You say, "Oh, I know somebody, he was once a deacon, he was once a Pastor, he was once an evangelist, he was once a missionary, he was once a soul winner, could not have been a more saintly, godly person than that person. And, now he denies the faith. He's living like the devil. Are you trying to tell me Pastor that he's saved?" No. I'm just trying to tell you he never was saved. They may prophesy, and cast out devils, and do many wonderful works, but

Jesus said, “I never knew you.” But, He says, “Those that I know, My sheep hear My voice, I know them, I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish.”

Now, keep all of that in mind and turn with me please to 1 John, 1 John back in the back of your Bibles. And, look if you will in chapter 2. And, this explains what happens to so many people who profess the Lord Jesus Christ and they go back and they fall away. And, somebody says, “Oh, they lost their salvation.” Of course they didn’t. Here’s what happened to them. 1 John chapter 2 and 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). Not everyone who professes faith in Christ is saved. “They went out from us because they were not of us. Had they been of us, they no doubt would have continued with us. But, they went out to make it manifest, they were not all of us”. We have a saying around here, “The faith that fizzles before the finish had a flaw from the first.” They never were truly, truly saved. Now, but the Bible teaches that those who are truly saved, are kept by the power of God.

## **I. Eight Reasons I Believe in the Eternal Security of the Believer**

Now, let me give you some reasons for that. Let me give you some reasons for that. Let me give you some reasons for why I believe in the eternal security of the believer. Now, somebody just recently spoke to me about this, and I think that’s what has engendered this message. They said, “Please, please bring a message on the eternal security of the believer.”

Now, I want to give you eight ironclad Bible reasons why a born-again child of God can never, ever, ever, ever, ever again be a lost soul.

### **A. The Clear Promise of Scripture**

Number one, is the clear plain promise of the Scriptures. Now, go back to Romans 8, where we began, and look in verses 38 and 39. Notice what the Apostle Paul says, “I am persuaded”—I am persuaded. This is something that I have thought about, I have prayed about, this is something by inspiration of the Holy Spirit—“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”

Now, my dear friend, have you ever read a more all-inclusive statement than that? There is nothing in Heaven above, earth beneath, Hell below, no creature, no principality, no power, nothing that you can name, conjure up, or think of that could possible separate you from the love of God. This is an all-inclusive verse, and if we didn’t have any other verse in the Bible, any other verses than Romans 8, verses 38 and 39, I would say that would settle it beyond any peradventure, beyond any

statement, God says, there is nothing, no nothing, nothing, nothing, nothing that can separate you from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## **B. The Nature of the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross**

All right, now here's the second reason. The second reason is the nature of the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Look, if you will in Hebrews chapter 10, with me for just a moment. Hebrews chapter 10 and verse 14, The Bible says, *"For by one offering he"*—that is Jesus—*"hath perfected"*—Now, notice the next little phrase—*"for ever them that are sanctified"* (Hebrews 10:14). The offering of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross bought salvation for you, sanctified you, made you perfect in the sight of God, once and for all, now and forever.

Now, when you got saved, God didn't just give you a new start. God made you perfect and complete in His sight by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you see, in the Old Testament, sacrifices had to be made over and over again, because those sacrifices could never really take away sin. All they did was to picture the sacrifice that would come. All they did was, as it were, roll the sins of the people forward. All they were was a promise of God to pay. Go back to Hebrews 10 verses 1 and 2: *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect"* (Hebrews 10:1). I mean, they offered the blood of bulls and goats, but they had to do it year after year, after year, after year, after year, after year, after year, after year as the centuries and the millenniums rolled on.

But, my dear friend, they never were made perfect. Notice in verse 2, *"For then would they not have ceased to be offered?"*—That is, if the blood of a bull or a goat could save you, why then they would just say, "It's done"—*"because that the worshippers"*—now watch it—*"once purged"*—that is once cleansed—*"should have had no more conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year"*—Every time they went to that bloody place for a sacrifice, God was saying, "You're a sinner, you're a sinner, you're a sinner." That's what those Old Testament sacrifices did. And, look in verse 4—*"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"* (Hebrews 10:2–4). We all know that. Now, having that in mind, look if you will, in again in verse 14 of this chapter. He speaks now of Jesus and he says, "For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Now, the death of the Lord Jesus Christ was not like the death of those bloody sacrifices of bulls and goats. When you come to Jesus, your sins are not just rolled forward. Your sins are paid for. When you got saved, you didn't just get a new start. My dear friend, I'm trying to tell you something. If you were to get saved, and then lose your salvation, in order for you to get saved again, Jesus would have to die again. Do you

understand what I'm saying? I mean, when Jesus died, He provided something for you. And, it says, "Good for one salvation only." "By one offering, He hath perfected" for how long? "For ever." Forever. I mean, dear friend, forever.

Now, if you ever lost your salvation, Jesus would have to leave Heaven, come back to this earth, and die again in order to save you. That's the reason you will never find in the Bible a record of anybody being saved twice. Have you ever thought about that? Nowhere in the Bible will you find it, not one place. My dear friend, you will never find in the Word of God anybody ever saved twice. Why? "For by one offering, He hath perfected forever, them that are sanctified."

You say, "Well, what if I sin after I get saved?" Did I hear you correctly? What if? Let me show you what happens to your sins. Turn to Romans chapter 4 here for just a moment. Oh my dear friend, I'm going to read to you something here that's one of the most incredible blessings in all of the Word of God. You're not saved, my dear friend, by good works. If you could work for your salvation, it wouldn't be a gift, it would be a reward. The Bible says in Romans 4 verse 4: "*Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt*"—If you were save by your good works, then salvation would be something God owes you. That's what he's saying in verse 4. But, he says in verse 5—"*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*"—When you stop trying and start trusting, at that moment you become a child of God. And, then he gives an illustration—"*Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works*" (Romans 4:4–6).

You say, "All right, how am I made righteous?" God imputes righteousness to you. You say, "What does 'imputeth' mean?" Well, it just means He puts that on your account. Next time you go to the department store, don't say, "Charge it," just say, "Impute it." It's the same thing. "Put that on my account." God imputes righteousness without works. Not anything that you do, not one cent of a half of an act helps get you saved. God imputes righteousness to you.

Now, "*Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven*"—Now, that's wonderful isn't it? Sin forgiven. Hey, but folks, that's not the best part, look. "*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*" (Romans 4:7). Oh thank God for that. I mean, He didn't just forgive me and then leave the record there. Oh friend, He forgave me and then He covered it. With His precious blood He blotted it out. You say, "It can't get better than that."

Oh wait a minute. It does get better. "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*" (Romans 4:8). Whew!! Hey, forgiven that's wonderful, blotted out that's better. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Now, He'll carry you to the woodshed and beat the daylights out of you. But, friend, He does not put it on your

account. These people who think you can lose your salvation if you don't live just right. What arrogance. What consummated arrogance. So, you think you're living good enough to get you to Heaven. My dear friend, if God put one-half of one sin on your account, you'd go to Hell. I wouldn't trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to Heaven, much less some of my worst ones.

But, my dear friend, by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, my iniquity is forgiven, it is covered. And, then God says, "I will not, I will not, I will not impute that sin to you." This has nothing to do with the fact that God will chastise children, and God will carry you to the wood shed and God will judge you. But, my dear friend, if God were to impute sin to you, you'd be lost again and you'd have to get saved again. But, then Jesus would have to die again, and He's not going to die again. "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

I like it, and I get excited about it. You want me to tell you how many times you want to get saved? You can get saved as many times as Christ died. That's how many times you can get saved.

### **C. The Continuing Work of the Holy Spirit**

Now, I'll tell you another reason that I believe in the eternal security of the believer. And, that is by the continuing work of the Holy Spirit of God.

Turn with me please to the book of Philippians chapter 1 for just a moment. Philippians Chapter 1 and verse 6, now the Bible says, "*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). Who started this salvation thing in you? Did you seek God or did God first seek you?

The Bible says, "*there is none that seeketh after God*" (Romans 3:11). No not one. He sought us. You say, "I sought Him." It's only because He first sought you. You say, "I love Him." It's only because He first loved you. My dear friend, He began a good work in you, the Holy Spirit of God. Salvation originated in the heart and the mind of God, not in your heart and your mind, it is God's sovereign work in your life. Who began it? The Holy Spirit of God. And, the Bible says, "...he which hath begun a good work in you"—What will He do? He will finish it—He "will perform it..."

Now, let me tell you what the Holy Spirit did, in your in your salvation. Number one, the Holy Spirit was the convictor. He was the convictor. He convicted you of your sin. Number two, the Holy Spirit was the convincer. The Holy Spirit made Jesus Christ real to you. Number three, He was the converter. You were born again of the Spirit of God. And, may I tell you that the convictor and the convincer and the converter is also the completer. He's the completer. He's the completer. "He who hath begun a good work in you, will," He will, He will, He "will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Now, folks you're in better hands than All State, I want to tell you.

#### **D. The Predestination We Have to Be Like Jesus**

Now, I want you to turn back to Romans chapter 8, with me for just a moment. And, here's another reason that a child of God is eternally secure. And, it is because we have been predestined by sovereign God to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, in Romans chapter 8 begin in verse 29. The Bible speaks of "the golden chain of redemption." The wonderful sequencing of events. And, He says here in verse 29, "*For whom he did foreknow*"—that's the first step—"*he also did predestinate*"—that's the second step—"*to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called*"—That's the third step—"*and whom he called, them he also justified*"—That's the fourth step—"*and whom he justified, them he also glorified*" (Romans 8:29–30).

It doesn't say, "He will glorify." Did you know you're just as glorified now, as you'll ever be. You say, "Well, man I don't look like it, I don't feel like it, I don't think like it." No, but in the mind of God—who sees the finished transaction—my dear friend, God sees you now glorified. You're now glorified. Now, the Bible says, "Those whom He foreknew, He also predestined."

Do you know what "predestined" means? It means, folks, the sovereign God has decreed it's going to happen. Now, if you have been saved, God says, "That you're predestined, predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son." Now, what does that mean? It means nothing can stop it. It is done in the heart and mind of God. You cannot be sure than predestined. Your destiny is predetermined by a sovereign God.

When I received Christ, I was predestined to be like Him. Now, my dear friend, if I'm not like Him, I'm not predestined to be like Him. If it doesn't happen. All I'm trying to tell you, dear friend, is you cannot be more sure than predestined.

#### **E. The Relationship We Have with Jesus**

All right, now let me give you the fifth reason. The next reason is, the relationship that you have with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the Bible tells us here in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17, and you may want to look at it. The Bible says, "*if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature*" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Now, where am I tonight? Well you say, "You're up there on the platform." Well, that's right. But, you see, when God sees me, God doesn't see me up here on the platform. He knows I'm up here on the platform, but that isn't the way He sees me. He sees me in Christ. You see, everybody here tonight is either in Adam or in Christ.

The really only two men who ever lived, Adam and Christ. The first Adam and the last Adam. And, either you are in Christ, or you're in Adam. Now, in Adam all die. Hallelujah, in Christ all are made alive. Now, if you are in Christ that is your position tonight. Now, if I, therefore who am in Christ were to lose my salvation, a part of the body of Christ would die. I mean. He would have an amputation. A part of the body of

Christ would die. You see, I could not ever be lost unless the head of a new creation, the Lord Jesus, fails.

I've illustrated it with you and other congregations in times past by Noah's ark. Peter tells us that Noah's ark is a picture, a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, God said in Genesis chapter 7 verse 1 to Noah, "...*Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark...*" (Genesis 7:1). Now, He didn't say, "Noah go into the ark." I read the Living Bible says, "Go into the ark." But, that isn't what the language says. That's one of the dangers of paraphrases. The Scripture says, "God said to Noah, Noah, come into the ark." Now, if I stand out here and I say, "Go in that room." That means you go where I'm not. But, if I go in that room and say, "Come in that room," you'd come where I am. Right? God said to Noah, "Come into the ark." God was in the ark. "Noah, come into the ark."

And, then when Noah came in the ark, the Bible says what? "...*the LORD shut him in*" (Genesis 7:16). Now, remember that ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as Noah went into the ark, I have come into Christ. And, then God shut the door. Now, why did God shut the door? Two reasons, to shut Noah in and to shut the water out. You see, the Bible says in the book of Ephesians, after that, "*ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*" (Ephesians 1:13). Just as Noah was sealed into that ark, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise.

Now, how safe was Noah from that flood? He was as safe as the ark. Now, if the ark had gone down, Noah would have gone down. If the ark survives, Noah survives. You see dear friend, Noah may have fallen down inside of the ark, but He couldn't fall out of it. Do you understand? Because He was shut into that ark by the grace of God.

Now, there are a lot of people who think they're not going to be secure until they get to Heaven. Well, now wait a minute friend, what makes you think you'd be secure when you get to Heaven if you're not secure down here. The angels fell from Heaven. Security is not in a place, but in a person. His name is Jesus. His name is Jesus. You see, you're already in Christ. And, in Christ, in Christ all are made alive. If any man be in Christ He is a new creation. You are in the Lord Jesus Christ if you're saved. Now, if you're not saved, you're not in there and you're just as lost as those outside the ark in Noah's day.

#### **F. The Eternal Life We Already Have When We Believe in Jesus**

Now, let me give you another reason. Reason number six. And, reason number six is that when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you already have eternal life. Eternal life is not something you get when you die. It's something you get when you believe. Turn with me to John chapter 5 and verse 24, would you please. John chapter 5 and verse 24. Jesus said, "*Verily, verily...*" And, by the way, when our Lord says, "Verily, verily" that means, "Pay attention, this is of the utmost importance." "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word*"—have you heard it? Nod your head—"and

*believeth on him that sent me*” have you believed? All right. Do you believe in the God who sent Jesus to be the Savior of the world, have you? All right. *“He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me”*—What’s that next little word?—*“hath”* H-A-T-H, which is old English for what? “Has.” Present tense, *“hath everlasting life…”* (John 5:24).

Now, don’t get the perverted idea that you get everlasting life after you die. You get everlasting life the moment you believe. “He that believeth on Me has,” already has, “everlasting life.” Now, you’re looking at a man that has everlasting life because I believe. Now, if I have everlasting life, when will it end? It can’t end. Well you say, “What if after ten years you lose it?” Then I have ten-year life. If I had lost it after fifty years, I would have fifty-year life. But, my dear friend, the Bible says I have not. I’m going to get, I now have, right now, this moment, everlasting life. Jesus said, *“And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die”* (John 11:26). That’s a good place for an “Amen.” That’s wonderful. Praise God.

### **G. The Constant Prayers of Jesus for His Own**

Now, let me give you another reason. Reason number seven, Jesus Christ is constantly praying for His own. He is interceding for His own. Turn with me to John chapter 17 here for just a moment. John chapter 17, I begin in verse 9. Our Lord has prayed for His disciples, and He has prayed a wonderful prayer for His disciples. He says in John 17, verse 9: *“I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine”* (John 17:9). Our Lord says, “I’m going to pray a special prayer now. This prayer is a limited prayer. This prayer is for the saints, the ones that you have given me Father. Well what did He pray for them? Go down to verse 15. *“I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil”* (John 17:15). Literally the evil one, from Satan.

Now, our Lord just prayed for those disciples, Peter, James, John, Matthew, Bartholomew. He prayed, “Lord God, while they’re down here in this old sinful world, wicked, filthy, debouched world, this veil of tears. God keep them, keep them, keep them.” Oh you say, I wish He had prayed for me like that. Well, I’ve got good news for you. My dear friend, just continue to read right here, if you will, in verse twenty, Our Lord says, “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.” He might as well put my name right there. Our Lord, prayed with tears, “Lord God keep Adrian. Keep Him.”

I want to ask you a couple of questions. Did Jesus Christ ever pray for anything that was ever out of the will of God? Of course not. Our Lord said, *“not my will, but thine, be done”* (Luke 22:42). And, His will and the Father’s will were just like that. Now, the Bible says, *“...if we ask any thing according to his will”*—what?—*“he heareth us”* (1 John 5:14). It would be impossible for the Son of God to pray a prayer that’s not answered.

Hebrews chapter 7, Our Lord says there, *“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost...”*—I used to think that meant He could save the worst of people. You know I would say from the guttermost to the uttermost. But, that isn’t what it says. I mean, He’s able to save you all the way to the end—*“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession...”* (Hebrews 7:25). That one verse proves eternal security. It means that because He’s praying for you, He’s praying that you’ll be kept, and His prayers are always answered, Hallelujah for that.

#### H. The Sovereignty of God

The last reason is because He is a sovereign God. Turn to 1 Peter chapter 1 with me for just a moment. 1 Peter chapter 1 and I begin reading in verse 3. 1 Peter chapter 1 and verse 3: *“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy”—and hallelujah it is—“hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead”—*Now, He goes on to say—*“To an inheritance incorruptible”—*that means the foul breath of decay and the gnawing tooth of time can’t get it—*“and undefiled”—*that means there’s going to be no court that says it doesn’t belong to you—*“and that fadeth not away”—*that means inflation can’t take it—*“reserved in heaven for you”—*that means that thieves can’t steal it. Who? Those who are kept by their good works. Huh? No, look at it—*“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). My friend, you’re kept by God. You’re not kept by yourself.

I hear these folks say, “Oh pray for me I’ll hold our faithful until the end.” Well, I hope you will hold out faithful to the end, but dear friend, you’re being held faithful to the end. Can you imagine when God told Noah to build that ark, He said, “Now Noah, put some pegs on the outside of the ark. Eight of them. One for you and one for Mrs. Noah, and one for Shem and one for Hamm, and one for Jacob and one for their wives. And, when the rain starts to fall, you get a stepladder, go up and get a hold of that peg and hold on to that slimy thing til the water goes down, you’ll be saved.” Noah said to Mrs. Noah, “Honey, pray for me I’ll hold out faithful ’til the end. Would you please?” Do you think any of them had been saved? No. They were in that ark. They were sealed in that ark. They were kept by the power of God. We think we’re holding on to Him.

I heard of a father who was taking his son across the street, a busy intersection. He was about a little four-year-old boy. He said, “Take Daddy’s hand.” And, gave him a finger. You know how they do? They grab hold of the finger. They start walking across, and the light changed there, and the father saw what was happening, the traffic rushing this way, the father then took the little boys hand off of His finger, and put that entire little grubby hand in his big massive hand and drug that little boy across the street. His toes this way dragging him across. When they got to the other side, the little fellow

looked up at his daddy and said, “I held on, Daddy.” My dear friend, listen, it is God that holds on to us.

## II. Some Answers to Apparently Conflicting Scriptures

Now, let me just take just a few moments and answer some things, because some of you are saying, “Yes Pastor, that’s all right, but what you have done tonight is you have just selected some verses. You have dealt with all of the verses that say we can lose our salvation.” Well, my dear friend, the only reason I haven’t is because there are not any. But, let me just give you what seems to be some conflicting Scriptures. Just for a moment, in all honesty, let’s look at them.

### A. 2 Peter 2:20–22

For example in 2 Peter chapter 2 and verse 20 the Bible says, *“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour 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”* (2 Peter 2:20–22).

Somebody says, “See, that proves you can be saved and lose it again.” No, it proves just the opposite. Just the opposite. Peter here’s not talking about a person who is saved and lost their salvation, he is talking about those ones that John was talking about, “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” Now, here’s a dog who eats some purification, he gets dyspepsia, he regurgitates—or to be plain about it, he vomits—and there is that warm, slimy vomit on the ground. Now, let me tell you what a dog will do. He’ll walk away, and then he’ll say, “Now, wait a minute. There’s a warm meal.” It’s disgusting. And, he’ll go and return to his own vomit.

Let me tell you what a sow will do. You can take a sow, any sow, out of a pigpen. Take that sow and get a stiff bristle brush, and scrub that pig until she is pink. And, get a big toothbrush and polish those teeth, you polish it up good, and put a little deodorant under all four legs, and put that sow in your living room. And, something will be changed, but it won’t be the sow, it’ll be your living room. And, you let that sow out, and what will she do? She’ll go right back to the mire. Isn’t that right? Do you think God is talking here about a child of God who is losing his salvation? Do you think God has ever called one of His own a hog or a dog? No. What God is saying, “The reason they go back is they’re had no change of nature. But, dog regurgitates, the sow is washed, but neither are changed.

I've seen it happen so many times. Somebody is sick of his sin. His wife has left him. His children despise him. His boss has fired him. He says, "I'm tired of this way of life, I want a new life. He comes and joins the church and gets baptized. He regurgitates, but he's never saved. And, he just goes back to that which made him sick to begin with. I see people who have reformation, but they don't have regeneration. They are washed, but they are not saved. They still have that old sow nature.

Here's what somebody else says. Look, if you will in John chapter 10 for a moment. Let me tell you how these people argue about this thing, John chapter 10 beginning in verse 27. Remember that our Lord 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." And, somebody says, "Oh yes, a man can take you out of the hand of God, but the devil can't." Well first of all, if you have the King James Version of the Scripture, you'll notice the word "man" is italicized, which means it's not in the original at all. It says, "neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." "Any" what? You name it. "Any." Remember the word "man" is italicized. It is there so the translators let you know that it's not in the original. There's nothing that can take you. "Neither shall any take them out of My hand."

You say, "Well, maybe you can take yourself out. Nothing could, but you could." Well, if self could, look if you will, in verse 28. "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish" Now, the word "perish" and the word "destroy" are the same in the Greek language. This is in the middle voice. And, what it literally says is, "They shall never destroy themselves." "They will never destroy themselves." My friend, you can't do it, and the devil can't do it.

### **B. Matthew 24:13**

Somebody says, "Oh yes, but Pastor, the Bible says in Matthew 24, verse 13: *'But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved'*" (Matthew 24:13). You're exactly right, brother, if you're saved, you endure to the end. He's not saying you're saved because you endure to the end. He's saying you endure to the end because you're saved. You want to know who's saved, see who endures.

### **C. Hebrews 6:4-6**

One last verse, and these are just some of a number. Turn to Hebrews chapter 6 and verse 4, he's going to be talking about something that is impossible. And, he says, *"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"* (Hebrews 6:4-6).

Well they say, "That proves that you can be saved and lost again." It proves no such thing. As a matter of fact, if it proved to these people that they can be saved and lost again, it proves too much for them. Because it proves if they can be saved and lost again, if they use it that way, it also proves that they can never be saved again, after they're lost. In other words what it says is, "If you use this to mean that a person has fallen away from salvation, that a person is no longer saved, the same Bible says it is impossible to renew them to repentance." So, my friend, put it down big and plain and straight, if you use this verse, and you don't believe in once saved, always saved, you will have to believe in twice lost, always lost.

You follow what I'm talking about? I mean, if you say, "This means somebody has been saved, and now they're lost again." Well, then be honest, it also says, "You'll never be saved again." Now, these denominations that believe you can get lost after you're saved, you know you must be born again, and again, and again, and again, and again. I mean, they believe that you can be lost and saved, and lost and saved, and lost and saved, and lost and saved. But, if you use this verse to prove that, it proves too much for that group.

Well, then what does this talk about? It's talking about a person who never has been saved. You see, it talks about a person who comes to a threshold of salvation and then commits the unpardonable sin. I mean he understands, he's enlightened. He's tasted of the Heavenly gift. He's made partaker of. He's gone along with the Holy Ghost. I mean, God is doing business with him. He has tasted the good Word of God. The powers of the world to come. This is no casual hearer. This is a person who's come to the threshold of salvation and then he said, "No. I will not give my heart to Jesus." The Holy Spirit ceases to strive with him. It's impossible to bring him back to that point of repentance.

Now, let me give you an illustration. And, I'm so glad. You see verse 6? It says, "...they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." You see, when Jesus died the first time, He prayed for those who nailed Him up on that cross, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do*" (Luke 23:34). He could not pray this prayer for these people. They are enlightened. They know what they're doing. He can't pray that prayer for them. It's impossible to renew them to repentance. And, then here's the illustration, look in verse 7. Do you see where it begins, "*For*"? Now, "*for*" if a part of verse 6, "*For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh off upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God*" (Hebrews 6:7).

All right so here's a farm. And, right here on one side of the fence is the cultivated earth. The earth is dressed. The rain comes down, and the crops grow, and the herbs grow, the vegetables grow. But, look in verse 8, "*But that which beareth thorns and*

*briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned*” Right across the fence is the ground that’s not cultivated. And, the same rain falls on that, but it doesn’t bring forth herbs, it doesn’t bring forth vegetables, it brings forth thorns and briers. The same word, the same rain falls upon both. One is saved. One is lost. Now, notice verse 9. And, here’s the key to the whole thing, *“But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation...”* See, he’s not describing a saved person. He’s describing a person that brings forth thorns and briers. Had he been describing a saved person, he wouldn’t say, “It’s impossible to renew them to repentance.” He’s describing a person that comes to the very threshold of salvation and then says, “No.”

You say, “Pastor Rogers, if I believe that, I’d get saved and sin all I want to.” Well, friend, I sin all I want to. I sin more than I want to. I don’t want to. And, if you still want to, you need to get saved. You need to get your wanter fixed. I mean, you need to get a brand new wanter. You need to be born again. It’s not that I don’t sin. I sin. You sin. But, dear friend, there is in my heart, isn’t there one in yours, never to sin again? Do you have a desire to be a sinner or not to be a sinner? You don’t want to be a sinner. I mean, a person says, “Oh I’d get saved and man I’d have a ball.” He doesn’t know Jesus. He’s not saved. “Well,” you say, “But, Pastor, if you tell people they’re eternally secure, that’s going to be so dangerous.” My dear friend, truth is never dangerous. Lies are dangerous.

## Conclusion

Let’s take a little child in an earthly family. Let’s suppose that one day that child says, “I’m a member of the family.” The next day, he’s not a member of the family. Next day, he is a member of the family. Two weeks later he’s not a member of the family. Six months later he’s a member of the family again. My dear friend, that child is ready for the mental ward. That child needs to know that Mother and Daddy love him, he’s born into the family, he cannot be unborn. If that child sins or disobeys, he’ll be disciplined, but he is a part of the family of God. We are born in to the family of God. It’s not dangerous to believe the truth. It is dangerous not to believe the truth. You say, “It’ll cause people to let down.” No. I cannot tell you the number of people who are so discouraged because they don’t understand that God keeps them.

When they were building the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, that bridge, spanning those swirling icy waters was so tall. The people looking down doing that ironwork got dizzy, and they were frightened, and they could hardly concentrate on their work. And, some of the workers let go and plunged to their death. Then at great expense, they built a net under that bridge, a safety net for the workers. My dear friend, when the safety net was there, do you think more people fell or fewer people fell?

Fewer. They didn't say, "The nets there, I can be careless now." They said, the net is there, I can now concentrate on what I'm doing. You take all that energy you've been worrying about keeping yourself saved and just put it into serving Jesus. Be able to concentrate on serving the Lord Jesus and know that He is able to keep to the end because He ever lives to make intercession for you.

Now, I'm not trying to tell you my dear friend, to think that you have eternal security if you've never been saved again. The Bible says, "*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith...*" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Some church members who walk down the aisle, and got baptized are going to split Hell wide open in the vernacular, wide open, because they're trusting the doctrine of eternal security when they've never been saved. You better get saved. You better have a changed life. And, I am telling you, don't you sit out there and think, "I'm not going to come to Jesus, because I'm not able to live it." Friend, you just bring yourself to Jesus, sincerely, and He will keep you to the end. Hallelujah. Father God, I just pray tonight for those who may need the Lord Jesus Christ that tonight they will trust you, once and for all, now and forever as their personal Savior and Lord, in Jesus' holy name, amen.

# Getting To Know Your Best Friend

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: October 10, 1990**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:9**

*“But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”*

ROMANS 8:9

## Outline

Introduction

- I. As the Spirit of Life, He Gives Us Our Life
- II. As the Spirit of Christ, He Glorifies Our Lord
- III. As the Spirit of Adoption, He Guarantees Our Legacy
  - A. We Have a New Relationship
  - B. We Have a New Assurance
  - C. We Have a New Certainty

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 8 with me. Sunday morning, I spoke on this subject: Don't Mistreat Your Best Friend. Now, tonight, I want to speak to you on this subject: Getting to Know Your Best Friend. Perhaps I should have brought this message first, but Romans chapter 8, I want you to notice a very interesting verse. The Bible says in verse 9, “But ye are not in the flesh but in the spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.” And then, Paul makes a very emphatic statement that, if you don't mind underlining, you ought to underline in your Bible: “Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” And in the Greek language that's an emphatic negative, and he's just saying plainly and clearly that, if the Spirit of Christ doesn't dwell in you, my dear friend, do not belong to Christ; you are on your way to hell.

Now, Romans chapter 8 is a great chapter on the Holy Spirit of God. Many things are taught in Romans chapter 8, but it is a great chapter on the Holy Spirit. And in Romans chapter 8 the apostle Paul is making a comparison between the saved and the lost, the saints and the ain'ts. And that comparison, my dear friend, hinges on the Holy Spirit—those who have the Holy Spirit and those who do not have the Holy Spirit. What

is the distinguishing mark of a Christian? What is the one test beyond all other tests that a person has been saved? It is this: does he have the Holy Spirit? Does the Holy Spirit dwell in him?

Now, just put your bookmark there in Romans 8, because we're going to come back to that, and look with me in John 14 for just a moment, and notice what the Lord Jesus says also about this comparison. In John chapter 14, beginning in verse 16, "Jesus said, 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"—now, here He's talking about the Holy Spirit, and He calls Him the Word of truth—"whom the world cannot receive." And there again the Lord is making the difference. The saints of God have the Holy Spirit, they receive the Holy Spirit, but the world does not receive the Holy Spirit, "because it seeth him not." Now, the word seeth him does not mean that the world does not literally see Him. We know the world literally doesn't see Him, but neither do you. He is a spirit, and a spirit can't be seen. The word see here means that the world does not perceive Him, the world does not understand Him. It's used in the same sense in which Jesus said, in the third chapter of John, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven." That means you can't perceive. If I'm talking to you about something, I say, See? I mean, do you understand that? What Jesus is saying here is, the world can't perceive Him, the world doesn't understand Him, and then, He goes on to say that, "neither knoweth him." Now, you may know about Him, but you do not know Him intimately. You can't perceive the Holy Spirit, you cannot fellowship with the Holy Spirit, if you are of the world. It is impossible. You may know about Him, but you do not know Him intimately. And, because you have not received Him.

Now, a good test as to whether you're saved or not is just simply this: Have you received the Holy Spirit? As a matter of fact, in Acts chapter 19, Paul met some disciples and he had reason to believe, just wonder whether they were saved at all or not. He asked them, he said, Have you received the Holy Ghost since you were saved, since you believed? And they said, We didn't even know if there was a Holy Spirit. Paul said, Is that right? What were you baptized for? Oh, they said, We were baptized with John's baptism. And then, Paul realized that these people had come right up to the threshold of salvation but they'd never received the Lord. And he preached unto them Jesus, and they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus and received the Holy Spirit. My dear friend, the distinguishing mark of a child of God is this: that he has the Holy Spirit.

If you don't have the Holy Spirit, you don't know anything about God. And we're coming back to Romans 8 in just a moment, but go to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 for a moment. I want to read a passage of Scripture that's often used at funerals, but it's taken out of context a little bit when you use it at a funeral. And turn with me, if you

would, to 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 9. The apostle Paul is talking about understanding or perceiving the things that belong to God, and he says, “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, so many times we use this as a funeral text, and we say, Oh, isn't it wonderful? Aunt Susie is seeing what eyes can't see, and hearing what our ears can't hear, and knowing what our hearts can't know, because now she's in heaven. But that isn't what this verse means. Look at it right now. What he is saying is that your natural eye cannot perceive, understand, behold spiritual truths, neither can your natural ear perceive spiritual truth, neither your natural heart. What he's saying is that you will never comprehend spiritual things visually, audibly, emotionally—never. Not by the eye-gate, not by the ear-gate, not by your heart. “As it is written, eye hath not seen, nor ears heard, nor entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” But notice: “God hath”—not will, but already has—“revealed them unto us by his Spirit, for the Spirit says of all things, Yea, that be things of God.”

Now, he's just contrasting two types of people: those who live by their senses and those who live by the Spirit. Verse 12: “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.” What Paul is saying is, you don't have to wait till you get to heaven to see and experience these things, but the only way you're going to know them is by the Holy Spirit. Verse 14: “But the natural man”—that is, an unsaved man, a man in his natural state—“receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they're foolishness unto him.”

Now, if I preach the gospel to you, and you say that that's foolish, or if God's Word appears foolish to you, well, you're just giving proof positive that you have never been saved. They're foolishness to the natural man: “neither can he know them, because they're spiritually discerned.” He doesn't have the equipment to know them. There's no way that he can know these truths, “but he that is spiritual judgeth all things,” that is, he discerns all things.

And so, again, turn with me to the next to the last book of the Bible, to Jude. And we're going to get back to Romans 8 in just a moment, but I'm really trying to set the stage, and I'm trying to get you to see what makes the difference is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the distinguishing mark of a Christian. And the book of Jude here, there's just one chapter, so we don't give a chapter reference, but look in verse 10. He's speaking of the unsaved, and he says, “But these speak evil of those things which they know not”—why don't they know them? Because they're spiritually discerned—“but what they know naturally as brute beasts.” That is, a man without the Holy Spirit has no head start over an animal in knowing God. They're like a brute beast. And then, look, if you would, in verse 19 of Jude: “These be they who separate themselves, sensual,”—

that is, they're living by their senses—"having not the Spirit." So you have the sensual man and the spiritual man, the natural man and the spiritual man. I'm just trying to tell you in all of these verses what Paul has said in Romans chapter 8 and verse 9: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

Now, back to Romans 8. All of that's by way of introduction. All right now, back to Romans 8, and I want you to see that God is your best friend, through description. There are three references to the Holy Spirit, and he's described three ways. For example, in Romans 8, verse 2, He is called the Spirit of life. Do you see that? "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death." There, the Holy Spirit—and the word Spirit is capitalized in my Bible—it's talking about the Holy Spirit; He is called the Spirit of life. Your best friend is the Spirit of life.

Now, go down to verse 9, and there He's called the Spirit of Christ. Notice the last part: the Spirit of God is called the Spirit of Christ. In this verse, He's called both the Spirit of God and the Spirit of Christ. "Now, if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." So the Holy Spirit is called in verse 2 the Spirit of life; He's called in verse 9 the Spirit of Christ. Now, go down to verse 15 and in verse 15 He is called the Spirit of adoption. Now, I believe in these three references you really have the office work of the Holy Spirit, your best friend, in your life. He is the Spirit of life, He is the Spirit of Christ, and He is the Spirit of adoption. And I want you to get to know your best friend because this is His threefold ministry to you. He ministers to you as the Spirit of life; He ministers to you as the Spirit of Christ; He ministers to you as the Spirit of adoption.

## **I. As the Spirit of Life, He Gives Us Our Life**

Now, let's look at these. As the Spirit of life, He gives us our life. We have life by the Holy Spirit. I don't mean existence. Even an unsaved man has existence—he will exist forever; but he doesn't have life. Jesus said in John 10:10, "I've come that you might have life." Well, how do we get this life? We receive this life by the Holy Spirit. The Bible says it is the Spirit that quickens; it is the Spirit that gives life. Now, the difference between the people of the world who are religious and true Christians is this: the people who are truly saved live by the impartation of life; the unsaved live by the imitation of life. They just simply imitate the Lord. But a Christian is somebody who has received life. Jesus said in John chapter 3 we have to be born of the Spirit. When you are born, that's when you have life. You are born literally from above, which is life.

You see, man is body, soul, and spirit. Now, I know that theologians argue this, and they say, No, he's just physical and spiritual, but the Bible says in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 23, "And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless until the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." Now, man is more than a plant, because he has a soul. Plants have a body but they don't have a soul. But man

is more than an animal. Animals have a body and a soul, but animals don't have a spirit. Only man has body, soul, and spirit. And your spirit is that organ of knowledge, that part of your nature that enables you to know God. For the Bible says, "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." And when we get saved, God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

Now, I want to point this out, that man by nature is spiritually dead. He may be physically alive, he may be soulishly or psychologically alive, but he is spiritually dead until he receives the Holy Spirit. Now, it is the Spirit that gives life. You cannot have life apart from the Spirit of God. You only have existence, and the reason that some people are religious but lost, they have never ever received the pentecostal difference, the Holy Spirit of God. And that's the reason the Bible says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." You're just dead, spiritually dead. You may have physical life, you may have emotional life, but unless the Holy Spirit has come into you, you are spiritually dead.

You remember reading in John 1, verse 4, where John is describing Jesus, and the Bible says, "In him"—that is, the Lord—"was light, and the light was the life of man." The Lord has the light, and the light is the life—John 1:4. All right, what happened when Adam sinned is, the Lord went out; and when the Lord went out, the life went out; and when the life went out, the light went out. And now he doesn't have the Lord—he's depraved; and now he doesn't have the life—he's dead; now, he doesn't have the light—he's darkened. And in order for a man to be saved again, he's got to get the Lord back in. And when the Lord comes back in, the life comes back in; and when the life comes back in, the light comes back in.

Now, how does the Lord come back in? The Lord comes back in by His Holy Spirit—which brings up a very interesting question: Who lives in you? Does God live in you—God the Father? Or, does Jesus the Son live in you? Or, does the Holy Spirit live in you? Well, all live in you. Romans 8, verse 9, says, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of his," but in that same verse, it calls Him the Spirit of God. And then, in Colossians 1, verse 27, the Bible says it's "Christ in you, which is the hope of glory." Don't ever make the mistake of trying to segment the Holy Trinity so precisely that you think that because the Holy Spirit is in you that Jesus is not in you. The Holy Spirit is Christ in you. The Holy Spirit is God the Father's agent to make Jesus Christ real to you. Jesus is in us by the agency of the Holy Spirit, and there's no contradiction.

And so, your best friend, first of all, is the Spirit of life, and He gives our life. The life that I have now I have because the Holy Spirit lives in me. What a difference that makes. Let me give you an illustration if I can. God formed Adam out of the dust of the earth. That we know: out of the dust of the ground, God made Adam. And there's Adam. Let's just imagine he's lying down there because he doesn't have any life yet. God has

formed him, and he's perfect. He really is; I mean, he's a specimen of a man. Everything is perfect except for one thing. He doesn't have any life. I mean, God has made him absolutely, totally perfect, but there's no life. Now, suppose God were to say to Adam, Adam, get up and act like a man. There's no way he can act like a man, because he has no life. And then, the Bible says that God breathed into Adam the breath of life, and the word breath of life may be translated the spirit of life. He breathed the spirit of life into Adam, and physically and spiritually and emotionally, Adam is quickened. God breathes into this lump of clay the life.

Now, God doesn't have to say to him, Now, Adam, act like a man. Get up and walk around like a man. It's natural for him to walk like a man. He doesn't have to be begged or instructed to do it—that's just natural. He has the life; the life is inside of him right now. May I tell you, dear friend, that the same thing is true spiritually. You are a spiritual corpse until God infuses you spiritually with His life, until you receive the Holy Spirit, and to encourage you to live the Christian life before you receive the Holy Spirit is to encourage you in an impossibility. But once you do receive the Holy Spirit, once your best friend comes into you, it is perfectly natural for you to live the Christian life. I mean, it's just natural, because you have the life of God in you. Well, is it a miracle? Well, yes, it's a miracle, but once it's a miracle, you become supernaturally natural and naturally supernatural. Because you have received, there has been an impartation of life. So your best friend is called the Spirit of life. You have no life, no spiritual life, apart from the Holy Spirit of God.

## **II. As the Spirit of Christ, He Glorifies Our Lord**

Now, not only is He the Spirit of life, who gives us life, but now, secondly, He's called the Spirit of Christ. Now, what does He do as the Spirit of Christ? As the Spirit of life, He gives our life. As the Spirit of Christ, He glorifies our Lord—He glorifies our Lord. He is called the Spirit of Christ. It is Jesus in you who is the Holy Spirit; He is the Spirit of Christ.

What is He going to do in you? When this man gets up and walks around, this man who has received the Holy Spirit spiritually, whose life is in him? What is the Spirit of life? The Spirit of life is the Spirit of Christ. Now, if I have the Spirit of Christ, who am I going to act like? I'm going to act like Christ. The Holy Spirit just reproduces Jesus Christ in me. I've told you this many, many times, but I want to tell you this one more time: there's only one person who has ever lived the Christian life. His name is Jesus—His name is Jesus. And if the Christian life is lived at your house, it'll be Jesus in you; it'll be the Spirit of Christ, who not only gives us life but glorifies our Lord. He is the one who makes Jesus Christ real in you. I mean, there's no other way; other than this, you'd just be a little cheap tin imitation of Jesus.

I'm not a golfer, Brother Sorrell is an excellent golfer, so he tells me. I am not a golfer. I've never played golf. I tried one time. I had some friends who took me out, and they said, Adrian, we want you to go golfing. I said, Fine—several preachers, and I'm a has-been athlete, and I thought I knew something about athletics, and I read some books about golfing, that you don't try to kill the ball, you let the club do the work, and you follow through, keep your eye on the ball, and all that—I thought they were going to be amazed at how well I golfed. But they were rolling in the grass laughing at me. One of them said, Adrian, you look like you're trying to kill a snake. And I just said, Well, until somebody teaches me how to play this game, I'm not going to fool with it.

But suppose I tried, when I was a kid, and a young man, to play golf like the golfer that everybody knew was Arnold Palmer. I mean, you know, he's not on the circuit as much now except on the Seniors Tour, but he was about my age; Arnold Palmer and I are about the same age. I keep my eyes on him, but Arnold Palmer, when I was, you know, a younger man, and he was a younger man, boy, he was the golfer—Arnold Palmer. Well now, suppose, back in that day, I decided I'm going to play golf just like Arnold Palmer. When I went out to play golf, Arnold Palmer was in his prime. And all I had to do is just say, well, what does Arnold do? Well, Arnold lines up, and he hits it off the tee down the fairway. Well, that's what I'm going to do. Well, friend, my deciding I'm going to do that doesn't do any good. I mean, they're still rolling on the grass laughing at me. But if there's some way that I could put Arnold Palmer in a pill and swallow him down, and his very life would permeate me, and his mind and his senses and his coordination and his eye and all he knows about golf would permeate every bit of my being, and I would come out there on the golf course with my friends, and tell them, I've never done this before, but line up and hit that ball straight down the fairway, and maybe birdie the first hole or two, they'd say, Adrian, that is amazing. But I'd have a secret, you see. I'd say, Well, it's really not me; it's Arnold in me.

Now, you say, that's a silly illustration. It is in a way, but you see, the apostle Paul said, "I'm crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ who lives 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."

Now, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life, and He's the Spirit of Christ. He gives us our life; He glorifies our Lord. He gives our life; He glorifies our Lord. He is the Spirit of Christ. And, by the way, if you want to know whether a person has the Holy Spirit, don't ask if they can speak with tongues—that's not the sign that they have the Holy Spirit. Ask: Are they like Jesus? Are they like Jesus? That's the sign whether or not the person has the Holy Spirit of God.

### **III. As the Spirit of Adoption, He Guarantees Our Legacy**

Now, there's a third thing that your best friend does. He's called the Spirit of life, He's called the Spirit of Christ, and He's also called the Spirit of adoption. Notice in verse 15 now: "And the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God,"—and, by the way, if you're reading from the King James, don't let the word itself bother you, as if the Holy Spirit is a thing. That is the correct way to write that in the Greek, because in the Greek, the word spirit and itself have to line up, and they're both neuter, and so that's just a linguistic idiosyncrasy, but it certainly ought to say, and may say "the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if so be we suffer with him, that we may also be glorified together." I skipped really the verse that I wanted, verse 15, "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba Father," so verses 15 through 17 is what I meant to read.

Now, He's called the Spirit of adoption. What is adoption? When this was written, adoption was a process in which a man would make perhaps a son that he had sired by a slave, an heir to his riches, although being the son of a slave, that son would not necessarily be an heir. Or he might take another man's son, as we would do today, and adopt that other man's son into his family. Adoption is a legal act where a man takes his own son, or the son of another man, and gives to him legal position, legal advantage, and legal privilege. Now, spiritually, we're born into the family of God; legally, we are adopted into the family of God. Now, a man could disinherit a natural son, but he could not disinherit by law an adopted son—it's very interesting. For example, the way they reason that is this: a natural son might be accidentally conceived—that is, we didn't mean to have a child when this child was conceived, and I don't want this child to have a part of the inheritance—but, when a man adopts a child, he knows what he's doing legally, and he locks himself in. Now, what God is saying here is that we have the Holy Spirit who is the Spirit of our adoption. It's very interesting.

Now, what does the Holy Spirit, your best friend, do? He gives our life; He glorifies our Lord; He guarantees our legacy. Those are the three things: He gives our life; He glorifies our Lord; He gives our legacy. He is the Spirit of life; He is the Spirit of Christ; He is the Spirit of adoption. Now, the Holy Spirit is there to attest to and to make real what happened to you legally when you got saved.

#### **A. We Have a New Relationship**

For example, there is a new relationship.

Look, if you will here, in verse 15: "For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but have received the Spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

Now, two words are here together, Abba Father. The one is Aramaic; the other is Hebrew. Abba is not a Hebrew word. It is an Aramaic word, and it literally means Daddy, or Papa. Now, I'm not being irreverent, but when the Holy Spirit of God comes into you, He gives you such a relationship with the One who has adopted you that you can call Him Abba, Father.

Now, let me tell you the difference. There were plenty of people in Abraham's day who would call him Father Abraham, because he was a patriarch; and we call him Father Abraham, but we don't call him Abba Abraham, just Father Abraham, because we know him as the father ruler of the patriarchs. But Isaac would call him Abba Abraham, or Abba Father, Daddy. You see, the Holy Spirit of God, is the Spirit of adoption, where we can call Him Abba, Father.

It means very much to me. You see, I didn't understand a lot of what my dad did when I was a little boy. My dad, when I was growing up, sold automobiles. He worked for East Coast Motors, and he sold Buicks. I didn't know that. My dad would go off, and he would say, I have an appointment with a party. I thought, Boy, he gets to go to more parties, and he'd go off to work; or, I'm going to see a party about this or that. And I never could figure that out until I got to be about 8 or 9 what kind of a party it was he kept going to. But he would go off; it didn't make any difference to me. I didn't have to understand what my dad did. He was my daddy. I can jump up in his lap, and hug his neck, and kiss him, and rub his beard, and play ball with him, or help catch minnows for him when he fished. And I loved it: he was just my Dad. And I called him Daddy. You couldn't call him Daddy; you call him Mr. Rogers. But I called him Daddy, because—and I still do. I talked to him last night on the phone. I called him Daddy—because he's my daddy.

Now, dear friend, you don't have to understand God; you don't have to know how God runs this universe. You can't understand. The ways of God are so far beyond your ways, as high as the heavens are above the earth. But you can know Him—you can know Him. You see, the Holy Spirit is not given to us that we might understand God. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord and who has been his counselor?" But you know God by the Spirit, and it's the Spirit of adoption that shows you this new relationship, this intimacy, that you have with God the Father.

## **B. We Have a New Assurance**

But not only do you have a new relationship—listen—you have a new assurance, a reassurance. Now, continue to read, and look right here, if you will here. It says in verse 16, "And the Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." That's very interesting. What does it mean, the Spirit bears witness with our spirit? Well, in Galatians chapter 4 and verse 6, the Bible says that God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your heart crying, Abba, Father. God sent the Spirit of Jesus

into your heart crying Abba, Father. Now, why does the Holy Spirit cry Abba, Father? Because it is the Spirit of His Son. What was Jesus' favorite name for God? It was Father. And so, if the Holy Spirit is in you, and the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, then the Holy Spirit is saying what? Abba Father, Abba Father, because it is the Spirit of Christ. Galatians 4:6: the Spirit of His Son is in your heart, and He's just saying, Abba Father, Abba Father.

Now, when you say, Abba Father, and the Holy Spirit is saying, Abba Father, then His Spirit is agreeing with your spirit; you're both saying the same thing. I mean, that's what He's saying, but the Spirit agrees with our spirit; this is the way that you know you're saved. The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, because the Holy Spirit and your spirit are so mingled that it is Christ in you just addressing God as Abba Father.

### **C. We Have a New Certainty**

Now, not only do you have a new relationship, and a new assurance, but you have a new certainty, a guarantee of your riches, for he says in verse 17—here's the logic: "If you're children,"—that is, if you're an adopted child—"then an heir—and not just an heir, an heir of God; and not merely an heir of God, but a joint heir with Christ. Do you know what a joint heir is? The lawyers that are here will tell you that a joint heir means share and share alike. I don't know, dear friend, if you understand what's coming to you, but in the age to come, you're going to share and share alike with the Lord Jesus Christ, because God has given you legally the position Jesus has intrinsically. You will have been adopted as a son of the Lord Jesus Christ and how, how blessed this is. Now, a man can disinherit a natural son, even, but he could not disinherit an adopted son. And so, your best friend, He gives our life, because He's the Spirit of life; He glorifies our Lord, because He's the Spirit of Christ; He guarantees our legacy, because He's the Spirit of adoption.

## **Conclusion**

Now, I want to tell you again that, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His. Well, how do you get the Spirit of Christ? Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, trust Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, repent of your sin, and the Holy Spirit of God will come into you, as He did into me as a teenage boy so long ago.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you'd like to be saved tonight and be a child of God, let me help you to do it right now tonight. Even while heads are bowed in this place, just forget that anybody else is here but you and the Lord, and I'm your friend here to help you to pray, and if you want Jesus Christ to come into your life, to give you life, to glorify Jesus, and to guarantee your legacy, would you pray a prayer like this: Dear God, I need you so much. I know that you love me. I

know that you want to save me. I confess that I'm a sinner. I confess that I'm spiritually dead, but I need life. I need to be born again. I need to be saved. Jesus, you died on the cross to pay for my sin. 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, from your heart: Oh, Lord Jesus, I commit my life to you. I receive you now as my personal Savior and Lord. Come into my heart through your Holy Spirit. Change me right now. Come in. I don't ask for a feeling. I just accept it by faith. I receive you by faith now as my Lord, and as my Savior, and as my Friend. Thank you, Lord, for saving me, and begin now to make me the person that you want me to be, and help me to live for you and never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen.

# The Spirit of Easter

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: April 12, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:9–11**

*“But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”*

ROMANS 8:11

## Outline

Introduction

I. As the Spirit of Life, He Gives Us Life

II. As the Spirit of Christ, He Glorifies the Lord

III. As the Spirit of Adoption, He Guarantees Our Legacy

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 8 tonight as, we continue thinking about Easter. And, the title of our devotional thought tonight is simply this: “The Spirit of Easter.” “The Spirit of Easter.” When I say, “The Spirit of Easter,” I’m not talking about the good will that we have one toward another. I’m not talking about the joy and the fellowship and all of the things that we share on this wonderful day. But I’m talking about the dear, precious, Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Easter. Look in Romans chapter 8, beginning in verse 9: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit—and when he says, “the Spirit,” he means the Holy Spirit—if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his—that is, he doesn’t belong to Christ if he doesn’t have the Spirit of Christ. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead...” Who raised Jesus from the dead? The Holy Spirit. “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken—make alive—your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”

Now what Paul is doing here in this passage of Scripture is making a comparison and a distinction between the saved and the lost: if you prefer, the saints and the ain’ts. What is the line of demarcation? What makes the difference between those who are saved and those who are lost? Well, the Bible tells us very clearly, in verse 9. Look at it.

And he says here, “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” The distinguishing mark of a Christian is that he has in his life the Holy Spirit. There’s no such thing as getting saved and then receiving the Holy Spirit. If you don’t have the Holy Spirit in you, you are not saved. The distinguishing mark of a Christian is, therefore, the Holy Spirit.

Now I want you to take your Bibles and just put your bookmark there in Romans 8, because we’re going to be right back to it, but I want you to see what the Lord Jesus said in John chapter 14. So turn to John chapter 14 and read with me verses 16 and 17, and it will be even more clear that the distinguishing mark of a child of God is the Holy Spirit. Jesus, getting ready to ascend to heaven said this: “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.”

Now, again, Jesus is saying the same thing. There’s a difference between the child of God and those in the world, and that difference is the Holy Spirit. The Bible says, that, “...ye see him...” That means that, the people in the world see Him not. That means they don’t comprehend. They don’t understand the Holy Spirit because they’re not saved. It says that the people of the world don’t know Him. The word know speaks of a personal relationship. You may know about Him. You can learn that from a study of pneumatology or the study of the Holy Spirit, but you cannot know Him without being saved. You cannot receive Him, unless you are a child of God. So a good test as to whether or not you are saved is the Holy Spirit.

Now if you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you are a natural man. You might want to look over in the book of Jude, the last book, before the book of Revelation. It doesn’t have any chapter heading because it’s just one chapter. In Jude verse 10 speaks of those who are not saved, and it says, “These speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves.” Now he says they are like an animal. They’re like brute beasts. Animals don’t have the Holy Spirit in them. And then he mentions again in Jude, verse 19: “These are they which separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.” That is, they’re creatures of their five senses. They don’t know this, the Holy Spirit, which is the sixth sense of a Christian. So the criteria as to whether or not you’re saved is not a matter of doctrine, not a matter of denomination, not a matter of demeanor; but the distinction is whether or not you have the Holy Spirit. Go back to Romans 8 again now and look again if, in verse 9, the last part of verse 9: “...if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” And that Spirit is the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead in verse 11: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” So the

question tonight is not, “Have you been baptized?” The question tonight is not, “Do you live a good life?” But the question tonight is, “Do you have the Holy Spirit in you?”

Now in just a moment, to help you to answer yes or no to that question, I’m going to give you three marks of the Holy Spirit, three descriptions of the Holy Spirit, that Paul gives here in Romans chapter 8, and you can measure yourself by that. And look, if you will, in chapter 8 and verse 2. There He’s called the Spirit of life. “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus...” So the first distinction of the Holy Spirit: He’s called the Spirit of life. Then look down, if you will, in verse 9: “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.” So the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of life. He’s also called the Spirit of Christ. And then look in verse 15: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but have received the Spirit of adoption...” So the Holy Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead is called in this chapter the Spirit of life. He’s called the Spirit of Christ. And He’s called the Spirit of adoption. Now Paul says, “If you don’t have Him, you are not saved.”

So let’s look a little bit and see what the Holy Spirit of God does, the same Holy Spirit that brought Jesus out of that grave. What has the Holy Spirit done for us?

## **I. As the Spirit of Life, He Gives Us Life**

Number one: As the Spirit of life, He gives us life. Now let me tell you the difference between true salvation and religion. Salvation is the impartation of life; religion is the imitation of life. Salvation is the impartation of life; religion is the imitation of life. Now if you are saved, you don’t have life like His life; you have His life. You are born of the Spirit.

Now let’s see if I can illustrate this. When God first made Adam, God formed Adam of the dust of the ground and God fashioned his body. At that moment, as he is, his body is lying there, beautifully crafted by the omnipotent hand of Almighty God sculptured out of the clay, the dust of the ground, he’s lying there. He cannot stand. He cannot walk. He cannot talk. He cannot animate in any way. He is but a lump of clay—until God did something. God breathed in his nostrils the breath of life. And when God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, that lump of clay then began to get up and walk around and act like a man. Now, correspondingly, until the Holy Spirit of God comes into us we are spiritually just a lump of clay. We do not have what it takes to walk as a godly man, as a Christian man, until the Holy Spirit of God comes into us.

Joyce and I read in our devotional this morning from Oswald Chambers before we prayed. And one thing that Oswald Chambers said for today’s reading, if you read that, is that the gift of eternal life is God Himself. God does not just give us eternal life apart from Himself; He gives us Himself. God is the gift of eternal life, Himself. God comes into us. And so the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life, the Spirit of life—Romans 8, verse 2.

Without the Holy Spirit, you have no life. You are spiritually dead. And there's no such thing as getting saved and then later on receiving the Holy Spirit. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." So, number one is the Spirit of life. He gives life.

## **II. As the Spirit of Christ, He Glorifies the Lord**

Number two: As the Spirit of Christ, He glorifies the Lord. Look in verse 9 again. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. If so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." So, question: When you got saved, who came into you—the Holy Spirit or Jesus? Well, be careful how you answer that because both the Holy Spirit and Jesus came into you because it is the Holy Spirit that is the representative of the Lord Jesus. Jesus, speaking of the Holy Spirit, said, "He dwelleth with you—He was speaking of Himself—and shall be in you." He was talking about the Holy Spirit.

Now listen to this verse in Colossians 1 and verse 27. The Bible says, "To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." So who lives in Adrian—the Holy Spirit or Jesus? Both. Christ lives in me through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in me because He is Christ in the Christian. And so, that's the reason the Apostle Paul said in Galatians 2, verse 20: "I'm crucified with Christ; nevertheless, I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." It is not a life like His life; it is His life in me. If you want to know whether I'm saved or not, and want to know whether I have the Holy Spirit or not, or better, if I want to know if I'm saved, because you may not have enough information, I'll look to see if Jesus Christ is in me. And I don't want to say it braggingly, but I want to say it thankfully: I know that Jesus is in my heart. Christ is in me. And I have the Spirit of Christ in me. It's not life like His life; but His life. You see, there's only one person who has ever lived the Christian life. I've told you this before, and that's Jesus. And if the Christian life is lived in your home, in your school, in your business, it'll be Jesus Christ in you.

I've been watching a little bit of the Masters Golf Tournament. Now I'm not a golfer. I think it's pagan, Brother Bob. Not really. I'm just too rotten proud to play golf because I'm not good at it. And that's the truth, folks. And, you know, I would hate for Bob Sorrell to beat me at golf, so I just act like I don't want to play. But you know something? If I watch those men—and Bob was telling me tonight, he said, "You know, Pastor, that course over there in Augusta." He said, "It's an extremely hard course to play." I don't know how he knows that, but he says that's an extremely hard course to play. And I watched those men, and they're masters at their art. But for me to say, "All right, I'll take one of those men out there playing golf, the Masters, and, since that man is a great golfer, and I want to be a golfer, I'll just go out and play golf like him." That would be

ridiculous. There's no way just by admiring that person and wanting to play golf like that person, I'll just say, "Well, he's my model, he's my example, and I'll just play golf like him." That's the fallacy of people who say, "Well, Jesus is my example; I'll just follow Him." Friend, you would have a much easier time imitating one of those golfers at the Masters, one of those pros, than you would have imitating the Lord Jesus Christ. There's no way. But now, and I know this is going to be a little ridiculous, but if I could take one of those golfers and boil him down and put him in a pill and swallow him down and let him expand and fill me, and then I could go out there and say, "Sorrell, let's play golf, buddy." And off we'd go. And he'd say, "Well, Adrian, you're doing good. That's great." But it wouldn't be me; it would be somebody in me.

Now I know that's a silly illustration, but I want you to understand, folks, we are not just imitating Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of life, in verse 2. And He is the Spirit of Christ. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Don't be some cheap, tin, little imitation of Jesus. You won't make it. You've got to have Jesus Christ in you. "And if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

### **III. As the Spirit of Adoption, He Guarantees Our Legacy**

All right, now what is He? He, as the Spirit of life, He gives life. As the Spirit of Christ, He glorifies the Lord. And then, as the Spirit of adoption, He guarantees our legacy. Look, if you will, now in verses 15 through 17: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to, to fear; but have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself..." Now, by the way, let's just pause right here. I'm reading from the King James Version, and the Bible says here, "The Spirit itself." That's just an idiosyncrasy in the Greek language. It doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit is not a person. That's just trying to make these words match, because the word Spirit is neuter in gender and, what this literally says is, "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of god, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together."

Now, are we born into the family of God or are we adopted into the family of God? Now the truth is, that we are both born into the family of God and adopted into the family of God. God comes at it from both directions to help us to understand all that we get. Spiritually we are born into the family of God. Legally we are adopted into the family of God. Now adoption was a legal action, where a man would take the son of another man to be his own son and give him all of the legal position, advantages, and privileges of a son by birth. Now, we are born into the family of God spiritually; we are adopted into God's family legally. And, because we are adopted into God's family, we have some prerogatives that sometimes a spiritually born son who was not adopted would not have. Of course, we're both spiritually born and adopted.

Now what is, what is the, what does a, what does an adopted son have? Well, he becomes an heir. Look again in verse 17: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God...” And so it means that I have all of the riches, all of the riches of Almighty God are mine through the Lord Jesus Christ. And notice I said all of the riches, because, “...if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ...” Do you know what a joint-heir is? The lawyers here can tell you. In a will, joint-heirs means share-and-share-alike. Now, folks, that’s almost too much to take in. We are joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. And when we get adopted, the Holy Spirit, which is the Spirit of adoption, comes into our lives. Here’s a good verse to put in your margin, Galatians 4 and verse 6 right by this verse, and it says, “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.”

Now what does that mean? Well, the Holy Spirit of God comes into your heart. And the way that you know that you’re saved is that God becomes a Father to you and you’re just constantly saying, “Abba, Father.” Now the word Abba, Father is an Aramaic term, and it’s a, it’s a diminutive form. It’s, it literally means “Daddy, Father.” Now it’s not irreverent to speak of Almighty God as your daddy. “...God has sent forth His Spirit into your heart, crying, Abba, Father.” Abba, Ab-ba are little words that a little baby would say. The first lisping words in an Arabic family or Aramaic family, a Jewish family today, “Abba, Abba, Father,” very much like our daddy father. It speaks of the, the greatest intimacy with the Father.

Years ago, I told you a story about a father who was a bookkeeper, and he was an accountant, and he did his work at home. And he was very proud of his ledgers, back before word processors. His books were perfect. He had his office at his home. Had a little boy there that he loved very much. And this man was very proud that he kept his books just so. But the little guy came in and threw open the study door, ran and jumped in his father’s arms. And the father was sitting in a swivel chair. He had his pen there on the paper. And when he did, the pen just went right across the paper and made a mark, just ruined the whole page. And the father put his pen down, and he said, “Son, hasn’t daddy told you not to come in this office when I’m working? Son, look what you did! You, look, son, you messed up everything that daddy did.” And the little boy’s chin started to quiver and a big tear popped out of his eye, and he said, “Daddy, I’m sorry. I just wanted to sit in your lap and rub your beard and hug you.” Well, you know what that dad did. He put down his pen, closed the book, and said, “Come here, son, come sit in daddy’s lap,” and hugged him and kissed him and spent some special time with him and talked with him about the things that a father and a son ought to do.

## **Conclusion**

Now, folks, I want to tell you, God never gets so busy keeping His books, flinging out

the sun, the moon, and the stars and running this mighty universe, that He doesn't have time for you to come and just sit in His lap, just sit in His lap. I mean, it's not that He's so important, that He's so busy that you cannot come to Him and call Him Abba, Father. You have been adopted into His family. A child may be born into a family that's not particularly wanted, but I'll guarantee you, when a child is adopted, that child is wanted. That child is chosen. As a matter of fact, according to the law, a man could disinherit a natural son; he could not disinherit an adopted son. So what is the Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead? Better question: Who is the Spirit that raised up Jesus from the dead? He is the Spirit of life. He gives us life. He is the Spirit of Christ. He glorifies the Lord. And He is the Spirit of adoption. He guarantees our legacy. And that's the whole, the same Holy Spirit that brought our Savior out of the grave. Isn't that a blessing? Praise God for the Holy Spirit. And so, what is the distinguishing mark of a child of God? The Holy Spirit in his life. Now, the Holy Spirit in your life doesn't mean some emotional feeling. It's deeper than that. It is the awareness of these truths that I'm talking about.

Father, seal this thought to our hearts as we prepare for Your table. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

# How to Make Sense out of Suffering

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: February 16, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:18–23**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Bondage: Yesterday's Curse
- II. Liberty: Tomorrow's Conquest
- III. Hope: Today's Comfort

Conclusion

## Introduction

Romans chapter 8, and, when you've found it, look up here, and let me ask you this question: Do you know sorrow, suffering, pain, disappointment, fear, frustration, confusion? If you don't, just wait a while. You will! You will not escape. The age in which we live is filled with sickness, war, hate, riots, sorrow, and confusion. And man doesn't seem to be able to do anything about it. He longs for a better day, and it gets worse. Man's golden dream turns to rust. Man's millennium turns to pandemonium. What does the Bible have to say about all of this?

Well, look, if you will, now, in verse 18. The apostle Paul has been doing some figuring. The word reckon here is a bookkeeping term. And he says, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

Now, there are some things you'd better get in perspective, because if you don't get them into perspective, you're going to get into trouble. You may get into doubt, or you may get into rebellion. When tragedy hits you, and things don't work out the way you think that they ought to work out, when that person who is dearest on earth to you is being consumed by some greedy malady, you may lift a clenched fist in the face of God in defiant rebellion and accuse God of unfairness or lack of love. Or rather than being filled with rebellion, you just may be filled with doubt, and you say, "Where is God? I mean, if God cares, doesn't He have any power to do anything about it? Or, could it be that He has the power and He really doesn't care? Or, could it be that there is no God at

all?”

Now, we might as well be honest. A lot of people are facing these kinds of questions, and let me ask ourselves, How are we going to deal with this? Well, the apostle Paul has already dealt with it for us by divine inspiration. And Paul has been doing some divine calculation, and so he says, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” It’s a bookkeeping term. Over here is the suffering. Over here is the glory. And Paul says, “I’m not in the red. I am in the black.”

Now, take your Bibles, and I want you, if you don’t mind writing in your Bible, to underscore or circle three words. Look in verse 21, and find the word bondage. He says, “For the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.” Circle the word, if you don’t mind. I’ve circled it in red in my Bible—the word bondage. And then, go down a little further, and circle the word liberty. “Because the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” And then, go over, if you will, to verse 24, and circle the word hope. “For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” You see the word hope?

All right, now take these three words. Get them in your heart. The first one is bondage. Say it. All right, the second one is liberty. Say it. The third one is hope. Say it. All right now, keep those three words in your mind: bondage, liberty, and hope. And then you’re going to understand about suffering, and you’re going to learn to make sense out of suffering. And you’re going to find out that there is a God, and that this God is a good God.

## **I. Bondage: Yesterday’s Curse**

Now, let’s think first of all about the word bondage, and bondage deals with yesterday’s curse. Have you got that? Yesterday’s curse! Folks, look around, there is something desperately wrong in our world! And what is it? There is a curse on our world. Begin in verse 20. “For the creature—and that literally means the creation—everything God made—was made subject to vanity—the word vanity means senselessness, futility, that which does not seem to add up—“For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.” Now, that’s speaking of God who made it all where it seems to be filled with confusion. “Because the creature itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption.” Now, what is the bondage of corruption? And, how did it come?

What causes all of this confusion, this disease, this war, this strife, this suffering?

Why is it here? Well, because of a curse that's on mankind. It's here because of sin—because of sin. You can't give it any other word than that one short little three-letter word: sin. God made a perfect world, but sin entered into that world. Adam sinned, and when he did, he dragged all of creation down with him.

Now, that brings us a real question. Why did God allow that? I mean, if God is a good God, why did God even allow Adam to sin? Why did God even create the potentiality, the possibility, of sin? People say, "If God is a good God, why doesn't He do something?" Now, you think about it. God made everything, right? Sin is something, so somebody says, "God made sin. God is the author of everything, suffering is something, so God is the author of suffering." You see how our minds work?

And, when we say that, we get ourselves into a problem. We say, before God, there was nothing. Sin is something. All things have come from God. Sin has come from God. Before God, there was nothing. Now, there's evil and pain and pang and moan and groan and woe. Then, it must've come from God. How could a good God allow such things? Now, look up here, and be honest. Isn't that a hard question? That, my friend, is a hard question. That is what the apostle Paul is dealing with here, so that we can make sense out of our suffering.

Now, let me back up and tell you that God is the author of everything, that God did make everything, and when God made everything, God made it absolutely perfect. And He made a man and a woman, put that man and woman in a perfect environment—now listen carefully, listen—and the perfect God gave to man and woman perfect freedom. That's what God made. God made everything perfect. He made a perfect man, He made a perfect woman, put them in a perfect place, and gave them perfect freedom!

Now, why did He make man perfectly free? Because what is the highest good? Love. God is a God of love. Now, what good is love if there's nobody to love, no love to give, and no love to receive? A song is not a song until you sing it. A bell is not a bell till you ring it. Love is not love until you give it and receive it. So God wants love. So God created two creatures, Adam and Eve, that He could love and so they could love Him.

Now, why did God make them free? Because forced love is not love. Forced love is a contradiction in terms. God has to give us freedom so that we can love. In order to choose good, we have to have the freedom to choose evil, or else the choice to choose good is not a choice at all. Now, so God made man perfect, and God put man in a perfect environment, and God gave that man perfect freedom and that woman perfect freedom. He gave them the ability to choose, but they chose sin, they chose evil. And when they did, all of creation fell into a bondage that the Bible calls "the bondage of corruption."

Dr. M. R. DeHaan III was watching television. He tells about this, and it was when

there was a disastrous earthquake that hit Mexico City in 1985, and the live cameras were there, and they were showing the devastation of this earthquake, and down at the bottom were these words: Courtesy S-I-N. Courtesy Sin. Well, that was the Spanish International Network. But this earthquake brought to you, the courtesy of sin. That's what is happening in our world. We live in a sin-sick world, and sin is like a virus.

Now, somebody says, "Okay, that's what caused it. Adam sinned. He drug creation down with him. The entire creation has now the curse of sin on it. But why doesn't God now do something? Why doesn't God just step in? Why doesn't God just kill the devil? Why doesn't God just destroy evil? I mean, after all, if He's God, He could."

Now, listen to me carefully. God could not destroy evil without destroying freedom. And, if God destroyed freedom, God would destroy love. And, if God destroyed love, God would destroy the highest good. God could not destroy evil without destroying freedom! If we're not free to choose good, then we're not free. There must be, therefore, the ability to choose evil. God could not destroy evil without destroying freedom. He could not destroy freedom without destroying love. And, if God destroyed love, God would destroy the highest good.

Now, listen to me. For God to destroy evil would be evil. For God to destroy evil would be evil, because God would be destroying the capability for the highest good, and that is for His creatures to choose to love Him and to serve Him. Well then, what is God going to do about evil? What is God going to do about suffering? God is not going to destroy it; God is going to defeat it—to defeat it. You see, there were two gardens. There was the Garden of Eden, and there was the first Adam. And there is the Garden of Gethsemane, and the second Adam. And the Lord Jesus, the very Son of God, took that sin upon Himself, and carried that sin to a cross, and on that cross died for it, and therefore, ultimately God, through Christ, and that amazing grace that we sang about it, will triumph over it all.

Now, we're thinking about the word bondage—yesterday's curse. When Adam sinned, I said he drug all of creation down with him. What is this bondage that we talk about in verses 21 and 22? Let me tell you what happened to creation. You want to know why today's newspaper reads like it does? There's a curse! Yesterday's curse is upon everything. For example, there's a curse on the animal kingdom. Now, write these scriptures down—Genesis 3 verse 14: "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, cursed art thou—or thou art cursed—above all cattle."

Now, the idea is that not only was the serpent cursed, but the cattle, the animal kingdom, is cursed. You look at the animal kingdom, and what some call "the survival of the fittest" is really just creation groaning under the curse. When God made creation, when God put the animals in the Garden of Eden, He did not put them in there with the

law of tooth and fang and claw. That's the result of the curse of sin! The animal kingdom was cursed.

There's a curse on the mineral kingdom. Listen to Genesis chapter 3 verse 17: "And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." That's the reason that we see all of this ecological problem that so many are worried about in politics. The desert, the waste places, the barren land—all of this is because God says, "Cursed is the animal kingdom. Cursed is the mineral kingdom." Cursed is the vegetable kingdom. Genesis 3 verse 18: "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field." This world, that was meant to be like the Garden of Eden, has become a garden of weeds. Have you ever noticed how much easier it is to grow weeds than vegetables?

Not only that, but there's a curse upon the human kingdom—mankind. Man was meant to have dominion upon this earth. Why did God make Adam and Eve, and how did He make them? Genesis chapter 1, verse 26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."

But man doesn't have dominion today. Why? Because of sin! Man is morally depraved. His mind, like the earth, has become a garden of weeds. His imagination is evil. Look at the newsstands. Not since Manhattan Island was sold for 24 dollars, has so much dirt been sold so cheaply. Man is emotionally disturbed. Psychoses and neuroses are there because of sin in his life. He is morally depraved, emotionally disturbed, physically diseased. Why do our bodies wear out? Romans 5, verse 12: "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin." You have a polluted gene pool. You have the seeds of death in you. You are dying. I am dying. We all have a terminal disease. It's death. It's caused by sin. And none of us is immune.

Look, if you will, in verse 23. "And not only they—he's talking about, he's talking about the creatures now—"And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body." Folks, my spirit is saved, but my body is not yet saved. It is not yet redeemed. Not yet—neither is yours. We're waiting for that.

Now, I have the firstfruit of the Spirit in my heart! When I received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, the Holy Spirit came into me; but I live in a body that groans, and so do you. There is a curse on the animal kingdom. There is a curse on the vegetable kingdom. There is a curse on the mineral kingdom. There is a curse on the

human kingdom, and the Bible calls this curse “the bondage of corruption.” Now, do you have that? That is yesterday’s curse. It happened in the Garden of Eden, and what we are doing is just reaping the bitter fruit of it today. Yesterday’s curse—bondage.

## **II. Liberty: Tomorrow’s Conquest**

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see. First of all, the first word was bondage. What’s the next word? Liberty. All right, that, my friend, is tomorrow’s conquest. Yesterday’s curse; tomorrow’s conquest. Now, remember God does not destroy evil; what God does is God defeats evil.

Now, look, if you will, in verses 21 through 23 again. Look at it. “For the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves—watch it now—waiting for the adoption, to wit—that is—the redemption of our body.” There is a better day coming.

The whole creation is moaning and groaning and sighing, pressed down with grief and distress, and to try to save this old world with ecology and politics would be like rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. But when Jesus comes, He’s going to change it. When Jesus comes, He is going to change it! And this creation is waiting with outstretched arms. It is called “the earnest expectation of the creation.” When Jesus comes, the trees of the field will clap their hands. The hills will skip like little lambs. And the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as waters that cover the sea.

When Jesus comes, the animal kingdom will be changed. Listen to the prophet Isaiah—Isaiah chapter 11, verses 6 and following: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kids; the calf and the young lion and the fatling together—and a little cluck—and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; and their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like an ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice den. And they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as waters that cover the sea.” We sing about it, Brother Jim, when the beasts of the wild shall be led by a child, there shall be peace in the valley for me. The animal kingdom is going to be changed.

The mineral kingdom will be changed. Isaiah 35, verse 1: “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as a rose.” The vegetable kingdom will be changed. Isaiah 55, verses 12 through 13. “For ye

shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

And the human kingdom is going to be changed. Our bodies are going to be redeemed. Look in verse 23. We’re waiting for the redemption of the body. Ole Dr. Vance Havner used to say, “You’re not going to be towed into heaven by a wrecking crew. You are going to have a body like unto His glorious body.” And that’s why Romans chapter 8, verse 18, says, “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Because we’re going to be like Jesus. That’s the reason the psalmist said, “I shall be satisfied when I awaken in thy likeness.” And this dear great God who has redeemed us is going to turn every hurt to a hallelujah and every tear to a pearl, and every Calvary to an Easter, and every sunset to a sunrise, when Jesus comes. When Jesus comes! Yesterday’s curse; tomorrow’s conquest. And that’s why, my friend, we ought to be praying, longing for, looking for, waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God.

### **III. Hope: Today’s Comfort**

But now, what’s our third word? First word, bondage. Second word, liberty. Third word—what? Hope. Okay now watch it. Yesterday’s curse. Tomorrow’s conquest. Today’s comfort. Today’s comfort—that’s the hope. Today’s comfort. You see, remember this, that the groans that we endure are temporary, the glory we expect is eternal. If you’re making notes, write that down. The groans we endure are temporary. The glory we expect is eternal. That’s the reason he says, “I reckon—I’ve been figuring—that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.”

Now, there are three groanings that are mentioned here. Look, if you will, in verse 20, and you have the groaning of creation. Look: “For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain.” Everything God made is full of pain now because of sin. There’s the groaning of creation. Then, look, if you will, down in verse 23. There’s the groaning of the believer: “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves.” The groaning of the creation; the groaning of the Christian. And now, look, if you will, down to verse 26, and you have the groaning of the Comforter: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities.” Three groanings.

The groaning of creation—all of creation has a curse on it! Moan and groan and pain

and pang, woe! And the believer who's saved cannot escape. Being saved does not make you immune from suffering. Our bodies are not yet redeemed. Even we ourselves, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we groan. The groaning of the creation, the groaning of the Christian, but, oh, the groaning of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. He is there with us. Jesus said, He is One called alongside of us, just like an attending physician beside the bedside of a patient. Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the Comforter; that means One who is called alongside to help. Yes, we know suffering. Yes, we know sorrow. But that's not the end of the story. "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

Now, listen. The groans we endure are temporary. Notice what he says—the groanings of what? This present time—this present time. Creation has a curse on it. The Christian's body are not yet redeemed. And so creation groans. The Christian groans. But the Holy Spirit of God knows our infirmity, and He groans with intercessions and prayers that cannot be uttered. Now, listen. Listen to me now. The groans we endure are temporary. The glory we expect is eternal.

Now, look, if you will, now in verse 28. Look at it. "And we know—K-N-O-W—know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did know, 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."

God had a Son He loved so much He said I'm going to make a lot more like Him. I'm going to make a lot more like Him. I'm going to make a lot! I'm going to make a family in His image! And I'm going to take those people, and I have determined it, I have predestined it—that they're going to be like Jesus. Every blood-bought child of God sitting in this building today, you can put it down. Everybody in the choir, all this orchestra, even these two birds over here—listen to me—they're going to be like Jesus! I'm going to be like Jesus! He's going to be like Jesus! And all hell can't stop it, because it is predestined.

You know, he speaks of these things in the past tense. Look at it, if you will. Oh, how wonderful, "Whom he did foreknow, them he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Now, look, if you will, verse 30: "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called—past tense—and whom he called, them he also justified—past tense—and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Now, wait a minute. I thought you said the glory that will be revealed. Yes, but God says it's as good as done. It's as good as done. In my mind, in my heart, I don't speak of it as something going to happen. It's done. It is done. It is finished. God has predestined it. And what has been decreed in

heaven cannot be annulled by hell. It's done! It's done!

We're predestined for glory, and, therefore, we're preserved for glory. Look, if you will, now, in verses 31 and following: "What shall we say to these things?" What things is he talking about? Suffering. Pain. Pang. Moan. Groan. "What shall we say to these things?" I'll tell you what we'll say to them: "If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also—along with the Spirit—maketh intercession for us." Friend, we are predestined for glory. We are preserved for glory. Listen. No fault can condemn us, and no foe can destroy us.

Now, think about these sufferings. Paul doesn't deny them; he faced them all. Look in verse 35: "And who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we're killed all the day long: we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things..."—he doesn't say that you're going to escape all of these things; he says in all of these things—"...we are more than conquerors." Doesn't mean that we kick a field goal in the last three seconds. It literally means we are super-conquerors. "In all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Hey, folks, he doesn't say that you will not suffer, but he says you are predestined for glory, you are preserved for glory, and the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.

## Conclusion

First word is what? Bondage. That's yesterday's curse. Next word is what? Liberty. That's tomorrow's conquest. Third word is what? Hope. That's today's comfort. We know! We know that nothing can separate us from His great love. Aren't you glad you're saved? Hallelujah!

Father, thank You for Your Word. O God, seal it to our hearts. And I just pray, dear God, today for those who may not be saved, that today they will say an everlasting yes to Jesus and receive Him as their Lord and Savior.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I think it's time that you did business with God. I believe there are some here today who would like to receive Jesus Christ into their heart as their Lord and Savior. It is my duty to tell you that you're a

sinner by nature, by birth, by practice, by choice. You've broken God's holy law, and a holy and a righteous God must judge your sin. And if you die not being saved, you will face an eternity in hell, eternally separated from Almighty God. But God doesn't want that to happen, and God has sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, to be your sin-bearer, and He has taken your sin to the cross. Him who knew no sin—that's Jesus—God made to be sin for you—that is, He's your representation, He's your substitute. He took your sins to the cross, and there with His blood He atoned for your sin. And your sin debt has been paid for in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. And because He died for you, if you will receive His atoning death, receive Him into your heart by faith, I can promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you, and He will predestine you, and He will preserve you for glory.

Would you pray this way? Forget anybody else is here. "Dear God, thank You for loving me. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I would only trust You. I do trust You, Lord Jesus." Tell Him that: "I do trust You, Lord Jesus. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You died for my sin on that cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. I believe it. And now, by faith, like a child, I now receive You as my Lord and my Savior. Right now, I receive You. Now, I open my heart, I turn from my sin, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus." Would you pray that prayer? "Save me, Lord Jesus." Just pray it from your heart: "Save me, Lord Jesus." Just ask Him: "Save me, Lord Jesus." And if you prayed that prayer, I want you to thank Him for saving you. By an act of sheer faith, just say, "Lord, thank You. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. You cannot lie. Thank You for saving me, because I turn from my sin to You with childlike faith. And now, Lord Jesus, because You died for me, because You have forgiven me, because You've made me Your child, because You have glory for me, help me never to be ashamed of You. Help me never, Jesus, to be ashamed of You."

# The Problem of Pain

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** May 16, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:18–23

*“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

ROMANS 8:18

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Depravity Factor
- II. The Disobedience Factor
  - A. We Were Judged as Sinners
  - B. We Will Be Judged as Servants
  - C. We Are Judged as Sons
- III. The Dependence Factor
- IV. The Discipline Factor
- V. The Development Factor
- VI. The Demonic Factor
- VII. The Devotion Factor
- VIII. The Declaration Factor
- IX. The Darkness Factor

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding in your Bibles Romans chapter 8—one of the great, great, great chapters in all of the Bible—and I’m going to begin reading in verse 18: Romans chapter 8 and verse 18. The Apostle Paul says, *“For I reckon...”* (Romans 8:18)—the word *reckon* here means that he has been balancing the books; it’s a bookkeeping term. *“For I reckon...the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18) *“For the earnest expectation of the creature”—*that may be translated also “the creation”—*“waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.”* (Romans 8:19) *“For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature”—*or the creation—*“itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”* (Romans 8:20–21) *“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but*

*ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*” (Romans 8:22–23) Now, in verse 22 we read this: “[*And*] *we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now*”: (Romans 8:22) The Problem of Pain. Now, there are many kinds of pain, and the child of God is not immune. I told you this morning that someone, a wise man, said, “Be kind to every one you meet, for every one is fighting a battle.” And that is true. And there’s a heartache and a hurt on every pew here tonight.

Now, it’s not the normal battles that cause us so much difficulty. We all know that sooner or later we’re going to get sick. We all know that sooner or later our bodies are going to wear out. And we more or less expect that, and we accept that when it comes. It’s not those normal battles. It’s the abnormal things. We find ourselves in a war sometimes that we didn’t declare. Sometimes we find ourselves eating bitter fruit from trees that we did not plant. Sometimes we find ourselves drinking water from a well that we did not dig. Sometimes life just seems to cave in, and we pick up a telephone, and on the other end is a message, and we don’t want to hear it. Or we go to the doctor and he says, “You better be seated. I have a message for you,” and you probably don’t want to hear it.

Now, the philosophers have dealt with the problem of pain, but they haven’t come up with an answer. Epicurus, a Greek philosopher, put it this way, and I want you to listen to what he said. He said, “Either God wishes to take away evil and is unable, or He is able and unwilling, or He is neither willing or able, or He is both willing and able. If He is willing, but unable, He is feeble, which is not in accordance with the character of God. If He is able and unwilling, He is envious, which is equally at variance with God. If He is neither willing nor able, He is both envious and feeble and, therefore, not God. If He is both willing and able, which alone is suitable for God, from what source then are evils? Why then doesn’t He remove them?” That’s the question the philosophers have. Or let me just put it in plain English. Why do good people suffer? Why the problem of pain?

I want tonight to give you eight reasons, and then I want to give you a reason that’s not a reason. Eight reasons plus one, and the last one is not a reason, and you’ll see why I said it this way.

## **I. The Depravity Factor**

The very first is what I want to call the depravity factor, just sin in general. Folks, sin causes suffering. Ephesians 2:3 says that we “[*are*] *by nature the children of wrath.*” That is, there’s something in nature that is wrong. The Apostle Paul said, “[...] *The whole creation [groans] and [travails] in pain...*” (Romans 8:22) Now, in Genesis 2, God said to Adam, “Adam, if you disobey Me, if you eat of the forbidden fruit, in the day that you eat

you will surely die.” (Genesis 2:17) Adam disobeyed God, and sin entered into the world, and death by sin. We talked about that this morning from Romans 5:12. And we live—you might, might as well face it—in a sin-filled, sin-cursed world. And my body and your body, we bear in our body the curse of Adam. And when we were born, we were born out of a polluted gene pool.

And not only do we suffer because we have the seeds of depravity in us, but, friend, we live with other sinners, and other sinners can cause you to suffer. You cross the street, and a drunken driver hits you, and your suffering may come at the hands of other sinners. And then not only that, but the entire earth, everything, it has the curse of sin on it. In Genesis 3:17 God said to Adam and Eve, “...*cursed is the ground for thy sake...*” In the Scripture that I read to you it says, “*The whole creation [groans] and [travails] in pain.*” (Romans 8:22)

And, folks, we just happen to live here. We live on a planet that has the curse of sin. When Noah came out of the ark, and Mrs. Noah, and Ham, and Shem, and Japheth, God said in Genesis 8:22: “*While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.*” That is, sometimes it’s going to be cold and sometimes it’s going to be hot, and we just happen to live here when it’s cold and we happen to live here when it’s hot.

You see, when a hurricane comes, the hurricane doesn’t just hit the pagans. If you lived in South Miami and Homestead when that hurricane hit, it didn’t matter whether you were saved or lost. You just happen to live where a hurricane hit. You might say, “I’m a child of God. Why did this happen to me?” It happened to you because you live on a planet that is cursed with sin. Natural disasters fall on Christians and non-Christians alike. And Jesus said in Matthew 5:45 that God makes the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust. Saved or lost. You say, “Well, the unsaved farmer doesn’t deserve the rain to fall on his crops.” But God makes the rain to fall on his crops just like He does the crops of a saved man. You say, “Well, the saved man didn’t deserve the flood,” but God allows the flood to come to the saved man just as He does the unsaved man. “God makes the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust.” (Matthew 5:45)

† M. R. DeHaan III was watching television one time when there was that great earthquake down there in Mexico City in 1985. And the television crew was down there, and they were sending out the signal through television, and they were showing the heartache, the sorrow, the devastation, the buildings that had collapsed, the groaning and the moaning, and all of this. And over there in the corner of the television set were these words, “Courtesy SIN—Courtesy SIN.” What that really stood for was the Spanish International Network—“Courtesy SIN.” Well, every storm that we have we can just simply say, “That’s the courtesy of sin.”†

Folks, admit it. We have a polluted gene pool. “[We are] by nature...children of

*wrath.*” (Ephesians 2:3) We live with other sinners. And we live in a world that is cursed, and the curse of sin rests on all creation. *“Cursed is the ground for thy sake.”* (Genesis 3:17) But I just want to give you a word of encouragement before we leave this point. There was the first Adam. He lost it all in the garden. There was the second Adam, the last Adam, the Lord Jesus who prayed in the garden, “Not my will, but thine be done.” (Matthew 26:39) And thank God for the last Adam who is going to undo what the first Adam did. Reason number one—do you have it?—we suffer because of the depravity factor.

## **II. The Disobedience Factor**

Reason number two: we suffer because of the disobedience factor. Sometimes we suffer not because of other people, or not because of our ancestors, or not because of our environment. Folks, we have just done wrong and we sin; and because we sin God has to chastise us. Now, I’ve told you before there are three kinds of judgment. We’re judged three ways. We’re judged as sinners, we’re judged as sons, and we’re judged as servants.

### **A. We Were Judged as Sinners**

Now, our judgment as a sinner, that was Calvary. And that judgment will never come to us because this chapter, Romans 8:1 says, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to [those who] are in Christ Jesus...”* I will never, ever be judicially judged for my sins. One half of one sin put on my account would send me to hell forever, but that judgment is passed for me. I settled my case out of court. Jesus suffered, bled, and died, and with His blood He atoned for my sin. And that sin will never, ever, ever, ever, ever be brought up against me anymore. Hallelujah, praise God! I was judged as a sinner at Calvary.

### **B. We Will Be Judged as Servants**

But I will be judged as a servant at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Paul said, *“We must all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or whether it be evil.”* (2 Corinthians 5:10) And I’m going to be rewarded or not rewarded according to my service. That’s my judgment as a servant.

### **C. We Are Judged as Sons**

But right now I am judged as a son. And the way that God judges me as a son is, is His chastisement, and God may chastise me. Hebrews 12:5–11, God speaks of this chastisement. And the Bible says, *“...Whom the [Father] [loves] He [chastens], and [He] [scourges] every son whom he [receives].”* (Hebrews 12:6) And then He says, *“If you endure chastening, God [deals] with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the*

*father chasteneth not?"* (Hebrews 12:7) *"But,"* He says, *"If [you are not chastened], then [you]...[illegitimate] and not [true children of God]."* (Hebrews 12:8) God says, "If you were my child and you behaved that way, I would carry you to the woodshed." Now we have a generation that doesn't know what the woodshed is, so what He means is, "I would punish you. I would chastise you. I would whip you." And sometimes the pain that we know is the chastisement of God.

Now, God is far more concerned about your holiness than He is your happiness. A couple of Saturday mornings ago, Ron Dunn spoke from this platform, and we love Ron Dunn. And Ron Dunn was talking also about suffering, and he said, "We need to learn the difference between sentiment and compassion"—sentimentality and compassion. He said, "If a little child disobeys its mother and, the mother, rather, says to that child, 'If you do that one more time, I'm going to punish you'—maybe the mother has warned the child over and over again—and says, 'One more time and I'm going to punish you. I'm going to whip you.' And the child does it. And the mother says, 'All right, now I'm going to whip you.' That little chin begins to quiver, and a tear gathers in the corner of those big brown eyes, and he says, 'Mommy, I'm sorry. Please, please don't whip me.' And she looks down. She just can't do it. Now, that's sentimentality. But the little child says, 'Mama, I'm sorry. Please don't whip me,' and she wails the daylights out of him, that's compassion, that's compassion. She loves him too much to let him grow up to be a rebel. She loves him too much to let him get away with disobedience. That is compassion."

And God loves you too much to let you sin without suffering. You see, God is teaching you that sin is wrong. God's not trying to get even, but God, the Bible says, *"...Whom the Lord [loves] He [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom He [receives]."* (Hebrews 12:6) Now, if you're sick or if you're in pain, that does not necessarily mean that God is chastising you. This is only one reason.

### **III. The Dependence Factor**

We talked, friend, about the depravity factor. We live in a depraved society. That's one of the reasons. We've talked about the disobedience factor. Let me give you the third factor, and it is the dependence factor. Sometimes we suffer because God wants our sufferings to make us dependent upon Him. You know, God doesn't want us to live independent of Him, but if we never had any pain, if we never had any problems, if we never had any difficulty, if we never had any heartache, if we never had any tears, we would just sail through life and never really depend upon God.

The Apostle Paul experienced this. In 2 Corinthians 12 is that classic story of Paul's thorn in the flesh, and that thorn in the flesh was a messenger of Satan to buffet him. And Paul asked God to take away the thorn in the flesh, but God didn't do it. As a

matter of fact, 2 Corinthians 12:9 says this: *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.”* Then Paul said, *“...Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then [I’m] strong.”* (2 Corinthians 12:9–10) Oswald Chambers says, “An unguarded strength is a double weakness.” The Apostle Paul had seen visions. He had seen ecstasies. He was taken up into the third heaven. He saw things not lawful for a man to even utter. And God allowed him to be impaled upon a stake, as it were, figuratively. There was a thorn in his flesh. It doesn’t mean a thorn like grows on roses. It actually means a stake that impaled him. It, whatever it was, it was excruciating. But what was God doing? God was saying, “Paul, you cannot depend upon your own strength. You’re going to have to depend upon Me, and My strength is going to be made perfect in your weakness.” And sometimes God allows us to suffer to make us weak in order to make us depend upon Him.

Years and years ago, when I was a young preacher, I read a book. I don’t know whether it’s in print or not. But if it is, I want you to get it. By L. E. Maxwell. The title of the book is “Crowded to Christ”—“Crowded to Christ.” And what Dr. Maxwell said was this: We would not come to the Lord Jesus Christ sometimes unless we were crowded to Him. It is difficulty, and heartache, and pain, and sorrow, and tribulation, and persecution, that crowds us to the Lord Jesus Christ. And so there is the dependency factor; God wants us to depend upon Him.

#### **IV. The Discipline Factor**

The fourth reason, and it is the discipline factor. We suffer sometimes because that’s the way God teaches us, and the only way we can learn sometime is for God to teach us through suffering. Here’s the verse for that: Psalm 119:67. David said, *“Before I was afflicted I went astray...”* (Psalm 119:67) Isn’t that an incredible verse? *“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now [I have] kept thy word.”* (Psalm 119:67) And in Psalm 119:77 he says, *“Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.”* Now, God showed him His mercy after he suffered. Sometimes, and it’s happened to me, sometimes God brings things into focus through suffering. We never see, sometimes, as clearly as we see, than when we see, through eyes that have been washed through tears.

I can remember when our son Philip died. Joyce and I had been in seminary, and I’d kind of had a philosophy while we were in school. And I don’t think this is for everybody, but it was my philosophy. I didn’t think that Joyce ought to work, that is, outside the house, outside the home. And so I said, “Joyce...” And Joyce and I decided we wanted to start our family while we were in school also. Our children didn’t just happen; we

wanted them. We were hoping for them while we were in school. We were married seven years of schooling, getting an education. And, and I worked at many, many different jobs. And we didn't have very much—I mean, folks, we really did not have very much. We lived from hand to mouth, but God blessed us. We were able to go through all of that school and come out without any debt, without Joyce having to leave the babies and go into the work force. Now I'm not saying if, if some seminary students have to do that, that it's wrong or their wives, or whatever. For us, we just felt that we ought not to do it. So we went to that first little church; I can remember that first little church there. And we'd not had any furniture. Oh, we had some sticks and some things, but no furniture really. And I remember going to J. J. Cater Furniture Company with Joyce and, down in West Palm Beach, and we picked out some furniture. It wasn't exquisite furniture, but it was new, and it was ours—little pieces of furniture. Not expensive furniture, but it was new, and it was ours, and we had bought it out of seminary. And we'd not had it but just a few days. I had not been out of seminary but just a few days when our Philip died on a Mother's Day. And I remember the day that boy died, and I remember looking at that furniture. And do you know what I thought when I saw that furniture? "It does not even come up to the level of junk! Not even to the level of junk!" I thought to myself, "How incredibly worthless is that!" And God gave me a vision—and I pray, God, that I won't lose that—of what physical material things are.

If God blesses with physical material things, that's fine. The Bible says, "*The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich...*" (Proverbs 10:22) and, "...*God...[gives] us richly all things to enjoy.*" (1 Timothy 6:17) And material goods and possessions are not wrong. Many times they're a blessing of God. But, you know, sometimes, sometimes we just have to have some pain, some suffering to get things in focus, don't we, to see what really, really matters. Sometimes the things that we think are so important are not important at all until we see with eyes that have been washed with tears. And so sometimes there is that discipline factor God is teaching us.

## **V. The Development Factor**

Now let me give you the fifth factor; and it's the development factor. Not only is God teaching us, but God is developing us. Sometimes suffering teaches us patience, for example, and we all need patience. Not a one of us don't. But when you pray for patience, you know what you're praying for? "*Tribulation [works] patience,*" (Romans 5:3) the Bible says. You're praying for tribulation. And James said in James 1:2–3, "*My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.*" (James 1:1) That doesn't mean a temptation to jump in the water. *Divers* temptations means "different kinds" of temptation. "*Knowing this, that the trying—the testing—of your faith works patience.*" (James 1:2) And, friend, patience doesn't mean the ability to thread a needle or to do

something tedious. It means endurance, stick-to-it-iveness, to stay with the things that really matter, to bear up under pressure.

¶ I was reading of a pastor. You know, we pastors, sometimes our preaching exceeds our living. And this pastor, a godly man, but he got up late one morning because the alarm clock did not go off. So he was in a hurry to make his appointment, and he cut himself shaving. Then on top of that, when he finally got out to the automobile, a tire was flat. Can you image that? Oh, I forgot to tell you also he didn't have a clean shirt. His shirt wasn't ironed. The alarm clock didn't go off, he cut himself shaving, there was no shirt ironed—that had to be done—and then when he got out, it's almost like a comedy of errors—a tire was flat. He said, "I can't believe all of this." So when he got the tire changed, he's on his way trying to get there and he was doing something wrong. He was going too fast, and he went through a stop sign without stopping completely, and there was a motorcycle policeman, and the policeman stopped him. Now can you imagine? I mean, this, this is a true story. I mean, it all happened to this guy. I mean, bang, bang, bang, bang, bang. And there he is, being arrested, stopped for going through a stop sign without stopping. He said, "Boy, this does it." He got out of the car. He said, "All right, give me a ticket. You might as well. Everything else has gone wrong today." You know what the policeman said to him? He said, "You know, sir," he said, "I used to have days like that too before I gave my heart to Jesus," to this pastor, "I used to have days like that before I gave my heart to Jesus."

¶

You imagine how he felt? Can you imagine how he was rebuked? You know what that story tells us? It really tells us two things. It tells us that we who are Christians need patience, but it also tells us we can have patience. And the God that gave that policeman patience will give you patience. And sometime God allows us to go through episodes, just like that pastor went through, in order to teach us patience. And so, there's the development factor.

## **VI. The Demonic Factor**

I want to tell you another reason that we sometimes suffer, and this is the sixth of these reasons. There is the demonic factor. We suffer sometimes at the hands of Satan. Now that may come as a surprise to you, but Satan can cause some of your sufferings. First Peter 5:8 says, "*Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil [goes about] as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.*" And if that were not a possibility, Peter never would have given that warning.

Now, I don't believe that believers in Christ can be demon-possessed. Some people may believe that; I don't believe that. But I do believe that they can be demon-oppressed. I believe they can be obsessed. I believe they can be vexed. Job suffered at

the hand of Satan. That's the key to understanding the book of Job. He was attacked by Satan, not because he was a sinner, but it was a test. But in the book of Job we learn that even though Job could attack Satan, still there was nothing, absolutely nothing that Satan could do to Job except what God allowed. You remember there in Job 1:9? Satan put that question to God the Father and said what? *"Doth Job fear God for nought?"* (Job 1:9) That is, "God, You bought him. You bribed him. You've been so good to him. No wonder he serves you. *"Hast thou not 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 [to the], in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he'll curse you to your face."* (Job 1:10–11) "God, he doesn't really love you. He just loves the blessings you've given him. That's the only reason he is serving you." And then in that same chapter in verse 12: *"And the Lord said unto Satan, Behold, all that he hath is in thy power; only upon himself put not forth thine hand. [And] so Satan went forth from the presence of the Lord."* (Job 1:12) Now, you see, God allowed Satan to do certain things, but God limited Satan. And in Job 2:6, *"And the LORD said unto Satan, Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life."* Satan has power, but his power is limited. Now, I thank God that Job was able to stand all that Satan did to him and Job was able to say, *"Though he slay me, yet [shall] I trust...him."* (Job 13:15)

Do you know, I don't know whether or not I'd be able to do what Job did? I really don't know, but I'll tell you something: God does know. You see, God will not allow anything to come to me that I'm not able to bear. He won't allow it. He knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust, and so that's a wonderful thing. If God allowed this to happen to Job, it's only because God knew the incredible inner strength that Job had through faith in Him. And so God will not allow anything to come to you that you're not able to bear. Satan has no power over you that God will not allow and God will not use for His good and His glory. And God used the suffering of Job to shut the devil's mouth.

And there are many people who have a testimony, but their testimony doesn't ring nearly as true as it does when they have endured suffering at the hand of Satan and they still serve God. Sometimes Satan himself can cause us to suffer. *"We wrestle,"* the Apostle Paul said, *"not against flesh and blood, but against principalities [and] powers..."* (Ephesians 6:12) And the Apostle Paul said, "Take the shield of faith because there are fiery darts that are coming your way." (Ephesians 6:16) So that's one reason—the demonic factor.

## **VII. The Devotion Factor**

Now number seven—number seven. There is the devotion factor. We suffer sometimes in order to glorify God. Your suffering can glorify God. Suffering can help you to do that.

Now, these children sang up here tonight, talking about abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ, abiding in the vine, and that was a beautiful song the kids sang. But in John 15:2 Jesus said, *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that [bears] fruit, he [purges] it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”* Do you know what the word *purge* means? “It prunes”. He prunes it. Now, if you were a vine, how do you think we would react to the pruning shears? Would you say, “Hey, hey, I don’t want any pruning shears”? But you know it’s the vine that is pruned that brings forth the fruit. *“...Every branch [in me] that [bears] fruit, he [prunes] it, that it may bring forth more fruit.”* (John 15:2) And then, this is what He says: *“[And] herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit...”* (John 15:8) So suffering and the glory of God are linked together.

Psalm 50:15 is a wonderful verse. *“...Call upon me in the day of trouble: [and] I will deliver thee, [and you will glorify me] and thou shalt glorify me.”* (Psalm 50:15) *“Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.”* (Psalm 50:15) There have been some times in my life—one time, and not the too far distant past—where I had an excruciating problem. I cried out to God over and over and over again, and God heard me, and God answered me. And I can tell you there are times when I just drive down the road and lift my heart to God and just say, “O God, how I praise you! How I glorify you!”

Sometimes sickness brings glory to God. John 11:4, when Lazarus was sick, Jesus heard that he was sick and said, *“This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God...”* (John 11:4) Now, any way that you want to slice that, Jesus said, “This sickness is for the glory of God.” I know the “health and wealth” boys tell us that it’s never God’s will for anybody to be sick and so forth, and that sickness doesn’t glorify God. But how do you deal with John 11:4? “This sickness,” Jesus said, “is for the glory of God.” And then Jesus said to Mary and Martha there in John 11:40, Jesus said, *“Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?”* (John 11:40) And the glory of God when God worked in the sickness and through the sickness of Lazarus was the end result.

And I was reading this verse tonight in my study. Jesus suffered in order to glorify God. He set the example in John 12: 27 and 28. Jesus said, *“Now my soul [is] troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour.”* (John 12:27) *“Father, glorify thy name...”* (John 12:28) Jesus said, “I’m not asking, Father, that I not suffer. I am asking, Father, that your name will be glorified.”

Joseph Tson, the Romanian pastor, stood here in our World Missions week and spoke. Joseph told on another occasion how he was taken by the Communists. They broke into his house. They said, “Joseph, we believe you’re guilty of subversion.” What Joseph had done was this: Joseph had preached a sermon because the Communists had said that the Christians’ kids, the kids who were Christians, could not get

scholarships. They could not go on to higher education. They needed to be weeded out. They needed to be culled out. And they systematically excluded the best and the brightest of the young Christian kids. And they could not get further education. It was wrong, and Joseph knew it was wrong. And in the Community of Nations where Romania was trying to have that Communist dictatorship and at the same time enjoy most-favored nation status, Joseph knew it was wrong. And he preached a sermon about it, a very dangerous thing to do. Somebody got a tape of that sermon and they played it on an international radio broadcast. The Communists heard it. They broke into Joseph's house, they arrested him, they took him off, came very early in the morning. And the very first thing they did, they brutally beat him. They beat him, the same man that stood right here. Most of us have never been beaten. You've probably never been beaten. You've never been beaten, I've never been beaten for Jesus. They beat him brutally, and then kept him in that room by himself, and day after day they would interrogate him. Joseph said, "I was there in that room, and I got to thinking." He said, "You know, this is Easter week. This is the week of the suffering of Jesus." He said, "I've just been beaten." He said, "I have been counted worthy—worthy. I have been counted worthy to suffer for Jesus. Thank you, Jesus!" When that guard came back in, Joseph said, "Would you forgive me?" He said, "What do you mean, forgive you?" He said, "Would you forgive me?" He said, "Why should I forgive you? What do you want me to forgive you for?" "Oh," he said, "forgive me for yelling so loud when you beat me." He said, "What do you mean?" Joseph said, "You know," he said, "we prisoners had made up our mind that when one was beaten he would yell so the other down the hall would know he was being beaten." Because, you see, they would beat them in private and there would be no way that they could authenticate and document the fact that they'd been beaten. So they had this agreement among them that when one would be beaten, he would yell loudly enough that the others could hear, and they would keep a record of it, so to somehow corroborate the fact that they were being beaten. And Joseph said, "While I was being beaten," he said, "I yelled so loudly." He said, "I want you to forgive me for doing that." And he said, "Furthermore, I want to thank you for giving me a privilege to suffer for my Lord Jesus. Thank you for giving me the privilege of suffering for Jesus Christ." And Joseph said, "The fear of that man broke when I told him that."

You see, friend, when we suffer as a Christian, we glorify God. Many times we suffer because of sickness, and sorrow, and disappointment, and persecution, but when we suffer as the Lord Jesus did, we glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **VIII. The Declaration Factor**

Now here's the eighth reason: declaration, the declaration factor. We suffer in order to communicate a message to comfort and win others. You remember that classic

passage of Scripture in 2 Corinthians 1: 3 and 4? *“Blessed be God...the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father [of], of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”* (2 Corinthians 1:3–4) You see, when we suffer and God comforts us, it’s a proof to those who are around us that our God is real. And one of the greatest testimonies that we have is the comfort that God gives that we can pass on to others.

About a month ago, up in the Pastor’s Conference upstairs, I heard this story. There was a young pastor and his wife; they were having their first baby. It was to be a time of joy, and great expectancy, and great joy. But when the little baby was born, the baby was a mongoloid child. The doctor told the father before he told the mother, a young pastor, and said, “I think you need to tell her that the child is a mongoloid child.” This pastor, not wanting to face his wife right away, went and found another pastor, and said, “How can I tell her?” He was so heartbroken. He said, “What shall I say?” And that pastor showed him a passage of Scripture over there in Exodus 4:11 where God says, “I’m the one who makes the blind, and I’m the one that makes the dumb, and I’m the one that makes the deaf. I am the one that makes these kinds of folks, too, that God, God is a sovereign God over all of that. I’m the one who does that, whether you can understand it or not.” And then this pastor said, “Then, your baby is a gift from God. You need to understand that. Your baby is a gift from God.” That gave strength to that pastor. He went up to see his wife, and she was saying, “Where’s my baby? I want to see my baby. Is there something wrong?” And he said to her, “Sweetheart, God has given us a special baby,” and told her about it. And they wept, and they cried, and they hugged, and they prayed, and they thanked God for their special baby. Then she got on the phone, this little pastor’s wife, to call her mama to tell her mama. And the telephone operator listened in. Now they’re not supposed to do that, but she listened in. She knew this was a pastor’s wife, and it had gone all over the hospital what had happened. And this telephone operator wanted to know what was that pastor’s wife going to say to her mother. What was their faith going to be like now? And that sweet little pastor’s wife got on the phone and said, “Mama, God has given us a special baby. I don’t know why He did it, but He does everything well. And God has given us a special baby. And we don’t know how He’s going to do it, but we know that He’s going to do it for our good and His glory. God is in control.” That operator eavesdropping, listening in on that, could hardly believe what she’d heard. She was so moved that she went through that entire hospital telling everybody what she’d heard, confessed the fact that she’d been eavesdropping, just confessed it, and said, “This is what I heard.” The next Sunday in that pastor’s little country church there were over seventy people from that hospital who showed up to worship. Thirty of them came forward to give their heart to Jesus Christ, and one of

them was that telephone operator, because here was a person who had found the comfort of God and was passing that comfort on to other people.

*“Blessed be God...the Father of all mercies, the God of all comfort, who [comforts] us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort [others]...[with] the [same] comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.”* (2 Corinthians 1:3–4) The declaration factor—where we say God is real in trouble, in heartache, in sorrow. He’s real, and He has comforted me, and He can comfort you.

## **IX. The Darkness Factor**

Now, those are eight reasons. Now I’m going to give you a reason that’s not a reason: the ninth reason. It’s the darkness factor. Friend, sometime we just don’t know; we just don’t know why. You can say, “Why, why, why,” and you never will get an answer. You just don’t know. For God says, “My ways are not your ways, neither are your thoughts my thoughts. As the heavens are high above the earth, so are my thoughts and my ways above your ways.” (Isaiah 55:8–9) And sometimes we just simply have to say, “Let God be God.” Amen? Just let God be God. I don’t know. And when you come to somebody who’s going through pain, and suffering, and heartache, be very careful that you don’t try to explain it, because you may not be able to explain it. You just bring them to God and say, “He is sufficient, and He is able.”

## **Conclusion**

But I’m going to tell you one thing, my dear friend. Romans 8:18 says, “...*That the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared [to] the glory [that] shall be revealed in us.*” We’re awaiting the redemption of the body; it’s not over yet. And He’ll turn every heartache to a hallelujah. He’ll turn every tear to a pearl. He, my friend, will turn every Calvary to an Easter and every sunset to a sunrise. And one of these days—one of these days—He’ll make it right. You can call that sentimentality if you want, but, friend, I’m telling you there’s a great day coming for those who love God. Hallelujah! Amen!

Let’s bow in prayer. Lord, I thank you that you’re a sovereign God, and, Lord, that we don’t live by explanations, but we live by promises. And, Lord, you have promised to take care of, ultimately, those who love you and know you. Thank you, Jesus. In your name we pray, Amen. †

# Desert Storms and Desert Roses

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 3, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:18–25

*“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

ROMANS 8:18

## Outline

Introduction

I. Bondage

- A. There Is a Curse on the Animal Kingdom
- B. There Is a Curse on the Mineral Kingdom
- C. There Is a Curse on the Vegetable World
- D. There Is a Curse on the Human Kingdom
  - 1. Man Is Spiritually Dethroned
  - 2. Man Is Morally Depraved
  - 3. Man Is Emotionally Disturbed
  - 4. Man Is Physically Diseased

II. Liberty

- A. The Curse Will Be Removed from the Animal Kingdom
- B. The Curse Will Be Removed from the Mineral Kingdom
- C. The Curse Will Be Removed from the Vegetable Kingdom
- D. The Curse Will Be Removed from the Human Kingdom

III. Hope

- A. The Groaning of Creation
- B. The Groaning of the Christian
- C. The Groaning of the Comforter

Conclusion

- A. Adapt to the Groaning of the Christian
- B. Appropriate the Groaning of the Spirit

## Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to Romans chapter 8. If I, God forbid, were shipwrecked on an island and could have only one book, I would want the Bible. If I could have only one testament in the Bible, I would want the New Testament. If I could have one book in the New Testament—this is where it’s going to get very hard—but I think I would want the book of Romans. And, if I could have one chapter in the book of

Romans, I believe—and again, it’s getting very difficult here—I just believe if this is all I could have, I would want the eighth chapter of the book of Romans. What an incredible passage of Scripture this is! And, I want us to begin, in just a moment, reading in verse 18 in Romans 8. The title of the message tonight is “Desert Storms and Desert Roses.”

You know, we always dream for and long for a better day. And, it seems like when things look like they’re going to get better—the Berlin Wall comes down—and then suddenly things are worse. And, we feel now that we’re on the threshold, perhaps, of Armageddon. The Golden Age turns to rust. The prospective millennium turns to pandemonium. Trouble is on every hand. We look around, and we see a world, if we read our newspaper—which I am a consummate newspaper reader—we see a world that’s filled with sickness, war, hate, riots, sorrow, confusion. And, it seems that, more and more, there’s becoming a shortage of everything except filth, and we’re seeing more and more filth.

Now, my dear friend, if you don’t have a proper perspective of things, it’s going to cause you to get discouraged. The questions that people are asking today are not questions dealing primarily with science in the Bible. It’s not the problem of science—where did man come from?—and all of that. The problem today is more the question of history: If there is a God, and this is our Father’s world, why is our age an age of suffering? And why, if there is so much suffering, are Christians included? Why aren’t somehow Christians excluded from all of this? It can lead to discouragement. It can lead to doubt. It can lead to rebellion, a clenched fist in the face of God.

Now, with that in mind, I want you to begin reading in verse 18. And, understand that all of these things have not taken God by surprise. As a matter of fact, God tells us exactly why all of this is happening. Paul says in verse 18: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared [to] the glory which shall be revealed in us”*—so now, he looks at the present, and then he looks at the future. And now, he’s going to look in a moment at the past. He says—*“For the earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature”*—the King James says, “the creature”—*“was made subject to vanity”*—now, he’s looking at the past—*“not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption”*—now, if you have a Bible and don’t mind writing in it, just circle the word *bondage*. That’s one of our key words—*“the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God”*—put a circle around the word *liberty*—*“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption”*—that is, “the redemption”—*“of our body. For we are saved by hope”*—put a circle around the word *hope*—*“but hope that is seen is*

*not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that [which] we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*" (Romans 8:18–25)

Now, let's just stop there and tell you that the Apostle Paul is writing. And, he is a great philosopher and a philosopher by the Holy Spirit, indeed, but he's a thinking man. And, the Apostle Paul has been looking at things as they are, and he has known incredible suffering. And, he uses a term in verse 18 which is a bookkeeping term. He says, "*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared [to] the glory which shall be revealed in us.*" (Romans 8:18) Now, what he's doing is balancing the ledger. The word *reckon* here means "to balance a ledger." It's a bookkeeping term. So, over here, he puts sufferings. Over here, he puts glory. Present—suffering; future—glory. "And, the glory so outweighs the suffering," he said, "it's not even worthy to be compared. There's hardly anything on this side of the scale."

Now, when the Apostle Paul says that "*the sufferings of this present time are not [even] worthy to be compared,*" (Romans 8:18) we might think, "Well, Paul didn't suffer." My dear friend, Paul suffered incredibly. Just listen to these scriptures. Second Corinthians chapter 4, beginning in verse 8. Now, here's Paul. He's a beloved brother. He is a missionary. He is a preacher, a statesman, a scholar, and a sacrificer, and he says, "*[We're] troubled on every side*"—is that you? Well, it was Paul—"troubled on every side, yet not distressed; [we're] perplexed, but not in despair; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." (2 Corinthians 4:8–10) Paul knew what it was to suffer. He was acquainted with suffering.

Again, listen to this scripture: 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 17: he says, "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.*" (2 Corinthians 4:17) I feel like saying, "Paul, did I read that right? Did you say, 'light affliction'?" Now remember, Paul had been beaten nearly to death. He'd been scarred. He'd been lashed. He'd been stoned. He fought with wild beasts. He was pickled in the Mediterranean after he was shipwrecked. And yet, he says, "a light affliction," and then he says, "It's just but a moment." (2 Corinthians 4:17) I say, "Paul, is thirty-five years of this a moment?" "Oh," he says, "it's light, and it's just for a moment." I say, "Why is that, Paul? Why do you say that?" He says, "Well, I've been doing some thinking. I've had a glimpse of the glory," and he says, "*I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not [even] worthy to be compared [to] the glory which shall be revealed in us.*" (Romans 8:18) And then, he explains something that every child of God needs to learn, and it's rooted in these three words: *bondage, liberty, and hope.*

## I. Bondage

Now, right now, you need to understand that this world is a world in bondage.

Something is very wrong with the world. Look, if you will, in verse 20: *“For the [creation] was made subject to vanity”*—now, anything that’s subject to vanity is not fulfilling the purpose for which it was created—*“[it] was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, [For] the [creation] itself...shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”* (Romans 8:20–21) Now, what happened is this: our entire world—everything that we see—is in bondage, and the Bible calls it *“the bondage of corruption.”* (Romans 8:21) It happened in the Garden of Eden. When Adam sinned, Adam pulled creation down with him, and something happened to all that God created. And, there came bondage to everything that God created; there came a curse upon everything that God created.

### A. There Is a Curse on the Animal Kingdom

There is a curse, for example, upon the animal kingdom. In Genesis 3 and verse 14: *“And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle.”* (Genesis 3:14) The serpent was cursed, and the cattle was cursed. And, you know what the evolutionist calls the survival of the fittest—that is, the law of tooth and fang and claw? It’s not the survival of the fittest. What it is, is creation groaning under the curse. It’s a part of the curse of sin. All of the animals today are under the curse of sin. That’s the reason that we have the ferocity that we have in nature.

### B. There Is a Curse on the Mineral Kingdom

But, not only is there a curse on the animal kingdom; there’s a curse on the mineral kingdom. Why is it so hard to grow vegetables? Why is it so hard to tickle the earth and make the flowers spring forth? Genesis chapter 3 and verse 17: *“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake.”* (Genesis 3:17) The animal kingdom is cursed. The mineral kingdom is cursed. And, sometimes those of you who have been farmers can identify with Dr. Lee, who said, “We were raised on a farm that was so poor you couldn’t even raise an umbrella on it.” Why is that? There’s a curse upon the mineral world.

### C. There Is a Curse on the Vegetable World

But, not only is there a curse upon the mineral world; there’s a curse upon the vegetable world. Genesis chapter 3 and verse 18: God said to Adam, concerning this world, *“Thorns...and thistles shall it bring forth [unto] thee.”* (Genesis 3:18) Before man sinned, roses didn’t have thorns. Before man sinned, there were no weeds in the Garden of Eden. Thorns and thistles are part of the curse. What I’m trying to tell you is that all of

our world is in bondage.

#### **D. There Is a Curse on the Human Kingdom**

And, not only was there a curse on the animal kingdom and the mineral kingdom and the vegetable kingdom; there is a curse on the human kingdom. You see, human beings themselves are under the curse. In Romans 8 and verse 22, look. He talks about all creation. He says, *“We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain.”* (Romans 8:22) That’s all of these other kingdoms I’ve been talking about. And now, look in verse 23: *“And not only they, but ourselves also, [who] have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves.”* (Romans 8:23) There’s a curse upon human beings.

##### **1. Man Is Spiritually Dethroned**

Man was meant to be the king of the earth. When God made man, God said in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 26: *“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”* (Genesis 1:26) When God made Adam, God, as it were, put a crown upon Adam, and Adam was to be king of the earth. He was to have dominion over all of the creatures. He was to have dominion.

When the Lord Jesus was here, He demonstrated the dominion that Adam was to have had. Jesus rode a wild Syrian donkey that no one ever had ridden before. You try that, and see what happens to you. But, Jesus did. Jesus had a rooster to crow at the precise moment He wanted that rooster to crow. You try that. Jesus, when He directed a fishing expedition, put so many fish in the net the nets broke. Jesus, when He needed to pay His taxes, took a fish like a guided missile, had him pick up a coin in his mouth and then go to Simon Peter’s hook. The Lord Jesus was in control of the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea, and the beast of the field. But, you see, that’s what Adam was to have been, but Adam was spiritually dethroned.

##### **2. Man Is Morally Depraved**

And, Adam was morally depraved. Did you read this in the newspaper yesterday? “Cheerleader Battle Cited in Death Try”: “A Texas mother was so intent on making sure her daughter made the cheerleading squad that she tried to hire a hit man to kill a competitor’s mother,’ police said Friday.” Did you read that? Now, you say, “That’s incredible.” Well, my dear friend, it’s just a part of the fact that man is spiritually dethroned. He is morally depraved. *Not since Manhattan Island was sold for twenty-four dollars has so much dirt been sold so cheap in America.*

### 3. Man Is Emotionally Disturbed

Man is also emotionally disturbed. I mean, people are full of neurosis and conflicts. Adam's first words in the Garden of Eden after he'd sinned were these: "*I was afraid.*" (Genesis 3:10) Up until this time there was no fear, but we're filled with fear. And, a Chicago psychologist has described humanity as "living in a veritable hell of neurosis and psychosis because of sin and guilt."

### 4. Man Is Physically Diseased

And, man is physically diseased. There's not a person here, if you'll not think about it long enough, will say, "I have a pain somewhere tonight"—or very few. Most of us right now don't understand the fact that every one of us has a terminal disease; we're going to die.

We are—listen—spiritually dethroned, morally depraved, emotionally disturbed, and physically diseased. We are in bondage. The whole world is in bondage. That's the reason that nothing seems to work out right, because no matter how you stir bad eggs, you can't make a good omelet. It never will work out right. That's the word *bondage*. The Bible calls it "*the bondage of corruption,*" (Romans 8:21) and you're a part of it. And, because you're a part of it, you suffer.

## II. Liberty

Now, that's what happened yesterday. What's going to happen tomorrow? Well, the Bible says there's going to come liberty tomorrow. Look again in verse 21: "*[For] the [creation] itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption [unto] the glorious liberty of the children of God.*" (Romans 8:21)

Now, our world is going to be changed. There's a new world coming. Don't get the idea that God is just going to take us out of Planet Earth and destroy Planet Earth—not so. God is going to change nature. How many times have you prayed, "*Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*"—what's the next phrase?—"*[on] earth, as it is in heaven.*" (Matthew 6:10) Well, God's kingdom is not come. And, God's will is not being done on earth yet, but it will be. Have you ever heard this: "*The meek shall inherit the*"—what?—"*the earth*"—"the earth." (Psalms 37:11) Don't get the idea that God is finished with this earth. My dear friend, creation is under bondage, and creation is coming to liberty. All of creation right now is moaning and groaning and sighing, pressed down in grief and distressed. But, I'm telling you, a golden age is going to come. That golden age will be here when Jesus comes. And, all nature is waiting, yearning with outstretched arms, for the coming of her King. And, when Jesus comes, the hills will skip like little lambs, and the trees of the field will clap their hands. "*And the desert [will] blossom as [a] rose.*" (Isaiah 35:1)

### A. The Curse Will Be Removed from the Animal Kingdom

We said there was a curse upon the animal kingdom. The animal kingdom will have that curse removed. Listen to this scripture: Isaiah chapter 11, verses 6 and following: *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them”—* you can say to your child, “Go out and play with the wolves, honey. It’ll be quite all right”—*“the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And [a] sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp”—*that is, “Baby, go out and play with your baby rattler”—*“[a] child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den”—*that is, “the poisonous creature’s den”—*“[And] they shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as...waters [that] cover the sea.”* (Isaiah 11:6–9) Now friend, that is a promise from God. Won’t that be a day when the curse is removed from the animal kingdom?

### B. The Curse Will Be Removed from the Mineral Kingdom

And, the curse is going to be removed from the mineral kingdom. And, here comes the title of my message, “Desert Storms and Desert Roses.” Isaiah chapter 35, verse 1: *“The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.”* (Isaiah 35:1) How wonderful! How wonderful that will be! There will be no dry places like Saudi Arabia.

### C. The Curse Will Be Removed from the Vegetable Kingdom

And, if there were—and there will be—but there’ll be no war there either, because not only will the animal kingdom be changed, and not only, my dear friend, will the mineral kingdom be changed; the vegetable kingdom will be changed. Listen to these verses: Isaiah 55, beginning in verse 12: *“For [you] shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing...all [of] the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”* (Isaiah 55:12–13)

### D. The Curse Will Be Removed from the Human Kingdom

And, my dear friend, not only these kingdoms, but the human kingdom is going to be changed. Look, if you will now—we’re still in Romans 8—look, if you will, in verse 23. God says that all of creation is going to be brought into liberty. And then, verse 23: *“And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even...ourselves [do] groan with ourselves, waiting for the adoption”—*that is, “the redemption”—*“of our [bodies].”* (Romans 8:23) My dear friend, all of nature is going to be changed, and we’re going to be there in a new and a glorified body. The Bible calls this “the adoption”—that

is, when we receive our full legacy. When a child is adopted, he may be a little baby. His father may be incredibly rich, but he does not get the legacy until he reaches maturity. Our maturity comes in the Millennium when our Lord gives us—and in our resurrection—when our Lord gives us that full adoption. I can tell you, that’s what the Apostle Paul meant when he was saying in Romans 8, verse 18: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared [to] the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18)

### III. Hope

And so, I’ve talked to you, first of all, about bondage. That happened in the past. I talked to you about liberty. That’s coming in the future. But, in the meanwhile, let’s think about the word *hope* for just a moment. Oh, thank God for the word *hope*! Notice in verse 24: *“For we are saved by hope.”* (Romans 8:24) That’s what keeps us. The word *saved* means “delivered.” I mean, how are we going to endure? By hope! Now, the word *hope* does not mean “maybe so”; the Bible word *hope* means “a divine certainty based upon the promise of God.” But, it means more than “certainty”; it means “a glad certainty,” an expectation of joy.

Now, I want you to see something here that’s very, very exciting to me. Three times he uses the word *groan*, and I want you to look at this. Verse 22: *“For we know that the whole creation groaneth.”* (Romans 8:22) Look in verse 23: *“we ourselves groan.”* (Romans 8:23) And then, look in verse 26: *“the Spirit [Himself] maketh intercession [with] us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* (Romans 8:26) Now, if you miss this, you’re going to miss one of the great blessings in all of the Bible. Three times he mentions groanings right here, and all of it is in the context of hope.

#### A. The Groaning of Creation

First of all, you have the groaning of creation—moan, and groan, and ping, and pain, and sigh. If you listen to the wind blow, it just blows in a minor key. Everything is groaning. All of creation—tooth, and claw, and fang—it’s all there. All of creation is in bondage, and it is groaning. That’s the groaning of creation.

#### B. The Groaning of the Christian

And then, next, you have the groaning of the Christian in verse 23: *“we ourselves [also] groan.”* (Romans 8:23) Why do we groan? Because we’re part of it. We’re part of it, and we can’t escape it. We don’t have immunity from pain. We do not have immunity from suffering.

#### C. The Groaning of the Comforter

There’s the groaning of the creation. There’s the groaning of the Christian. Now, watch it: there’s also the groaning of the Comforter—the groaning of the Comforter—in verses

26 and following: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities”—our weakness, our bondage—“for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit [Himself] maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”* (Romans 8:26) I like how J. B. Phillips translates it. He says this: “His Spirit within us is actually praying for us in those agonizing longings which never find words.”

So, what is hope? Hope is knowing that liberty is coming. Hope is knowing that one day, when Jesus comes, the desert will blossom as a rose. And, in the meanwhile, creation is groaning. In the meanwhile, the Christian is groaning. Our hearts break within us. We’re crushed. But also, the Holy Spirit is groaning, interceding, and saying, “Father, help him. Help her. Encourage them, and keep them.” I have a Savior—a dear loving Savior—who is interceding for me in the glory and praying before the Father for me. And, I have the Holy Spirit in me interceding to the Father and praying for me in this day and age in which we live.

## Conclusion

So, having said that, let me just very quickly sum up the message. In this day, what do you do?

### A. Adapt to the Groaning of the Christian

When you see the groaning—listen—when you see the groaning of creation, the key word is *adapt*. Just adapt yourself to it—you might as well. I mean, friend, you are a part of it. When you see the groaning of the Christian, accept it. Just accept it. You are going to suffer—you are. You say, “That’s grim, pastor.” Call it what you want. It’s a fact. *“Man that is born of woman is...full of trouble.”* (Job 14:1)

You say, “Well, then, I’d rather not be a Christian.” You’ll still suffer, but your suffering won’t make sense, and Romans 8:28 won’t be over your suffering, and the Holy Spirit of God will not be groaning in you and for you and making intercession for you. Listen, you just—when there’s the groaning of the creation—you just adapt. You say, “I’m a part of it. I’m going to acclimate myself to it.” The groaning of the Christian—accept it; just simply accept it. Say, “I acknowledge it”—“I acknowledge it.” Don’t think some strange thing happened to you.

I heard about a woman whose pastor came to see her. She was an elderly woman in her seventies or eighties, and she was confined to her bed. And, she said, “Pastor, can you help me? Can you tell me why I am suffering like I am?” He said, “Yes, ma’am, I can.” “Well,” she said, “why?” He said, “You’re getting old.” That’s it. Hey, folks, we’re wearing out. Just admit it—just admit it.

### B. Appropriate the Groaning of the Spirit

Adapt to the groaning of creation. Accept the groaning of the Christian. It’s a part of life.

But, appropriate the groaning of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is there to see you through. Now friend, a Christian is not some sort of a Pollyanna person who's saying, "God is in His heavens; all is right in the world." God is in His heaven, my dear friend, but this world is in a mess—bondage, corruption. One of these days, there'll be liberty. But in the meanwhile, creation groans, and we groan. But, thank God, the Holy Spirit groans. "[He makes] intercession for us." (Romans 8:26)

And, there's a better day coming. And, I tell you, the more I study this Bible, the more I realize that when we're trying to save civilization and we're trying to redeem this world, it's like painting the decks of a sinking ship. What we need to do right now is win as many to Jesus as we can and pray, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." (Revelation 22:20) We're waiting on the redemption, the adoption, the redemption of our bodies.

Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want you to thank God for the dear Holy Spirit and just say, "Holy Spirit of God, I thank you for living in me, for giving me comfort and help. Holy Spirit of God, help me to know you and love you better." And then, what I ask you to do is this: Would you pray, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"? Desire the coming of Jesus. Pray for His coming. What a day it will be when Jesus comes! And, if you don't know Jesus, I want you to receive Him right now. Father, I pray that many in this place tonight will say "yes" to Jesus and be saved. In His wonderful name. Amen.

# The Problem of Pain

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: July 27, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:18–39**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Yesterday's Curse Brings Bondage
- II. Tomorrow's Conquest Brings Liberty
- III. Today's Comfort Brings Hope

Conclusion

## Introduction

Proposition number one: Yesterday's curse brings bondage,  
Proposition number two: Tomorrow's conquest brings liberty,  
Proposition number three: Today's comfort brings hope.

Hallelujah! What a friend! Wonderful, wonderful music this morning! Thank you so very much.

Find the Book of Romans, and find in my favorite book my favorite chapter in my favorite book: the eighth chapter of the Book of Romans. And go to the heart of the Book of Romans, and find verse 18. In a moment, I'm going to read it. But the message today deals with the problem of pain.

Now, we have pain. There are many kinds of pain: physical pain—obvious; emotional pain; spiritual pain. Man that is born of woman knows pain, and many times we have pain not because of our own choosing. We suffer from wars we didn't declare, and reap the bitter fruit of plants and trees that we did not cultivate. And, if you were to look around the globe today, you would say there is a problem, and that problem is suffering. There is disease, unbelievable disease. AIDS is ravaging Africa and other civilized countries around the globe. There is starvation and hunger. There is war, pillage, hatred, rape, calamities, natural disasters, storms that come suddenly out of nowhere, and we find ourselves right in the middle of it. Now, what does God's Word say? Look, if you will, at the key verse here in verse 18: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." So what you have is suffering. There's no fine print in the contract. There's no denying it. There's no painting the clouds with sunshine and filling the air with the aroma of lavender. Problems are real. Pain is real. There are some in this

building today who are suffering quietly unmentionable pain. And, if you don't get some solution, if you don't have some answer, it'll cause discouragement. You'll get discouraged in your Christian life. And worse than discouragement, it might cause rebellion. It might cause you to lift a clenched fist in the face of God, and say, "God, how did You let this happen? Why, God, do I suffer as I do?" Or, even greater the question, "Why do my loved ones suffer as they suffer?" And, if you're not careful, you can have a spirit of rebellion. Or, if not discouragement and rebellion, just sheer doubt—doubt. When you look at pain and suffering and heartache and fears and tears, you say, "Where's God?" As a matter of fact, the atheists and the agnostics have worked out a little syllogism. It goes this way: we're cast on a three-fold thing here, a question. Perhaps when all of this suffering comes, God really does care, but He has no power. He can't do anything about it. So, therefore, He is sort of a wimpy, impotent God, not worthy of service, because He cares, but He can't do anything about it. Or, the other part of the equation is that He has the power. He could do something about it, but He doesn't care. He just lets us suffer, twists like a worm in hot ashes, and He sits up there in His heaven dispassionately, and doesn't care. Or else, there is no God at all, a God who is non-existent, no God at all. And so, the atheist asks us, which of these three things, when you're in pain, is it: a God who cares who can't do anything about it; or a God who could do something about it, but doesn't, a non-loving God; or is there no God at all? It causes doubt. Maybe rebellion. Maybe discouragement. That was not the apostle Paul's problem. Paul had been doing some figuring. Look again in verse 18—look at it. He says here in verse 18, "For I reckon..."—now, underscore that word reckon. In the King James Version that I'm reading from—"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed is us."

Now, the word reckon, brothers and sisters, is a bookkeeping term. Paul had been doing some figuring. Paul had been adding things up. Paul had been taking inventory. Paul had come to the bottom line. He had done some reckoning, and Paul said, "I am in the black. I'm not in the red; I'm in the black." Now, how do you figure this? How did Paul reckon? Well, wrapped around verse 18 is the rest of the chapter, obviously. And, in the rest of the chapter, we're going to see three things, as we look at the problem of pain, as we try to make sense out of suffering, because we all suffer. And, if you're not suffering right now, sooner or later, you will. And I don't want to be negative about that. It's just a fact of life. Our bodies are winding down to the grave. Most of us feel just about as good as we're ever going to feel, and it's going to get worse. Sorry about that, but, folks, that's the way it is. The sufferings of this present time. No need to deny it. So I want to give you three propositions here, and help you to understand the problem of

pain, maybe help us all to make sense out of suffering.

## I. **Yesterday's Curse Brings Bondage**

Proposition number one: Yesterday's curse brings bondage—yesterday's curse brings bondage. Now, notice. Go forward to verse 20—the apostle Paul says, “For the creature”—now, when he says creature, actually the Greek is the creation; that is, everything God created—“was made subject to vanity, not willingly but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.” Now, the creation is made subject to vanity. The word vanity means that it does not reach its original conclusion. What happened to the creation is it is subjected to vanity. It is in bondage, for notice verse 21: “For the creature himself—for the creation itself—also shall be delivered—underscore this word now—from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” Look around. All of creation is in bondage. Pain and pang, moan and groan, tribulation and trouble, problems and perplexity everywhere. Ours is a sick world, and it is a sin-sick world. Well, why did this happen?

Well, when Adam sinned, Adam dragged the entire creation down with him. It's called the corruption of bondage. God did not create this world this way. Some people say, “If God created everything, why did God create evil? Why did God create pain?” God did not do that. God is a good God. And when God made a creation, God stepped back, and God said, “It is good—it is good.” God made everything good. Now, what this good God did, however, is to make man perfect. And when this good God made man perfect, He gave man a gift, and that was the gift of choice. He made man perfect and perfectly free. Now, don't forget this. You see, because, if you don't, you're going to get a faulty syllogism. Here's the faulty syllogism. God is the author of all things. Evil, pain, and suffering is something, so God is the author of evil, suffering, and pain. You see, that's what some people think. God made everything. Evil is something. Then God created evil. So we have a problem. It's another problem. But that's not the way the syllogism works. That's not the argument. Here's the argument: God made everything, and He made it perfect. When God finished, God rested. God said, “It is good.” He made man. He made man perfect, but He made man perfectly free. That is, He gave man a choice. Why did God give to man a choice? Because God wanted something from man that is unique, special, wonderful, and glorious. He wants man's love. He wants you to love Him. That's the highest good, to love God and to love one another, for God is love. Now, why didn't God just force us to love Him? Well, forced love is a contradiction in terms. There's no such thing as forced love. Love has to choose. Now, in order for the lover to choose to love, he has to be able to choose not to love, or else

it's forced love, and it's not love at all. So what is the highest good? It is love. Man, therefore, must be perfectly free to choose to love God. But in order to have the ability to choose to love God, he has to have the ability to choose not to love God, or he has no choice at all. And not to love God is evil. The greatest commandment is to love God with all of your being, so, therefore, the greatest sin would be not to love God.

Now, Adam and Eve chose to sin because they were perfect and perfectly free, and, when they did, this world that we live in fell into the bondage of corruption. We live in a sin-sick world. The Bible calls it the bondage of corruption. And corruption, like a virus, has corrupted the entire world, and, as we're going to see in a moment, we're on board. We're part of it. Well, somebody says, "Well, okay, if Adam and Eve sinned, why didn't God just step in and God stop it? Why doesn't God just kill the devil, and why doesn't God destroy evil? It would not be good for God to just step in and destroy evil. If God were to step in and destroy evil, God would be destroying freedom. If God destroyed freedom, God would destroy the opportunity to love. If God destroyed the opportunity to love, God would destroy the highest good. So God does not destroy evil. Now, listen—the key point: God defeats evil, and there is a big difference. The second Adam, the Lord Jesus Christ, came to this earth to undo what the first Adam did, and, on the cross, He defeats evil with His death.

Now, what is this bondage of corruption that we read about in verses 21 and 22? You think about it. All of God's creation fell. For example, when Adam and Eve sinned, there came a curse on the animal kingdom. Put in your margin Genesis 3:14: "And the Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle and above every beast of the field." Now, the serpent was cursed above the others, but all of the others were cursed. There is a curse on the animal kingdom, and what the evolutionist calls the law of the survival of the fittest, tooth and claw and fang and blood, all that is, is creation groaning under the curse.

There's also a curse on the mineral kingdom. Genesis 3, verse 17—God said, "cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life." Have you ever tried to grow a garden? It's not easy. To grow weeds is easy. There's a curse on the mineral kingdom. Cursed is the ground.

There's a curse on the vegetable kingdom. Genesis 3, verse 18: "Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee." It's easier to grow weeds, as I've said, than it is to grow tomatoes. And, by the way, somebody gave me—well, I'll just tell you who it is. Brother Danny gave me—some of the best tomatoes you've ever seen. Thank you, Danny. A little commercial slips in there every now and then. And there's a curse on the vegetable kingdom. Tomatoes, they're not grown naturally and normally. They have to be cultivated. They have to be planted. Weeds, they'll just come up.

There's a curse on the human kingdom. Man was meant to have dominion. Genesis 1, verse 26, God said, concerning Adam and Eve, "let them have dominion." But look around at the people that you go to work with, that you go to school with, that you're in a club with, your neighbors, and yourself. Look in the mirror. Man today is morally depraved. His imagination is a garden of weeds. Not since Manhattan Island was sold for \$24 has so much dirt been sold so cheaply today.

I was watching television news last night, and I saw a reporter talk about salacious advertising that comes from Abercrombie and Fitch, pure perverted pornography pitched to your kids. I hope you parents will be indignant enough, if your child dares to want to wear some of their filth, that you'll say, "No, we're not going to wear that, darling." And we're not going to advertise for these filthy, immoral people who have tried to seduce our kids. Man's mind is morally depraved. Man is emotionally depraved, emotionally disturbed. Adam's first words, after he'd sinned, were these: "I was afraid." God put him in a perfect garden, gave him everything he needed, and now he says, "I was afraid." Man is spiritually diseased. The Bible says, in Romans 5, verse 12: "Therefore, as by one man sin entered in to the world, and death by sin, so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Every now and then, we say somebody has a terminal disease. Look up here. I want everybody in this auditorium just to lift your hand, everybody. Just lift your hand. Now, everybody with your hand up, you're got a terminal disease. You've got a terminal disease. You are dying! Death passed upon all men. We all have a polluted gene pool. And being saved does not make you immune. Look, if you will, in verse 22: "And we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." Now, watch this. If you don't watch it, you might get discouraged. "And not only they, but ourselves also...—not just the pagans—but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies." Our bodies are not yet redeemed. Because our bodies are not yet redeemed, we're not free from pain and suffering. So the point, very, very simple, is yesterday's curse brings bondage. When Adam sinned, he brought all of creation down with him, and we're not immune. This world has a viral infection.

## **II. Tomorrow's Conquest Brings Liberty**

Now, here's the second thing I want to lay on your heart. Yesterday's curse brings bondage. Tomorrow's conquest brings liberty. Now, notice there's going to be a bright tomorrow, because, verse 21, "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only

they—that is, all of the creatures and all of the pagans—but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.” What does he mean, the adoption? Well, a child who is adopted into a rich family, he doesn’t get the load until he reaches maturity. He doesn’t get all. I mean that you don’t give a child of a wealthy king millions and billions of dollars to spend; he’s under a caretaker until he’s old enough. That’s what he’s talking about now. Tomorrow’s conquest brings liberty. Now, all of creation is moaning and groaning and sighing in grief and distress. And, really, the ecologists—and I’m pretty much of an ecologist; I believe in ecology; I like clean air and pure water and nice trees, and I believe in being kind to animals; I believe about 95% of what these believe—but the last 5% are some of these whackos. But you can do all you want to do with ecology, but friend, you’re not going to change it. If you think you’re going to change it, or retrieve it, through ecology, you ought to get you a job rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic. The golden age is going to come tomorrow. It is tomorrow’s conquest, not today’s energy, that’s going to change this old world. This world is going to be changed. I mean, Planet Earth is going to be changed. There will be a new birth for Planet Earth when Jesus comes again.

For example, the animal kingdom that we talked about is going to be changed. Put down Isaiah chapter 11, verses 6 through 9: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. And the cow shall eat, and the bear shall feed their young ones, and the cow, and the bear shall feed. Their young ones shall lie down together. And the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child—that is, the little nursing child—shall play on the hole of the asp—that’s a poisonous snake, a once-poisonous snake—and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain—I love this verse—for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as waters that cover the sea.” When the beasts of the wild shall be led by a child, there shall be peace in the valley for me.

Not only will the animal kingdom be changed; the mineral kingdom shall be changed. Put down Isaiah 35, verse 1: “And the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” The Sahara Desert will be like the Garden of Eden.

And the vegetable kingdom is going to be changed. Isaiah 55, verse 13: “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name and for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

And the human kingdom is going to be changed. Look, if you will, in verse 23 now—

Romans 8:23: “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we, we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.” My body is not yet redeemed. I am saved. I am heaven-born and heaven-bound, but I am waiting for the redemption of the body, and so are you. But, friend, our bodies are going to be redeemed, and when we go to heaven, we’re not going to be towed in by a wrecking crew. We’re going to have a redeemed body. What’s our body going to be like? It’s going to be like His glorious body. Paul knew that. Go back to verse 18, and you can understand this. Look at it: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us.” Why such glory in us? Because He’s going to change our vile body like unto His glorious body. Paul said, “You can’t even compare the glory that we will receive with the suffering that we now know.” He’s going to turn every tear to a pearl, every hurt to a hallelujah, and every defeat into a victory, and every Calvary into an Easter, when Jesus comes. That, my friend, is tomorrow’s conquest that brings freedom. First of all, there’s bondage. Then there is liberty, freedom. Now, what is the bridge between these two? That’s where we’re living right now.

### **III. Today’s Comfort Brings Hope**

And so, here’s the third and final thing. It is today’s comfort that brings hope. Now, if you miss this, I feel sorry for you. Look, if you will, in verse 24: “For we are saved—and the word saved means delivered—by hope. But hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?” Hope is something that you don’t have in your hand but you know is yours, and, therefore, when we have this hope, we understand that the groans that we endure are temporary. Now, I want to show you something in this passage, if you have your Bible open in front of you. I want you to see three times he uses the word groan. First of all, there’s the groaning of creation. Look in verse 22: “For we know the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.” Everything has decay and I was thinking of a scientific word I don’t want to use it—entropy. I used it. All right, everything is winding down. Everything is decaying. It’s coming apart. All right. And so, all of creation groans. Even if you hear the wind blowing through the trees, it seems, Brother Ken, to be in a minor key.

Now, there’s the groaning of creation. And then, there’s the groaning of the Christian. Notice verse 23: “And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” I’ve been to the hospital so many times. I’ve seen the precious saints of God writhing in pain, groaning. They’ve not sinned. Well, all have sinned, but they’re not there because of their personal sin, because some clenched fist

in the face of God. Some of God's choicest of saints have suffered. We've all known them, have we not? And yet, they groan.

There's the groaning of creation. There's the groaning of the Christian. Thirdly, friend, there's the groaning of the Comforter. Look, if you will, here in verses 26 and following: "Likewise, the Spirit—talking about the Holy Spirit—also helpeth our infirmities—that is, we have 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." Thank God there's one in the glory who groans. We serve a God with tears in His eyes. We serve a God who loves us, who cares, who said, "Cast all your care upon Me, for I care for you." And there's the groaning of creation, and groaning of the Christian, and the groaning of the Comforter, the Spirit. Why did I say Comforter? He's called the Paraclete. That means one who is called alongside of us. You don't have to bear this alone.

Now, listen to me. The suffering that we know is temporary. All of the suffering you'll ever know is this side of the grave. And, by the way, if you're unsaved, all of the joy you'll ever know is this side of the grave. The suffering, the groans, we endure are temporary. The glory that we have is eternal. Now, very quickly, and I must go. Friend, we are prepared for glory. Look in verse 16: "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we're children of God." When pain comes, when suffering comes, when sorrow comes, let the Holy Spirit of God within you bear witness with your spirit that you belong to God. Now, if you don't know you belong to God, friend, you're going to suffer anyway, saved or lost. Man that is born of woman is full of trouble. But there is this: that we are prepared for glory. And then, we're predestined for glory. Look in verse 28: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he 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." Wait a minute, Paul. You're supposed to say then he will glorify. That's not what it says: "and he glorified." He talks about us being in glory in the past tense. It's as good as done. And what has been settled in heaven can never be annulled in time or by hell. We are prepared for glory. We are preserved for glory. And friend, I want you to know that we can never be separated from our Lord. No fault can condemn us. Look, if you will, in verses 33 and 34. If you're suffering, let me give you some hope here. Romans chapter 8, verses 33: "And who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

Friend, I have a dear, loving Savior who's praying for me right now as I'm preaching this sermon. We are prepared for glory. We are predestined for glory. We are preserved for glory. No fault can condemn us. No foe can conquer us. And no fear need control us.

I must go to the end, so I'm going to pass some material, but two of my favorite verses in all of the Bible. And, by the way, if you'd like a free, all-expense-paid trip to the place of your desire, whatever resort you want to go to, I'll fly you there first class, take care of all of your meals, bring you back home, you stay as long as you like, if you can find anything that Paul left out of this statement here. Now, listen to it. He's talking about the God who has not only prepared us and predestinated us, but has preserved us for glory. Listen to it. "For I am persuaded..."—now, here's the way to get your vacation, so listen carefully—"For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life"—anything happens to you after you die, or while you're living, you already lost your vacation—"nor angels..."—what kind of angels: good angels, bad angels, fallen angels?"—"nor angels, nor principalities"—that means kingdoms. What kind of kingdoms? Just principalities: earthly kingdoms, heavenly kingdoms—"nor powers"—that means authorities, governmental authority, military authority, ecclesiastical authority—"nor things present"—anything that's in the world today—"nor things to come"—anything that may ever come, anything that may be created in the future—"nor height"—that means anything in heaven above—"nor depth"—anything in hell beneath. And, in case he left anything out—"nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord." Amen. Hallelujah. Praise God. Nothing.

So Paul is sitting there. Paul knew suffering. He knew what it was to have the lash laid on his back. He knew what it was to fast. He knew what it was to be pickled in the Mediterranean when he was shipwrecked. He knew what it was to languish in prison. He knew what it was to need food and water and clothing. But Paul says, in Romans 8:18: "I've been doing some figuring, and I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not even worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us."

## Conclusion

Now, folks, you listen to me. You have a choice. God gave you a choice like He gave Adam a choice, and there's no reason that you should be hell when all this is going on. There's no reason you should miss it, because Jesus Christ suffered and bled and died for you, and the last Adam, Jesus, has undone what the first Adam did in the Garden of Eden. I'd rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel, to have what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Bow your heads in prayer.

Now, if you're not sure that you're saved, this is your time to get saved, and I want to

lead you and guide you in prayer. Right now you can pray and ask Christ into your heart. Would you pray this prayer. If you're not certain that you're saved, and you want to know for certain, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that God will save you today where you are in your seat right now. I'm not asking you to become a Baptist or a Methodist or a Presbyterian or Episcopalian. I'm not asking you give anything or buy anything. I'm asking you right now to receive someone whose name is Jesus. I take it back. I am asking you to give something. I'm asking you to give yourself to Him. Would you pray this prayer? Lord Jesus, thank You that You shed Your blood on the cross for me. Thank You that You paid my sin debt with Your blood. Thank You that You have prepared me for glory. You've predestined me for glory. You are preserving me for glory when I trust You. I do trust You. Come into my heart; come in right now. Wash away my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, and take control of my life, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, thank You for saving me. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I just stand on Your Word. You promised and You cannot lie. So by faith now, I want to confess that You're my Lord and Savior. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. Help me not to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, I'm going to ask you to settle it and seal it by coming forward. You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, wasn't I saved when I just prayed and asked Jesus to save me? Do I have to come forward to be saved?" No. You can be saved in an airplane, a bicycle, at home at the kitchen sink, anywhere, by calling on the name of the Lord, but let me tell you something. God puts us to a test to show if we really mean business, and He says, "If you're ashamed of Me before men, I'll be ashamed of you when I come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels." Confession does not bring salvation; it shows salvation. And I'm going to tell you, if you don't trust Him enough to confess Him openly and publicly, you ought to put a big question mark after that thing you call salvation. The Bible says, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so." So we're going to sing an invitational hymn, and the ministers of our church are going to be standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front. And when we stand and sing, Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess you now, I want you to leave your seat, and come forward, and say to the minister, "I am trusting Jesus." It'll sound good in your mouth when you say it. We want to give you some Scripture to stand on, rejoice with you, answer any questions that we can answer, and seal it with you in prayer. It'll take just a few moments. You'll be so glad you did. Now, if you're in the balcony, there'll be someone waiting to receive you under the banner to my right that says Redeemer, or the one up there in the corner over here to

my left that says Messiah. Now, there are others of you here today who are saved, and you know it, have already been saved, but some have never had believer's baptism. I invite you to come forward, and say, "Look, I know I'm saved. I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I want to be baptized and added to the fellowship of the church." There are others of you who've been saved and baptized, have membership elsewhere. You know that you're saved. You need a church home. In the name of Jesus, I invite you to come forward, and say, "I want to place my membership here."

Let's stand together. And, as you stand, let's bow our heads for just a moment in prayer, as soon as we stand. Get quiet now; just get quiet. Lord Jesus, I pray, Lord Jesus, that You would open hearts, and You, Lord Jesus, would draw people to Yourself and to Your church. Help us, Lord, to obey You, and not to be ashamed of You. And help people to step out now and say yes to You. In Your dear name I pray. Amen.

Let's sing. You step out and come.

# The Problem of Pain

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 27, 2003

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:18–39

*“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

ROMANS 8:18

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Yesterday’s Curse Brings Bondage
- II. Tomorrow’s Conquest Brings Liberty
- III. Today’s Comfort Brings Hope

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, we’ve been blessed this morning with great music, have we not? Take God’s Word. Find the Book of Romans, the “Constitution of Christianity”, I suppose, my favorite book in the whole Bible. And find my favorite chapter in that favorite book, Romans chapter 8. In a moment, we’re going to begin looking in verse 18. But what I want to talk to you about today is the problem of pain.

You know, we live in a world that is filled with pain, and moan, and groan, and heartache, and tears, and fears, death, destruction, disaster, war, famine, disease. And some who are sitting in this building this morning have pain. And pain comes in different packages. Sometimes it’s physical pain, but many times it’s emotional pain, worse than physical pain. And some are asking why—why did a good God allow all of this? What is wrong in the world today? Sometimes we could understand, if it were the law of sowing and reaping, but sometimes we eat fruit from trees we did not plant, and sometimes we find ourselves in battles and wars that we never declared, and we long for a better day, and we long for peace on earth. We want it all to somehow turn out all right. But our golden dreams turn to rust, and our millennium is more like pandemonium, and we say, “Why? Where is God?” And sometimes when these things happen, it causes us to get discouraged, and we have suffering and pain. After a while, we just kind of want to throw in the towel. And then, if it doesn’t cause discouragement, sometimes it causes rebellion. You lift a clenched fist to the face of God, and say, “God, how could you allow this? Where are you? Why don’t you do something?” We get angry with God. Or, if it

doesn't cause discouragement or rebellion, sometimes it just causes doubt. I mean, we say, "Can we really believe Him?" Because here's the way the human mind works: If God loves us, why doesn't He do something about it? So maybe God is a God of love who is a weak God, an impotent God, a namby-pamby God, a God who's more a victim than an overcomer. That answer doesn't seem to suffice, that God loves us but can't do anything about it. Then, we turn it around, and we say, "Well, God is all powerful. God can do anything, but He doesn't. He just doesn't seem to care. He sits up there in His glory, in His heaven, with all of His power, and we kind of squirm like a worm in hot ashes. God has the power, but He doesn't have the love." Or, we say, "Well, maybe there's no God at all. The reason we don't see the power, and the reason we don't see the love, is there's no God there with power and love to display Himself." And so, we have doubt when pain comes. But that was not so with the Apostle Paul.

The Apostle Paul had been thinking about it, and the Apostle Paul had come to a quiet satisfactory conclusion in his own heart and mind. Look in verse 18. "*For I reckon...*"—do you see that? Romans 8:18: "*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared [to] the glory which shall be revealed in us.*" Now, the word *reckon* is a bookkeeping term. Paul had been doing some calculating; he'd been doing some figuring. He had come to a conclusion, a reckoning. He had been taking inventory, and he'd come to the bottom line, and he said, "I am convinced that the problems that we have, the pain, the suffering, the toil, the tears." And, friend, I want to tell you Paul knew it. Paul knew what it was to be beaten, stoned, left for dead, shipwrecked, languish in prison, fastings, tumult, accusations. He knew all of it. Don't think this is the musing of an armchair theorician. Paul says, "*...I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared [to] the glory which shall be revealed in us.*" (Roman 8:18) He's not saying, "So bad the suffering, so good the glory." He said, "There's no comparison—there's no comparison." Well, why could Paul say that?

Well, I want to talk to you today about the problem of pain, and making sense out of suffering, and I want you to see what Paul saw, and it's all wrapped up in this 8th chapter of Romans. And we're going to look into it, because there are three basic things that are there. Of course, there are many, many more things. But let's look a little bit and see why the world is so full of pain, and what we can reckon concerning it.

## **I. Yesterday's Curse Brings Bondage**

First thing I want you to see is what I'm going to call yesterday's curse that brings bondage. Let's look in verse 20. We were in verse 18. Paul says, "*For the creature...*"—now, when he says word *creature* here, he doesn't mean "a creature", but he means "creation", all that God has created. "*For the creature*"—or creation—"was made subject

*to vanity*—*vanity* means “it does not fulfill its original purpose”—“*not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope.*” (Romans 8:20) That is, somehow God subjected creation to vanity, but He did it that we might have hope. And now he explains it in verse 21: “*Because the creature*”—or creation—“*itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption*”—now, that’s a rich phrase right there, and I want you to underscore it: the bondage of corruption—“*into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*” (Romans 8:21) Yesterday’s curse brings bondage. The Bible calls it the bondage of corruption.

Now, you don’t have to be a rocket scientist to look around and see there’s something wrong in today’s world. There’s confusion, and frustration, and suffering that rests upon all that’s in this planet. And why did this happen? Because of sin. When Adam sinned, Adam pulled creation down with him. He dragged the whole creation down with him. Now, remember, we asked you, we said the doubter has these problems: If God is good, why doesn’t He do something? Or, if He’s able, does He really care? Let me try to explain that a little bit. God is good, and everything that God created is good. After God created His magnificent universe, and universes dripped from His fingers, and then He took this world, and said, “The earth is the Lord’s,” and formed it, and made it fruitful, and put man in the garden, God stepped back, and God said, “That is good.” God did not create evil. God did not create pain and suffering, heartache, tears and fears. No, He didn’t do that. God made a perfect world. And when God made a perfect world, He made a perfect man, and set that man in that perfect world. And let me tell you how perfect that man was. God gave that perfect man—are you listening?—perfect freedom. It’s very important that you understand that. That perfect man had perfect freedom.

Well, why did God give him perfect freedom, the ability to choose? I’ll tell you why God gave him the ability to choose: because God wanted something out of that man that He wants out of me, He wants out of you. God wants love. God is love. Love wants to love and be loved. And one of the definitions of God: God is love. Now, in order to love, you have to choose to love. Forced love is a contradiction in terms. There’s no such thing as forced love. If it’s forced, it is not love. Love has to be willing. It has to be voluntary. It has to be volitional. You have to choose. So God made man, and God made man perfect, gave him perfect freedom, liberty, to choose. But in order to choose right, he had to be able to choose wrong, or he would have had no choice at all. Again, we’d be back to forced love. So man had to have the ability to choose wrong, in order to have the ability and the joy and the privilege to choose right. And Adam chose wrong. And because Adam chose wrong, we have sin in this world. It is a result of man’s choice. God is not the author of sin. God is the author of man’s freedom, and man chose some things that are evil. Well, somebody says, “Well, if that is true, why doesn’t

God just step in and clean up the mess?” He could, if He wanted to. “Why didn’t God just destroy the devil and eradicate sin?” Well, we’re right back to where we were. If God were to do that, just step in and destroy the devil and eradicate sin, as such, God would put us right back where we were. We would have no more choice. Now, I want to say it, and I want you to listen to it: If God were to destroy evil, that would be evil, because that would destroy the ability for the highest good. What is the highest good? Somebody asked Jesus, “[*What*] is the great commandment...?” (Matthew 22:36) “*Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart...with all thy soul...with all thy mind.*” (Matthew 22:37) Love is the great commandment. Therefore, it’s the greatest good. And had man no choice, he cannot serve the greatest good and know the greatest joy. And, therefore, to destroy evil would be an act of evil. God does not destroy evil; God defeats evil through the cross. The first Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden, and drug it all down. The last Adam, the Son of God, steps into this world not to simply eradicate evil, but to overcome it with the blood of redemption. Now, there is what we call here the bondage of corruption. Do you see it again in verse 21? The bondage of corruption. And it’s on everything. Look around. Everything has the curse of it, yesterday’s curse.

For example, there is a curse on the animal kingdom. In Genesis 3:14—put that in your margin—God is speaking to the serpent who deceived Eve: “*And the Lord God said unto the serpent, because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field.*” Now, not only was the serpent cursed; according to this verse, all cattle and all beasts are cursed. There’s a curse on the animal kingdom. What we call the survival of the fittest, the law of tooth and fang and claw, is not the survival of the fittest; it is creation groaning under the curse.

Not only is there a curse on the animal kingdom; there is a curse on the mineral kingdom. Genesis 3, verse 17: “*...cursed is the ground...*” “*Thorns...and thistles...it [brings] forth...*” (Genesis 3:18) It easier to grow weeds than it is to grow roses. We have desert wastes. We have erosion. We have pollution, and all the ecologists of this world put together could not ultimately change it. Not only is there a curse on the animal kingdom, and a curse on the mineral kingdom; there’s a curse on the vegetable kingdom. Genesis 3, verse 18—God speaks of this cursed mineral world, and says, “*Thorns...and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee.*” That’s why you have dandelions in your yard. That’s the reason you tear your trousers when you walk through the brambles: thorns and thistles.

And there’s a curse also on the human kingdom. We are a part of it. Man was supposed to have had dominion over this earth, but notice in Genesis 1, verse 26: “*And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth*”—every

creeping thing.

¶ I was out in my backyard. I came in the house, sat down to watch the news. I looked on that thumb there, and it was blue and yellowish looking, and it looked like somebody hit me with a hammer right there. And I looked at it, and I said, “Now what is that? What did I do to myself?” There was a little white spot right in the middle. After a while, my wife came in, and said, “You’ve been bitten by a spider.” I said, “Thanks a lot.” Ended up, Dr. Castellaw had given me a shot, you know where. I don’t know what that had to do with my hand, but somehow there’s a connection. And I still have right there a little lymph node. It’s a little bump right there because of the poison of that creeping thing. I didn’t have dominion over that creeping thing. I’d like to have dominion over it, if I get hold of it, find out where it is.¶

Now, that’s the kind of a world that we live in. And man now, meant to be in the image of God and to have dominion, is morally depraved. Look at the filth on the newsstands, on television, radio, and it’s getting worse. Not since Manhattan Island was sold for twenty-four dollars has so much dirt been sold so cheaply. Man is morally depraved. He is emotionally disturbed. Adam’s first words after he’d sinned were these: “*I was afraid.*” (Genesis 3:10) We have people today who live in a jungle of neurosis, and fears, and sort of a veritable hell, because there’s sin in the world. Man is physically diseased, morally depraved, emotionally disturbed, physically diseased. We all have a polluted gene pool. Sometimes we talk about people who have terminal diseases. If you don’t mind doing something, I want everybody here to lift your right hand. Just hold it way up, everybody. Now, look around. All these people have a terminal disease, including you. You’re dying. Folks, you are dying. I am dying. We are physically diseased. I don’t want to discourage you too much, but you feel about as good as you’re ever going to feel right now. We’re winding down to the grave. It gets worse and worse until we turn to rust and dust. We have a polluted gene pool. Now, that’s yesterday’s bondage. Now, yesterday’s bondage, it’s on us.

## II. Tomorrow’s Conquest Brings Liberty

But now let’s move to the second point. Let’s think not only about yesterday’s curse that brings bondage, but tomorrow’s conquest that brings liberty. I’ve got good news. It’s going to be wonderful. Notice, if you will again, in verse 21 here in this chapter. He says here, “*Because the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.*” (Romans 8:21) There is coming a time of deliverance. Go on down, and let’s read through verse 23: “*For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our [bodies].*” (Romans

8:22–23) Now, there's yesterday's corruption, but there's tomorrow's conquest. One of these days, God is going to make it all better. One of these days, all of creation is going to be changed, “[and] the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as...waters that cover the sea.” (Habakkuk 2:14) Let me give you some verses that point that out, the day when Jesus comes, when “the trees of the field [will] clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12) and the hills will skip like lambs. (Psalm 114:4)

Let me show you. The animal kingdom—we said there's a curse on the animal kingdom—it's going to be changed. Isaiah 11, verses 6 through 9: “The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the suckling child shall play on the hole of the asp”—that's a poisonous snake, was poisonous—“and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be [filled with] the knowledge of”—for the earth shall be full of—“the knowledge of the Lord, as waters that cover the sea.” “When the beasts of the wild shall be led by a child...there shall be peace in the valley for me.” (Thomas Dorsey)

And not only will the animal kingdom be changed; the mineral kingdom is going to be changed. Isaiah chapter 35 and verse 1 says, “[And] the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.” The Sahara will be like the Garden of Eden.

And the vegetable kingdom is going to be changed. Isaiah 55, verse 13: “Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.” Won't that be a day when the hideous scarred and marred places of Planet Earth become like Eden again?

And the human kingdom is going to be changed. You're going to be changed. Now, you haven't been changed yet, because the Bible says we're waiting for the redemption of the body. Look in verse 23: “[But] not only they”—that is, the creatures—“but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we [within] ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.” (Romans 8:23) Your body is not yet redeemed. Your body is not yet redeemed. We're waiting for the redemption of the body. Our spirits are redeemed, but not our bodies. But one of these days our bodies are going to be redeemed, and we're going to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ. We're not going to heaven in these bodies. We'd have to be towed in by the wrecking crew. No, we're going in changed, glorified bodies. The Bible says that He's going to “change our vile body, that it might be...like unto His glorious body”. (Philippians 3:21) That's the reason the Apostle Paul was saying there in Romans 8:18,

*“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory”—now, watch it, not the glory around us, but the glory—“[that] shall be revealed in us.”* Friend, you’re going to be like Jesus. I mean, like Jesus, in His glorified, resurrected body. That seems almost too much to take in. But Paul said, *“[Look]...the sufferings of this present time are not [even] worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”* (Romans 8:18) One of these days, our vile bodies are going to be changed like to His glorious body. He’ll turn every tear to a pearl, every hurt to a hallelujah, every Calvary to an Easter. We’re going to be made like the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **III. Today’s Comfort Brings Hope**

Now, we talked about yesterday’s curse: bondage. We talked about tomorrow’s conquest: liberty. Meanwhile, back at the range. “Yesterday, uh-huh. Tomorrow, okay. But what about today?” Friend, today’s comfort brings hope—today’s comfort brings hope. Yes, corruption; yes, conquest; but what about today? What about meanwhile? Well, look, if you will, in verse 24—Romans 8, verse 24. Look at it: *“For we are saved by hope”—the word saved means that we “endure”. We are delivered by hope—“but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?”* Now, what he is saying is that the groans that we are enduring right now are temporary. You may not have caught it, but three times Paul uses the word *groans* here, and I want you to see them—three kinds of groans.

First of all, there’s the groaning of creation. Look in verse 22: *“[And] we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”* (Romans 8:22) Everything that God has made groans. Even the wind blowing through the trees is in a minor key. Pain and pang, moan and groan, is on all of creation. All of creation groans. There’s the groaning of the creation.

Now, here’s the second thing. There’s the groaning of the Christian. That’s very important that you see this. Look, if you will, in verse 23. And there’s no fine print here. *“And not only they”—that is, the creatures—“but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves”—he’s talking about believers—“groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”* (Romans 8:23) You can have an unredeemed body, and you can writhe in pain upon a bed of illness and sickness. I’ve been there many times to the hospital, folks. For over half a century, I have been by the bedside of people who groan, and it’s very real, and some of them the sweetest saints that have ever walked the face of this earth writhe and groan. And not only is there the physical groaning, but there are people with emotional problems, heartaches, children who break their hearts, husbands, wives, broken romance, and people just say, “Oh, oh, oh, oh, oh.” They groan, and they’re believers. They love

Jesus Christ with all of their heart. You say, “Then I’ll not be a believer.” Okay, then groan alone. You’re going to groan, too. Saved or lost, “*man that is born...of woman is...full of trouble.*” (Job 14:1) If you got here any other way, you’re excluded. If you’re born of a woman that means you’re human.

There’s the groaning of the creation, or the creature. Then, there’s the groaning of the Christian. But there’s a third groaning here, and I don’t want you to miss that. There’s the groaning of the Comforter. Look, if you will now, in verses 26 and 27 of this wonderful chapter: “*Likewise, the Spirit*”—now, he’s talking about the Holy Spirit—“*also helpeth our infirmities*”—that is, our pains—“*for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth...the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.*” (Romans 8:26–27) Thank God for the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. There’s a God with tears in His eyes. There’s a God who loves us. There’s a God who cares. There’s a God who says, “[*Cast*] *all your care upon [Me]; for [I] [care] for you.*” (1 Peter 5:7) And you’re not meant to bear these groanings alone.

Now, I want to tell you the groaning of the creation, the groaning of the Christian, and the groaning of the Comforter, all of these groanings are temporary because there is something that is eternal that we’re looking for, and that is the glory. Now, remember Romans 8:18: “*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*” What makes that glory real is the hope that we have. Now, let me tell you what our hope is based on.

First of all, our hope is based on the fact that we are prepared for glory. Look, if you will, in verse 16: “[*For*] *the Spirit [himself] beareth witness with our spirit, that [we’re] children of God.*” (Romans 8:16) Now, you’re not prepared for glory, if you’re not a child of God. Does the Holy Spirit of God tell you that you’re saved? I mean, not what Adrian says, not what your creed says, not what your intellectual beliefs say, but do you know Him? Does the Holy Spirit of God in you say, yes, you’re a child of God? If so, you’re prepared for glory.

But not only are you prepared for glory; then, hallelujah, you are predestined for glory. Look, if you will, in verse 28: “*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...*” (Romans 8:28) Do you know what predestinate means? It is already determined. It’s already settled. It is already done. You’re going to be like Jesus. “[*You are predestined*] *to be conformed to the image of [God’s] Son, that He,*” God’s Son, “*might be the firstborn among many brethren.*” (Romans 8:29) God had one Son, and He loved Him so much, He said, “I want a whole lot more like Him.” Now, notice this: “*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 8:30) You would expect him to say, "Will glorify," but he says, "No, I've put it in the past tense. It's as good as done—D-O-N-E." You are glorified in the heart and mind of God. You are predestined. You don't have to wait until you die to see whether you're going to heaven.

The believer is prepared for glory. He's predestined for glory. And then, he's preserved for glory. Now, look, if you will, in verse 31 of this same wonderful chapter. Look at it: *"What shall we say then to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:31–32) *"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril...? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Romans 8:34–37) Now, what he is saying is this—now, listen very carefully: no fault can condemn us. That's what he's saying. Look in verse 33: *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"* (Romans 8:33) You say, "Well, Adrian, what if you sin?" Did I hear you correctly? Did you say what if? We all sin, but thank God—thank God—not one-half of one sin will ever be marked on my account. *"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?"* (Romans 8:33) When that gets in your heart, you'll want to sing about it. You'll want to sing like "Amazing Grace." Friend, I want to tell you that no fault can condemn us, and no foe can conquer us. Look in verse 35: *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?"* (Romans 8:35) These things don't separate you from Jesus; they just draw you all the closer to Him, and no fear can control you.

I made this proposition to the earlier congregation, so I might as well make it to you. If you'd like to have an all-expense vacation, I'll fly you first-class to the resort of your choice for a full month, all expenses paid—and you've got a lot of witnesses here that heard me say it—if you can tell me anything Paul left out of this next statement that might separate you from the love of God. All right, I want you to listen to it. Verses 38 and 39: *"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life"* (Romans 8:38)—all right, you've already lost your vacation—anything that happens after you die, or anything that happens while you're alive. *"Nor angels"* (Romans 8:38)—what kind of angels—good angels, bad angels? Satan is a fallen angel. *"Nor principalities"* (Romans 8:38)—that means kingdoms. What kind of kingdoms? Heavenly kingdoms, earthly kingdoms, devilish kingdoms. *"Nor powers"* (Romans 8:38)—what kind of powers? That means authorities, governmental authorities, spiritual authorities, ecclesiastical authority. *"Nor*

*things present*—anything that’s in the universe today—*“nor things to come”* (Romans 8:38)—that’s anything that may come into existence—*“nor height”*—anything in heaven above—*“nor depth”* (Romans 8:39)—anything on earth, in hell beneath. And in case he left anything out—*“nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God...in Christ Jesus, our Lord.”* (Romans 8:39) Isn’t that wonderful? I say, isn’t that wonderful? Is that not glorious, friend? I’m telling you, no fault can condemn you, no foe can conquer you, no fear need control you. There is nothing, no, nothing, no, nothing, nothing, nothing that *“[can] separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:39) And so that’s the reason the Apostle Paul dips his pen in golden glory, and writes Romans chapter 8, and puts in the middle of Romans chapter 8, verse 18: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

## Conclusion

There’s yesterday’s curse that brings bondage. There’s tomorrow’s conquest that brings liberty. And there is today’s hope that brings comfort. And you’d better get hold of it. You better hold onto it and know that there’s nothing that can separate you from the love of God, to those who are prepared and preserved and predestined for glory. Bow your heads in prayer.

Now, if you’re not sure that you’re saved, God brought you here today that you might be saved. I’ll tell you there are millions who sit in darkness who would give a hundred worlds like this one to have the opportunity that you have right now to give your heart to Jesus. I want to promise you on the authority of the Word of God that God will save you today instantaneously, and God will keep you eternally if you will trust Him. Now, I cannot do it for you, but I want to guide you in this decision, and I want to pray a prayer called the sinner’s prayer, and I want you to pray it in your heart. You may already be a church member. That doesn’t save you. It’s Jesus that saves. And if you’ll pray this prayer sincerely—not just repeating words, but out of your heart pray—God will save you today, for the Bible says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of Lord shall be saved.”* (Romans 10:13)

I invite you to pray this way: “Dear God, I know that you love me, and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, I believe you’re the Son of God. I believe you paid my sin debt with your blood on the cross. Thank you for your shed blood that pays for my sin. I believe that God raised you from the dead. You promised to save me if I would trust you. I do trust you right now, this moment, like a little child. I open my heart. I receive you into my life as my Lord and Savior and Master. I yield my life to you, and I give it to you. Take control of my life, and begin now to make me the person you want me to be. Save me, Lord Jesus.” Now, pray that; pray it sincerely. “Save me, Lord Jesus.” Did you

ask Him? Were you sincere? Then pray this way: “Thank you for doing it, Jesus. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend forever. Now, Lord Jesus, I’m weak, but you’re strong, so give me strength. Make me what you want me to be, and give me the courage to make it public. Help me never to be ashamed of you, because you died for me. In your name I pray, Amen.”

Now, look up here. “Pastor Rogers, if I prayed that prayer, did Jesus save me?” Well, it depends. Were you sincere? “Well, I think I was sincere, Pastor. How can I know?” One of the best ways I know that you can show that you’re sincere is to make it public, for Jesus said, “[If you’ll] confess Me before men, [I’ll] confess [you]...before my Father...in heaven.” (Matthew 10:32) He also said, conversely, “[If you’re] ashamed of Me and of my words [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.” (Mark 8:28) I don’t want Jesus to be ashamed of me when He comes. That’s the reason why if you could give me an opportunity to stand on the tallest mountain with a megaphone and tell the world I’d want to tell them I love Jesus Christ. And if you’re truly trusting Him, here’s what I want you to do. I want you to show it. As we stand and sing, I want you to leave your seat and come forward. You can come down any of these aisles. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a man of God, a minister of this church, to welcome and receive you. Now, if you’re in the balcony, there’ll be someone standing under that banner over there that says, “Redeemer,” in that corner or under this one over here that says, “Messiah,” to welcome those of you in the balcony. And if you prayed that prayer, when we stand and sing, we’re going to sing, “Lord, I believe.” You say, “I do. Lord, I receive.” You say, “I have. Lord, I confess you now.” You say, “I will,” and you step out and come. That will help settle it, and seal it, shame the devil, give glory to God. I want you to do it today. For His sake, for your sake, for our sake, don’t be ashamed of Jesus. If you mean business, then you step out and come. Others of you, you say, “Pastor, what would I say when I go down there?” Say this: “I’m trusting Jesus.” What will happen, Pastor? Well, we’ll rejoice with you. We’ll give you some Scripture to stand on, answer any questions, and seal it in prayer. It will take just a few moments. You’ll be glad you did. Others of you, perhaps you’ve given your life to Christ in your automobile, at your kitchen sink, in your bedroom, in your office, some other place. I want you to come also and say to the minister, “Look. I know I’ve been saved. I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I want to be baptized in obedience to Jesus, and added to the fellowship of His church.” There are others of you here today who are saved and baptized. Your membership is elsewhere. You live here and work here, worship here, this is where you’re blessed, and God speaks to you; you’re always welcome as an attender, also welcome as a visitor, but God’s plan is for us to be a member of a local, New Testament church. If not this one, one somewhere

where you say not, “That church,” but, “My church”; not, “That pastor,” but, “My pastor”; not, “What they’re doing,” “What we’re doing.” You need to be a part. So I want to invite you, if you need a church home, to slip out, and come forward, and say to the minister, “I want to place my membership here.” And he’ll tell you how you may do that. Some are coming saying, “I’m trusting Christ.” Others are coming saying, “I want to make an appointment for my baptism.” 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 an emergency. Be in a spirit of prayer. If you’re with a friend who would like to come forward, you can volunteer to come forward with him. How beautiful to see one friend bring another friend to Jesus Christ. Father God, bless the invitation. Bring the lost to Jesus. And help us all to be obedient to you, in your holy name.

Let’s stand together. You step out and come on the first stanza.†

# A Biblical Response to Katrina

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 6, 2005

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:20–28

*“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”*

ROMANS 8:22

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Power of Sin and the Groaning of Creation
  - II. The Problem of Suffering and the Groaning of the Christian
  - III. The Promise of Strength and the Groaning of the Comforter
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Chris Fabry: Welcome to Love Worth Finding with pastor, teacher, and author Dr. Adrian Rogers. We have something a little different for you today. We've set aside our normal schedule to cover some important matters as we go into this weekend. This, of course, will be the anniversary of September 11, 2001, coming up in just a couple of days. And in the past week or two we've seen the tragedy unfolding in New Orleans and Mississippi and the rest of the Gulf Coast. We're titling our program today "A Biblical Response to Katrina." Adrian Rogers answers the question "Why?" And I think that question is on the minds of many today. Pastor, we watched in horror at what occurred in New Orleans at the time of the hurricane and then the rescue effort in that whole region. What was your reaction at what was going on?

Pastor: Well, I think the word horror is a good word. The word to me was, Where is God, and where should His people be in the midst of all of this? And I was thinking so much from heaven's viewpoint as to what our reaction will be to that which we have no control over and especially the reaction of the saints of God. And right away, Chris, I had in my heart a desire to share with people from the Word of God concerning this, because, very frankly, there is no other place to turn in a time like this but to the Word of God.

Chris Fabry: We have something for each listener struggling with these questions today. I'll encourage you to listen as we continue the program, but I know that you have a lot of thoughts and some encouragement for people who are really, really struggling,

so take as much time as you need.

Pastor: Well, Chris, you know in the disaster that we've seen, we see a manifestation of Mother Nature and human nature. And I've watched the reaction of people to this horrendous tragedy, and there've been some who've just simply lowered their head and endured in suffering and confusion. Then, next, there've been some who have humbled themselves and turned to God with greater faith. And I thank God for that. And then, our hearts have been broken as we've seen those who've turned to rebellion and anarchy and looting and rape and murder and depravity. And it's terrible what happens when that thin veneer of civilization is scraped away. And then again, my heart has been broken as I've seen those who have tried to merchandize misery. The price gouging, the political finger pointing, and all of that. And then again, I have been heartbroken as those who have blasphemed and literally cursed God. But I've been blessed. There have been a lot who have done an enormous, enormous outpouring of love, sacrifice, and personal help which shows the other side of human nature. But there are those who've asked honest questions: Why? Why did God allow this?

Now, I want to share with our listeners from Romans chapter eight, and I hope that if you're at home with a Bible, you'll get your Bible and open to Romans chapter eight, and I'm going to read three verses from Romans chapter eight, and I think these three verses as much as anything I know will speak to Katrina, will speak to the tsunami, will speak to 9/11 and all of the other things that we have known in these recent days. Romans chapter eight, beginning in verse: For the creature...—and, by the way, that word creature literally is translated “for the creation,” and I'll read it that way from now on—For the creation was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creation itself shall also be delivered from the bondage of corruption—underscore that, the bondage of corruption—into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.

And then, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit Himself is groaning, and we'll get to that in a moment. But in these scriptures, the word groaning is mentioned three times. There is the groaning of creation, there's the groaning of the Christian, and the groaning of the Comforter.

Now, I want our listeners to pay attention to those three groanings because I really do believe that they unlock the mystery of all of this.

## **I. The Power of Sin and the Groaning of Creation**

First of all, I want you to think about the power of sin and the groaning of creation.

Remember again what the Scripture says: The creation was made subject to vanity. And then the Bible says in verse twenty-two, We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.

Now, we talk lovingly about Mother Nature, but Mother Nature is not a kind goddess. As a matter of fact, it's time for all of these who worship nature to turn from Mother Nature to Father God. If you look at nature, all creation is marked with sickness, disasters, calamities, storms, fires, earthquakes. And all of creation is moaning, and groaning, and sighing—pressed down with grief and distress, and all around us suffers from the foul breath, the gnawing tooth, of decay. It's easy to see that something is wrong with this whole creation. Why? Why the confusion? Why the frustration? Why the suffering? This word groan actually means labor pains, like a woman in labor. And when we see these things, some people may ask question: Where's God? Either God cares and He has no power to do anything about it, or else He has power but He doesn't care, or else there's no God at all.

Well, I want to say that God is not the creation of chaos and sin and anguish and pain. When God made this world, He made it perfect, and He stepped back, and He said, It is good. And God made the world perfect, and He made His creatures perfectly free. Because He made His creatures perfectly free, He gave them the ability to choose good or to choose evil. God can't just force us to love Him. Forced love is a contradiction in terms. And so, the ability to choose evil is necessary for the ability to choose good.

So when Adam sinned, by his free choice, when he sinned, he dragged the entire whole creation down with him. And that's what the Bible calls here in Romans 8:21, the bondage of corruption. You want to know, why all the suffering, the pain, the moan, the groan? I'll tell you why: it is because of sin.

A great Bible teacher, M. R. DeHaan II, told one time about an earthquake that hit Mexico City in 1985. He was watching live satellite coverage. Devastation was everywhere. At the lower left hand of the television screen was this superscription: "Courtesy S. I. N." That stood for the Spanish International Network. But there's something cryptic about that. Here is an earthquake, courtesy of sin. You can say, Here's a tornado, here is a hurricane, here's a flood, here's a mudslide, courtesy of sin. It's the bondage of creation.

Look around. There's a curse on the animal kingdom. When Adam sinned, the Lord God said to the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. The serpent was cursed, but all of the cattle, the animal kingdom, was cursed.

There's a curse on the mineral kingdom. God says in Genesis 3:17, cursed is the

ground for thy sake. We see deserts and waste places, and earthquakes and mudslides, and tornadoes and hurricanes and floods.

And there's a curse on the vegetable kingdom. Genesis 3:18: Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of herb of the field. The world has become a garden of weeds. Why, is the courtesy of sin.

But why did God put a curse upon creation? Why is there a curse upon Mother Nature? The Bible says that God did it for our sake. Adam, cursed is the ground for thy sake. The worst thing that could ever happen to human beings would be to live in paradise with sinful hearts. We would never know that anything is wrong. You see, it's the pain and the fever that tells us that our body is sick. It would be foolish simply to deaden the pain without dealing with the disease. And all of this suffering, all of this pain, all of this chaos, all of this misery, is God's reminder there is something desperately wrong with creation and with human nature.

Now, one day—one day—there's going to be a change. The Bible says God has subjected the same in hope, and in verse twenty, and I thank God for that. I want to tell all of our listeners that, one day, the desert is going to blossom as a rose. One day, the lamb and the lion will lie down together. One day, the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as waters that cover the sea. That'll be when Jesus comes, and I'm looking forward to that. But the first thing I want us to see, and I want our listeners to write this upon their heart: we see the power of sin and the groaning of creation.

## **II. The Problem of Suffering and the Groaning of the Christian**

But secondly, not only is there the power of sin, but there is the problem of suffering and the groaning of the Christian. Listen to Romans 8:23: And not only they—he means the creatures—but ourselves also—he's including the Christians now—which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. And every Christian who is listening to me needs to understand that he is not exempt. Being saved does not mean immunity from pain and suffering. And there are many godly people in New Orleans, and on the Gulf Coast and other places, who have suffered along with these others. Why is that? Because our world has a curse upon it. And it's the world in which we live. And the virus of sin, and the results of sin, they're everywhere. And then, our personal bodies also bear the curse of Adam's sin.

Now, we're not in the image of God precisely. It was Adam that was in the image of God. But that image of God was marred in Adam. The Bible says that Adam brought forth a son after his likeness and in his image. Now, what I'm trying to say is this: that we have been born out of a polluted gene pool. And the marks of sin are in our body.

And because of that we suffer. Now, God, in mercy, allows this tribulation. Cursed is the ground for thy sake.

Now, we're in the book of Romans chapter eight. I'd like for our listeners to go back to Romans five, verses one through five. Listen to it: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God—now, if it just ended there, we we'd love it, but it doesn't end there—and not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which God, which is given unto us. And there God says that not only do we have this peace but we have tribulation. They exist side by side. And the word tribulation literally means “pressure.” It referred to the crushing of grapes in the wine press, and olives in the oil press. And what God is looking for is the oil and the wine of Christian character. And, therefore, God allows tribulation.

My friend, it takes pressure to make something beautiful out of a life. And the conflicts that we face, all of us, we need to see them not as obstacles, but as opportunities. A diamond is a lump of coal that has stayed under pressure. Now, we may not understand all the ways of God, but God is in control. And take the word luck and the word fate out of your vocabulary. They don't belong there. And put the word faith and trust in their places—and providence there. You know there are so many Christians who fail to understand that tribulation is a part of life—whether you are saved or whether you're lost. We also which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, we groan because of this tribulation. And friend, it's a false gospel that says, if we come to Christ, there'll be no adversity, no misfortune, no persecution, or pain.

Here's what the apostle Paul said about himself in 2 Corinthians chapter four, beginning in verse eight: We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; we are persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. Now, what is Paul saying? He's saying, Look, there's trouble on every side. Are you saved? You are? I'm happy. Are you better than the apostle Paul? You are not going to get out of this world unscathed. Tribulation is there to teach us patience.

Now, a crisis like this storm doesn't make a person. It reveals what the person is made of. The same sun that melts the ice is going to harden the clay. The word patience that Paul used here is the word for endurance or perseverance. As a matter of fact, one translation gives it: “It brings about tribulation, brings about perseverance.” Another translation, “Produces endurance.” What kind of endurance is this? It is that

courageous endurance that enables us to keep on going without quitting.

Precious friend, if you've been through some kind of tribulation—this storm or anything else—stay true to God. Don't quit. Endure. Winston Churchill reminds us that a bulldog's nose is pointed backward so he can continue to breathe while he still holds on. That's what I want you to do, and, friend, you're not a failure until you quit. William Barclay has described this kind of endurance and patience in this way—listen to him: It is not the patience that can sit down and bow its head and let things descend upon it and passively endure until the storm has passed. It is the spirit that can bear things not simply with resignation, but with blazing hope. It is not the spirit that sits statically enduring in one place, but the spirit that bears things, because it knows that these things are leading to a goal of glory. It is not patience that grimly waits for the end, but patience which radiantly hopes for the dawn.

Now, as a Christian, you're going to suffer, and there's going to be tribulation, and that's going to work patience or endurance in your heart and in your life. I wish I could tell you there's an easy way, a lazy way, to escape this, but there is none. Jesus said plainly, finally, without a shadow of a doubt, in this world you will have tribulation. Now, what can you do? Well you can retreat. You can try to run away. Buy a plane ticket. Take a pill. Turn up a bottle. Stick in the needle. Take a gun and kill yourself. Drop out. Give up. That's retreat. Don't do it.

Or you can resent. You can complain against God and shake your fist in the face of God. You can become critical, even blaspheme God. But don't do it. You can resign and just throw in the towel and give up. Don't do it! Don't give way to discouragement and despondency. You can retreat, resent, resign. But you need to rely. Depend upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and say with Job, Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him. And remember that Romans 8:24 says, We are saved by hope. Thank God there is hope. What is hope? Hope is faith in the future tense.

Now, in a dark world of despair, there shines the bright star of hope from an empty tomb. It is Easter that can turn every hurt into a hallelujah, every tear to a pearl, every midnight to a sunrise, and every Calvary to a resurrection. There is hope.

### **III. The Promise of Strength and the Groaning of the Comforter**

Now, the third thing in this marvelous passage is not only the groaning of creation and the groaning of the Christian. But there is the promise of strength and the groaning of the comforter. Now, I begin reading Romans 8:26: Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit Himself maketh intercession for us—now, listen to this—with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he—the dear Holy Spirit—maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

Friends, are you listening? There is the groaning of creation. There is the groaning of the Christian. But, thank God, there is the groaning of the Comforter. We don't have to bear our groanings alone. The Spirit within us is actually praying for us in agonizing longings which can never find words. Now, you see, listen. God enters into our suffering with us. God does not spare us from the furnace of affliction. He joins us in it. But whether He should spare, or whether He would share, we know He's there. And hallelujah for the Holy Spirit of God within my heart and your heart.

You know sometimes in tragedy, we don't know how to pray. We're almost numb. Sometimes we are inarticulate. We pray until we're out of breath. All we can do is just simply sigh and groan. That's when God steps in. That's when the dear Holy Spirit of God says, He needs help! She needs help! And He intercedes for us.

You know, that word, the Spirit helps, is only used one other time in the Bible. It is used when Martha was complaining about Mary—two sisters that loved Jesus. Martha was a homemaker. And Mary was deep in her devotional life. And Martha was in the kitchen working, and Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus. And Martha came out with flour up to her elbows out of the kitchen. Of course I'm just reading into that part of it. But she put her hands on her hips—I can see it in my mind—and she says to Jesus, Jesus, tell Mary to come help me. That's the same word that's used here when the Bible says, He helps our infirmities. That means, tell Mary to bear her part of the load. I want to tell you, the Holy Spirit of God is there to help you bear that part of the load. It's the Holy Spirit that inspires and guides and energizes and sustains our praying. And when we don't know how to pray, or what to pray for, thank God the Holy Spirit of God is interceding.

And, precious friend, if you've been through the storm, if you're in the storm, or going into a storm, thank God there's one Who groans for you, the Comforter. And the word comforter literally means "with strength." Com, meaning "with," fort, which means "strength" — like a fortress. And so, He's there. God is there for you. You say, well, I don't understand it all. Friend, you don't have to understand it. He does. We live by promises, and not by explanations.

There is the power of sin and the groaning of creation. There is the problem of suffering and the groaning of the Christian. But there is the promise of strength and the groaning of the Spirit. And you can just take all of it, and arch the rainbow of hope over it, and write down Romans 8:28: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are called according to his purpose.

## **Conclusion**

Now, as I just bring this to a conclusion, let me tell you, friend, trust the Lord. He is still in control. Lean hard on Him. Secondly, find somebody to help. Show the love of Jesus

to all that you meet. Everybody that you meet, whether they've been in the storm or not, is hurting someway. Thirdly, pray and look for Jesus to come. All of these calamities are signs of His coming. One day, the curse is going to be lifted, and, hallelujah, the groans will be gone. And, finally, if you've never really trusted Jesus Christ, precious friend, come to Him in faith. Jesus died for a groaning creation; and for the curse of those thorns that came after the Garden of Eden Jesus wore a crown of thorns. For the curse of the sweat that was on Adam's brow Jesus would sweat blood. And for the curse of the dust of death that Adam entered into Jesus laid down His life in the dust of death for us. And I can promise you—listen, friend—I can promise you that our dear Savior is not a casual spectator to your trouble. He's knocking at your heart's door, and He wants to come in.

And if you would pray and say, Lord Jesus, I need You. I want You. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me and help me to trust in You through all of this problem. And thank you, dear Spirit of God, that You will make groanings and intercessions for me because I need you so much. Save me, Lord Jesus. Friend, pray it, say it, and mean it. And may God bless us all in these tragic days.

Chris Fabry: Pastor Rogers, you have explained, Pastor Rogers, you've answered this question of why in the message. I want to ask you a personal question. I've heard the story of a family invited to a church to be basically rescued from the evacuation of their area, and they didn't want to go to a church because they were upset with God that He would let this happen. What would you say to that family?

Pastor: I would say they've been completely duped by the devil. Well, let me say this. If a person does not come to the Lord, they have lined up with the enemy. And why would I line up with the one who has hurt me? God is not the one who hurts. The Bible says, The thief comes but to kill to steal and to destroy. And Jesus said, I've come that you might have life and have it abundantly. Why would a person line up with the one who has hurt them? Had there been no Satan, there's no sin. No sin, no suffering. I choose God. I'm coming to the answer no to the perpetrator. And it's just a shame that these people can be so deceived. But they eventually, when they see the love of Christ through Christians, many of them will be changed and will repent of this rebellion that they have right now.

Chris Fabry: You know, one of the things that I see on television that really hasn't been highlighted is the response of the church. And there are believers all around this country who are getting involved, and who are praying, and who are giving, and who are reaching out with God's love to people who have basically no hope other than someone getting involved.

Pastor: Well I agree 100%, Chris. You know, the government has to do what it can do, but one thing government cannot do is make us good. Only government can guard

and protect us, but the government cannot make us good. There's not a law on Earth that can make you love me. So I have to have one to keep you from killing me. You see, we hear people say, You can't legislate morality. Well, they're right. So therefore, we legislate against immorality. We legislate against stealing and killing and these things. But only God can make us good, and, therefore, in this time of tribulation and trouble, thank God for the government. But, oh, friend we're the ones that have the answer, the message of hope and love, and I think this can be the church's finest hour.

Chris Fabry: There are many who say New Orleans will never be the same; the Gulf Coast will never be the same. And part of me thinks that's true, and I hope it is true, because there need to be changes in our lives, and we need to get our priorities straight, don't we?

Pastor: Well, indeed we do. There's something about a storm like this that humbles us all. We realize in spite of our vaulted ingenuity, our cyclotrons, our computers, our philosophers, and our government, here comes a storm, and we cannot stop it. And this teaches us that we are not sovereign in this world. And, whether or not we like it, or think God should allow it, we must come to the bottom line, and it is because of sin, and we live in a sinful world. There are some people that say, Well, why should I suffer for Adam's sin? Well, forget Adam; you've sinned. Is there's anybody who hasn't sinned? And of course we all know that we have. And I thank God for the fact that by one man sin entered into the world, because, hallelujah, thank God, by one Man, Jesus, there is an answer. And so, I don't mind a one-man condemnation, if I can have a one-man salvation.

Chris Fabry: Pastor Rogers, you have answered the question of why through the Scripture. I want to give you the personal slant on that, and it would be this: a family who was evacuated from the area was so upset at what had happened, so upset at God, that when a church reached out to them and wanted them their services, they said no, we don't want any part of this, because it was God who did this to us. Come alongside that family. What would you say to them?

Pastor: Well, I think that is tragic, and while I can understand humanly their thinking, it is a flawed thinking. You know, one time Joyce and I had a heartache that was horrendous in our family. We lost a little baby. The baby died, and one of those sudden crib deaths. And I had been visiting the hospital days before that and was witnessing to a man, and when I came back shortly after the funeral of our baby boy, the man looked at me, and he said, What are you doing here? Are you still serving God after what He did to you? I said, Oh, friend, I'm serving God all the more, because I'm not lining up with the enemy. The enemy is Satan. He came to steal and to kill and to destroy. Had there been no Satan, no sin, there'd have been no death. And do you think that now I'm going to line up with the enemy? Satan has a greater foe than he's ever had before, and

Jesus is the only One who has the answer to sin and sorrow and death. And I'm giving my heart to Him in a richer fuller way than I ever have before. And I would hope that friends like this would not turn from the Lord and dishonor Him by failing to turn to Him, but use this as an opportunity to come to Him in a richer fuller way than ever before.

Chris Fabry: There are some who look at the situations in our world like this and say, well, there it is; that proves that we're in the end times. How do you respond to that?

Pastor: No, it doesn't prove that we're in the end times, but it certainly is an indication that we may be. This word groaning that we used in our message is a word for childbirth, labor pains, and we believe that something is about to come forth. And, you know, when labor pains intensify, and when they concentrate, you know you're getting closer to the delivery. And what we're seeing now, the signs of the times, you know earthquakes and fires and floods and tribulation, we've always had those things, but now it seems they are intensified, and they are closer together, and I believe that we may be very, very, very close to the coming of Jesus. And all of these Scriptures that I have shared from Romans eight mention the word hope—hope, hope. God subjected the same in hope. And we must never lose sight of the blessed hope which is the Second Coming of Jesus.

# How to Pray in the Spirit

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date:** January 26, 1997

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:26–27

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Activation of Our Will
- II. The Animation of Our Bodies
- III. The Adaptation of Our Requests
- IV. The Administration of Our Access
- V. The Articulation of Our Words
- VI. The Enunciation of Our Confidence
- VII. The Amplification of Our Victory

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to Romans chapter 8 and a classic verse on praying in the Spirit—Romans chapter 8, verses 26 and 27.

And, as you're turning to that, let me say that prayer is the greatest Christian privilege. Secondly, prayer is the greatest Christian service. Thirdly, alas, prayer is the greatest Christian failure. I think that we fail more in our prayer life than in most any other place. If I were to ask you, one by one, are you satisfied with your prayer life, most of us would hang our heads and say no. Now, the reason for that is that we're in a battle with the world, the flesh, and the devil, that do not want us to pray. Many of us have the problem of indifference. We really don't want to pray. Some of us have the problem of ignorance. We don't know how to pray or what to pray for. Some of us—that's the problem with our inability. We do not have the energy and the strength to pray. Some of us have problems with language. We don't know how to form and articulate our prayers. Some of us have problems with satanic attack. When we endeavor to pray, the devil comes in to invade our minds and to draw away our attention. And many of us have some of these, or all of these, that cause us, sometimes, to fail to pray as we ought. Now, God knows this, and so, God has given someone to help us in our prayer life. And that someone is the Holy Spirit of God.

Look in verse 26: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities—that's our weaknesses—for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that

searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, for he—the Spirit—maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” Oh, what a great, great text that is. And may God help us to understand it.

Now, this is one of several texts in the Bible that teaches that we’re to pray in the Spirit. For example, another one is Ephesians chapter 6, verse 18. The apostle Paul admonishes the church at Ephesus to be praying “...always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit.” Now, he’s not talking about spirited praying. He’s not talking about praying with energy, as we say, “That’s the spirit.” No, he’s talking about in the Spirit. He’s talking about in the Holy Spirit.

And then, in that classic verse, in Jude verse 20: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost”—praying in the Holy Ghost. To pray in the flesh is to fail. To pray in the Spirit is to succeed. Now, when I say the flesh, I don’t mean the hide, the hair, the skin, the bones, the muscle, the sinew, the corpuscle that make up the house that you live in. The flesh is just another word for the old nature. To pray in the flesh is to fail. To pray in the Spirit is to succeed.

Have you ever wondered why the early church was able to do what it did? That early church advanced on its knees. They were mighty in power because they were mighty in prayer. And they were mighty in prayer because they were filled with the Holy Spirit.

Now, in our message today I want to mention to you seven ways—and all of them are found right here in the 8th chapter of the book of Romans—seven ways that the Holy Spirit of God will help you in your prayer life. And then, we’ll see the necessity not only to be saved, but to be filled with the Holy Spirit.

## **I. The Activation of Our Will**

Now, number one: The Holy Spirit works in the activation of your will to pray—the activation of your will in prayer. Look now in Romans chapter 8, verses 5 through 7: “For they that are after the flesh—that is, the old Adamic nature—for they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded...—that’s just another way of saying fleshly minded. Carnus is the Latin word for flesh. A carnivorous animal is a flesh-eating animal—For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.” Now, do you wonder sometimes why you don’t want to pray? Here it is in verse 7: “Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.” That’s the reason I said to pray in the flesh is to fail. To pray in the Spirit is to succeed. We might as well admit it: most of us do not pray when we do not pray because we do not want to pray. We do not want to pray. Now, be reasonable—be reasonable. Don’t we do what we want to

do? Now, think with me. Don't we do what we want to do? Why is it that we don't want to pray? Because, friend, the flesh doesn't like it. And so, when we don't want to pray, what does that tell us? It tells us that we're carnally minded rather than spiritually minded. Look again in verse 7: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God..." The carnal mind has no more desire to pray than your dog has to watch opera. I'm telling you, there's something in us in that old nature that not only doesn't want to pray; it has an antipathy toward prayer. And we need to stop trying to cover it up, and admit it, that the reason that we don't pray when we don't pray is we don't want to pray. And the reason we don't want to pray is we're in the flesh rather than the Spirit. Now, you get Spirit-filled, and you'll have to backslide to keep from praying. I'm telling you, the Holy Spirit of God will activate your will in prayer.

Now, let me show you how that happens. Look, if you will, in chapter 8 and verse 15: "For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear—we're no longer slaves, you see—but you have received the Spirit of adoption..."—now, the Spirit of adoption is the Holy Spirit that puts us in the body of Christ. And when you receive the Spirit of adoption, God becomes your Father. And then what happens?—"...whereby we cry, Abba, Father." You see, what happens is when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, that Spirit in you recognizes God is your Father, and it is the natural thing for the Spirit-filled person to say, "Father, Abba, Father," to worship Him and to praise Him.

Let me give you another verse that says exactly the same thing in another place. In Galatians chapter 4 and verse 6, and here's what Paul says: "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father."

Question: Did Jesus love to pray? Yes. Was it natural for Jesus to pray? Yes. Who is the Holy Spirit? That's the Spirit of God's Son. If the Holy Spirit is in your heart and in control of your life, then what will happen? You will have the nature of Jesus. You will be like Jesus. And just as it was normal and natural for Jesus to pray to God the Father and to say, "Abba, Father," it will be normal and natural for you. You will want to pray. Listen to it again. "And because you are sons—that means because you've been born again. You're in God's family—God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son—that's the Spirit of Jesus—into your hearts, crying Abba, Father."

You see, when the Holy Spirit of God is in you, and you're yielded to the Spirit, you're not walking in the flesh. It is as normal as breathing to pray to God. This is the answer to the problem of a lack of appetite for prayer. What does the Holy Spirit do? His ministry is the activation of the will in prayer. And, you see, we're not just taking ourselves by the nape of the neck and making ourselves pray as a discipline, though, indeed, if it takes that, we ought to do it. But Philippians 3, verse 13, says, "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." You get filled with the

Holy Spirit, you'll want to pray. Let me say that again. When you get filled with the Holy Spirit, you will want to pray. So, if you don't have a desire to pray, admit it. The carnal mind is enmity with God. Got it? That's the first ministry of the Holy Spirit—praying in the Spirit. It is the activation of our wills. "It is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure." Got it? Got it!

Now, let me tell you what else the Holy Spirit will do. Not only the activation of our wills, but the animation of our bodies—the animation of our bodies in prayer. When you pray, do you ever get tired, sleepy, lazy, can't concentrate, your mind gather wool? How many of you? Let me see your hands. Come on. Bunch of... you know it's true. If you've ever prayed, you get sleepy, you get groggy, your mind goes out the door and around the world, and you get to thinking about all kinds of things. Why is that? Because not only do we have a problem with our wills; we have difficulty with our bodies.

## **II. The Animation of Our Bodies**

But do you know what the Holy Spirit of God will do? Not only will He activate your will, but He will animate your body. Now, I'm not saying that every time you're tired, not that you're sinning, or that you're out of the will of God. There is a legitimate rest. And Jesus said to His disciples, "Come ye apart and rest a while." And I read where Jesus was so sleepy one time He went to sleep in the midst of a storm in a sea. There's nothing wrong with physical tiredness. As a matter of fact, it's good to get tired and get a good night's sleep. But, folks, I'm telling you that sometimes you can go to pray and get too yawny and sleepy and your mind will get so fuzzy, and then a football game will come on, and you're all awake. Where's the problem? Your problem there is not physical. The devil has teamed up with your flesh to keep you from praying.

Do you remember what happened there in the Garden of Gethsemane? Matthew chapter 26, verses 40 and 41. And Jesus had asked His disciples to watch and pray, and the Bible says, "And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and said unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." And then, notice what He said. Listen to this: "The spirit is willing, but what? the flesh is weak." So what do you need? You need help. You need help. It is the Holy Spirit of God that is willing to help you to pray in these times. Now, what the Holy Spirit of God will do is refresh your bodies.

You're in Romans chapter 8. Look, if you will, in verses 10 and 11: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin..."—what does that mean? It means you've been crucified with Christ, and because of your sin, that sin was carried to the cross—"...but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." Not only did Jesus give Himself for you; He gave Himself to you. So when He gave Himself for you, the body is dead

because of sin. But when He gave Himself to you, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. Now, look, if you will, in verse 11: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.” Quicken your mortal bodies—that is, give you vitality, give you energy, give you power. I’m not talking about keeping you from your legitimate rest, because He also giveth His beloved sleep. I’m talking about energizing you when you need the power to do the will of God. When the Spirit is willing and the flesh is weak, when you yield to the Holy Spirit of God, He will do that. It is obvious that Jesus was not expecting Peter, James, and John to be asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane. And the reason that they were is they were in the flesh and they were not in the Spirit. I know from personal experience that when I yield myself in these times when my mind wanders, and I get all groggy and distracted, when I yield myself to the Holy Spirit, I get energized.

Let me give you an example of what I’m talking about from the life of Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus was on a journey to Galilee, and He must needs go through Samaria. It was a torturous trek. They did not go by airplane or bus or automobile. And Jesus, about the halfway point in His journey, is tired. He comes to a place called Sychar. He’s tired, hot, thirsty, hungry, and He is sitting on the curbing of that well. And then, there’s this opportunity for ministry. This Samaritan woman that we spoke about a few Sundays ago, if you remember, came and met the Lord Jesus there, and Jesus ministered to her. When the disciples came back, they found Jesus refreshed. They had gone into the city for groceries to feed Him, to give Him energy, to give Him strength. And they came back, Scotty, and they found Him full of energy, full of vitality. They said, “Who gave Him something to eat? Who’s been ministering to Him?” You know what He said? He said, “I have food to eat you don’t know anything about.” What happened? The Holy Spirit of God had energized the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Holy Spirit of God will energize your body and refresh you and to help you. Let’s see how He does it.

Look, if you will, now in verse 26 of this same passage: “Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities...” That literally means our weaknesses. Now, look up here and let me tell you something. You ought to accept and confess your weakness. Don’t deny it. I’ll tell you, the first reason you ought to do it, because it’s a fact. The Bible declares it. Our weakness. Our infirmity. Okay? It’s a fact. Got it? Admit it. Number two: It’s an access. You say, “No, my weakness is a liability.” No! Your weakness is an access. What did God tell the apostle Paul in 11 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 9? He says, “And he said unto him, My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength, my strength is made perfect in weakness.” You see, our problem many times is not that we’re too weak; our

problem is we're not yet weak enough. We have never finally said, "Lord, I can't. I don't have what it takes." And we're still struggling. But, folks, when you come to the end of your strength, and then you appropriate His strength, then you understand how He will not only, activate your will, but He will animate your body. You see, God's plan is to deliver us from self-sufficiency and cast ourselves upon His sufficiency, so He makes us perpetually weak that we might be perpetually strong.

This word helpeth, it's a very interesting word, in verse 26. It has a double prefix in the Greek language. On the one hand, it means to take hold of. The only other time it was used is when Martha came out of the kitchen, and said, concerning Mary, her sister, "Jesus, would You tell her to come in the kitchen and help me—come in here and get her hands in the kitchen and help me with these pots and pans?" It means "to take hold of," and it also means "instead of." That's very interesting. That's the way the Holy Spirit of God helps us—together with and instead of. That's what it means. Together with— to take hold of— together with and instead of. Now, this is not a contradiction.

So, when you're praying in the Spirit, who is praying: you or the Holy Spirit of God in you? The answer is yes—yes. The Holy Spirit of God is praying instead of you, but He is praying together with you. You cannot do it without Him; He will not do it without you. Oh, what a partnership and what a privilege to pray with the Holy Spirit! You see, the Holy Spirit of God wants to think through our minds. He wants to speak through our lips. He wants to weep through our eyes. He wants to groan through our spirits. It is the Holy Spirit in the human spirit together with and instead of.

### **III. The Adaptation of Our Requests**

Now, here's a third thing the Holy Spirit of God does in our prayers. First of all, there is the activation of our wills. Secondly, there is the animation of our bodies. Thirdly, there is the adaptation of our requests—the adaptation of our requests. You know, another problem is that sometimes we just don't know what to pray for, as we ought. Look again in verse 26: "Likewise also the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought..." You know, a lot of times we just don't know what to ask for. But look, if you will, in chapter 8, verse 14: "But as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God." We don't know what to ask for, but the Holy Spirit of God knows what to ask for. And so, what He does is, He adapts our prayers.

You see, we all have specific duties for prayer. I know that I ought to pray for my wife. I know I ought to pray for these men on the platform. I do pray for them. I know I ought to pray for you as a congregation, and so forth. I have certain responsibilities. But there are many things I don't know whether I ought to pray for them or not. I mean, I can't pray for everything. If I tried to pray for everything, I'd end up not praying for

anything. My prayer, rather than being a mighty river, would become a stagnant swamp. In order for prayer to be effective, it must be elective. And even when we know what to pray for, we don't know what to pray in the specific thing.

Suppose you have a loved one who's sick. How are you going to pray for that loved one? "Lord, heal them." Well, yes. But what if God wants to take them to heaven? I mean, you know what Jesus prayed in John 17? "Father, I pray for them whom thou hast given me that they may be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." We're praying, "Lord, let them stay." Jesus is praying, "Father, let them come." Do you ever think about that? You get in an average Baptist prayer meeting. How many people are praying for the unsaved? Most people are praying for the sick. And they're praying not only for the sick; they're praying for sick saints. They're praying for Aunt Bessie who's one of the finest Christians in the church. They're praying for Deacon Jones, saint of God: "Lord, heal him." And God sometimes directs our prayers that way. But have you ever noticed that sometimes we're more interested in keeping the saints out of heaven than the lost out of hell? Have you ever noticed the way we pray sometimes? We're not agonizing to get the lost saved. How do we pray? Sometimes we don't know how to pray. Admit it. We don't know what to pray for. And then, we don't know how to pray, when we know what to pray for.

When the apostle Paul was making havoc of the church, before he was the apostle Paul, he was the persecutor of the church. His name was Saul. And he was having Christians put to death. He even held the clothes while they stoned one of the greatest Christians who ever lived. His name was Stephen. I imagine that early church said, "That man is the archenemy of the church. God, strike him dead!" But God didn't strike him dead; God struck him alive. God made him the great apostle Paul. We don't know what to pray for, sometimes, as we ought. But I'm telling you that the Holy Spirit of God is active in the adaptation—in the adaptation—of our requests.

Now, I was in my study with some deacons a while back. It was on Wednesday night. We were having a committee meeting. One of the deacons dismissed in prayer, and he said, "Bless the pastor as he preaches tonight." Well, folks, I wasn't going to preach. Someone else was going to preach that night. But he said, "Lord, bless the pastor." Greg Addison was going to preach, not me. But he said, "God, bless the pastor, as he preaches tonight." And you know what the Holy Spirit of God did? He just brought that prayer right on to heaven. And God heard the prayer. Now, he was asking for Adrian to be blessed, but it was Greg that needed to be blessed. You think that confused God? No. God said, the Holy Spirit said, "Here's what he's asking for. Here's what he needs." And it's done. You know, isn't that wonderful how the Holy Spirit of God takes our prayer energy?

There's a transformer up on the telephone pole near your house, or the light pole, and that takes that incredible voltage that comes to that transformer. And in that transformer it is transformed and it goes into your toaster, and so you had toast this morning. But, friend, if it had come from that big, fat wire into your toaster, your toaster would have been toasted, right? Right! Because it has to go through that transformer. It's the same energy, but it's transformed. The Holy Spirit of God is that transformer. He takes our prayers, and God sees our heart, and sometimes we know not what we should ask for as we ought, "...but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us according to the will of God." Isn't that great? So, folks, sometimes we don't know exactly what to pray for. Just pray! God knows your heart. Pray with a clean heart. Pray with a right spirit, and the Holy Spirit of God is the one who will adapt your prayers. I love verse 27: "And he that searcheth the hearts—that's God—knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit—of course He does—because he—the Spirit—maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." And the Holy Spirit of God knows what we need. So my prayer—I may not always get what I ask for, but that doesn't mean my prayer is not answered. If God doesn't give you what you asked for, He'll give you something better than you asked, when you're praying in the spirit—praying in the spirit.

#### **IV. The Administration of Our Access**

Number four: Here's another thing that the Holy Spirit of God does. When you pray in the Spirit, He presides over the administration of our access. Now, not only the adaptation of our requests, but the administration of our access. Now, you see, you just don't burst into the holy presence of God. That may be a surprise to you. But you need someone to bring you into God's presence to give you access to God. Look in Romans 8 and verse 14—look at it: For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Now, what that means is that it's the Holy Spirit of God that gives us access. Put this verse down—Ephesians 2 and verse 18: "For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Through who? Through Jesus we have access by one Spirit to the Father. How does prayer work? We pray to God through Jesus in the Spirit—to God through Jesus in the Spirit. We have access by one Spirit.

One time I was invited to go—well, I've been invited several times—to go into the Oval Office to meet with the President of the United States. How do you think you get into the Oval Office? You think you get out of a cab and just walk through the gates and go in the Oval Office and say, "Hi, Prez?" Do you think you do that? No, you don't do that. What you do, you go into a particular room, and there's a person who meets you

there who is the personal envoy of the President, and talks with you, and chats with you, until he's ready. And then he takes you, and he brings you into that office. That's what the Holy Spirit of God does when you come into a higher office than the Oval Office.

When you come before the throne of grace, you have a Father to pray to. You have a Savior to pray through. You have a Spirit to pray in. Have you ever prayed, and it feels like you're just praying at God rather than to God, and God's a billion light years away? Have you ever heard the expression, "My prayers don't get above the light bulb?" You see, that's our problem. God's underneath the light bulb. We think, Oh, way out yonder. Maybe if I can just get my prayers through. Friend, when you're in the Spirit, God is in you and you're praying in the Holy Ghost. And prayer is not just simply sending prayer missiles to heaven; it is talking with a friend. God gives us the royal invitation to pray, and then God gives us a palace and guide to bring us in, a palace attendant to bring us right in to God.

## **V. The Articulation of Our Words**

Now, let me tell you what else praying in the Spirit will do. Number five: Not only do we have the administration of our access, but we have the articulation of our words. Another problem in prayer is that, folks, we get tongue-tied, we run out of words. You know what words are? Words are just trucks to carry thoughts. That's what words are. They're just trucks to carry thoughts. Sometimes, folks, the thought is too heavy for any truck. Sometimes there are things that are so deep, so big, so heavy, so imponderable, that we don't know how to put it into words. That's when we need to be praying in the Spirit.

Look, if you will, in the last part of verse 26: "...but the Spirit himself—and every time you say itself in the King James there, it may better be translated the Spirit Himself—maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." That means sighs that are too deep for words. Did you know there is a form of wordless praying? Who is doing the groaning here? Well, it's the divine Spirit merged with the human spirit. This word for groaning is the word that means "birth pains." If you've ever been around a woman in labor, you've heard that groan. You know what that groan is? That groan is pain transfigured by hope. That's what prayer is. Pain transfigured by hope. Look in verse 22 of this same chapter—look at it: "And we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." Our bodies have not yet been redeemed. Our souls are redeemed. Our spirits are redeemed. Our bodies are not

yet redeemed. And, therefore, dear friend, we live in a world full of pain and pang and moan and groan and sorrow and sickness and sighing and dying and crying. It's about us. And saved or lost, you are not immune. Don't get the idea that if you get saved, there's no sorrow, there's no groaning. The whole creation groans. Verse 22: "...and we ourselves, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan..." But the Holy Spirit of God, when you pray, He enters into that agony. And as Jesus wept in Gethsemane, in your darkest, deepest hours the Holy Spirit of God merges with your spirit in wordless prayer, groanings too deep to be uttered. If you've never been here—you don't know anything about prayer, if you've never been there. But the time will come when you'll get there. You won't know what to do. You won't know what to say. But the Holy Spirit of God will blend with your spirit, and the dear Holy Spirit of God will help you, not only in the administration of the access, but the articulation of your desires. And God knows what it means, even when you can't put it into words. Isn't that neat? Isn't that wonderful?

## **VI. The Enunciation of Our Confidence**

Now, I'll tell you what else the Holy Spirit of God does when you pray in the Spirit. Not only the articulation of our desires, but the enunciation of our confidence comes from the Holy Spirit. Look, if you will, now—you're in verses 26 and 27—now, notice how it's followed: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." Now, notice in verse 28, it says He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. In verse 27, he says that. In verse 28, he says, "What is the will of God?" Well, God is working all things together for good to them that love God, who are called according to his purpose, according to his will." And then, the next verse says that He's doing it to make us like the Lord Jesus.

Now, sometimes you pray, and you groan, and you weep, you ask, and it seems like nothing is happening. You say, "I prayed, and God didn't hear my prayer." Yes, He did! All things are working together for good. It literally means that God is working all things together for good. God's plan for you is not to make you healthy and wealthy and happy. God's plan for you is to make you holy and to make you like the Lord Jesus, to be conformed to the image of His Son; and God is hearing prayers. And you may be asking for one thing, but the Holy Spirit of God is giving another thing to make you more and more and more and more like Jesus. And that's what it's all about, folks. Prayer is not making God some sort of a heavenly bellhop to wait on you and give you your whims and your wants. Prayer is God's plan to make you like Jesus. And so, the Holy Spirit is the enunciation of our confidence.

I had a prayer burden one time, the heaviest prayer burden I've ever had. I stained

heaven. I even came to the place one time where I yelled at God, not out of disrespect, but I cried out to God almost with a shout, not in defiance, but “O God, where are You?” Do you know what God did? God said to me, “Adrian, I have heard your prayer. I’ll take care of it.” He didn’t tell me how. He just said, “Don’t worry about it. I’ll take care of it.” That’s Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God...” There is the enunciation of our confidence.

## **VII. The Amplification of Our Victory**

And, last of all, when we pray in the Spirit, there is the amplification of our victory. You see, the devil doesn’t want you to pray. Look, if you will, in Romans 8, now, verses 31 and 32: “What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” The devil will do all that he can do to keep you from praying. He doesn’t want you to pray. He comes against you. All of the artillery of hell is leveled against you when you pray. Why? The devil must say to his demons, “Boys, keep him from praying, because if he fails to pray, we can beat him every time. But if he prays, he’ll beat us every time.” He’s against you. He’s against you. You have an enemy. He’s against you. But if God be for us, who can be against us? That’s why you can’t pray in the flesh: because you’re no match for Satan. But when you pray in the Spirit, if God be for you, who can be against you?

## **Conclusion**

Those are seven things the Holy Spirit does when we pray in the Spirit. Now, listen to me. You can’t pray in the Spirit, you can’t even pray in the name of Jesus, till you get saved. But, you know, you could be saved, and get in the flesh, and your flesh won’t even want to pray. So, if you’re not saved, you need to get saved. And, if you’re saved, you need to be surrendered and filled with the Holy Spirit of God. Amen? Father God, seal this message to our hearts. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now, look up here. Look at me. Every eye here. Don’t even gather your books. Just look right here at me. Today, if you’re not a Christian, could be the most wonderful day of your life, because this can be the first day of your new life. This can be the day that you can say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ, have every sin forgiven, have God the Holy Spirit to come and live in you, inhabit your humanity, teach you to pray, help you to be the person He wants you to be, and give you the absolute assurance if you died today you’d go to heaven. That’s by repenting of your sin and trusting Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord. He paid for your sin. He’s the Son of God. The Bible says, believe on Him, trust Him, and He will save you. Acts 16:31 puts it this way: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” And that word believe doesn’t mean

intellectual belief; it means trust. Trust Him and you'll be saved.

# Praying in the Spirit

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: May 15, 1983**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:26–27**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Spirit Encourages Our Prayer
- II. The Spirit Enlightens Our Prayer
- III. The Spirit Enlivens Our Prayer
- IV. The Spirit Expresses Our Prayer
- V. The Spirit Helps Us to Endure in Prayer

Conclusion

## Introduction

Okay, take God's Word, and turn with me to the eighth chapter of Romans. And I don't know of a more pertinent passage on praying in the Spirit than Romans chapter 8—the entire chapter, but especially verses 26 and 27. Romans 8:26–27: *“Likewise the Spirit”—that's speaking of the Holy Spirit—“also helpeth our infirmities:”—*now, another word for *infirmities* is *weaknesses*—*“for we know what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself”—*that's the translation in the *King James*, but a better translation is *“the Spirit 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).

We've already been reminded that prayer is the greatest Christian privilege. Not only is prayer the greatest Christian privilege, but prayer is the greatest Christian service. Greater than singing, greater than preaching, greater than soul winning, greater than testifying, and greater than teaching is prayer—our greatest privilege, our greatest service, and, alas, our greatest failure. I believe that far and beyond the majority of the people in my congregation tonight would say, “Pastor, I'm not satisfied with my prayer life.” Isn't that true? “I am not satisfied with my prayer life. I wish my prayer life were better, greater, stronger, and purer than it is.”

Well, praying in the Spirit is, indeed, the key to a vital prayer life. It is the answer to our indifference, when God seems far away. It is the answer to our ignorance, when we don't know what to pray for. It is the answer to our weakness, when we don't seem to be

able to concentrate. It is the answer to our inability, when we are not able to articulate the things that we'd like to articulate when we pray.

Again, I want to remind you that not only do these verses in Romans teach us about praying in the Spirit, but other verses—some that I mentioned this morning—teach about prayer in the Spirit. Again, Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18—we're admonished to be *"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit"* (Ephesians 6:18). And again, in the Book of Jude, chapter 1: *"But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost"* (Jude 1:20).

I told you, this morning, that praying in the Holy Spirit will turn prayer from drudgery to a delight. The early Church had so little. They had no fine auditoriums. They had no printing presses. They had no radio. They had no television. They had no electric lights. They had none of the things that we have. They did so much with so little. We do so little with so much. But the difference is in the prayer life of that early Church and in the prayer life of the modern Church.

Now Paul, here, in this passage, in Romans chapter 8, mentions the weaknesses of the saints. Now notice, again, in verse 26: *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities"* (Romans 8:26). Now people, you might as well admit it: Your weakness that you have is not unique. You have a weakness. It is not an inferiority complex. It is an inferiority. I have it. You have it. And Paul had it. It is a great encouragement to me that the Apostle Paul did not say, "The Spirit helps *your* infirmities." I am grateful that the Apostle Paul said, "The Spirit helps *our* infirmities" (Romans 8:26). It is fact. Admit it—number one—because it is a fact; but, rejoice in it because it is not a liability; it is an asset.

You say, "Pastor, how could a weakness be an asset?" Well, I want to refer you to 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 9: *"And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9). You see, God makes us weak, that we might depend upon Him and be stronger than we could ever be. The Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness—that's the way He helps us. That is the stage for His helping; that is the platform for His helping. *"Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities."*

Now if we were not weak, we would not have His help. And so God wants to deliver me from the peril of self-sufficiency. The worst thing that could happen to me would be for me to be strong enough to be sufficient upon myself. Therefore, I could never know the help of the blessed Holy Spirit. He has made me perpetually weak, that I might be perpetually dependent; and, therefore, that I might be perpetually powerful. So don't go around complaining about your weakness. Thank God for it. Paul said that he rejoiced in his weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Now the Holy Spirit helps us. I want you to look at that word *help* here, for a moment: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities”* (Romans 8:26). That’s a very interesting word—*help*. It literally means, “take hold of.” And that is, “to lay hands to, in order to help.” As a matter of fact, the only other time it’s used in the entire New Testament is when Martha complained about Mary, who was sitting at the feet of Jesus, and Martha came out of the kitchen and said to Jesus, “Tell her to help me. Tell her to help me” (Luke 10:40). And that means “Let her come into the kitchen, and lay hands on these matters, and get them done.” Now this word is a very interesting word, because it is preceded by a double prefix. The first part of the prefix means “together with.” The other part means “instead of.” That’s very interesting. The Holy Spirit helps together with us, and the Holy Spirit does it instead of us. That’s very interesting. A unique word—a “together with” and “instead of” kind of help.

That is not contradictory, but there is a beautiful thought here. The Holy Spirit of God does the work, but He will not do it apart from us—a “together with” and “instead of” kind of help. What a glorious partnership! I said, this morning, that the Holy Spirit wants to think, but He wants to think through our mind. The Holy Spirit wants to speak, but He wants to speak through our lips. The Holy Spirit wants to weep, but He wants to weep through our eyes. The Holy Spirit wants to groan, but He wants to groan through our spirit. He does it *instead of* us. He does it *together with* us. That’s a wonderful, wonderful partnership of praying in the Spirit. Friend, He needs us, and we need Him. Hallelujah! He wants to minister through us. And so in order to minister through us, He ministers to us. And He helps our infirmities, and then, He—the dear Holy Spirit of God—uses these vessels as instruments of intercession, that the great purpose of God would be fulfilled in this world.

Now I want to tell you some things that the Holy Spirit does as we pray in the Spirit, to help you to understand the reason—the importance—of praying in the Spirit.

## **I. The Spirit Encourages Our Prayer**

The very first reason is the matter of encouragement—encouragement. It is the Holy Spirit who encourages us—encourages us to pray. Back up, if you will, to verses 5 and following of Romans 8—chapter 8, verse 5: *“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.”* You see, there are two principles in you—two propensities: the flesh and the spirit. And they’re warring together, in our hearts and in our minds. Now he goes on to say, *“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh”—*that is, they who are carnal—*“cannot please*

God” (Romans 8:5–8).

Now do you know why it is that it’s so hard for you to pray, if you’re not in the Spirit? The flesh doesn’t want to pray. The flesh is indifferent to prayer. The flesh has no desire to pray. The flesh is completely apathetic to prayer. And so if you’re carnally minded, you’re not going to want to pray. Look again: *“For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit [mind] the things of the Spirit”* (Romans 8:5). Now if the Spirit of God is alive and active in you, then you’re going to want to pray, because prayer is a thing of the Spirit. Now so many of us are indifferent to praying. We’re apathetic about prayer, and it is because we’re in the flesh and we’re not in the Spirit. You see, the Bible teaches that the Holy Spirit in us energizes our prayer.

Look, if you will please, in verse 15 of this chapter: *“For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father”* (Romans 8:15). Now when the Holy Spirit comes into you, and you’re adopted into the family of God, that Holy Spirit comes into you, praying. The very nature of a newborn child is to mimic those simple words, and the easiest two syllables for a baby to say are “ahh” and “bah”—“ah bah, Ahbah.” This is an Aramaic term, a diminutive that a baby would speak. I want to tell you that the birth cry of a newborn babe is prayer: “Abba, Father”; the Spirit in us is crying, “Abba, Father,” as Jesus taught us to pray “Our Father.”

Now friend, the Holy Spirit encourages prayer. And when you’re in the Spirit, you’re going to find that Spirit crying, “Abba, Father.” By the way, let me give you another verse very closely akin to it—it is Galatians 4, verse 6: *“And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father”* (Galatians 4:6). That makes it even clearer. *“God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts.”* Who is God’s Son? Jesus. Who is the supreme example of prayer? The Lord Jesus is the supreme example of prayer. There is no prayer life like the prayer life of the Lord Jesus, for *“he ever liveth to make intercession”* (Hebrews 7:25).

How would you like to have the Spirit of Jesus in your heart? Well, you do. God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts crying, “Abba, Father.” And friend, when the Holy Spirit of God is let loose in your heart, He will encourage you to pray. You’re not going to be apathetic about prayer.

## **II. The Spirit Enlightens Our Prayer**

Now let me tell you what else the Holy Spirit does: Not only the encouragement to pray, but the Holy Spirit gives you the enlightenment to pray. Now there’s another reason that I’m glad that the Apostle Paul used the pronoun *we*. Look, again, if you will, in verse 26:

*“Likewise the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought”* (Romans 8:26). And isn’t that true? Isn’t it hard to know how to pray, especially when you’re trying to think up the things to pray?

For example, what areas to pray for. You can’t pray about everything. So many times, people come to me and say, “Brother Rogers, put me on your prayer list.” They say that so glibly. Friend, I want to tell you, if I put you on my prayer list, it will be because I feel impressed of the Holy Spirit to put you on my prayer list. Oh, I pray for the church in general, because the Holy Spirit has put this church on my heart. But I can’t pray for everybody. And when people tell me that they have me on their prayer list, I want to tell you that humbles and breaks my heart. J. Sidlow Baxter said, “Adrian, Mrs. Baxter and I pray for you every morning.” I thought, “What a privilege! What a privilege to be on that man’s prayer list!” And other people tell me, “I pray for you.” And there are people that I pray for. But I can’t pray for everything. I don’t know everything to pray for.

Friend, listen. If you tried to pray for every possibility of every need of all of the people—all of the countries, all of the nations, all of the problems, all the lost people—your prayer, rather than being a mighty river, would become a stagnant swamp, and your prayer would cease to be powerful. *In order for your prayer to be effective, it must be selective.* Paul says, “We don’t know what to pray for as we ought.” There are so many things to pray for.

And then, not only that, but we don’t know how to pray. So many times we’re asking God to do things, and we’re asking for the wrong thing. Sometimes, someone gets sick, and we’re praying, and pleading, and saying, “God, heal that person,” when God might have a higher plan. We might be praying, “God let them stay,” but God’s will and all of Heaven is saying, “Let them come.” *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Philippians 1:21). I’ve told you before: In our churches, so many times, so many of our prayer requests are for the sick, rather than for the lost. We’re praying for sick saints rather than lost sinners. *We’re more interested in keeping the saints out of Heaven than we are the lost out of Hell.* We don’t want them to die, when yet, Jesus is praying, “Father, I pray for them whom Thou hast given me, that they may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory” (John 17:24). As you sang about tonight, face to face, even before He comes, beholding His glory.

It’s hard to know. Your grand-mama gets sick. She’s been serving the Lord all these years, and now, her body’s old and worn out. We’re saying, “How do we know whether to pray that God will cure them or God will take them home?” It’s not easy; we need divine leadership in this matter. What about if a person in the church is causing problems? How do you pray about that person? Think of the Apostle Paul—the Apostle Paul, who was making havoc of the Church. I’m sure there were a lot of people praying

about him, and some of them were probably praying, “Lord, strike him dead.” God had a better plan: He struck him alive, made a great apostle out of him.

You see, so many times, we really don’t know how to pray, but the Holy Spirit knows how to pray. I want you to look, again, in this passage, in Romans 8, verse 14: *“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”* (Romans 8:14). The Holy Spirit can lead our prayer. He can take our prayers and make them effective because they’re selective, make them powerful because He takes our ignorance and makes intercession for us, and leads us in our praying, and shows us how to pray, in spite of our ignorance.

I love that designation and description of the Holy Spirit in Isaiah chapter 11 and verse 2. Here is the Holy Spirit that rests upon the Lord Jesus. Listen to it: *“And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD”* (Isaiah 11:2). That’s the Holy Spirit. Listen to it again: *“The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”* And that is the dear, precious Holy Spirit who lives in you.

*“We know not what we should pray for as we ought”* (Romans 8:26). But *“As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God”* (Romans 8:14). How important it is, therefore, that we abide in the Holy Spirit! Sometimes, even when we pray wrongly, the Holy Spirit is so gracious as to say, “Now Father, Adrian said this. That’s what he thinks he wants, but he doesn’t really want that. This is what he needs; and, Father, give him what he needs and not what he asks for.” Look in verse 27: *“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 8:27). You say, then, “Well, is it my prayer, if I’m asking for something and God gives me something else?” Yes, it’s still your prayer. Thank God the Holy Spirit just takes it and makes it acceptable to the Lord.

On these power lines outside this church there is great electrical power in those lines, surging through those lines. And if it were to come into this building and be connected to our sound amplification system, this light system, and this air conditioning system, without going through a transformer, it would just blow everything up. It’d just burn it to smithereens. We’d have fuses blowing all over the place. So there’s a transformer. That power comes from the great generators, and it comes into that transformer; and, that transformer changes that electrical energy into a form that is acceptable, that can be used.

Now the dear Holy Spirit is that Great Transformer who takes my prayer, and I’m the

dynamo. And I originate these prayers with His help, but then, the Holy Spirit takes those prayers, and He transforms them and makes intercession according to the will of God.

And that's so wonderful—so wonderful! Even when you might be praying, “Lord, this is what I think You want. But Lord, if it's not, Lord, I want what You want,” and God sees your heart; God knows that you're praying; God knows that you desire the will of God. And it's so wonderful that the dear Holy Spirit is there—that Divine Transformer, that is taking that prayer energy and making it acceptable to the heart and the mind of the Father. Look at it, again, in verse 27: *“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.”*

### **III. The Spirit Enlivens Our Prayer**

And so it is the Holy Spirit, on the one hand, who encourages my prayer. It is the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, who enlightens my prayer. And then, it is the Holy Spirit who enlivens my prayer. Look, if you will, in verses 10 and 11 of this same chapter: *“And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken”—that means enliven—“your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you”* (Romans 8:10–11).

Now some people think this refers to the Resurrection. I don't. I think that it refers to the *right now*. I believe that the Holy Spirit of God in you is there to enliven you, to give you spiritual quickening and spiritual life that you need to pray. Friend, it takes energy to pray. It takes life to pray. It takes a quickening to pray. It takes spiritual strength to pray.

That's what Jesus meant, when He said to those sleepy disciples, *“The spirit...is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Matthew 26:41). Now Jesus would not have commanded them and encouraged them to pray, had they truly needed to sleep. They did not need to sleep. Did you know that when you pray... Oh, I'm not saying you never need to sleep. I'm saying those disciples did not need to sleep at that time. There was sufficient strength for them to pray. You'll never convince me that the Lord asked of them an impossibility. Did you know that sleepiness is, many times, an attack of the devil? Did you know that laziness, many times, is an attack of the devil? Did you know that, many times, your inability to concentrate is an attack of the devil?

Now there is a legitimate tiredness. There is a legitimate need for sleep. The Bible says, graciously and beautifully, in the Book of Psalms, “God gives his beloved sleep” (Psalm 127:2). And Jesus said to His disciples, *“Come ye...apart...and rest a while”* (Mark 6:31). And we need to rest. But I am telling you this: that the devil is able to make

you sleepy. The devil is able to make you drowsy. It is a work of the flesh. *“The spirit...is willing, but the flesh is weak.”* Matthew 26, verse 40: “And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and he said unto Peter, Could ye not watch with me one hour?” (Matthew 26:40). Peter was asleep. It was the work of the flesh.

You see, there is a divine dynamo—the Holy Spirit, who enlivens us. Friend, listen. I depend upon the Holy Spirit to give me strength when I preach. I honestly do not believe that I would have the physical stamina to preach, without the power of the Holy Spirit. I honestly believe that. I believe that the Holy Spirit quickens my body when I preach. I have come to this pulpit, sometimes, absolutely tired, and breathe a prayer, and say it and claim it—“The joy of the Lord is my strength” (Nehemiah 8:10)—and God infuses me with strength. I believe that the Holy Spirit of God quickens our bodies. He is the One who encourages our prayers. He is the One who enlightens our prayers. He is the One who enlivens our prayers and gives us that strength.

Do you remember the story of the Lord Jesus there, in the fourth chapter of John, when He was on His journey, and the Bible says that He was weary, and they were hungry? And the disciples went into the city of Sychar, the city of Samaria, to get food and provisions. And Jesus was there, at the well of Sychar, and He was tired. The Bible says He was sitting there, on the curving of that well. Those of you who are going with us to Israel, God willing, we’ll visit this very spot. It’s one of the most authentic spots in all of the land of Israel. We’ll drink water out of that same well. It is still there—that same deep well. And Jesus was sitting upon the curving of that well. But when that woman came—that woman who had lived a life of debauchery, and sin, and disappointment, and failure—Jesus witnessed to her, and, Jesus won her, and she was saved. When the disciples came back with provisions, and they offered food to Jesus, Jesus said, “No thank you. I’m not even hungry. I have meat to eat that you know not of” (John 4:32). Jesus had been so quickened, so energized, so given strength by that spiritual experience; the Holy Spirit of God had quickened Him.

Now listen. You can use some common sense in your prayer life, also. I mean, you ought to save the best time for prayer. I don’t know when the best time for prayer for you is. I mean, well, for me, it is not immediately after I awake. I’ll guarantee you that. Listen. My blood is like molasses. I have to put my knee on the toothpaste to squeeze it. I mean, I just greet the Lord when I first wake up. And I move around a little bit, until I get my motor running a little bit. And then, I pray. But you find out when that best time for you is. Now that’s just common sense, there. Don’t wait until you’re tired, or worn out, or get some overstuffed chair, and bury your face in your pillow, and want to go sleep. It’s a lack of oxygen. Use common sense.

But don’t you let that devil just give you an attack of *the sleep* r eases. Don’t you let

that devil give you an attack of *the lazies*. Many times, that is not a legitimate need for rest. It is an attack of the devil. It is a ploy of the flesh. And the Holy Spirit will enliven your prayer. And the Holy Spirit will enable you to pray, as you pray in the Spirit.

#### **IV. The Spirit Expresses Our Prayer**

Now not only does He encourage your prayers, not only does He enlighten your prayers, not only does He enliven your prayers; I want to say, He expresses your prayers. Thank God for that. Thank God that the Holy Spirit gives expression to our prayers. Look again, if you will, in verse 26: *“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:”—hallelujah for this—“but the Spirit [himself] maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”* (Romans 8:26). He—the Holy Spirit—expresses our prayers. *“Groanings which cannot be uttered”* means “sighs that are too deep for words,” a form of wordless praying.

Who is doing the groaning? Is it the Holy Spirit, or is it you? It is both. He is groaning instead of us. He is groaning together with us. It is that partnership that I was talking about when God the Holy Spirit, in the human spirit, enables you to pray what is, sometimes, an inarticulate prayer. This word *groaning* is the word that is used of the pains at childbirth. Look, if you will, at verse 22 of this same chapter: *“For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now”* (Romans 8:22).

Oh, like a woman travails in pain, giving birth to a child, the groans, the sighs, the pain—that’s the idea of the Holy Spirit of God in us making that deep intercession—those things that you feel so deeply about; those hurts, those wounds, those sorrows, those pleas, those sighs. And you say, “God, I don’t know how to say it. Spirit of the living God, help me to pray.” And God’s dear Holy Spirit, moving in your heart, just takes those inexpressible, unutterable, non-articulate desires and carries them to the throne. And He prays for us, instead of us, together with us, just as a woman in travail has pain. She’s looking past that pain to that childbirth. It is pain that is transfigured by hope. It is pain that is transfigured by expectation. It is the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane—the prayer of agony, transfixed, transposed, by hope.

#### **V. The Spirit Helps Us to Endure in Prayer**

There’s another thing the Holy Spirit does: Not only does He encourage our prayers, not only does He enlighten our prayers, not only does He enliven our prayers, not only does He express our prayers, but He helps us, that we might endure in our prayers. You see, again, I want to tell you what I told you this morning: that the enemy—the enemy, the devil—doesn’t want you to pray. Prayer is warfare.

So Paul is asking in this same chapter on the Holy Spirit—look, if you will, in verse 31: *“What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). When you go to prayer, and the devil lets loose with all of the artillery of Hell, the Holy Spirit is there. He’s saying, “My child, I’m for you.” *“Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world”* (1 John 4:4).

And I want to remind you, again, that the devil is very clever. The Bible says that he’s more subtle than any beast of the field (Genesis 3:1). Let me tell you how clever the devil is: The devil is so clever that he will encourage you to witness, if it will keep you from praying. The devil is so clever that he will encourage you to attend church, if that will keep you from praying. Now no one who lives, in my estimation, as he ought to live has to choose between church attendance and prayer. But if you had to choose, it’d be better to stay home and pray than it would to be a prayer-less Christian in church. The devil would even encourage you to study the Word of God, if that becomes a substitute for your prayer life. There is no substitute for prayer—not enthusiasm, not eloquence, not energy—no substitutes for intercession and prayer. And so we must pray. Prayer is warfare.

But it is the Holy Spirit who gives us endurance. And in that sixth chapter of Ephesians, Paul says, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, and powers...and spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:12). That wrestling is prayer. When we put on the armor, then we show up to the battle. And the battle is prayer, for he says, in chapter 6, verse 18: *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit”* (Ephesians 6:18). Satan is no match for the Holy Spirit. And only prayer in the Spirit can overcome the interference of the devil. That, ladies and gentlemen, is why we must pray in the Spirit.

## Conclusion

But in order to pray in the Spirit, we must be filled with that Spirit. And in order to be filled with the Spirit, we must first of all be saved. And in order to be saved, we must receive Christ as our Lord and Savior. Have you done that? Does Jesus live in your heart? Have you invited Him in? I want every head bowed. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed.

O dear Holy Spirit of God, energize the prayer life of this church and my own prayer life. Thank You, Lord, that You’ve not left us helpless; that, Lord, You help our weaknesses, our infirmities, if we’ll only yield to You. Holy Spirit, one more time, anew and afresh, I yield myself to You to be an instrument of prayer. Come into my heart and my life in a new and a full way. And now Holy Spirit of God, bless those who are not saved, that they might come to know Jesus as their personal Savior and Lord. For we

pray in His name. Amen.

# Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: April 26, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:26–28**

*“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.”*

ROMANS 8:26

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Problems in Prayer

- A. The Problem of Indifference
- B. The Problem of Ignorance
- C. The Problem of Interference

II. The Answer: the Holy Spirit

- A. The Holy Spirit Activates Our Wills in Prayer
- B. The Holy Spirit Animates Our Body in Prayer
- C. The Holy Spirit Adapts Our Requests in Prayer
- D. The Holy Spirit Administrates Our Access in Prayer
- E. The Holy Spirit Articulates Our Needs in Prayer

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, take your Bibles and find Romans chapter 8. Romans is the constitution of Christianity. We are looking at the foundations of our faith, a solid word in an unsure age, and we've been right in the heart of this eighth chapter, which is the heart of the book of Romans, which is the heartbeat of all theology. And today we're going to be talking about prayer. We're going to retrace some things that we've told you before, re-emphasize these things because they are of such great importance.

Romans chapter 8, and we begin in verse 26: "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered, and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he"—that is, the Spirit—"maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Now, it's very obvious that there are two words that are standing out here. One is the Spirit, and the other is the word prayer. Now, I want to talk to you about how to pray in the Spirit. As I said a few moments ago, I don't know a one of us that would say, I am satisfied with my prayer life. And I think all of those of us who know and love the Lord Jesus want to pray better. Prayer is the greatest Christian privilege. That was a good place for an amen. Prayer is the greatest Christian privilege. I want to say it is the greatest Christian service. You can do more than pray after you've prayed, but you cannot do any more than pray until you pray. It's the greatest privilege, it is the greatest service, but alas, it is the Christian's greatest failure. We fail in our prayer life, and very few of us would say, I am satisfied with my prayer life.

## **I. The Problems in Prayer**

Now, what are the problems?

### **A. The Problem of Indifference**

Well, first of all, there is the problem of indifference. Many times we just don't have a desire to pray. We just don't want to pray; we don't have a longing to pray. We might as well admit it: there's something in every one of us that doesn't want to pray. Now, don't look so holy. I'm telling you, there's something in every one of you, it's the flesh; and we're going to see in a moment, it doesn't want to pray. There's the problem of indifference.

### **B. The Problem of Ignorance**

And then, there's the problem of ignorance. We don't know how to pray or what to pray for.

### **C. The Problem of Interference**

And then, not only is it the problem of indifference, and the problem of ignorance, but folks, there's the problem of interference. I mean, when you go to pray, the devil moves heaven and earth, and hell beneath, to try to keep you from praying—he really does. The beans will burn; the kids will get in a fight; the telephone will ring; you will get sleepy; your mind will gather wool; you'll think silly thoughts. Has that ever happened to you—or just me? All right, when you're trying to pray, there's interference. Do you know why? The devil laughs at our organization; he mocks our schemes; he ridicules our good intentions; he fears our prayers. You can imagine the devil talking to his demons, and saying to his demons, There's that Baptist preacher there. Whatever you do, keep him from praying, because, if he prays, he'll beat us every time. If you can keep him from praying, we can beat him every time. So, when you go to pray, the devil is going to level all of the artillery against you, because he does not want you to pray, and your indifference, and your ignorance, and his interference, sometimes just line up against

us, and then we just say, Well, we're not very good at prayer. We like to talk about prayer, sing about prayer, but many of us really do not have a satisfying, fulfilling prayer life.

## **II. The Answer: the Holy Spirit**

Now, what is the answer? The answer is to find that God has given us an ally, an asset, a helper, an encourager—and He is the Holy Spirit. And this passage of Scripture says, "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities." We're going to talk about that word help in just a moment, and show you how the Holy Spirit of God helps you, energizes you, enlightens you, empowers you to pray. And we're going to find all of that right here in the eighth chapter of Romans. We're not going to have to go to any other place; well, we'll have some ancillary scriptures, but they'll all impinge on scriptures that we find right here in the eighth chapter of Romans, praying in the Spirit. By the way, this is not the only place we're told to pray in the Spirit. You might want to put in your margin a couple other verses. For example, Ephesians chapter 6 and verse 18: "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit." "Praying always, with all prayer and supplication, in the Spirit." Or Jude, verse 20, "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost." Praying in the Holy Ghost. To pray in the flesh is to fail; to pray in the Spirit is to succeed. The early church advanced on its knees. Bellevue Baptist Church can be no greater than the prayer life of her members. My ministry would be no better than my prayer life.

Now, what are some ways that the Holy Spirit of God helps us to pray? Let's look right here.

### **A. The Holy Spirit Activates Our Wills in Prayer**

First of all, the Holy Spirit of God activates our wills in prayer. The Holy Spirit of God—listen—He activates our wills in prayer. That is, the Holy Spirit of God moves your will to pray. We might as well admit it: the reason, basically, that we don't pray is, there is a lack of desire; we have no will, we have no appetite, we have no hunger. Come up close, I'm going to tell you something: the reason you don't pray more than you pray is because you don't want to. People do what they want to do—people do what they want to do. But there's a part of us called the flesh—now, he's not talking about your hide, your hair, your skin, your, the bones, the sinew, the flesh, the meat on those bones; that's not what the Bible means when it says flesh. When the Bible uses the word flesh—in this instance anyway—it's talking about your old nature, that Adamic nature, that predisposition to sin, that part of you that doesn't love God. You were born with it.

Let's see how the Bible describes it. Look, if you will, here in verse 5. You're in chapter 8—look in verse 5—watch it: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh." And some of you, right now, have already checked me out on this

sermon. I mean, your mind, right now, you're thinking about business, you're thinking about a movie, you're thinking about sports, you're thinking about your lawn, or something right now. You don't have an appetite even to hear about prayer. You are in the flesh, and you are minding the things of the flesh. "But they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded..."—the word carnally is just another way of saying fleshly minded—"to be carnally minded is death"—he's not talking here about physical death only; he's talking about spiritual death, he's talking about death to goodness, purity, power, prayer, it's death—"but to be spiritually minded is life and peace."

Now, you here today, you have a carnal mind or a spiritual mind. You are hungry to know more, or you probably are bored. It all depends on what your mind is set on. Now, look, if you will, at the explanation of that, in verse 7: "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God." Do you know what the word enmity means? It means warfare. "It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." So, you have to be filled with the Holy Spirit to desire to pray. Because, if you're not filled with the Holy Spirit, the flesh in you says, Hey, I don't care about that; I'm not interested in that; I don't want to know about that. You see, we do what we want to do.

Now, how does the Holy Spirit of God activate our wills? Well, this is beautiful; this is wonderful. You see, look if you will, in verse 15 of this same chapter—Romans chapter 8 and verse 15: "For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father." Now, there's the spirit of bondage. That's the old devil, he wants to keep you in bondage, he wants to keep you down—that's the spirit that motivates the children of this world. But he's saying, when you get saved, you have received the spirit of adoption. Now, what is adoption? Well, we are born into the family of God spiritually, we are adopted into the family of God legally, and the spirit of adoption means that we are heirs of God, and once we are adopted into the family of God, God puts His Holy Spirit into us, and the Holy Spirit in us just loves the Father. The Holy Spirit says, Abba Father. It's as normal and natural to pray when you're Spirit-filled. God has taken away the spirit of bondage that keeps you from praying. God puts the Holy Spirit of God in your heart and in your life, and you just say, Father.

Did you know that you don't have to be a junior-sized Shakespeare in order to pray. Sometimes you'll ask a person to pray in public, they say, Well, I can't pray. What they mean is, I can't rattle off some poetical praises. Jesus said we're not heard for our much speaking. He says here is: Abba Father. That's the most primary speech that a child can make; that's the counterpart of daddy, father. Suppose when my girls were growing up, one of my teenage daughters would say to me, Hail, yon, eminent pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church, biddest thou, have a wonderful sojourn down interstate 40 coming to

our domicile. Thy second daughter, Janice, would request of her father that thou wouldest grant to thy daughter Janice a dollar or two that I may sojourn to yonder apothecary and procure some necessities for my cosmological appearance. It'd be a lot better to say, Daddy, hey, I love you. Papa, good to have you home. Here's a kiss, Daddy. Daddy, I need some things down at the drugstore. You got a couple of bucks? Well, it'd be better—it'd be better. God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, Abba Father. It is as natural for you to pray as it would be to speak to your own daddy when you're filled with the Holy Spirit.

Because, you see, look, if you will, in verse 9 of this same chapter. The Bible calls the Holy Spirit the Spirit of Christ. You see that? Look, if you will: "But if you're in the flesh, but you're not in the flesh but in the Spirit, it so being that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's none of his." So, when you're filled with the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit is just Christ in the Christian. Well, what was the prayer life of Jesus like? His prayer life was so wonderful, when the disciples saw Him pray, said, Lord, teach us to pray, after they heard Him pray, and saw Him pray. Well, the Spirit of Christ is in you; you have the spirit of adoption. It is normal, it is natural, it is easy to pray, when you're in the Spirit. But I'm telling you, to be carnally minded is death. The carnal mind is enmity against God. There's a part of you that does not want to pray. That is your old nature. Now, you know it is true, but friend, if you don't have a desire to pray, it's because you're not filled with the Holy Spirit.

### **B. The Holy Spirit Animates Our Body in Prayer**

Now, the first thing the Holy Spirit of God does to help us to pray is that the Holy Spirit of God activates our will. "And for it is God that worketh in you"—the Bible says, in Philippians 2, verse 13—"both to will and to do of his good pleasure." God works in you; He activates your will. Listen to that verse again: "For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure." So, you have to let the Holy Spirit of God come into you and activate your will.

But not only will the Holy Spirit of God activate your will; I'll tell you what else the Holy Spirit of God will do. He will animate your body. It's not only the activation of your will, but the animation of your body. It means He makes your body alive. Now, look, if you will—look in verses 10 and 11 of this same chapter: "And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin,"—that is, the wages of sin is death and because of our sin Jesus died for us, we died with Him, the old person is crucified—"but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you..."—who was it that brought Jesus out of that grave? Well, according to this verse, it's the Holy Spirit. Now, the Holy Spirit that brought Jesus actually, literally, visibly, bodily out of that grave, He's the Holy Spirit that came into you when you got saved—"Now, if the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he

that raised up Jesus from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." You know what the word quicken means? It means give life, energy, to animate.

You see, He not only activates your will; He animates your body. He gives you strength to pray. Did you know it takes energy to pray? Did you know I had rather preach for an hour than to pray for a half an hour, so far as energy is concerned? It takes great strength to pray. Paul talked about laboring with me in prayer. The reason many of us don't pray is, very frankly, we're lazy, and we go to pray, our energy just drains out of us. Do you ever feel that? You're tired, you're sleepy, your head gets full of cobwebs. Part of it is your fault. You get in a big, overstuffed chair, put your face down in it, you smother. Get your head up anyway, and breathe. Sometime, you know, I'll just go for a walk and pray. That's a wonderful thing to do. And, walk and pray and breathe, and so forth. But, I'm talking on top of that. That there's a part of the flesh, the old nature, the body, we just don't have the strength to pray. Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, and He was praying, and He wanted His disciples to pray, and He said, Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. And He came back, and what were they doing? They were sleeping—sleeping. And what did Jesus say? Listen to this very carefully. He said, "Watch and pray; the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Had they been filled with the Spirit they wouldn't have prayed. Many times we're sleeping when we ought to be praying, and the reason we're sleeping when we ought to be praying is we're not praying in the Spirit.

If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus Christ from the dead dwell in you, that Spirit will quicken your mortal bodies. There's something about the Holy Spirit that gives you energy. You know, when the Spirit of God is there, joy is there, and the joy of the Lord is your strength. When Jesus was there—you read about it in the fourth chapter of John—Jesus was at Sychar in Samaria, and Jacob's well was there, and Jesus was weary, He was sitting on the rim of that well. I've been there many times. I've drunk water from that same well. It's still there, a deep well. Jesus was sitting on the rim of that well. He was tired, and the woman of Samaria came, and Jesus began to witness to her, and she came to saving faith. And, I don't want to digress and get into that too much—many of you know the story—but the interesting thing is that Jesus was tired. He was sitting there, and He was hungry, because the disciples had gone into town to get some food, and they'd come back, and Jesus is vibrant, and they say, Here's some food. And He says, Hey, I've got food to eat you don't know anything about; I have food to eat you don't know anything about. Jesus' actual body had been invigorated by the Holy Spirit of God. And when you're in the Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God will literally strengthen, He will animate your body, as well as activate your will. And, you can just say, Lord, I'm weak, I'm fading, I am numb and sleepy, and my mind is gathering wool. Come, Holy Spirit of

God; my flesh is weak, the Spirit is willing—okay?

### **C. The Holy Spirit Adapts Our Requests in Prayer**

Now, let me tell you a third thing the Holy Spirit of God will do. Not only is there the activation of your will in prayer, and the animation of our bodies in prayer, but, number three, there's the adaptation of our requests in prayer. Now, look at this—it's very interesting. Go, if you will, to verse 26; look, if you will, in verse 26: "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities,"—now, let's just stop there for a moment and say that Paul includes himself. He didn't say your weaknesses. Paul's the greatest Christian that ever lived, and he included himself, says our infirmities—"for we know not what we should pray for." He didn't say, You bunch of carnal people don't know what you should pray for. It says, "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."

Now, you ought to accept your weakness for two reasons. Reason number one: it's a fact. Paul said my infirmity, your infirmity—it's a fact. Number two: it is an asset. You say, How can my weakness be an asset? Well, Paul learned that his weakness was an asset. Put this verse down, in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 9. Paul had a thorn in the flesh; he asked God to take it away from him, and God refused, and, beginning in verse 9, "He said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Isn't that great? You see, many of us think we're too weak—maybe we haven't been weak enough; maybe we haven't come to the place where we've said, Lord, I can't. Have you ever done that? Lord, I just can't. So long as we're struggling, we don't cry out to Him. But when we say, Lord, I can't, and you can, then God says, All right, that strength is a fact; it's going to become an asset; because my strength will be made perfect in your weakness. What God wants to do in prayer is to deliver us from self-sufficiency. He makes us perpetually weak that we might be perpetually dependent, that we might be perpetually powerful, as we depend upon Him.

And so, the Spirit helpeth our infirmities. You see, the Holy Spirit of God adapts our requests in prayer. He just moves in alongside of us. Now, look at the word helper. It's a very interesting word. Oh, you're going to be blessed by this—it has a double prefix. I know you've been waiting all morning to hear that; oh my, you can carry that home with you. But now, listen—a double prefix. All right, it begins with the word sun—we'd say s-u-n—sun—or, if you want to Anglicize it more, s-o-o-n—soon—which means with. And then, another prefix is anti—a-n-t-i—which means face to face. And then, the third word is lambano, which means to take hold of. All right, sun-anti-lambano. That's the word helper. The only other time it's used in the Bible, I think, is when Martha was in the kitchen, and she came out of the kitchen like she was mad, because Mary was sitting at the feet of Jesus, and Martha was in the kitchen fixing a meatloaf, and she comes out there, and she says, Jesus, would you tell Mary to come in this kitchen and help me?

Now, think of these words: sun—means with; and anti—means face-to-face; and lambano—means to take hold of.

Now, I'm going to tell you how the Holy Spirit—the adaptation of our requests in prayer, that's what we're talking about—how He helps our infirmities. I heard Dr. Herschel Hobbs use this illustration, and it was a great blessing to me. He said, suppose here's a man, he has a wagon, and on that wagon he has a 500-pound bale of hay. And he's going over a little bridge, and the back of that wagon tilts, and that bale of hay falls out on the ground. And you come up to this man, and he's struggling, trying to put that 500-pound bale of hay back on that wagon, and he just can't do it. And you say, What are you doing? He'll say, I'm trying to load this hay—hay, cotton; did I say hay? Well, let's make it cotton, a better illustration—trying to put this cotton back on this wagon. So, you say, Well, let me help you. So, you get on one side, and he gets on the other side. Now, you're looking at each other over that bale of cotton. You're anti—face-to-face. Then you take hold of it—with Him, he's on one side; you're on the other side—that's sun, with. Anti—face-to-face—and then, you both take hold—that's lambano—and you both lift that load on that wagon. Now, that's a good illustration about what this verse is about.

You see, when we pray in the Holy Spirit, we are face to face with Him. There is that vital relationship, face-to-face with Him. He with me, and I with Him; and He takes hold, and I take hold, and together we do it. I cannot do it without him; He will not do it without me; but together, in prayer, the Holy Spirit of God helps us to pray. And that is so very important, because, friend, this thing of prayer is a mystery, and the Holy Spirit of God has to adapt our prayers. You know, there are so many questions about prayer. I mean, what should you pray for? Folks, there are so many needs in our world today. If you go just to pray according to need—that's like trying to bail out the ocean with a teacup—you'll get discouraged. If you try to pray for everything, you'll end up praying for nothing. I've been there. I mean, you'll never get finished. There are so many people, so many hurts, so many problems, so many nations, so much to pray about, you just don't know what to pray about.

And you don't know, once you know what to pray about, you don't know how to pray about what you know to pray about. Aunt Susie, she's sick—is it God's will to heal her, or does God want to take her home? I mean, when you pray for the sick, you know Jesus prayed, Father, I pray for those whom thou hast given me that they may be with me where I am. Jesus is saying, Father, I want them in heaven. We're praying, Lord, don't let them go to heaven, isn't that true? Now, sometimes, it is God's will for people to stay here, and God extends our lives, and God, in mercy to us, let's them stay with us. But God has made us for heaven. How do you pray about dear old Aunt Susie who's walked with the Lord for so long? Jesus is up there saying, Father, let her come. We're

down here, O God, don't let her go. And in most of our prayer meetings in our churches, how many people are praying for the lost that need to be saved? Far more people are praying for the saints to get well. Nothing wrong with that. Always seemed more strange to me we're more interested in keeping the saints out of heaven than the lost out of hell. How do you pray about these things?

What do you pray about a troublemaker in the church? Troublemakers, Pastor, in the church? Well, I've heard about them in other churches. How do you pray about people like that? Do you pray, Lord, get them out, or Lord, get them right? You may not know how to pray. I know when Saul was making havoc of the church, and hauling off Christians to prison and to death, I can just imagine how the church was praying about old Saul. O God, strike him dead. God struck him alive; God saved him, became the great apostle Paul. Hey, folks, it's hard to know how to pray.

If you try to pray about everything, rather than being a river, your prayer will become a swamp. You have to pray with selectivity and specificity in order to pray with power. Well, how are you going to know? Well, listen—listen to this passage of Scripture. Look, if you will again: "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought. But the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Thank God that the Holy Spirit of God, when we pray, will lay prayer burdens on our heart, and teach us what to pray for.

#### **D. The Holy Spirit Administrates Our Access in Prayer**

Now, here's something else that the Holy Spirit of God will do: the Holy Spirit of God will administrate your access to God—the administration of our access in prayer. Look, if you will again, in verses 14 and 15. We've already looked at this, but look at it again, in chapter 8, verse 14: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Will you not receive the spirit of bondage again of fear, but have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry, Abba Father." Now, what the Holy Spirit of God does, He energizes you, and leads you into the presence of God. Question: have you ever tried to pray, and it just seemed like the heavens were brass? I mean, that your prayers hit the ceiling, and bounced back off; you just can't seem to get through, and God seems thousands of light years away—you just can't seem to get through. Well, the Bible teaches that it is the Holy Spirit that ushers us into the throne room. I want to give you a verse that you put down in your margin, because it refers again to Romans 8, verses 14 and 15, and it's Ephesians 2, verse 18: "For through him"—through Jesus—"we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." Now, listen carefully. We pray to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit—to the Father, through the Son, in the Spirit. "For by him"—Jesus—"we have access by one Spirit unto the Father."

Now, yes, the Lord has invited us to come boldly to the throne of grace, but you need the Holy Spirit of God to usher you into the throne room. When I was first elected

president of the Southern Baptist Convention back in 1979, that year, the ensuing year, 1980, President Jimmy Carter was elected, and he's a Southern Baptist, and I'm a Southern Baptist, so he was my president, and I was his president. He invited me to the Oval Office. I went to the Oval Office. Well, how do you go into the Oval Office? Well, I'll tell you what you don't do. You don't catch a cab, go to the front gate, go sauntering in, go knock on the door of the Oval Office. You just don't do that. What you do, you go to a particular room, and you wait there, and there is an envoy for the president who will come and get you and usher you into that office. Even if you've been invited, you need that person to bring you in. Now, friend, the Holy Spirit is that person who'll bring you in to the throne room—the throne room. You say, Well, I'll never get invited to the Oval Office, Pastor. Well, let me tell you something, friend: you're invited into the throne room. Come boldly—boldly—to the throne of grace. And, it's the Holy Spirit of God, when you're filled with the Holy Spirit of God, He'll take you by the hand, and bring you right into the Shekinah glory, the presence of God. "For by him"—Jesus—"we have access by one Spirit"—the Holy Spirit—"unto the Father." Isn't that great? Not because I said it; it's just great anyway.

You see, it's praying in the Spirit. There is the activation of our will, the animation of our bodies. Friend, there's the adaptation of our requests. We don't know what to pray for, as we ought. Then, there's the administration of our access, as we're brought right in.

#### **E. The Holy Spirit Articulates Our Needs in Prayer**

Now, I must close this with one other thing the Holy Spirit will do. There's the articulation of our needs. You know, sometimes also, when we pray, we don't have the vocabulary. There are certain things that we cannot put into words. Look again at this passage of Scripture, in Romans chapter 8.

Now, go back over here. Watch this: "Likewise, the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know now what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." He's not talking about praying in tongues here; that's an utterance. He's talking about groanings that can't be uttered. Do you know what a word is? A word is like a truck; a word is like a vehicle, that delivers a thought from one person to another person. My words are the trucks, the vehicles, that are getting my thoughts to you. But sometimes, you know, there are some thoughts that are too heavy for the truck. I mean, we might have a four-ton problem and a two-ton truck. We may have something that we don't know what to ask for, we don't know how to ask it, we don't know how to articulate it, and there are just things, friend, that we don't know what to do. And the Bible says the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. One translation gives it, sighs that are too deep for words. This word groanings is a word that's used for labor pains. You ever

been there? I've been there. Well, I've never had them; I've had sympathetic labor pains, but you know, when that groaning that sometimes that mother who is about to bring forth. She's not making a speech; she's just in agony. But it is a groaning, the desires to bring forth. There's a need, something that needs to be delivered, to happen, and the Holy Spirit of God makes groanings that cannot be uttered. It's a form of inarticulate prayer.

I've been there. Some years ago, there was a problem in our family. It broke my heart. I staid heaven with my prayers. There came a time when I would just say, O God, that's it, not know how to pray, what to pray for. Just, O God. You know what? The Holy Spirit was saying, Father, Adrian doesn't know what to ask for, but I know. He that searches the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, and He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And, you know, sometimes we don't know how to pray, what to pray for; but when you're in the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit of God is helping you, and praying, that's so wonderful.

You know, if you go down the streets of Memphis Tennessee, and look up on these poles, you'll see something called a transformer—it's a big box. And that heavy voltage comes into that transformer, and then it comes out of that transformer. Those wires that come into your house come into your toaster that you toasted that bagel in this morning; or it comes down to your refrigerator that kept your orange juice cold; came down to your hair dryer that enabled you to blow it, fluff your hair; or it came down to those light bulbs, and so forth. But, you know, if you just took that energy, and, as it comes into that transformer, and put it just right into your hair blower, you probably wouldn't have any hair, or a hair blower, you know. Or, put it into your toaster, you wouldn't have a bagel, and you wouldn't have a toaster.

Now, it's the same energy, but it goes through a transformer. The Holy Spirit of God will take your prayers sometimes, and put them in the divine transformer, and make them adaptable to heaven. Sometimes, I'll be back in my study, and say, Well, we're going out to such-and-such a person. Will you pray for me before we have the service? And that person, maybe be a friend, preacher friend—and he'll pray something like this: And God, bless Adrian as he preaches tonight. And I have a guest preacher. He doesn't know that. I'm not going to preach. But he's saying, Lord, bless Adrian as he preaches tonight. Will that prayer be answered? Sure. It's a sincere prayer. The Holy Spirit says, Father, he doesn't know Adrian's not going to preach tonight. Ron Dunn is going to preach tonight, and so, Lord, just take that prayer, and apply it to Ron. That's the way the Holy Spirit does. Isn't that neat? Isn't that wonderful? "We know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us, sometimes with groanings that cannot be uttered."

## Conclusion

Now, to pray in the Spirit, how do you get started? First of all, you've got to get saved. You can't have the Holy Spirit unless you're saved. Romans 8, verse 9: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he's not of his." Now, friend, without being saved you cannot have the Holy Spirit. But now, wait a minute. You can be saved, and the Holy Spirit of God can be in you, and still not pray in the Spirit. Because not only are you to have the Holy Spirit; He is to have you; you are to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Not only is He to be resident, but He needs to be president. And what you need to do right now, well, let's just bow our heads right now—every head bowed, right now. Why don't you pray, O God, I admit that the problem in my prayer life is I'm just carnally minded. I don't want to pray, and it's because I've been walking according to the flesh, and not according to the Spirit. Lord, I take myself off the throne, and I enthrone the Lord Jesus. Just fill me with the Spirit. Right now, Holy Spirit, I yield anew and afresh my heart and my life to you. Fill me, Spirit of God. Fill me, Spirit of God. Take control of my life. Now, those of you who have never truly been saved, let me lead you in a prayer. Right now, you can pray and ask Jesus Christ into your heart. Now, you may already be a church member, but I'm talking about being truly saved. Let me help you to pray. Would you pray like this: Dear God, Dear God, I know that you love me, and I know that you want to save me. Jesus, you died to save me. Thank you for paying for my sin with your blood on the cross. You promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you, Jesus. Friend, tell him that; tell him that right now. I trust you, Jesus. I really do. Come into my heart. Forgive my sins. Save me, Jesus. Pray it, friend. Pray it right now, right now. Save me, Jesus. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. Lord Jesus, I thank you for saving me. Just pray that, by faith. I thank you for saving me. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. And, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make this public. In your name I pray. Amen.

# God Works All Things Together for Good

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 9, 1989

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:28

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

ROMANS 8:28

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Certainty of the Promise
- II. The Completeness of the Promise
- III. The Cause of the Promise
- IV. The Condition of the Promise
- V. The Consequences of the Promise

Conclusion

## Introduction

The book of Romans has been called the constitution of Christianity. And, every chapter in that wonderful book of Romans is a power-packed chapter. But, there's no chapter in that book like the eighth chapter of Romans. I want you to turn to Romans chapter 8 and look with me tonight at a familiar verse, one that our hearts can rejoice in. Romans 8 verse 28 says, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28). Ladies and gentlemen, that one verse will help you to go to sleep at night when nothing else will.

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God...”*

Someone gave us some wonderful and beautiful garden grown tomatoes. I had some of those tomatoes for lunch, as Joyce fixed our family a wonderful lunch after church. But, I put some poison on them and then ate them. I really did. But, it didn't hurt me because what was poison wasn't poison. Actually, it was a white substance. It was sodium chloride. Some people call it salt. Made up of two ingredients being sodium, which is deadly poison and chloride, which is deadly poison. But, compounded together—table salt—in the right amount is good for your health. And, certainly does cause tomatoes to taste even better than these wonderful tomatoes did.

Now, there are certain things, in and of themselves that are not good. In and of themselves they are bad, even terrible. But—by the chemistry of the cross—God takes these things that in themselves are bad and God compounds them in the crucible of his omnipotence. He mixes them with the hand of his love and they become to us that which is good. They become to us flavors of life and they actually nourish us. Now, I want you to think of that as we think of Romans chapter 8 and verse 28. I declare unto you that it is perhaps—other than John 3:16—the most precious promise in all of the Bible. I want you to notice several things about this great promise.

## I. The Certainty of the Promise

First of all I want you to notice how certain it is. I want you to notice how sure it is. Because, notice what the apostle Paul says. He said, *“And we know that all things work together...”* (Romans 8:28) This is not conjecture. This is not surmising. This is not perhaps so. The apostle Paul says, *“We know that it is true.”* You see, the promises of God are yea and amen in Jesus Christ.

Dr. F. B. Meyer is one of my favorite writers. He said, *“On an occasion, if any promise of God should fail, the Heaven would clothe themselves with sackcloth. The sun, the moon, and the stars would reel from their courses. The universe would rock. And, a hollow wind would moan through a ruined creation the awful message that God can lie. But, thank God, while many may lie, God cannot lie. He abides faithful.”* And, we know that when he said Romans 8:28. When he put it in the Bible, it cannot fail. We know that all things work together for good. Now, don’t get your eyes on circumstances. If you get your eyes on circumstances, you’ll get confused.

One woman said to another man, *“I got married.”* He said, *“That’s wonderful.”* “Uh” she said, *“but my husband is not good looking.”* “Oh,” he said, *“that’s too bad.”* She said, *“He’s very rich though.”* “Oh,” he said, *“that’s good.”* “But he’s very stingy,” she said. “Oh,” he said, *“that’s bad.”* “But,” she said, *“He did build us a big house.”* “Oh,” he said, *“that’s good.”* “But it burned,” she said. “Oh,” he said, *“that’s bad.”* “But he was in it,” she said. Then he didn’t know what to say. We look at circumstances and sometimes we say this is good, then it’s bad, then it’s good, and then it’s bad. Hey, folks, just wait till God is finished. Just wait till God is finished.

Someone wrote these words:

*“On the far reef the breakers  
Recoil in shattered foam,  
While still the sea behind them  
Urges its forces home;  
Its song of triumph surges  
O’er all the thunderous din,*

*The wave may break in failure;  
But the tide is sure to win!  
... mighty sea! thy message  
In clanging spray is cast;  
Within God's plan of progress  
It matters not at last  
How wide the shores of evil,  
How strong the reefs of sin,  
The wave may be defeated,  
But the tide is sure to win!*

—PRISCILLA LEONARD

Get your eyes off the waves and get your eyes on God's mighty tide. And, the same God that programmed the planets to draw that tide back and forth is the God that controls your life. He is the same God that controls this universe. There's the certainty of it.

## **II. The Completeness of the Promise**

But, I want you to notice something else. I want you to notice the completeness of it. Notice what he said. He says, *"And we know that all things work together for good"* (Romans 8:28). Not some things, not a few things, and not most things. There is nothing that is outside the pale of this promise. He says all things work together for good. Now, we know that the sweet things work together for good. Thank God for the kiss of a baby. Thank God for the love of a wife. Thank God for friendship. Thank God for health. Thank God for happiness. Thank God for the church. Thank God for joy. Thank God for music. Thank God for all of these good gifts. *"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above..."* (James 1:17).

And, God takes these things and God uses them for good even when we're not good. The Bible says, *"...the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"* (Romans 2:4). The sweet things work together for good. What about the sorrowful things? They work together for good also. Turn with me to the book of Jeremiah. Let me show you something here. Jeremiah chapter 24 is an interesting passage of Scripture. You can see how God dealt with his ancient people, Judah. Jeremiah chapter 24. And, I want to read verse 5. Look at it with me please. The Bible says, *"Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans—now watch this next phrase—for their good."* (Jeremiah 24:5).

What would happen if the Soviets were to take over the United States and export us all to Siberia? We would say, "God has forsaken us." That's what happened to Judah.

The Babylonians came in and took them out of their land. And, God had them put into a foreign country as captives. But, why did God say he did it? Had God forsaken them? No. God said, "I did it for their good." You're in the Old Testament. Turn with me to the book of Psalms. Psalm 119. And, look with me for just a moment in verse 71. David said, "*It is good for me that I have been afflicted...*" (Psalm 119:71). Have you ever said that? It takes a lot of faith to say that. Anybody afflicted? Anybody sick? Anybody sorrowful? Anybody under the gun? Anybody hurting? Would you say it is good? It takes a lot of faith to say that. But, that's what David said. You see, God had to get David's attention. And, what God taught David when he was afflicted was more than God could teach him when he was well. Sometimes the bed of affliction and a sickbed will do more than a sermon.

I want you to look—you're still in the Old Testament—at Genesis chapter 50. It's the first book, but near the end of that first book. Genesis chapter 50. There was a man—I think one of the finest men in the Bible—whose name was Joseph. I can't find anything really bad said about Joseph. I know he was a sinner like the rest of us, but how he was mistreated. If you would read the story of Joseph you would find that he was betrayed by his brethren. He was put into a pit and left for dead. And, then brought out of that pit and sold into slavery. After he was sold into slavery, he was cast into prison. He was maligned and ridiculed. And, his brothers did it to him, those closest to him. But, I want you to notice what this man—Joseph—said in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20. As he looked at his brethren he said, "*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good...*" (Genesis 50:20). There it is again.

Now, suppose that had happened to you. Suppose you'd been left in a pit by your brothers. Suppose you'd been sold as a slave. Suppose you'd been lied about, languished and rotted in prison. Suppose you had been falsely accused of rape and all of these things. That happened to Joseph. Joseph said to his brothers, "you meant it for harm." But, God meant it for good. God arched Romans 8:28 over that entire situation. You're in the Old Testament. Again turn to 2 Chronicles with me for just a moment. 2 Chronicles, and let's look for a moment in chapter 33, verse 11. "*Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God*" (2 Chronicles 33:11–13).

Here was a king on his throne. And, God took that king from his throne. The Bible says that God did it. He took away Manasseh's golden crown and gave Manasseh iron chains. And, yet the Bible says that when that happened, it brought about a spiritual

revival, it's the life of Manasseh. What am I trying to say, dear friend? You may be like Joseph, suffering at the hand of your brethren. You may be like David, afflicted in body. You may be like King Manasseh, dragged from your throne. You may be like Judah, carried into captivity. And, I tell you my dear friend all of the sorrowful things that happen if you're a Christian and if you love God they will work together for good. Sweet things do happen and sorrowful things do happen. I want to tell you, my friend, that Satanic things do happen. You say, what about what the devil does? Does that work together for good? It does. You see, the devil himself—though he doesn't desire to and though he doesn't want to—gives glory to God. The Bible says that, God makes even the wrath of man to praise him. Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. The apostle Paul had a vision from God. It was so big, so great, and so glorious. The Bible tells us about it in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. It tells us that Paul was in danger of being carried away into perhaps pride, egotism, or going beyond certain bounds that God had set for him. And he said there in 2 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 7, "...*there was given to me a thorn in the flesh*—and then notice what he said—*the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure*" (2 Corinthians 12:7).

Now, here God wanted to humble Paul. And, God allowed the devil to become his messenger, his errand boy, and his servant. That doesn't mean that the devil meant it for good. That didn't mean what the devil did was good. That doesn't mean a thorn in the flesh is good. But, here is God who takes everything that happens and he works it together for good. And, here was the apostle Paul who was broken, humble, and hurt. But, he said, when I'm weak, then I'm strong. And, God gave him added grace. And, that grace made him greater than he ever could have been. And, even satanic things work together for good to those who love God. I'll go a step further. Sinful things work together for good to those who love God. I didn't say sin was good any more than I said Satan was good.

But, I am telling you, my dear friend, that God is over all and God is the final answer. God is sovereign. And, even where there is sin, the Bible says, "...*where sin abounded, grace did much more abound*" (Romans 5:20). If a man sins then he will suffer. If a man sins then he will be hurt. If a man sins then it's terrible, it's horrible, and it's heinous. But, when Simon Peter cursed and swore and denied the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus said to Simon, "*But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not...*" (Luke 22:32). And, then he said, Simon, "...*and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren*" (Luke 22:32). Jesus was telling Simon that what he did was bad. It was terrible. But, I know that you're going to come out on the other side. And, even the sin that you committed is going to be used as a platform to help and strengthen others." Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it amazing how God works all things together for good? Peter suffered, and he wept bitterly. Because "*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to*

*be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:11).*

Not only do the sinful work together for good. But my dear friend, the simple things. Anything you can mention. Did you know that the very hairs of your head are numbered? Did you know not a blade of grass moves without God’s permission? Did you know, dear friend that God takes the most minute and inconsequential detail, and He is moving it and working it all according to His sovereign purpose? I think of Pharaoh—the mighty king and ruler of Egypt—he’d decreed that all the little boy babies would be put to death. Little Moses was hid in the bulrushes. There’s a verse of Scripture that says, “...*the babe wept...*” (Exodus 2:6). Pharaoh’s daughter heard that baby crying and her maternal instincts went out. She found that little baby and she raised him. He became mighty Moses that led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and brought about the demise of that great monarchy. And, what caused it? One of the events was a baby’s cry. Mighty Pharaoh. *Waaa*—the sound of a baby’s cry. A little baby. That small thing. Simple things. Great things.

O my dear friend, whatever it is, there is completeness to this thing. “*And we know that all things—all things, all things, all things—work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*” (Romans 8:28).

### **III. The Cause of the Promise**

Now, I want you to see something else. I want you to see not only the completeness of it but I want you to see the cause of it. Why does it happen this way? Well, now in the King James Version of the Scripture I read from tonight it says, “*and we know that all things work together for good...*” (Romans 8:28). But, that may be translated—I think could be and should be—and we know that God works all things together for good. Things in themselves don’t work together. You see, where God does not rule, God overrules. God is the one who brings order out of confusion and harmony out of discord. Don’t forget—if this verse seems too much for you to take in—that there is a God in the Heavens who’s doing all of this.

The choir and orchestra were playing tonight, “A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing.” This is one of the greatest pieces of music the world has ever heard. It was written by Martin Luther, one of the greatest theologians, a courageous man. But, what a lot of people don’t realize is that sometimes he had fits of despondency, almost despair. He would get in a blue mood. He would go in his study or in his basement and stay there day after day after day. He would not want to see anybody. He would feel depressed and melancholy. This man who had such great faith would go down into the depths of despair.

His wife would try to cheer him and help him but she couldn’t. One day his wife—

whose name was Catherine, he called her Cathy, her Catherine—tried to bring him out. She couldn't so she thought she would shock him. She put on a funeral dress. It was black. She put on black gloves. She put on a black hat and a black veil. Everything dressed in black as if she were going to a funeral. And, then she walked into the room where he was. And, he said, "Why Cathy, who has died? Who has died?" "Oh," she said, "Martin, haven't you heard? God is dead." He said, "Cathy, that's blasphemy." She said, "It is. And, it's blasphemy for you to live like God is dead also." We know that God works all things together for good. There's a God in the Heavens whether you can understand it or not.

Dear friend, it's not things that work together for good. The cause is that God himself does it.

#### **IV. The Condition of the Promise**

I want you to notice not only the cause of it, but I want you to notice the condition of it. There's a condition here. It's not just automatic. The Bible says, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God...*" (Romans 8:28). Those who love him. Listen to it again. Romans 8:28 says, "*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God...*" That's the condition of it.

If you're here tonight, and you don't love God then Romans 8:28 doesn't apply to you. The despisers of God cannot claim this. The haters of God may not claim this. But, let me tell you something very wonderful. Everybody who loves God can claim it. Now, I'll tell why that's so wonderful. There are people who can preach better than I can. There are people who can sing better than I can. There are people who can give more money than I can. There are people who are more gifted in service than I am, but nobody can love God better than I can or you can. Isn't that wonderful? Boys and girls, anybody, just love God. That's the condition. He didn't say, "Be able to play an instrument." He didn't say, "Be able to give a million dollars". He just simply said, "The one condition is that you love God". And, if you love God, then this verse applies to you.

But, now let me say something else while we're here. If you don't love God, this verse applies to you only in reverse. All things work together for bad to those who don't love God. Now, you think for a moment. The bad things work together for good if you do love God. The good things work together for bad if you don't love God. Let me give you an example. Preaching of the Gospel. Is preaching the Gospel good or bad? I didn't say is the kind of preaching I do good or bad? I don't answer that. I'm just saying preaching is—we know—a good thing. But, you see dear friend, this book is a sword and it's a two edged sword. And, when it is preached, it cuts. And, if it does not cut to heal, it will wound. If it does not bless you, it will convict you and judge you. You're never the same after hearing The Word of God. The same wind that blows one ship into the harbor is

the same wind that blows another ship upon the rock. You see, dear friend, the Gospel is either good or bad. If you are in this service tonight and you hear me preach and you get saved and you love God then that's working together for your good. But, if you hear me preach and you don't love God, what I do tonight is hurting you. If you don't get saved, it will be used against you.

Jesus said, when you go to a house to witness, you knock on the door. Jesus said, if they receive you, go into that house and share, and let your peace be upon that house. But. Jesus said, If they will not receive you, shake the dust off your feet. Shake it off. Because he said that dust will be used against them in the judgment. O God, I didn't have a chance. There's the dust off the shoes of my servant that I sent to your house. And, that which would have worked together for good to bless will work together for bad to blast. The Bible is a two-edged sword. What about the resurrection of Jesus Christ? Is that good or is that bad? Well, if you're saved, it works together for good but if you're not saved, do you know what it means? In Acts chapter 17 the Bible says, *"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead"* (Acts 17:31). You see, if you're not saved and you don't intend to get saved, you ought not to come to church on Easter. You should not put on your glad rags and celebrate. Easter is the day that seals your doom. You can't hold court if the judge is dead and you can't hold court if the defendant is dead. But, what God is saying is that he rose up Jesus Christ to judge and he will raise you up. And, you'll not be able to pull the dirt over your face and hide from God. The resurrection of Jesus Christ works together for bad if you don't love God. I'm telling you, there's nothing that is good, that will work for good for you if you don't love God. Ultimately, it will all be bad.

The Bible says, *"...and the plowing of the wicked, is sin"* (Proverbs 21:4) I remember reading in Judges chapter 5 and verse 20 about a man named Sisera who set out against God's army. And, the Bible says of Sisera, *"They fought from heaven; the stars in their courses fought against Sisera"* (Judges 5:20). No wonder he lost the battle. The very stars in their courses were against him. You talk about star wars. The stars in their courses fought against Sisera Do you know what that verse means. I will tell you what it means. It means that the entire universe is against the man who is against God. Every grain of sand and very stellar body is against the man who is against God. The condition of it is that you love God. That is one thing that anybody and everybody can do if they will do. That's the **condition of it**.

## V. The Consequences of the Promise

One last thing I want to say and that is the **consequences** of it. How do all things

work together for good? Well, that you will be wealthy? No. That you will be healthy? Not necessarily. That you will be happy. Perhaps, but not necessarily. What are the consequences? Well, continue to read Romans 8:28, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28). Just underline that phrase. Well, what is His purpose? Well, I’m glad you asked. Let me read it. *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren...”* (Romans 8:29). Now, that is what it all works together for. That’s the consequences of it that you might be like Jesus.

So many people have the wrong idea. They think, well, everything is working together for good. Here’s the construction that some people put on it. They are driving down the road and they have a blow out and they say, “Oh well, praise God, all things work together for the good, there is a sale on tires somewhere.” That isn’t what that means. Now, God may do that in mercy and that’s fine and I think frequently He does. But, dear friend, that’s an awfully cheap application of this verse. God’s plan for you is not that you have new tires on your tires. God’s plan for you is that you are like Jesus and that you will be conformed to the image of His Son.

## **Conclusion**

Suffering and pain, sunshine and rain, good and bad times, sweet and sorrowful things, sinful and satanic things, simple and sublime things all things work together to those who love God. It happens to make them like Jesus Christ. Friend, I want to tell you, that’s wonderful. It’s one of the greatest promises in The Word of God. Let’s bow in prayer. Father, God, I pray tonight if there are those in this building who don’t truly love you that they might understand, Lord, that the entire universe is programmed against them. That even the things that they think are good will ultimately be against them. But, help us dear Lord God, O, God those that do love you to know that ultimately that everything is going to be worked together for their good and your glory. In Jesus’ name, amen.

# The Chemistry of the Cross

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 12, 1993**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:28**

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

ROMANS 8:28

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Certainty of the Promise
- II. The Completeness of the Promise
- III. The Cause of the Promise
- IV. The Condition of the Promise
- V. The Consequences of the Promise

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word and find Romans chapter eight—Romans chapter eight—and we're going to see a very familiar verse. But I pray God, that He'll take the familiarity of that verse, and He will mix it with a brand new freshness for your heart and for your mind today—Romans chapter eight and verse twenty-eight.

One time, I took an old high school friend to breakfast after we had been apart for many, many years. We were in another city. I was staying in a hotel and I looked forward to being at breakfast with Richard. And, after breakfast, I said, I'll get the tab. And I picked it up, and I meant to sign my room number on the tab, but often someone will ask me to inscribe a Bible, and when I inscribe a Bible, I just inscribe the Bible many times, Adrian Rogers, and then put a verse of Scripture under it. Sometimes it's Psalm 34. Sometimes it's Romans 8:28. And sometimes it's Romans 1:16. But often I'll sign Romans 8:28, which is our text for today.

And so, I said, I'll sign the ticket, and I meant to put my room number, but rather than putting my room number, I put a Scripture verse there: Romans 8:28. And I went up and handed it to the cashier, and she looked at it. She said, Mister, we don't have a room 828.

I said, Oh, I'm sorry, that's a verse out of the Bible. That's not the room I'm staying in, but that's a verse from the Bible. But come to think of it, it's a wonderful room to live

in. And here's what it says; I want you to hear what it says right here—Romans eight and verse twenty-eight: And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God and to them that are the called according to His purpose.

What an incredible verse that is! I want to talk to you today about the chemistry of the cross. If you go to the pharmacy, you need some medicine, that pharmacist will take bottles from his shelf sometimes, and powders and other things that may be by themselves noxious poison, but he mixes them together, and makes medicine for us. And, so many times, God does the same thing. He takes situations and problems and things that in themselves look that they're bad and hurtful and harmful, and the God mixes these together in the crucible of His love, and the crucible of His wisdom, and the result is medicine for our souls—something good and something wonderful.

This morning when I had my oatmeal, in that oatmeal there was some salt. And salt is what? Sodium chloride—chlorine, deadly poison. But, put together they make salt, necessary for life. And so, I want you to see how God takes the situation of your life, the circumstances, and God, by the chemistry of the cross, makes these things work together for your good and for His glory.

## **I. The Certainty of the Promise**

Now having said that, I want you to look at our text very carefully, because we're just going to camp right here in Romans chapter eight and verse twenty-eight. And as we think of the chemistry of the cross, the very first thing I want you to think about is the certainty of it. Do you have that? The certainty of it.

How does that verse begin? Look at it. It says, and we know that all things work together for good. We know that all things work together for good. No ifs, ands, and buts about it. This is a promise of God. It is ironclad. It is rock-ribbed. No stutter, no stammer. You can say, I don't care what happens, I don't care how bad it may seem, I know that I know that this is going to work together for God's glory and for my good.

F. B. Meyer was a preacher of another generation, but he said something so wonderful I copied it down. And, this is what he said—he said, if any promise of God should fail, the heavens would clothe themselves with sackcloth. The sun, moon and stars would reel from their courses. The universe would rock, and a hollow wind would moan through a ruined creation, the awful creation, that God can lie. But, friend, He can't lie. He cannot lie. And, He says that all things work together for good to those who love God.

And so, the very first thing I want you to get into your heart and in your soul today is the certainty of it—the certainty of it, the certainty of it. Do you have it?

## II. The Completeness of the Promise

Second thing: not only the certainty of it, but I want you to see the completeness of it. Look at that verse again: And we know that all things work together for good. Not most things. Not some things. Not even almost all things. But that big little word, I thank God that it is there: we know that all things—hallelujah—all things work together for good.

Now, let's just think about those all things. Now, we know that the sweet things work together for good. Oh, there are many sweet things that happen in our lives today. Today, my wife fixed me an extra special breakfast. And, I looked over at her and thought, you know, she's such a wonderful woman. She's so sweet and so good to me, and I'm grateful for every blessing. I've been thanking God all this morning for the blessings of God. And they just make me want to be a better Christian. They just make me want to be a better Christian. They ought to make you want to be a better Christian. For the Bible says, in Romans chapter two and verse four, the goodness of God leads us to repentance. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. The goodness of God leads us to repentance. God is so good. Count your many blessings. Name them one by one. It will surprise you what the Lord has done. The sweet things.

You say, yes, I can understand that; but now, wait a minute, not only the sweet things, but the sorrowful things. Do you have a broken heart today? You say, no, I don't think a broken heart is good. But I'll tell you this: it will work for good—it will work for your good. I was looking at some scriptures this morning, and I want to share them with you, as to how sorrowful things work for good.

For example, think about how God worked with the people of Judah. And, God carried the people of Judah away to a strange land. It would be as if the Russians had subjugated the United States and took us and put us in Siberia. Would we say that's good? We'd say, no, that's not good. But put in your margin Jeremiah chapter twenty-four and verse five, where God is speaking about how He carried His people away. And God says, I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans, for their good.

Now, if you and I were to wake up this morning in Siberia, we would say, this is terrible. But it may be that God would have done it for our good. As a matter of fact, I think God is getting ready to do some terrible things to America, for our good. We have been cursed with blessings. I think we're about to be blessed with cursings. We don't know how to handle our blessings. And it seems like the more that God blesses us, the more arrogant and more sinful that we get. And it may be that God will have to do something to America, for our good, just like He did to Judah, for their good.

I was thinking about David also. David, who was a man after God's own heart, but David had a tendency to stray from God, to get away from God, and you know what

God did for David? God afflicted David, and God made David sick. And, I want you to see what David wrote in Psalm 119, verse 71. Do you have it? Psalm 119:71—he said, it is good for me that I have been afflicted. Have you ever said that? O God, thank you for this sickness. Thank you for this suffering. Thank you for this adversity. Thank you for this problem. Thank you for this heartache. Thank you for this thing I'm going through. Takes a lot of faith to say, it is good for me that I have been afflicted. And David said, it is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn Thy statutes. Did you know that affliction is sometimes the best teacher, and we never see as clearly as when we see through eyes that have been washed through tears. And when we get on our back, it's then that we begin to look up into the face of God. And a sick bed can often teach more than a sermon.

And then, look at Joseph. I was thinking about Joseph—what a wonderful man was Joseph! Joseph loved God with all of his heart. But you know what happened to Joseph? Joseph was put in a pit by his brothers. He was sold as a slave. He was cast into prison, and languished in prison for two years, and he'd not done anything wrong. But his abasement made him ready for his advancement, and he became the prime minister of Egypt. And this is what he said to his brothers, in Genesis chapter fifty and verse twenty—listen: but as for you, you thought evil against me. Do you have somebody who's doing you wrong? Do you have an enemy? Just keep on loving God. Because, listen: but as for you, you thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good. You see, all things work together for good—your enemy trying to do your harm. And here's Joseph, cast in a pit by his brothers, sold for a slave, languishing in prison, being blamed for assault and rape and all of these terrible things. The devil is saying, look what I'm doing to Joseph! But God was saying, you just don't understand the chemistry of the cross. You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good.

There was a king whose name was Manasseh. And Manasseh had difficulty serving God. God just couldn't get Manasseh's attention. And if you're taking notes, write this down, because this is a blesser: 2 Chronicles chapter thirty-three, verses eleven through thirteen. Now listen to it carefully: "Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria..." Now, the Assyrians were cruel and wicked people. Now Manasseh is the king. Now, listen: "...which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And, when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers..." When? When he was in affliction. "And he prayed unto him: and he was entreated of him—that is, God heard him—and heard his supplication and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God." Listen. His iron chains did him more good than his golden crown. And I want to tell you, friend, that that was a greater blessing to him. And God may sometime have to pull you

from your throne, just like He did Manasseh. God may have to put you in a prison, that you will seek God. Now, what am I saying? I'm saying the sweet things work together for good. The sorrowful things work together for good.

I'll tell you another thing: The satanic things work together for good. Well, you say, why doesn't God just kill the devil? Did you know that God uses the devil? That may be a surprise to you. But Paul had an affliction. That affliction was called a thorn in the flesh. And then, Paul called it a messenger of Satan. But he says, there was given to me a messenger of Satan. Who gave it to him? God gave it to him. You say, I don't understand this. Well, you see, all things work together for good, and God rules in the heavens. And even Satan unwittingly becomes the servant of God.

I think I have an illustration that fits perfectly here. Years and years and years ago, I heard of a poor woman who lived in a threadbare apartment, and she loved God with all of her heart. She had a landlord. The landlord didn't love God at all. As a matter of fact, he took great joy in ridiculing her because of her faith and trust in the Lord. And this poor woman, this widow, was living from hand to mouth. And the time came that she had no food in the house, and she prayed to God. And she said, God, I don't have any food. I don't have any groceries. O God, you promised to meet my need. Lord, I ask you, give me some groceries. The old landlord was listening through the paper-thin walls. He heard her praying. He thought he would cure her from her religious superstitions. So, you know what he did? He went out and bought a bountiful basket of groceries. And while she was away, he went in with his passkey, unlocked the door to her apartment, and put this basket of groceries there on her table, and backed out and waited. He was listening. When she came in, there was a squeal of delight. Oh, Jesus! Thank you, Jesus! Thank you, Lord! Thank you! Hallelujah! Thank you for an answered prayer! She rejoiced, and did a little dance there in the room, and then, knock, knock, knock, knock—she was knocking at his door. You say there's no God? You say that God doesn't answer prayer? Come in here—I want to show you something. Look over there. Do you see that basketful of groceries? Let me tell you about that basketful of groceries. I didn't have anything. I was down to nothing. And I prayed and asked God for groceries. And now, look what God has given me. His lips twisted in a cynical smile. And he said, you poor, old, deluded, religious fanatic and fool. I heard you pray for those groceries. I heard you ask God. I bought those groceries. I put them there on your table. Here is the receipt for those groceries. I knew that you would say that God did it. God didn't give you those groceries. I gave you those groceries. You Christians are always ready to give any coincidence, any happening, to give God the glory and the credit. I am the one that bought those groceries. What a fool you are! She said, no, you're the one who's wrong. I'm the one who is right. And you listen to me, sir. I asked God for groceries, and I got groceries, even if God did send it by the devil. Now, you

think about that—you think about that. There is a God who rules in the affairs of this world, and God is over all. The satanic things work together for good.

But not only the satanic things, now, listen. This is going to be hard to believe, but sinful things work together for good. Now, no Christian should willingly, deliberately sin, because if you're bound to sin, you're bound to suffer. But even that suffering will work together for your good. The Bible says that God makes the wrath of man to praise Him. And the Bible says, where sin abounds, grace doth much more abound.

The illustration I'm thinking about is Simon Peter. Before the crucifixion of Jesus, Simon Peter had boasted that he would go with Christ both to prison and to death. And Jesus prophesied, and said, Simon, before the cock crows, you'll thrice deny that you know me. But He said, Peter, I've prayed for you that your faith fail not. And then He said, Peter, when you're converted, strengthen your brethren. And Peter denied Jesus. And Jesus was betrayed by that denial. Peter cursed and swore. A terrible thing. But God arched the rainbow of Romans 8:28 over what Peter did. And did you know that his bitter weeping, the Bible says that he went out and wept bitterly. But Jesus forgave him. Jesus restored him. And in a very odd sense, a strange way, even that disobedience was used to strengthen Adrian Rogers. When you are converted, strengthen your brethren. Isn't that amazing—how God could take even that sin and use that sin to help strengthen me and to strengthen Simon Peter?

You know, the Bible says, no chastening for the present time seems to be joyous, but grievous. Peter wept bitterly. But afterward—afterward—it yielded the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them that exercise thereby. That's what the Bible tells us in Hebrews chapter twelve.

And what am I saying? Friend, listen to this pastor this morning. The Bible means it when it says that all things work together. The sweet things. The sorrowful things. The satanic things. The sinful things. The simple things. The smallest things work together for good. It's amazing how God sits at master control.

Pharaoh has decided that all Jewish babies are going to be put to death. But God takes a little baby, puts that little baby in the bulrushes, and Pharaoh's daughter comes by and decides that she wants to bathe in the Nile. Can you imagine this, this princess who can bathe in her marble tubs? Maybe she remembers the little swimming hole where she used to play as a kid. She decides she's going to go down to the Nile. And then, the Bible says this: And the baby wept. Lo, the baby wept. Have you ever heard a baby cry? Waaahh, a baby cried. And God took the cry of a baby and brought Pharaoh's mighty kingdom crashing down. The smallest things. God—God is the sovereign God. The certainty of it. The completeness of it.

### **III. The Cause of the Promise**

Now, I want you to notice a third thing, as we look at Romans 8:28. I want you to notice the cause of it. How does this happen? "And we know that all things work together for good." Literally, some translations give it this way: And we know that God works all things together. And put that with Ephesians chapter one, verse eleven. The Bible speaks of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will—Him, who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will. Now, if you think that what I'm saying today about all things working together for good to those who love God, if you think that's far-fetched, do you know why you think it's far-fetched? Because you just don't believe in a big enough God. You see, we know that God is the one who is working all things. That's the cause of it. And sometimes we get our eyes off of that.

Martin Luther was the mighty reformer. Martin Luther who led in the Protestant Reformation, was a man of great, great faith. But, you know what? Martin Luther, like some of us, was given to fits of despondency and depression. And, one day, Martin Luther, in spite of his great faith, he just got depressed. He got his eyes on the circumstances and the situation rather than on God. And he went into his room. And, there in his room, he was brooding. There in his room, he was in a state of melancholy. Looking at circumstances, looking at the situation, and he wouldn't come out. His wife's name was Katrinka. He called her Cathy. She tried to coax him out of the room, but he wouldn't come out. Then, you know what Cathy did? One day, she put on a black dress. She put on a black hat. She put a black veil over her face. She put black gloves on, and came into that room. She was dressed for a funeral. He looked at her. He said, Cathy, who has died? Oh, she said, Martin, haven't you heard? God is dead. He said, what did you say? She said, I said, God is dead. He said, Cathy, that's blasphemy! She said, yes. And it's blasphemy for you to be living like He's dead. Whew! Martin Luther said, O God, forgive me. Forgive me. And Martin Luther got up and went out and began to live like God is not dead. God is alive. And he wrote, I guess, my favorite hymn, "A Mighty Fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing. Our helper He amid the flood, of mortal ills prevailing. Did we in our own strength confide? Our striving would be losing. Were not the right man on our side, a man of God's own choosing." That's Jesus. And we know that all things work together for good. That's the cause of it. God is the cause of it.

### **IV. The Condition of the Promise**

Now, I want you to notice next, not only the cause of it, but I want you to notice the condition of it. This is not a promise for everyone. This is not axiomatic for everybody. There is a condition to Romans 8:28—listen to it. And we know that all things work together for good, to what? Do you see it? Look at it. To them that love God—to them that love God. You can't put your initial by this, unless you love God. Despisers of God

cannot claim this promise. Haters of God cannot claim this privilege and this promise. And, by the way, if you don't love God, there's something wrong with you. It's well been said that somebody who does not love God is a beast with a man's head. You know what encourages me about this condition? I'll tell you what encourages me about this condition. Others may be able to give more than I can give. Others may be able to sing or preach or serve better than I can. But there's nobody on earth who can love God more than I can, or you can, or anybody else. I mean, the person next to you may have a lot more talent than you have. They may have a lot more resources than you have. They may have more opportunities than you have. But, my friend, there is nobody who has a monopoly on love. Isn't that wonderful? I mean, listen. You want to love God? Just have at it. Anybody can love God as much as they want to love God, and that is the condition for having Romans 8:28 work in your life: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."

Have you ever thought about it? That you could put Romans 8:28 in reverse? All things work together for good to those who love God. And to those who don't love God, all things work together for bad. Did you know that? Just put it in reverse. You say, well, I'm living high, wide, and handsome right now. But, friend, it's working, not for your good, but for evil, in your life. All things work together for evil—let me put it that way—to those who don't love God.

Let me show you how seemingly good things can work against you. For example, preaching can work against you. Did you know it's dangerous to come to church? If you don't love God, and you come and listen to me preach, and you have no desire to love God, and you don't want to know God—maybe you've come for whatever reason, I don't know; but you don't intend to love God—did you know this sermon will do you damage? It will do you harm. The Bible says the gospel that we preach is a savor of life unto life, or death unto death. The gospel sword is a two-edged sword. Jesus said, when you go into a place to preach, into a village to preach, if they hear you, wonderful. But, He said, if they won't hear you, He said, shake the dust off your feet. And then, Jesus said, that dust will be used against them in the day of judgment. Somebody knocks on your door to invite you to Jesus Christ, and you say, would you get out of here? I don't want to hear that. Listen, you folks quit pestering me. And the door is slammed. There is the dust of the soul-winner right here. God says, angel, get that dust. Now, put it in the vaults up in heaven. The final judgment comes. You're there. You say, I didn't have an opportunity to hear God. God, you can't let me die and go to hell. O God, you can't let this happen to me. O God, have mercy upon me. O God, I never had a chance to be saved. God says, Angel, get exhibit A. Angel comes out there with a little dust in the palm of his hand. You say, what is that? Oh, you see that dust? That's the dust off the foot of my servant Bob Gallina, that came and knocked at your door when you shut the

door in his face. You see that? That is a witness against you in the day of judgment. Now preaching is good, but not if you refuse it. It works together for bad.

Think about Jesus. Is Jesus good or is Jesus bad? It all depends. If you receive Him, He's wonderful. But if you don't receive Him, He works together for bad. Did you know that? Did you know that Jesus is the door? I want to ask you a question. That piece of wood over there, is that the door, or is the opening the door? How many of you believe that the opening is the door, let me see your hand. Come, you're scared to death. How many of you believe the piece of wood is the door, let me see your hand. How many of you say, I think you're trying to trap me, and I'm not going to lift my hand? All right, what is the door? What is the door? Is the door the opening that you come through? Or, is the door the piece of wood that closes the opening? Which is the door? Well, if you didn't have an opening, you couldn't have a door. Can you have a door without a shutter or closer or piece of wood in it? I guess so. But, if you went down to the hardware store, and said, I want to buy a door. They couldn't sell you an opening. They just sell you a piece of wood, or metal, or whatever it is. What is the door? Friend, you're both right. The door is what let you in, and the door is what keeps you out. And His name is Jesus. He'll either let you in, or He'll keep you out. You see, listen: to those who love Him, He's the way in. But to those who refuse Him, His righteousness and His holiness say, you cannot come in here. All things work together for bad to those who don't love God.

Did you know that the wicked pluck death from the tree of life? And if Jesus is not your savior—listen to me—He'll be your judge. You're going to meet Jesus. I mean, you have a date with Deity. You will meet Jesus. And you will bow the knee to Jesus. You will bow either to Him as Savior and Lord, or you will bow to Him as judge and executioner. But you will bow the knee to Jesus Christ as I live, saith the Lord. Every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.

Now, think of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Is the resurrection of Jesus Christ good? You'd better believe it's good. But what about if you're not saved, is it good? No. In Acts chapter seventeen, the apostle Paul, preaching on Mars Hill, said this: God has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained. Whereof he hath given assurance unto all men in that he raised him from the dead. Now what does that mean? It means that the assurance of judgment is the resurrection of Jesus. Why? Well, you can't hold court, if the judge is dead. And you can't hold court, if the defendant is dead. What Paul is saying is this: that the same God that raised up Jesus Christ is the God that will raise you up, and you'll come to judgment. What he is saying is this—and listen very carefully: you cannot crawl up in the grave and pull the dirt over your face and hide from God. The resurrection of Jesus Christ seals your doom. I've never been able to understand why unsaved people will put on their glad rags and celebrate Easter. I'm glad they come, because I can shoot 'em

full of Jesus. I'm glad they come, hoping they get saved. But if they don't intend to get saved, why should a person celebrate the day that seals his doom? God hath given assurance unto all men that there will be a judgment, in that He raised Jesus from the dead.

Oh, my friend, the condition of Romans 8:28 is that you love God. If you don't love God, Romans 8:28 goes into reverse for you. And all things work together for bad to those who don't love God. But to those who love God, all things work together for good. That's the condition of it.

## **V. The Consequences of the Promise**

Now, let's come to the best part and the vital part. I want you to notice the consequences of it. What are the consequences? What is the good? What is the good that it all works together for? You know, sometimes we trivialize this verse so much. And we just take such a short-sighted view of this verse. We're driving down the road and we have a blow out, and we say, Oh well, all things work together for good. I guess there's a sale on tires somewhere. No, that's not what this verse means. That's not what this verse means. Listen. In verse twenty-eight—I'm going to tell you something profound: it's followed by verse twenty-nine.

Now look in verse twenty-nine: For—and that word for is a preposition which means unto; it moves toward something—For, because whom he did foreknow he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son. Do you know what the good is that all things are working together for? Do you know what it is? Not to make you healthy. Not to make you wealthy. Not to make you happy. Not to give you fun. But to make you like Jesus. That was a good place for an amen. To make you like Jesus. The good is that we be conformed to the image of God's Son. And how wonderful that is that you and I can be like the Lord Jesus Christ, and be with the Lord Jesus Christ—be glorified with Him in eternity. What a blessing! What a blessing! Let me tell you something: God's not finished with you yet. God is not finished with you yet. He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Now, if you're not saved, and everything is going good for you right now—you're healthy, you're happy, you're wealthy, but you don't love God; and so you're sitting here saying, I don't need his God; I don't need his Savior—the Bible says, in Judges chapter five and verse twenty, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera. Sisera didn't love God, and the whole universe was against him. And God has programmed the whole universe against you. And I don't care how good things are right now, one of these days, it's going to cave in for you, because all things work together for bad to those who

don't love God. And you're going to die and drop into hell, because you don't love God.

Let me tell you about the devil. The devil always gives the best first. The bread of deceit is sweet, but afterwards a man's mouth will be filled with gravel. Let me tell you about Jesus. Jesus always saves the best for the last. Remember the wedding feast? The man said, I don't understand it. People generally put out the best wine first, but you've saved the best for the last. He always does. Do you know what the consequences of loving God are? That, friend, one day we'll be glorified with the Lord Jesus Christ. We'll be made like Him. This is what God is working for in my life, and in your life. All things work together for good to those who love God, and that good is that you'll be like Jesus. And when the purpling dawn of eternity is mingled with the setting sun of your life, when all of the things that you've dreamed for and schemed for have gone, and you see Him, and you're like Him, you'll say, hallelujah, Romans 8:28. And we know, we know, we know, that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are called according to His purpose. Amen?

Father, we thank you for your Word. In Jesus name. Amen.

# Why Do Good Things Happen to Bad People?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** June 14, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:28–39

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

ROMANS 8:28

## Outline

Introduction

- I. I Am Graced by His Purpose
- II. I Am Guided by God’s Providence
- III. I Am Guarded by His Power
  - A. No Intimidation
  - B. No Deprivation
  - C. No Incrimination
  - D. No Condemnation
  - E. No Separation
- IV. I Am Gladdened by God’s Presence

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and turn to Romans chapter 8? And, we’re going to backtrack and revisit Romans chapter 8. My wife reminded me—she said, “Adrian, you left out a passage of scripture that I was waiting to hear you preach on.” And, I said, “Well Joyce, I guess I was moving too fast.” And so, this is a sermon meets, shall we say, requirements, but not in reality. It’s something that is burning in my heart. And, let me just ask you a question: What is life all about? I mean, folks, we’re here for such a short time, and then we die. Yes, we die. Death runs in my family, and it runs in your family; and at best, life is a puzzle. There are things that we don’t understand. There are circumstances that we cannot control. And then, there are joys unspeakable and full of glory. Life is full of mystery, misery, and magnificence, but it doesn’t seem to make sense.

Now friend, if you get into the eighth chapter of Romans, you’re going to find that God will bring an incredible sense to all that we see. And, we’re going to learn

something of the magnificent grace of God in it all and through it all. A man, not long ago, wrote a book. The title of the book is *Why Do Bad things Happen to Good People?* Well, that's a very wonderful title, but I don't like it really. I'll tell you why: folks, first of all, there are no good people. The Bible says, "*There is none...good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:12). I don't know whether you believe that or not, but that's scripture. I mean, in and of ourselves, there are no good people. "*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). "*There is none...good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:12).

So, let's just take that question, and turn it over, and ask not, "Why do bad things happen to good people," but friend, "Why do good things happen to bad people?" That is the grace of God. I mean, everything good that has come to us is the grace of God, in spite of our sins. Why do good things happen to bad people—to sinners such as we? Well, we're going to find a divine plan, an incredible promise. And, there are four things today I pray the Holy Ghost will write upon your heart indelibly, will etch upon your consciousness and cause to reverberate through your being—four wonderful truths, things that are true about you if you have come to know Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Write four things about yourself.

## **I. I Am Graced by His Purpose**

Write, first of all, "I am graced"—"I am graced." I'm taking the word *grace* and making a verb out of it. I am graced by His purpose. Begin in verse 28 and look with me, if you will: "*And we know*"—"we know"—"*that all things*"—not *some* things, *all* things—"work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called"—now, watch it—"according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). God has a purpose. Now, you know, Disraeli said that "youth is a blunder. Manhood is a struggle. Old age is a regret." That's the voice of a cynic. But, what is the voice of the Apostle Paul? He is saying that God has a purpose.

Now, what is His purpose? Why did God create the universes? Why did God plan Planet Earth? Why did God create Adam, and Eve, and all their progeny? Why did the Lord Jesus step out of Heaven and come to this earth? Why did He suffer, bleed, and die upon a cross? Why, as we said, did He walk out of that grave? Why has He ascended back to the high hills of Glory? Why has He forgiven your sin? Why are we here? What is the eternal purpose of God? You want to see? Well, we're graced with His purpose, and we're going to find out what it is: it's to make it like Jesus. That's it. You say, "Is that it?" That is it. Look at it again in verse 28: "*the called according to his purpose. For*"—that connects verse 29 with verse 28—"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:28–29). What is God's eternal purpose? It's to make a generation of people like Jesus—"to be conformed to the image of his Son" (Romans 8:29).

That is why... Well, why does God want us to be conformed to the image of His Son? Well, when God created Adam and Eve in the first place in the Garden of Eden, He created them in His image—that is, so that they could know Him, and worship Him, and fellowship with Him. And, why has, since that image has been marred, why did Jesus Christ come to the cross? To restore that image. And, He does it, first of all, by regeneration, when we're saved and we're made partakers of the Holy Ghost. And, He does it by sanctification, as we're being made more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, one day—hallelujah! Thank God!—when Jesus comes in glorification, we will be made just like the Lord Jesus.

Now, you want to find out how you're doing in your Christian life? Would you like to check up? Question: Are you becoming more like Jesus? That's it. Are you becoming more like Jesus? Not like Adrian; not, "Are you becoming a better Baptist?" not, "Are you happy in Bellevue?"—no, the question is, "Are you having God's purpose being fulfilled in you? Are you becoming more like the Lord Jesus?" Now, God is not primarily concerned about making you healthy, or wealthy, or popular. God's plan is that you be more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if these other blessings of health and wealth come, give God thanks.

"Well," you say, "Pastor, what if God's purpose in me is not going to be fulfilled?" Friend, it will be fulfilled. Bank on it. You have been graced with God's purpose "*and he [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it*" (Philippians 1:6). Look in verse 30. Look at it—look at it: "*Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called*" (Romans 8:30). Now, look—go back to verse 29; I skipped that one: "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son*" (Romans 8:29). Now, did you know that it's already settled you're going to be like Jesus? It is predestined that you're going to be like the Lord Jesus; it is determined. It has been determined in the counsel halls of eternity. God has said, "Adrian's destination is already predetermined; he is predestined to be like Jesus."

Now, let me just pause right here and say, parenthetically, "God never predestines anybody to Hell—never." That was a good place for an "amen." God never predestines anybody to Hell. Predestination does not deal with the lost; it deals with the saved. "*Whom he did foreknow, [them] he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son*" (Romans 8:29). When God sees me receiving Christ as my personal Lord and Savior, He predestines me to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. Those that He foreknows, He predestines. And, *predestined* means it's already done in the heart and mind of God.

You say, "Well Adrian, does that mean you don't have any choices?" I make choices everyday—some good, some bad, some neutral. I was just on an airplane coming back from Salt Lake City, and on that airplane I made a lot of decisions. I could read this

magazine, or work on that sermon, or make up my mind whether I wanted cranberry juice or Diet Coke, whether or not I wanted to eat the sandwich they offered, which I did not, and all of these other things. I'm making all of these decisions; they're my decisions. But, wait a minute, when that airplane took off from Point A and it landed over here at Point B, there was a predestined place where that airplane was going to land. Now, I made all these other little decisions, but while I'm making all of these other little decisions, there's one big great decision being made. I'm going from there to here. Now, granted, I know that every illustration has its weaknesses. That plane could've gone down before it got here, could've blown up, or the pilot could've been hijacked and all of that. But, I'm...just don't make the illustration work harder than I want it to work. What I'm trying to say is just simply this: in the heart and mind of those airplane people, and that pilot, and all of that, I'm on board making a lot of little decisions. But, there's one great big overarching decision already been made—and that's the way your life is.

You might make a lot of decisions. Folks, today, you can scratch your ear or not scratch your ear. But, I'm telling you what—God is going to make you like Jesus. It is predestined. You have been graced with God's purpose, and He says we know—we know—that this is happening. That's what he says here. Look at it in this passage of scripture—in verse 28: *"And we know that all things work together for good"* (Romans 8:28). This is something that is obvious.

You say, "Well Pastor, I really don't understand predestination." Well, that makes two of us. That makes all of us, because you don't understand it. Vance Havner said (we love to quote Vance Havner)—he said, "I don't understand electricity, but I'm not going to sit around in the dark until I do." Friend, you don't have to understand the Bible. You better start believing the Bible. It's not a book, first and foremost, to be explained; it's a book, first and foremost, to be believed. And so—listen, folks—what's it all about? Why do good things happen to bad people? Number one: we have been graced with His purpose. We're going to be like the Lord Jesus no matter what else happens.

## **II. I Am Guided by God's Providence**

Number two—write this down. First one: I am graced with His purpose. Secondly, I am guided by God's providence—I am guided by God's providence. Now, how does God fulfill His purpose? By His providence. Look in verse 28: *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28). Now, notice it says, *"And we know that all things work together for good"* (Romans 8:28). *For* is a preposition and this particular preposition in the Greek language means that we're moving toward a goal. It implies movement toward an object. And, God has a goal in mind.

Now, we talk about providence. What is providence? That's a word we often use—

*providence*. Well, our English word *providence* comes from two words—*pro*, which means “ahead of time,” and *video*. We know about the word *video*—*vide*, “to see.” So, providence means “to see ahead of time and to make provision.” That is, God sees the event before it ever gets here, and that’s what we call providence. God just simply sees ahead of time, and He moves everything toward the goal that He has in mind. All things are working together for good, toward that good, because of God’s providence.

Years ago, I read about Henry Ford, who bought the first Ford automobiles. And, his classic automobile in that day was the Model T Ford. That came even before the Model A Ford. And, according to the article that I read, old Mr. Ford was so shrewd that when he ordered the transmissions for his Model T Fords, he said to those who bid, “I want you to box these transmissions in certain sized boxes. I want the screw holes to be in certain places. I want the wood to be of thus-and-such character and quality.” And, they said, “Well, the old guy’s eccentric. It really doesn’t matter how you box the transmission. But, we want the bid, so we’ll box the transmissions this way because he didn’t make the transmissions; somebody else made the transmissions.” So, when they got there to the Ford factory, they unboxed the transmissions for the Model T Ford. But, you know what he did with the boxes? They were cut perfectly for the floorboards on the Model T Ford. The screw holes and everything in place, and all he had to do was take the boxes. He got the other folks to make the other floorboards for him, and they were free. Well, old man Ford was just looking ahead and making provisions. That’s what God does. God makes provision. We call that *providence*.

Now, we may not understand, just like those people who were boxing up those transmissions did not understand. And, a lot of times appearances may be deceiving. Now folks, put this down, if you don’t get anything else down: we do not live by appearances; we live by promises. Appearances are deceiving. We don’t live by explanations; we live by promises. Even when God does not rule, God overrules. Now, there’s a lot of evil in the world. Don’t get the idea that God causes all things. That’s not what this verse says.

As a matter of fact, I was reading in our paper yesterday—the day before yesterday, I believe; sometime this week—of a young man (a teenager) in Pearl, Mississippi, who perpetrated a horrible crime—brutally murdered his mother; then went to Pearl High School; and there, with a rifle, shot and killed, I believe, two students and wounded seven others. As I read about that in the newspaper, I was particularly struck with what this young man said there in the courtroom. He said (quote), “Everything that happens has a reason. It’s God’s will.” Now friend, I want to tell you God did not will that boy killing his mama. God did not will that boy carrying that rifle to high school. Don’t get in your mind that everything that happens is God’s will. Rape is not God’s will. Murder is not God’s will. Racial hatred is not God’s will. Perversion is not God’s will. Adultery is

not God's will. Sodomy is not God's will. It is not God's will. Man has a will, and man has an evil heart. But, you see, even when man does evil, where God does not rule, God overrules. And, God is still in charge of all of this.

Now, sometimes there's sin that God just overrules. And, some of those people in those families that are suffering because of what that young man did, if they know the Lord, God's providence is still going to rule and God is going to take care of those precious families. And then, sometimes, you'll know that God will engineer by His providence circumstances that look evil to us, but they're not evil. God just has that wonderful plan.

Somewhere, years ago, I read about a farmer who had a great big brush pile out there of brush and debris that he was going to burn. And, when he came out there, he saw that a little bird had built a nest in that brush pile. Well, he knew he was going to burn it. That was a bad place for that little bird to build a nest, so the farmer destroyed the nest. When he came back days later, he found out that the bird was rebuilding the nest in that brush pile. The farmer went out there and destroyed the nest again. I think he did it three times; and finally, the little bird gave up. But, I can just imagine that little bird going home and saying to his mate, "I just don't know what's happening. I don't know why all these things are against us. I don't know why every time that we try to build a nest it gets destroyed." Well, there was an unseen hand that was doing something that that bird may have thought was bad but was really good.

I read also of a boy who had a twisted foot, and the boy had to walk on the side of his foot like that; and he was handicapped. His father was a loving man, took that boy to the best orthopedic surgeons and specialists, but they said, "No, we can't do anything. All of his life he will walk on the side of his foot." Well, that father would not give up. He began to study. He took his self-prescribed course in orthopedics and medicine and began to study about bones, and ligaments, and sinews. And, he decided he was going to straighten his boy's foot even if the doctors would not. And, he worked and built a box, and in that box he put some screws that went into that box that could be tightened from the outside, and padded those screws on the inside, and put that box on that boy's foot and began to tighten those screws until the boy cried out in pain. He said, "Son, I love you. Just trust me." That night, the boy went to sleep with that wooden box on. The next day he got up, and the father tightened the screws a little more; and the boy would cry out in pain, and the father would comfort him. And, the boy had to go around with that big box on his foot. But, there came a time when the father said, "Son, I'm going to take the box off of your foot now." And, he took the box off, and the foot was straight. That father had, through love and tenderness—and yet causing the boy some pain—had straightened that foot. And, the boy put his arms around that father and said, "Father, I love you. Thank you. It hurt; it was painful, but thank you. Thank you for what

you did.” That father had a purpose in what he did.

Can you imagine—can you imagine—some school kids who are ridiculing a boy whose father is a surgeon, and they say to that boy, “Your father is a mean man”? “Why do you say my father is a mean man?” “Your father puts people to sleep where they can’t even help themselves, and then he puts them on a table and cuts them open. Then he takes things out of them, throws them away, and then he sews them up. And, when they wake up, they cry; they’re in pain. Your father’s a mean man.” You know, some people accuse our Heavenly Father. Did you know that? They accuse our Heavenly Father because they don’t have any more sense than those students who might be accusing the son of that surgeon. No, sometimes there’s evil; and where God does not rule, He overrules. And, sometimes the things that God does—they don’t seem to be good to us, but they are good.

Young Joseph—17 years he was suffering. His brothers had sold him into slavery. You remember the caravan of Ishmaelites that bought young Joseph? He’s carried into Egypt; and there, he’s lied about by Potiphar’s wife, and he languishes in prison. But, he finally becomes a prime minister of Egypt. And, here’s a great verse for you—Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20: Joseph is talking later to his 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”* (Genesis 50:20). It was God that brought that caravan of slave traders. It was God that caused the famine in Israel, and it was God who overruled the lie of Potiphar’s wife. Friend, listen—listen to me very carefully: don’t read Romans 8:28 to say that all things are good. All things are not good. There are some terrible things in this world. The point is not that things are good; it is that God is good—that it is God that is good.

As a matter of fact, put in your margin “Ephesians 1, verse 11”: it says, *“Being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will”* (Ephesians 1:11). And so, here’s the first thing I want you to write down—look: I am graced with His purpose. I’m going to be like Jesus. Number two: I am guided by His providence, God is working all things together (Romans 8:28). That word *working* is the Greek word that we get our English word *synergy* from. There is a synergy of divine energy, where God is working all things together for good. Robert Ketchum said, “God is too good to be unkind and too wise to make a mistake.”

### **III. I Am Guarded by His Power**

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to write down. We’re trying to answer the question, “Why do good things happen to bad people?” Well, number one, I’m graced by His purpose. He’s going to make me like Jesus. Number two: I am guided by His providence. He is working all things together for my good and His glory. Number three:

write down, “I am guarded by His power”—“I am guarded by His power.” Now, look in verse 31: *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31).

Now, there are a lot of people who would like to be against you. Don’t get the idea that this world will honor you if you serve the Lord Jesus. This world will break your neck if it can. But, just remember this: If God be for you—if God be for you—and that word *for* literally has the idea there of God being in your place. He died for you. He died as your substitute. It doesn’t only mean that “if God is on your side”; it literally means “if God is in your place”—If God be for you, if God is your substitute in the Lord Jesus Christ, if He is in your place, who can be against you? Think about it: whoever’s coming against you is really coming against the One who stands for you.

Now, Satan wants you to doubt. Satan wants you to have questions in your mind. Did you know that Satan loves to put questions in your mind? Did you know Satan loves to ask questions—insinuating questions? The first time, as we see him in the Garden of Eden, as he crawls his slimy, corroding path into the pages of history, he says to Eve, *“Yeah, hath God said”* (Genesis 3:1). It’s a question. It was a question there that was to inculcate doubt in the heart and the mind of Eve. *“Hath God said”* (Genesis 3:1). Well, he even has the audacity to ask God questions—insinuating questions: *“Doth Job [serve] God for nought?”* (Job 1:9). I’d like to ask the devil some questions.

I’m going to give you five questions right now, out of the Word of God—five questions the devil cannot answer. Now, what we’re talking about is this—that we are guarded by God’s power. And, when you see these five questions that Satan cannot answer, then you’re going to say, “Thank God! Hallelujah! No matter what happens, I know that God is watching over me.”

#### A. **No Intimidation**

All right, look, here’s the first question in verse 31: *“What shall we...say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). That is question number one. Write down “no intimidation”—“no intimidation.” Remember, God is in our place. Jesus died for us; and so, when Satan comes to intimidate us, he’s literally coming against God Himself. Last Friday, I really enjoyed this scripture—Isaiah 41, beginning in verse 13: *“For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; [for] I will help thee”—now, watch this—“Fear not, thou worm”—W-O-R-M—“thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel”* (Isaiah 41:13–14). Now, that’s a pretty good partnership—God and a worm. Friend, I tell you what, I’d rather be a worm with God on my side than be a bull elephant all by myself. Hadn’t you? He said, “Don’t be afraid, little worm. I am with you. God is with you.” Now listen, devil, I want to ask you a question: *“If God be for us, who*

*can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). That’s it. If God is in my place, I may be a worm, but He’s the Almighty.

## B. **No Deprivation**

Second question I want to ask the devil—and it’s found in verse 32; look at it: *“He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32). Devil, I want to ask you that question. Put down, dear friend, not only “no intimidation,” but “no deprivation”—“no deprivation.” I mean, listen, if God gave Jesus, I don’t have to doubt any more promises. I mean, He loved me enough to give His Son. I want you to see the logic of what Paul is talking about. Paul has great logic. He says—listen, *“[For if he] spared not his own Son, but delivered him up [freely] for us all, how shall he not [also] with him...freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32). Now friend, if He would give the great gift of Jesus while we were sinners, what’s He going to do for us now that we’re His children? If He gave the great gift when we didn’t even ask, what will He give for the asking? I mean, if He gave Jesus, would He withhold anything else?

If you were to say to me, “Adrian, can I have your son? I want to take you firstborn, Steve”... “What do you want to do with Steve?” “Well, I want to lie on him, beat him, abuse him, strip him naked, and nail him to a cross—that’s what I want to do with him.” “No, you can’t have my son—no, you can’t have my son.” But, suppose I loved you enough for whatever reason and said, “Yes, you can have my son.” And then, you said, “Can I have his basketball, and his bicycle also, and his blue jeans?” I say, “Are you kidding?” If I give you my son, do you think I’d withhold the basketball, the bicycle, and the blue jeans? Friend, *“he [who] spared not his own Son...how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32). I mean, if God gave the best gift—the best gift—everything else comes with Jesus. And, there is no intimidation. *“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). There is no deprivation.

## C. **No Incrimination**

Now, here is another question I want to ask you, Mr. Devil. Here is the third question. It’s found in verse 33—look at it: *“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?”* (Romans 8:33). Write down “no incrimination.” The devil would like to blame you. He’s the accuser of the brethren. Now it doesn’t say, uh, who would like to charge us. It literally means who is qualified to do so. Satan will try. Revelation chapter 12 verse 10 says he is *“the accuser of [the] brethren”* (Revelation 12:10). But friend, how can we be condemned? Who can lay any charge against us, when Colossians tells us that He took all those things out of the way and nailed them to the cross? (Colossians 2:14). And, when He died, He said, “Paid in full.” And, God will never bring us into double jeopardy. And, *“blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin”* (Romans 4:8). So now,

watch—look at it: no intimidation—*“If God be for us, who can be against us?”* (Romans 8:31). No deprivation—if Jesus died for us, *“how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32). Watch it: no incrimination—*“Who is he that can lay any charge to us?”* (Romans 8:33). Nobody—nobody—can lay a charge against any child of God.

#### D. **No Condemnation**

And then, here’s another question I want to ask, Mr. Devil. It’s found in verse 34: *“Who is he that condemneth?”* (Romans 8:34). Paul is full of questions, isn’t he? I love these questions. *“Who is he that condemneth?”* (Romans 8:34). Write down “no condemnation”—“no condemnation.” Now, there are a lot of people who will try to condemn you. Have you ever been told to go to Hell? Live long enough, somebody will tell you that. Come up close, I want to tell you something: you don’t have to—you don’t have to. Why? Because this verse begins—this chapter begins, *“There is therefore no condemnation to [those who] are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). We have been saved. You see, the only One who would be qualified to condemn us is the One who died for us, and the Bible says, *“He ever [lives] to make intercession for [us]”* (Hebrews 7:25). And, certainly, the One who died for us and makes intercession for us is the only One who could possibly condemn us, and He is not going to condemn us because it’s very clear here in the Word of God: *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us”* (Romans 8:33–34). Do you know, if somebody tells me to go to Hell, do you know why I’m not going? Because there’s One with a nail-pierced hand at the right hand of the Father praying daily for me. *“He ever [lives] to make intercession for [me]”* (Hebrews 7:25).

#### E. **No Separation**

All right, now, here’s the fifth question the old devil can’t answer, and I love these questions: *“Who shall separate us?”*—look, if you will, in verse 35—*“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?”* (Romans 8:35). Devil, what can separate me from the love of Christ? Satan says, “Oh, I’ll tell you what can do it: tribulation can do it; distress can do it; persecution can do it; famine can do it; nakedness can do it; peril can do it; sword can do it.” I say, “Devil, you’re bluffing. Nothing can do it.” He doesn’t say these things are not going to happen to us. They happened to Paul; they may happen to you. But, these things don’t separate you from the love of Christ; they draw you all the closer to the Lord.

Now, you think about these five questions. I’m talking now, dear friend, about the

fact that we're guarded by His power. There is no intimidation. There's no deprivation. There's no incrimination. There's no condemnation. There's no separation. And, God's people said "amen." Listen folks, this is why good things happen to bad people. It is called the grace of Almighty God.

#### **IV. I Am Gladdened by God's Presence**

Now, let's move on to the last of these four truths I want to write upon your heart. Number one: I am graced by God's purpose. Number two: I am guided by God's providence. Number three: I am guarded by God's power. Number four: I am gladdened by God's presence. Look, if you will, in verses 38 and 39. Paul dips his pen in golden glory right here. I mean, Romans 8 is the heart of the whole thing, friend, and this is the climax of the heart right here. Look at it: *"For I am persuaded"*—here he is; here's the old Apostle Paul. He's coming to the end now, folks. Nothing has ever been written in all literature more glorious than this—*"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).

No matter where, the darkest night, the most lonely road—death can't separate me from His love. Life can't separate me—angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, and in case you left out anything, nor any other creature. Friend, when you have sorrow and sickness, He's there. He's never stopped loving you. Paul does not say that these things will not happen. He's saying, "No, in all of these things—not in the absence of all of these things, but in all of these things—we're more than conquerors, not that we kick a field goal the last three seconds—super-conquerors over all of these things."

Many in this building will have cancer before you die. You'll go to the doctor; the doctor will say, "You have cancer." I want to tell you some things that cancer cannot do. We're listening. We have some people right now who have a malignancy gnawing away in their body. Let me tell you what cancer cannot do: cancer cannot cripple love; cancer cannot shatter hope; cancer cannot corrode faith; cancer cannot eat away peace; cancer cannot destroy confidence; cancer cannot kill friendship; cancer cannot shut out memories; cancer cannot silence courage; cancer cannot evade the soul; cancer cannot reduce eternal life; cancer cannot quench the Spirit of God; and cancer cannot lessen the power of the Resurrection. That's how limited cancer is, friend. I want to tell you, "death, 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). Isn't that great news?

You know, the Indians—the Indians—when a young boy would come to the age when it was time for him to become a brave, to go from a little boy into a young brave, they, in some Indian tribes, they would do this: they would take that boy out into the deep forest where there were wild animals and predators, and they would draw a circle on the ground out there in the middle of the forest. And, they would take that little Indian boy out there and then put him in that circle. And, they would say, “Son, you are to stay in that circle by yourself in these deep woods all night long.” Then they would go off, and the little boy would be there in the circle. He could hear the coyotes, the hoot owls; he could hear the screeches of the wild creatures out there. And, he’s there, surrounded by all of that danger, by himself, in that circle, forbidden to leave that circle. And, the little Indian boy would get on the ground and would just tremble, and whimper, and cry, ’till finally about two in the morning he’d drop off to sleep out of sheer exhaustion. In the morning, when the sun would come up, that Indian boy would look up and there, standing outside that circle with a drawn bow, would be his father, who’d been there all night long watching over him. And friend, there’s a circle—there’s the circle—of God’s grace, the circle of God’s love. God means you no harm. He wants to grow you. But, I’ll tell you, standing outside that circle is Almighty God our Father, watching over us.

Aren’t you glad that good things can happen to bad people like we are? We’re graced—we’re graced with His purpose. He’s going to make us like Jesus. We’re guided by His providence—*“that all things [are working] together for good to [those] that love God”* (Romans 8:28). Oh, precious friend, we’re guarded by His power. There are five questions the devil can’t answer because of the power of God. And, we’re gladdened with His presence, for there’s nothing that can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Glory, hallelujah!

## Conclusion

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Now friend, I’ve been talking to the children of God today, to those who love God, the ones *“who are...called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28). And, I believe, right now, that there are some of you who say, “I want to step into the circle of God’s love. I want to be His child. I want to receive Him as my Lord and Savior.” If you do, I’d like to lead you in a prayer. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you, right now, pray this prayer out of your heart, if you want to know Jesus? Now, if you’re not sincere, it won’t do you any good at all. But, if you’re sincere, don’t let your weakness or your fear keep you from praying, because He loves you. He died for sinners; He didn’t die for good people. He died for people like we are. And, good things can happen to bad people when they trust Jesus.

Would you pray, “Dear God, I am a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I want

mercy. Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You"—tell Him that—"I do trust You, right now, with all of my heart. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus"—pray that prayer—"Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me"—pray that from the depth of your heart—"Save me, Lord Jesus"—pray it—"Save me, Lord Jesus"?

Did you ask Him? Then, pray this prayer: "Thank You for doing 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, my Savior, my Master, my God, my Friend. Begin now to make me what You want me to be, and give me the courage to make it public"—pray that—"Give me the courage to make it public. Don't let me be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

# The Chemistry of the Cross

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 26, 1976**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:28–29**

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

ROMANS 8:28

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Certainty of It
  - II. The Completeness of It
    - A. The Best Things Work Together for Good
    - B. The Worst Things Work Together for Good
    - C. Sin Works Together for Good
  - III. The Cause of It
  - IV. The Condition of It
  - V. The Consequences of It
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Take the Word of God, if you will, this morning, please, and open to Romans chapter 8. I want us to think together today on this subject: “The Chemistry of the Cross.” And we’re reading verses 28 and 29: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren”* (Romans 8:28–29).

Our Father, we thank You for this word, and we pray that You will anoint our hearts as we endeavor to preach it. Dear Father, not only our hearts, but our minds, our lips, our ears. Energize our will to do Your will. For Jesus’ sake, amen.

Sodium is a deadly poison. Chlorine is a poison. But sodium chloride compounded together is table salt. Salt is necessary for life. It is amazing how the chemist can put together certain elements, and even how nature blends together certain elements, and how the pharmacist sometimes takes certain medicines and certain chemicals that, in themselves, would be poison. But he puts them by the precise proportions into his crucible, and he mixes them, and gives to us what could, in their own native state,

cause harm.

I want us to think about “The Chemistry of the Cross.” Do you remember there, in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Exodus, when the children of Israel were coming out of the land of Egypt, and they were going on into the Promised Land, out of the land of bondage, into the land of blessing? They came to a place called Mara, where the water was bitter. And God said to Moses, “Moses, cast a tree into that water.” Moses cut down a tree, threw that tree into the water, and the bitter became sweet (Exodus 15:25). There was a divine chemistry that turned that bitter experience into a blessed experience; and, it was when a tree was cast into the water. The cross, to me, is that tree that transforms all of the bitter experiences on this pilgrim journey into something that is sweet and blessed.

God describes “The Chemistry of the Cross” in Romans chapter 8 and verse 28: “*And we know that all things work together for good...*” (Romans 8:28). Now some of these things, by themselves, are not good at all. But when God compounds them in the crucible of His love and by the chemistry of the cross, He makes something very wonderful and very glorious out of everything that happens to you and happens to me. There’s nothing bad, ultimately, that can happen to you, if you’re a child of God and are on your way to Heaven. That’s a glorious truth. I want us to learn three or four things about this glorious truth.

## I. The Certainty of It

First of all, I want you to look at the certainty of it. Verse 28 says: “*And we know*”—there’s no doubt. There’s no happenstance, here. There’s no *maybe*, here—“*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God*” (Romans 8:28). This is not conjecture. This is not vague opinion. This is a promise of God.

F. B. Meyer is one of my favorite authors. F. B. Meyer said this: “If any promise of God should fail, the heavens would clothe themselves with sackcloth; the sun, moon, and stars would reel from their courses; the universe would rock; and a hollow wind would moan through a ruined creation the awful message that God could lie. But God can’t lie.”

All of the promises are “yea and amen” in the Lord Jesus Christ. “*And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God*” (Romans 8:28). You say, “Well, Brother Rogers, it doesn’t look like it’s so good for me, right now. I am having tremendous difficulty. I have a sickness. I have a problem. I have a financial need. I have a spirit of depression. I don’t see how you say that can be good.” Well, it may not look good, right now. But friend, you better wait until God has finished.

I love the ocean. My blood is about 75% salt water, because I was born in West Palm Beach, Florida, and pastored on the east coast of Florida all of my life, before you

folks were so kind as to let me come here and be your pastor. I miss the surging sea. I guess, when a man is born in the mountains, he sometimes misses the mountains. And I miss the ocean. I just like to watch the waves come up on the shore of the sea. There's a great spiritual lesson there, in the waves and in the tides. A poet put it this way—and I think it's one of the grandest poems that has been pinned to give a spiritual truth:

*On the far reef the breakers recoil in shattered foam,  
While still the sea behind them urges its forces home.  
Its song of triumph surges o'er all the thunderous din:  
The wave may break in failure, But the tide is sure to win!*

*The reef is strong and cruel upon its jagged wall.  
One wave, a score, a hundred, broken and beaten, fall.  
Yet in defeat they conquer, the sea comes flooding in,  
Wave upon wave is routed, But the tide is sure to win!*

*Oh! Mighty sea, thy message in clanging spray is cast.  
Within God's plan of progress it matters not at last  
How wide the shores of evil, How strong the reefs of sin.  
The wave may be defeated, But the tide is sure to win!*

You see, God has too much invested in you to let you lose. God has a great investment in you, and He's not going to let it go. The Bible says, in Philippians chapter 1, verse 6: *"He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it"* (Philippians 1:6). You were born to win. God is not going to let you go. God is going to see to it that all things work together for good for you, because you love the Lord.

## **II. The Completeness of It**

Now the second thing I want you to notice: not only the certainty of it—*"we know"*—but, I want you to notice the completeness of it—*"we know that all things work together for good..."* (Romans 8:28).

### **A. The Best Things Work Together for Good**

So many times, when we read this, we only think about the worst things, but the best things work together. For, this a glorious service; it's working for good. Isn't this a

wonderful book? It's working for good. Wasn't that thrilling music? That's working for good. And all of the good things that God does for you, everyday—that's working together. God daily loads us with benefits.

*Count your many blessings;  
Name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you  
What the Lord has done (Oatman, Jr., Johnson).*

## **B. The Worst Things Work Together for Good**

But wait a minute. Not only the best things work together for good, but also, the worst things work together for good. The things that you said were calamities, the things that you said were disastrous, the things that you said that brought ruin: God said, "It's going to be blessing to you."

Now you may not be able to see it, right now. Let's just take a little safari through the Bible, and let me point out some texts that may illustrate what I'm talking about. Turn, if you will, to Jeremiah chapter 24. What would happen if—God forbid—what would happen if the Russians were to take over the United States, and communism would prevail here? Would that ruin God's plan for your life? Now we ought to do all that we can do to keep that from happening. But suppose it did happen. Suppose our country were subjected to a foreign power, and suppose our churches were closed. Do you think that would thwart the plan of God? Look in Jeremiah chapter 24, verse 5. God is speaking to his people, Judah: *"Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge those who are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans"*—now, notice the next three words—*"for their good"* (Jeremiah 24:5). God allowed His ancient people, His chosen people, Judah, to be carried away into the land of Babylon, as slaves in a wicked and oppressive land. And God said, "I did it for their good" (Jeremiah 24:5).

Now dear friend, God may do something like that to America, for our good. We sing "God bless America." Why should God bless America? Because over 50% of the world's divorces take place here, and we have 6% of the world's population? Because we have three times as many taverns as we have churches? Is that why God should bless America? Because our crime rate is a disgrace of civilization? Is that why God should bless America? Because of the pornographic literature that is disbursed in every major city, including Memphis, Tennessee? Is that why God should bless America? Well, God may bless it, but He may not bless us the way we think. We have been cursed with blessings. He may bless us with cursing. He may send some calamities, as He said to His ancient people, Judah. We're not God's darlings. We're not better than Judah. But God ruled it all. And God said, "If it happens, it will be for your good"

(Jeremiah 24:5).

All right. Now watch: Not only did God do that with Judah, He also did it with David. Turn to Psalm 119, verse 71. David was a man after God's own heart. I love to study about David. But David had some difficulty in his life, from time to time. And I want you to look in verse 71—Psalm 119 and verse 71. Listen to the testimony of David: *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted"*—is there somebody listening who has a sickness? Somebody listening who has an affliction? Have you ever said it is good that you have been afflicted? David did—*"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes"* (Psalm 119:71). God had a lesson He wanted to teach David. But for some reason, He could not get David's attention. Somebody has well said, "We never see so clearly, as when we see through eyes that have been washed with tears." David's affliction worked together for his good. *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes"* (Psalm 119:71).

Let's go on. Look in the book of Genesis, chapter 50—the last chapter in the book of Genesis. And I want you to read what Joseph said. You know? You talk about a fellow who had a hard time? Why, Joseph—my soul—Joseph, who loved the Lord. Do you know what happened to Joseph? He was thrown into a pit by his brothers. He was betrayed. He was sold as a slave. He was cast into prison—languished in prison, there, for two years. He was lied on by Potiphar's wife. It looked like everything was working together for bad, to Joseph. But later on, this same Joseph, through his abasement, found advancement. And through all of these events, Joseph became the Prime Minister of Egypt and was used by God to save his brethren.

And I want you to notice this passage of Scripture here, in Genesis chapter 50, and look in verse 20; Joseph says: *"But as for you, ye thought evil against me"*—he's talking to his 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 many people alive"* (Genesis 50:20). God knew what He was doing when Joseph was cast into that pit. God knew what He was doing when Joseph was lied on by his brethren. God knew what He was doing when Joseph was disgraced. And had he been like the modern weak Christians, he would have said, "Where is God? God has forsaken me." But God was in Heaven, working out Romans 8:28, that *"all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

The same thing is true about King Manasseh. Turn to 2 Chronicles chapter 33, for a moment, in the Word of God. Old King Manasseh, who was a mighty king, was taken from his throne and was cast into chains—2 Chronicles chapter 33, beginning in verse 11: *"Wherefore, the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh in chains, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon."* Notice verse twelve: *"And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD,*

*his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto him; and he was entreated by him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD, he was God”* (2 Chronicles 33:11–13). Now Manasseh’s iron chains were better for Manasseh than his golden crown. It was good for Manasseh that he was pulled from his throne. It was good for Manasseh that he was put in chains. It was good for Manasseh that he was carried away into Babylon. Because, his eyes were opened. He learned some spiritual truths that he could not have learned any other way. You see, God’s providence is a strange teacher. It gives the test first, and then, the lesson. And God tested this man, and God tried this man. But God gave him a lesson that he learned—the great truth God wanted him to learn. And I’m just simply saying that God works together all things.

Look in the life of the Apostle Paul. Paul had a thorn in the flesh. It wasn’t good, in and of itself. Nobody wants a—that’s literally the word—a *stake* in the flesh. He prayed, and asked God to take it from him. But God didn’t take it from him. And God said, in 2 Corinthians—the 12th chapter, and the 9th verse: *“My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness”* (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul says, “Well, wonderful; I’ll glory in my infirmity.” You know? Some people say, “What can’t be cured, must be endured.” Paul said, “What can’t be cured, can be enjoyed. I glory in my infirmity. It makes me more like Jesus.”

### C. **Sin Works Together for Good**

All things work together for good. But not just the good things work together for good, and not just bad things work together, or things of suffering, but even sin works together for good. And now we’re going to get pretty deep right here, for just a moment. “But,” you say, “Brother Rogers, if I, as a Christian, sin, is that good?” No, it’s not good. And if you sin, you’re going to suffer for it. And if you sin, God will chastise you for it. But even that sin and that chastisement will work together for your good. There is nothing that can happen to you but that it will work together for good for those who love God, *“who are the called according to his purpose”* (Romans 8:28).

When Simon Peter betrayed the Lord, he cursed, and swore, and denied he knew the Lord. Jesus said, “Simon, before the cock crows, you’re going to deny me three times. But I have prayed for you that your faith won’t fail and when you are converted strengthen your brethren” (Matthew 26:34). And God took Simon Peter’s failure, God took Simon Peter’s sin, and God so taught Simon Peter a lesson that God used him to teach many others the same lesson. Isn’t it wonderful how God cuts the devil off with his own sword? Isn’t it wonderful how God uses the axe the devil sharpens? Isn’t it wonderful that even when we sin and though God has to chastise us, God still makes that work together for our good?

You see, that's the reason the book of Hebrews says: "*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be...*" (Hebrews 12:11). When my dad used to whip the daylights out of me, I never did say, "Hot dog, I'm getting another whipping." I never did say that. But when my father was here, last week, I looked out at him with pride and admiration. I thank God for a father who said, "Son, you can do this, and you can't do that; and if you do the wrong, you have me to reckon with." I'm glad for that. "*Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them who are exercised by it*" (Hebrews 12:11). And I tell you, my dear friend, that God will take sin, or anything that ever happened, and, if you're a child of God, though He may chastise you, "*all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose*" (Romans 8:28). The completeness of it.

### III. The Cause of It

Now we've noticed the certainty of it; we've noticed the completeness of it—"all things work together for good" (Romans 8:28). Now I want you to notice, thirdly, with me, if you will, not only the completeness of it, but I want you to notice the cause of it. Because, in the King James Version, it's not quite as clear as it is in some other translations. Literally and, I think, theologically and, with good exegesis, this can be translated: "God works all things together for good." Not that all things work together for good, but *God works* all things together for good.

It is not that things just sort of fall in place; it is that the sovereign God puts them in place. And everything that happens is not God's will. For example, people perish and go to Hell. But the Lord "*is not willing that any should perish*" (2 Peter 3:9). You see, God allows certain things, because God has given to man a free will. But you see, when it comes to a Christian, I may do things that are not God's will, and I may do things when I get out of the rule of God. But where God does not rule in my life, God will overrule. And God still takes the things that may be wrong and works them together for my good and His glory. God is the One who brings order out of confusion. God is the One who brings harmony out of disharmony and discord. And we need to understand, when we get discouraged—and I know I'm speaking, today, to some of you who are discouraged—some bad things are happening to you, and you're going around moaning, and groaning, and complaining, like God is dead. I want to tell you: God, right now, is over it all. And it is God who is able to work all things together for your good.

Martin Luther, the great reformer, one time, got so discouraged and so melancholy, he set himself alone in his room, and he would not talk to anyone. He was so downcast. Things seemed to be going against him on every turn. And he just refused to let anybody encourage him. And he got into a state of depression and melancholy, until his

friends were fearful for his health. His wife, Catherine—he called her “Katie”; we’d call her “Kathy.” Kathy, one day, decided what she would do. She put on black gloves, a black dress, a black hat, and a veil, just exactly as they wore to a funeral in that day, and she came in to see Martin. When he looked at her, he said, “Kathy, whose funeral are you going to? Who has died?” “Oh,” she said, “Martin, didn’t you hear? God is dead.” Martin Luther looked at her, and he said, “That’s blasphemy. God is not dead.” She said, “Martin, that’s the way you’re acting.” And he never forgot that lesson. Martin Luther said, “O God, forgive me.” This same Martin Luther wrote:

*A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing;*

*Our helper He amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing.*

*Did we in our own strength confide, our striving would be losing;*

*Were not the right man on our side, the man of God’s own choosing.*

**A mighty fortress is our God.** The cause of Romans 8:28 is this: that it is God who is working all things together for good.

#### **IV. The Condition of It**

Now the fourth thing I want you to notice: not only the cause of it, but I want you to notice the condition of it. Because, all things don’t work together for good to all people. But notice what it says—Romans 8:28: “*And we know that all things work together for good*”—or, *God works* all things together for good—“*to them that love God*” (Romans 8:28). That’s the condition of it, friend. This is not a blanket promise. The despisers and haters of God cannot claim this privilege. Those of you who may not be Christians, don’t you think that I’m speaking to you, because I’m not. I want you to be a Christian, and I’m speaking to you in that way. And those of you who are here and not saved, I want you to be saved, but I don’t want you to misapply this text. I don’t want you to think that this just applies to everybody, everywhere. It’s very clear, very plain. All things work together for good to those who love God—to those who love God, who are lovers of God (Romans 8:28).

One man said, “He who does not love God is a beast with a man’s head.” Do you love God? I say, do you love God? I’m not asking you, “Are you a Baptist?” Much less, a Bellevue Baptist, or a church member. I want to know: Is the love of God in your bosom? Is the love of God shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost? Have you received God’s Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as your personal Savior and Lord?

*Other people may preach better than I. Other people may pray better than I. Other people may give more than I. Other people may be able to serve with more talents than*

*I. But nobody can love God more than I can. And nobody can love God more than you can.* And brother, when it comes to loving God, we're all the same. And that's what God wants. God wants us to love Him, and that's something you can do as well as I. And that's something I can do as well as you. And we can all love God. And when we begin to love God, it's then that God begins to work all things together for good: our good and His glory.

Now let me tell you something, friend. I want you to listen. If you're a Christian, all things work together for good. But if you're not a Christian, then good things work for your harm. Are you listening? While for the Christian, who loves God, evil works for good, for wicked ones, who don't love, good works for evil. Did you know that the things that bless others will hurt you, if you're not saved?

Did you know this sermon will hurt you? Did you know it's dangerous to come to church? You know, you'll get wounded by this sermon. I say, you'll get hurt by this sermon, if you don't love God and don't intend to love God. This sermon will hurt you. And even a service that's supposed to work together for good will work together for harm to those who don't love God. You see, the gospel is a sword. It cuts both ways: either to salvation or condemnation. And if you don't let the word I preach bless you, God will make the word I preach judge you. Did you know that? Jesus said, "When you preach, if someone won't hear you, *'shake off the dust of your feet'*" (Matthew 10:14). And Jesus said that very dust will be used against in the Day of Judgment (Mark 6:11). You see, the gospel is a sword that cuts both ways: It is a savor of life unto life; it is savor of death unto death. And the wind that blows one ship into the harbor blows another ship upon the reef. It's not the gale, but the set of the sail, that determines where the ship will go. And some come here with their sail set wrong. And the same wind that brings others into the harbor will be used to judge them.

Jesus is not a blessing to some of you. Jesus will be a curse to some of you. I say He's good; but if you're not saved, that good will work for your evil. Jesus said He's like a stone (Luke 20:17). Jesus is either a foundation stone or a stumbling block. Now if you're saved, Jesus works together for your good. But if you're not saved, Jesus works for your ill. Jesus said, "Some folks will stand upon that stone, and on other people that stone will fall" (Luke 20:18). Jesus Christ is a door. He's either a door that lets you in, or He's a door that shuts you out. Jesus Christ will either be your Savior or your Judge.

Now if you're saved, all things work together for your good. But if you're not saved, good things work together for evil. What about prayer? Did you know, when a wicked man who doesn't know God prays, it nauseates God? Did you know that the prayer of a wicked man is sin? The Bible says, in Psalm 109:7: *"let his prayer become sin."* Now boy, a man that doesn't love God is in a mess. I say, friend, he's in a mess. If he doesn't pray, he sins; if he does pray, he sins. What's he going to do? I mean, he doesn't love

God, and even his prayer is an insult to God. He has the audacity to pray to a God that he doesn't love. Their prayer shall be an abomination. Why, your sacrifice. You'll say, "I'll come to church on Sunday morning. I'll give the God I don't love something." Well, if you do, God will judge you for it. Proverbs 15, verse 8: *"the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD"* (Proverbs 15:8).

Now if we come, and we put our offering in the plate—if we love God—God accepts it, and God takes that offering, and works it together for our good. God takes that prayer, and He works it together for our good. God takes the Savior; He works it together for our good. God takes the preaching; He works it together for our good. I tell you, God takes sin, suffering, sorrow, anything, and, if you love God, it works together for good. But if you don't love God, the things that seem to be good work together for evil. And I tell you something, friend: We ought to love God. We just ought to love God. You're not going to get by without loving God and having everything else cool. You ought to love God. That's the condition of it: *"to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

## **V. The Consequences of It**

Now let me go on and conclude the message, this morning, by talking about the consequences of it, the consequences of it. Go back to Romans 8, verse 28. The condition of it is that we're to love God. And then, when we do love God, and God starts to work all things together for our good, what are the consequences of it? Now so many people still misinterpret Romans 8:28. Here's a way some people think about Romans 8:28 (all things working together for good): They have a blow out, and they say, "Oh well, there must be a sale on tires." That's not what God is talking about. You know, that's the shallow way that people think about Romans 8:28. And they don't read—they don't understand—what God is talking about, when it says: *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose"* (Romans 8:28).

Now that's the consequence of it: His purpose. What is His purpose? All right. Look and see. What is God's purpose for you? You know, God doesn't have two or three goals for you. God has one single solitary goal for you, and it's found in verse 29: *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son"* (Romans 8:29). Do you know what God's purpose is for you? To make you like Jesus, to make you like Jesus Christ. God called you for a purpose. God saved you for a purpose. And that purpose is to make you like His beloved Son, the Lord Jesus Christ—to conform you to His image. And so God is not working all things together to make you healthy. God is not working all things together to make you happy. God is working all things together to make you holy—to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And there are not enough demons in Hell, or out, to stop you. *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate”* (Romans 8:29).

Brother, it's settled. I'm going to be like Jesus. So if you love God, isn't that great? We're going to be like Jesus. Now friend, *there are some things we can't be dogmatic about; and there are other things we can be “bull-dogmatic” about.* This is one of them. I mean, *“When he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:2). We're going to be like Him; like Him, like Him, the Lord Jesus, for all eternity.

Now that's something pretty wonderful, friend. You ought to want to get in on that. Can you imagine the glory that God has prepared with His eternal purpose, and “The Chemistry of the Cross?” God working all things together for glory, for good, to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose? (Romans 8:28). The reason the Bible says: *“In everything give thanks,”* (1 Thessalonians 5:18) is because God's just working everything together. Some people say, “I can't give thanks for this.” You can, if you understand Romans 8:28, can't you? Isn't it strange that people don't understand the greatness, the glory, and the thrill of knowing Jesus Christ? *If I could receive Jesus Christ for you, I would. If I could trust Jesus Christ for you, I would. If I could love Jesus Christ for you, I would. But I cannot.*

## Conclusion

I've preached as best I know how. I'm going to ask you to make a decision. Let us bow in prayer. Every head bowed; every eye closed.

Now friend, the Bible speaks of those who love God, and the Bible speaks of those who are called. This message is God calling you, right now. And you're being called to love God. And that's basically what being a Christian is. It's not joining a church, as such. It's not living a good life, as such. It's loving God. And the only way you can love God is through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. But when you love the Father, you love the Son. And when you love the Son, you love the Father. And this entire passage is talking about those who are in Christ, who are saved.

Father, I pray this morning for men, women, boys and girls, that they will repent of their sins and will receive Jesus Christ—that they will love the Father through the Son, and glorify the Father through the Son, so that You, Lord, can work the chemistry of the cross in their lives and make them like your Son. Father, I just pray, now, that if there are some here who have confusion and questions, the Holy Spirit of God will do what I'm not able to do and just speak to their hearts and draw them to Jesus Christ. We pray in His name.

# A Total Makeover

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: December 5, 2004**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:28–30**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. You Need to Realize God's Unchanging Purpose
- II. You Need to Respect God's Unfathomed Providence
- III. You Need to Rest in God's Unchallenged Protection
- IV. You Need to Rejoice in God's Unfailing Promise

Conclusion

## Introduction

Amen. I like that. Thank God for that Christmas, that first Christmas when our dear Savior stepped out of heaven, came to this earth to suffer and bleed and die for sinners such as we are.

I want you to take your Bibles today and open to Romans chapter eight. I suppose, if I had a favorite chapter in all of the Bible, it would have to be Romans chapter eight.

While you're finding it, I want to tell you what I saw on television a while back. It was the most astounding thing. It was called a total makeover. There was a lady, a woman, and she was anything but pretty. Her face sagged. Her nose had a bump in it. She looked kind of washed out. She was plump and overweight. Now, I'm not talking about you. I'm talking about this lady on television. She wasn't a whole lot to look at. She was not a showstopper. Her teeth were crooked, and she had bags under her eyes. And her hair was, whatever. And so they're going to do a total makeover on this woman. I was fascinated. They did everything to her. They put her under surgery. They corrected her teeth. They gave her a face—what all they did, I don't know what they did to her. She was in bandages, in suffering and pain and all of this. And then, one day, they unwrapped her like a cocoon. And all of her loved ones were out there, and she steps out from behind the curtain—ta da! And they look and they cannot believe what has happened to this woman. She's had a total makeover.

I heard of a woman who saw another woman in the beauty shop and she said, "Mary, Mary, what have you done to yourself? You look marvelous! You look wonderful! Your hair is different. Your complexion is different. You even stand different. Mary Jones, I would never have recognized you." She said, "My name is not Mary Jones."

She said, “Oh, you’ve even changed your name.” A total makeover.

Well, I want to talk to you today about a total makeover. God’s going to give you one if you’re saved. It’s an experience that I think all of us can rejoice in.

Look in Romans chapter eight here, and let’s begin in verse twenty-eight of this wonderful, wonderful chapter. He says here: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose...—now, underscore the phrase “his purpose”—who are called according to his purpose—now, watch this—For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”

Now, are you in the image of Jesus right now? No! But God’s going to do a total makeover on you. “To be conformed to the image of His Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.” God loved His Son so much He said, I’m going to make a lot like Him, that He’s going to be the firstborn of many brothers. God has a divine plan. And that divine plan is to give to Adrian, to you, to each of us on the platform, to all of us—listen, friend—a total makeover.

## **I. You Need to Realize God’s Unchanging Purpose**

With that in mind, I want to give you four thoughts. And first of all, I want you to think of God’s unchanging purpose. You need to realize God’s unchanging purpose. Now, let me read that again in verses Romans 8:28 to 30: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, for the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son”—there’s the key there, His purpose and His image—that he 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.”

Now, when we get to the glorified state, that is a total makeover. You know, God has a purpose in everything He does. Why did God create the universe? All of the stellar galaxies—why did God put this planet in space? Why did God make mankind? Why did Jesus step out of heaven and come to this earth? Why the incarnation? Why did He suffer, bleed and die on the cross? Why? For one purpose: to make us like Him. That He might be the firstborn among many brethren.

You see—look—we need a total makeover because we have been marred by sin. Now, you know, sometimes people say, “Well, we’re in the image of God.” Hey, I’ve got news for you. You’re not in the image of God. You’re the image of Adam. God made Adam after His image, and that image was marred. And then, the Bible says that Adam brought forth children after his own image. You think you’re in the image of God? You think that the person next to you is in the image of God? Look around. God’s not in that

shape, folks. I want to tell you something. The image of God has been marred, and it needs to be restored.

Now, what image are we talking about? We're not talking about a physical makeover; it's a spiritual makeover primarily. Animals were never in the image of God. And therefore animals cannot know their spiritual makeover. There's a difference between animals and man. Man is made in the spiritual image of God. Animals never cry. Animals never laugh. Animals never blush. Why? Because they are different creatures than we are. We are made in the image of God, but the image of God has been marred. And the image of God has got to be restored. There has to be a total, total makeover.

Now, God does this in three stages. First of all, there is regeneration, when we're saved. That's stage number one. Secondly, there is sanctification as we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, finally, there is glorification when we are just like our dear Savior in His image, glorified with Him.

So you see, God's purpose for you is not primarily for you to be handsome, beautiful, or popular, or witty, or wealthy. If you have any of these attributes, and all of them, I'm happy for you. But God's purpose is not to make you happy. God's purpose is to make you holy. God's purpose is not to make you like somebody else, but to make you like His dear Son the Lord Jesus Christ, to move us from where we are to where He is. And, friend, I submit to you that's a total makeover. Would you say amen? That is a total makeover.

Now, let me say that this makeover has been predestined. It's already settled that He's going to do it. If you're saved, you can go look in a mirror and say, "There's somebody who's going to be just like Jesus." No ifs, ands, or buts about it. Look again in Romans eight, verse twenty-nine: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son."

Now, you are predestined to be like the Lord Jesus. Now, sometimes people think that God predestines people to be saved and predestines people to be lost. God doesn't predestine anybody to go to hell. Don't ever get that idea. God never predestined anybody to go to hell. As a matter of fact, this predestination is talking about people who have already trusted Christ. When you've trusted Christ, that settles it, you're going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Adrian, do you understand predestination?" "No, but that doesn't bother me. Neither do you." Listen. There are some things that God understands that we don't understand. Dr. Vance Havner said, "I don't understand electricity, but I'm not going to sit around in the dark until I do." There are some things we don't have to understand, but we can appropriate and live it.

Now, sometime back I got on an airplane and that airplane was leaving the United States, New York City, and was going to London. Let this side of the rug be the United States. Let this side of the rug over here be London, England. Now, there's a 747, a great big airplane. I get on that airplane, and when I sit down there's a certain seat for me, and I sit there. There are magazines. I can thumb through the magazines. There are headphones. There's music I can listen to. The lady comes through and says, "Would you like a soft drink? What do you want?" I choose whether I want some fruit juice, or whether I want plain water, or whether I want Diet Coke, or whether I want this or that. We fly a little bit further, she comes down the aisle with a meal, and says, "Do you want beef or chicken?" And I decide what I'm going to want there. Then, after a while, I get up and go to the restroom. I go back and snooze a little bit, and so forth and so forth. I make all these decisions. Then the plane lands in London.

Now, folks, that's the way life is. You say, "I'm making all of these decisions." You may be, but friend, God controls where the airplane goes. God controls all of that. Within those decisions, God is moving toward a plan that one day, hallelujah, you're going to be like Jesus. And the landing of that plane is already predestined. You can walk around in it all you want, but God one day is going to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ, if indeed you're saved.

Now, this is talking about those that love God. Life is filled with mystery, misery, magnificence. But God puts all of those things in the crucible of His love to make us like the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. You Need to Respect God's Unfathomable Providence**

So, number one: listen, you need to remember God's purpose—to make you like Jesus. Number two: you need to respect God's unfathomable providence. Look again in verse 28. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose."

Now, we call that providence. You ever heard the word "providence"? The word providence comes from two words. First of all, a preposition which is, "pro," or "for." And then, "video." Pro-video. Providence. God sees ahead of time. "Pro," ahead of time, and for. And, "to see," God just simply foresees. God makes the need before the need ever arises, and that's called providence. And God just foresees. And the word "for" literally means, unto, toward a goal. God is working all things for good. That is, unto that goal.

Some years ago, I read about Henry Ford—I'm talking about the original Henry Ford who built the first Ford automobiles, and he created the assembly line, and there was the Model-T Ford that came before the Model-A Ford. The Model-T Ford sometimes called the Tin Lizzie. Ford said you could have any color you want, as long as it is black.

And he made these things. He mass-produced them so the average person could have an automobile. Ford was a genius. He did not make the transmission for his Fords. He had another company to make those. So he ordered them from this company. But, in order for them to get the bid, they had to make the boxes a certain size, out of a certain kind of wood, put together with a certain kind of screw and the holes in a certain kind of place. Well, they said, it doesn't make any difference to us. We want the job. If the old nut wants them packaged this way or that way, it makes no difference to us, we have to package them anyway. But it made a difference to Henry Ford, because when those crates were taken apart, they were the floorboards for the Model-T Ford. They were making his floorboards for free. Now, what Henry Ford did was to see ahead and to make provision. We call that, theologically, "providence."

Now, verse 28 says, "And we know that all things work together for good." That sounds like an overstatement. Now, if we were to say some things work together for good, that would be one thing. Yet this is God's promise. And never bring God's promises down to your understanding.

Dr. F. B. Meyer of yesteryear said this: "If any promise of God should fail, the heavens would clothe themselves with sackcloth. The sun, moon, and stars would reel from their courses. The universe would rock, and a hollow wind would moan through a ruin creation the awful message that God can lie. But God cannot lie."

Now, when we talk about God's providence and all things working together for good, we need to understand that appearances may be deceiving. And there's a wise man who said, "We don't live by explanations; we live by promises." Now, there are a lot of people in the world. It would be mockery to say that God causes that evil. If you just lost a baby child, loved ones have been in an automobile wreck, and maybe lives have been destroyed, limbs have been twisted, and minds have been marred, don't say that God caused that. I think that's something that many of us have to understand. When there is evil, God does not cause it. But God overrules it. God is causing all things to work together for good.

To say that that God does not cause everything doesn't mean that God is not sovereign. The sovereign God has given us the freedom to choose. We're free to choose. We're not free not to choose. And we're not free to choose the consequences of our choice, but in spite of all of that, God rules. Even in our sin, God is overruling to make us like Jesus.

On the far reef the breakers recoil in shattered foam. Yet, still the sea behind them urges its forces home. It's chant of triumph surges through all the thunderous den. The wave may break in failure, but the tide is sure to win. Almighty sea, thy message in changing spray is cast. Within God's plan of progress it matters not at last how wide the

shores of evil, how strong the reefs of sin. The wave may break in failure, but the tide is sure to win.

And God has programmed His mighty universe that in spite of the broken waves and the eddies in your life, I'm telling you, friend, if you are saved, you are predestined to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

God rules. God overrules. You can do whatever you want on that airplane, but that airplane is headed toward London.

Now, there are many experiences in the Bible where we can see this worked out even when God engineers it or God overrules it. Young Joseph—do you remember the story of Joseph? His brothers were envious of him. They sold him into slavery and they told his father he was dead. And Joseph was carried as a slave to Egypt. For seventeen years, he was there as a slave in Egypt before his brothers saw him again. He was put to work. He was accused of sexual assault. He was thrown into prison. He languished in prison, but finally came out of prison, became the Prime Minister of all Egypt next in line to the Pharaoh himself. When his brothers saw him again, they were terrified, because their lives were in his hand. But he said there, "Look. Listen to me. You thought it for evil. But God meant it for good"—the slavery, the caravan, the false accusation, the prison, all of that. By circumstances we would say, "No, that's not good." But God meant it for good.

The apostle Paul talked about the things that happened to him. You think you have it hard? Paul was shipwrecked three times. He was beaten five times. He languished in prison. He was forsaken by his friends. Now, listen to this. Paul said, "All these things have happened to me for the furtherance of the gospel." He said, "Look, in spite of all this, God has used all of these things for the furtherance of the gospel." All things are working together for good to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that doesn't mean all things are good. Put in your margin, if it's not already there, Ephesians 1:11: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who worketh all things together for good."

Now, things in themselves have no ability to work together for good. It is God who overrules. And you're going to find out, folks, when God's giving you a total makeover, and when God is putting you through the second stage, which is sanctification, you're going to have in your life some things that are very negative. Sorrow, pain, heartache, disappointment, misunderstanding, the negative things are going to come into your life. But then there are going to be some positive things that have come into your life—joy, peace, victory, truth, all of the things, the fellowship we have in Christ. And God is working all of these things together.

My friend, Dr. James Dobson, said it's kind of like battery cables. If you just take one

of them and it's hooked to the negative, there is no power there. If you take one that is hooked to the positive without the negative, there is no power there. But hook both the positive and the negative to the battery, and you grab the other end, it'll curl your hair. You see, it is the negative, it is the positive that is working together.

### **III. You Need to Rest in God's Unchallenged Protection**

Now, here's the third thing about your total makeover: you need to rest in God's unchallenged protection. You say, what if it goes wrong, Pastor? What if God fails? No, there's His purpose, there's His providence, and then there is His protection. Look, if you will, in chapter 8 and verse 31: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us—if God be for us—who can be against us?"

Now, right now as I'm preaching to you, Satan is putting doubts in your mind. Satan is saying, "No, I'm not going to be like Jesus. No, all things don't work together for good to those of you who claim to love the Lord." You know, Satan is the sinister minister of doubt. In the Garden of Eden, he said to Eve, "Yeah, hath God said?" He said about Job, "Doth Job fear God for nothing?" Satan loves to ask questions, doesn't he?

Well, I want to give you brothers and sisters five questions the devil can't answer. Now, what we're talking about now is God's protection. The devil would like to make you fear and doubt and wonder whether or not the total makeover is going to work for you. Do you ever wonder what those women must have felt before the bandages come off? Did it work? Has it been a success?

Well, let me give you five questions the devil, who wants to put doubt in your mind, cannot answer. Number one: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" If God be for us, who can be against us? Now, listen carefully. The word "for,"—God for us—does not mean God is on our side. Now, listen carefully, It means God is in our place. God is in our place. Christ died for us. It's substitution. He died for us.

Now, if God is in our place, and the devil comes against us, whom is he coming against? God! God! God spoke to Jacob in the Old Testament. He called him a worm. "Thou worm, Jacob." Well, a worm and Almighty God is not a bad combination. God said to Jacob, "I am for you." And when the devil comes against you, he's not coming against a worm. He's coming against the almighty God. So question number one: if God is for us, who can be against us?

Question number two, Mr. Devil: "How shall he also not with him freely give us all things?"

Look at it there in Romans chapter 8, verse 32: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Now, don't miss the logic. Now, what he's saying here is—are you listening to me

now?—he says, if God sent Jesus when we were His enemies, do you think now He's going to withhold from us? You see, if God gave the first gift, even unasked, when Christ came to save us, how much more shall He take care of us?

Listen. If God gave His Son, how much more shall He give us all things that we need. If there were ever a promise that God would have been tempted to go back on, it would have been the one to send His Son. If God sent His Son, Mr. Devil, if God sent His Son, shall He not also freely give us all things?

That's the reason we can say with the apostle Paul that "God will supply all of our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Here's a third question the devil can't answer: "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Look at it in verse 33: "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth."

Now, if you're saved, you're justified. And if you're justified, who can point a finger of accusation at you? You see, it doesn't mean, who thinks he can do it. But it means, who is qualified to do it. Now, there are many who try. As a matter of fact, in Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10, the devil is called the accuser. He will accuse you, but he cannot lay anything to your charge. The only person who can lay anything to your charge is Almighty God, and He has already declared us justified. In this verse of Scripture, it says that we are justified.

Now, that means it's done. It's paid in full. When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, you receive justification. When Jesus was on the cross, as He died and with the last drop of His blood paid our sin debt, He bowed His head and said, "It's finished." It's done. It is paid in full. *Tetelestai*—paid in full.

In Bible times, when a man would be put in jail, they would write a bill against him. The crime that he had done would be nailed to the cell door. And it was a bill of accusation—what the man had done and what the penalty was. After he had done his prison time, now that bill would be taken off the jail door and it would be signed, *tetelestai*, paid in full. That man could never again be brought into jeopardy for that crime, because he was now justified. He had paid his debt. No longer does the government have anything against him.

Now, the devil would like to accuse you, but friend, you have a bill signed in the crimson blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. You have been justified. That doesn't mean now that in the practical realm there is no sin in your life. But listen. If it weren't for justification, you'd never make it to heaven. I've frequently said, I wouldn't trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven; much less some of my bad ones. But thank God, when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ, we come to a place where we are justified, and there's no one that can point a finger of condemnation to us.

Now, that brings me to the fourth question the devil can't answer: "Who is he that condemneth?" Now again, there are a lot of people who like to condemn, but look in verse 34: "Who is he who condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."

There are a lot of people who like to condemn us. Did you know that? Have you ever been told to go to hell? Live long enough, and somebody will tell you that. I've got good news. You don't have to go. Nobody can condemn a child of God. The only one who could do it is Jesus, and He's not going to do it. Why would He reverse the decision of the Supreme Court of the Universe? No, He's not going to condemn you; He's going to intercede for you. He will not condemn what God has already acquitted. That's the reason the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25 that He ever lives to make intercession for us.

Here's the last question the devil can't answer: "Who shall separate us from the love of God?" Now, the devil will tell you when you go through this heartache, trial, tribulations, problems, God doesn't love you. That is a black lie. Nothing can separate you from the love of God.

Look at chapter 8, verse 35: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Satan likes to bluff. He'll tell you that these things that you're enduring in your life will separate you from the love of God or perhaps are signs that He already has separated you from the love of God. He mentions a list of enemies. He would like for you to believe he can separate you from the love of God. Tribulation—do you have any? Distress—have you known it? Persecution—have you experienced it? Famine—has it been there? Nakedness, peril, sword? All of things don't separate us from the love of God. To the contrary, they draw the child of God even closer to Him.

#### **IV. You Need to Rejoice in God's Unfailing Promise**

Now, here's the final thing I want you to see. Not only do you need to see God's purpose, God's providence, God's protection, but you need to see, and you need to rejoice in God's unfailing promise.

I suppose now that we come to one of the greatest verses in the Word of God, and, beyond a shadow of doubt, in the handful of verses that are my favorite in all of the Bible. What is God's unfailing purpose—unfailing promise? Look, if you will, in Romans 8, verses 38 and 39. Paul says: "For I am persuaded—this means this is not conjecture; I am not guessing about it—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.”

This may be the greatest chapter in the Bible, and these may be the greatest verses in the greatest chapter of the Bible.

Now, listen to me, precious friend. God is doing a total makeover on you. He is. He is. And there’s nothing that’s going to cause God’s promise to fail. It is an unfulfilling promise. He mentions some things that cannot separate us from His presence. Death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, 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.

Now, friend, listen to your Pastor today. God is doing a total makeover on you. First point: He has a purpose—to make you like His Son. Second point: His providence is working together. Third point: His power is overshadowing you. There’s nothing the devil can do to keep it from happening. Last point: His promise is secure to you. He will, He will, He will make you like the Lord Jesus.

You say, well then, Pastor, how come I’m so far behind in my sanctification? Well, because you haven’t obeyed. You haven’t listened. Listen, folks. God will carry you to the woodshed. That will be part of His making you like the Lord Jesus Christ. God allows you to disobey Him. God allows you to go your own willful way. And, therefore, you’re so far behind in your sanctification. But sanctification is only one part of it.

Remember, first of all, there’s regeneration. Then there’s sanctification. All of us are in different stages of sanctification. Some are a whole lot more like Jesus than others today. But glorification is the climax of it all when He makes us just like the Lord Jesus. And that happens at the Rapture. At the Rapture, we’re going to leave this robe of flesh, or actually our flesh will be changed. We’ll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Now, when you see yourself transformed at the likeness of Jesus, all heaven will not be able to contain your hallelujahs. What a joy!

Look at Jim Whitmire over there. Do you think Jim Whitmire is a man? Not really. Suppose you’ve never seen a train wreck. Suppose you’ve never seen a train. And then somebody shows you a train wreck, the thing on its side, smoking, caved in, won’t work—just ugly. And, I want to ask you a question: Have you seen a train? Not really. You’ve seen a train wreck. Now, look at Mr. Whitmire. Have you seen a man? Not really. That’s a wreck! That’s a wreck. That is not God’s original plan. One day, I’ll be strolling down the streets of glory, and I’ll see a creature come. Look, there’s Jesus. He says, “No, I’m not Jesus.” Well, you must be an angel. Are you the archangel Gabriel? “No, no, no, no. I’m not an angel. I’m a human.” A human? You must be Peter, Paul, Stephen? “No, no, no, I’m Jim Whitmire.” I’ll say, “Jim, I hardly recognized you—I hardly recognized you.”

## Conclusion

Friend, we are going to be made like Jesus—like Jesus. It's settled. It's predestined. That is His purpose: a total makeover.

Now, a lot of things may cause you fear. I've heard that a little Indian boy in some parts of the world, when he gets old enough to be called a brave, they give him an ordeal. They take him into the deep woods and draw a circle, and tell that little boy he has to spend all night long in that circle by himself. He lies on the ground, hears the hoot of the owl. There is the howl of the wolf, the sound of the coyote. Every leaf that rustles he thinks may be a bear. So he, on hard, cold ground, perhaps about two in the morning, he falls asleep. He awakens when the sun is up, and he looks, and there his father standing right outside that circle with his bow and arrow to protect his child.

Friend, I'm telling you that our God is the one who stands by, and He has promised—He has promised—that He's going to make us like Jesus. Isn't that wonderful? That is wonderful.

Bow your heads in prayer. Would you like to get in on this plan? Would you? Now, you see, this is only for those who love God. Not everyone can claim this. If you love God, it's because you know Jesus. And if you know Jesus, you love God. And if you don't receive Jesus, you've rejected God. Now, you can receive Jesus today. Boys and girls can receive Him today. College students can receive Him today. Businessmen, retirees, if you're in your 80's or 90's, you can still be saved and get in on this plan.

I want you to pray, Dear God—just talk to Him—Dear God, I'm a sinner. I'm lost. I need to be saved. I want to be like Jesus someday. And Lord, I want you to begin right now to make me that way. I open my heart. I receive You, Jesus, into my life as my Lord and Savior. I believe, Jesus, that You paid my sin debt with Your shed blood on the cross. I believe that God raised you from the dead. And right now, with all of my heart, like a little child, I ask you to come in. Forgive my sin, cleanse me, and save me, Jesus. Save me, Jesus.

Did you pray that prayer? Did you? Were you sincere? Were you? Then thank Him for doing it. For the Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Well, Pastor, how do I know if I'm sincere? Are you willing to make it public? Are you? Jesus said, if you're ashamed of Me, I'll be ashamed of you. I think the mark of your sincerity is if you're willing today to make a public, open declaration of your faith.

Father, I pray that many will come today and say "yes" to Christ, or perhaps have already said "yes" where they are, but will make it known. For I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now, look up here. We're going to sing a gospel invitation. The words are these:

“Lord, I believe; Lord, I receive; Lord, I confess You now.” Your coming forward will be your way of confessing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front of this magnificent building will be a minister to welcome and receive those of you who will be coming. If you’re in the balcony, there’ll be a minister standing under that banner over there that says “Messiah” to welcome you, or this one over here to my right that says “Redeemer.” And if you prayed that prayer, or you need some more help in praying that prayer, I want you to leave your seat this morning. Make your way down one of these aisles and do what you’ll be so glad you did when you stand in the presence of Almighty God. Tell that minister, I’m trusting Jesus. What will happen? We’ll rejoice. We’ll give you some Scripture to stand on. We’ll answer any questions. And we will seal it with you in prayer. It will be a wonderful, wonderful thing for you to do.

Now, also, there are some who need a church home. Church membership is not a substitute for salvation. If you haven’t been saved, that comes first. But if you have been saved, and you know it, then you need a church home. And God’s plan is for every born-again child of God to be a member of a local New Testament church, if not Bellevue, one like it somewhere. This is where you worship and God speaks to your heart, most likely this is where you belong.

So, when we stand and sing, those of you who need a church home, I want you to endeavor to be the first ones down here. And just lead the way for these others who need to confess Christ, by coming. Let’s stand together. Our deacons are going to come ready to pray with any of you. They’re going to come in just a moment. Our ministers are going to come, be standing down here waiting on you. And listen, folks. As soon as we begin to sing, I want you to step out and come. Will you do it? Let’s sing while you come.

# The Five Pillars of Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** June 26, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:28–30

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

ROMANS 8:28

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Supreme Wisdom of God
- II. The Sovereign Will of God
- III. The Seeking Word of God
- IV. The Saving Work of God
  - A. The Basis of Our Justification
  - B. How Justification May Be Applied
    1. Justice
    2. Mercy
    3. Grace
  - C. The Results of Justification
- V. The Settled Ways of God

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to turn to Romans 8:28, and we're going to read Romans 8, verses 28, 29, and 30. Now these verses are very familiar, but I pray God that familiarity with them shall not have bred contempt, but a greater reverence, because of the great truths that there are here in these verses. And if you don't have a Bible, this morning, with you, there's probably one there in the pew rack before you. Would you get that Bible, please, and find the Book of Romans, and find the eighth chapter. You're going to get so much more out of any message, if you'll listen with an open Bible in your hand. Are you ready, now, for the reading of the Word of God?

All right, let's read it: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, 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 8:28–30).

Now look up here. In Romans chapter 8, verse 28, there's a verse that we know so well: "All things work together for good to those who love God." We rejoice in that, but you're never really going to rejoice in it as you ought, or understand it as you ought, unless you understand the two verses that follow it. And I want to talk to you today about "The Five Pillars of Salvation"—"The Five Pillars of Salvation." There are five impregnable pillars that rest upon the omnipotence of Almighty God, upon which the house of salvation stands, upon which the temple of truth rests. If you take away any of these five pillars of truth, then the entire thing comes tumbling down. But thank God, you cannot take them away, because they are all of God, and none of them are of man. And I want you to see, today, these five pillars of salvation, because if you do see them and understand them, and you're a Christian, it's going to cause you to rejoice in your salvation all the more. And if you're not a Christian, I just believe it ought to cause you to want to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. So pay attention—all right?

## I. The Supreme Wisdom of God

What is the first of these five pillars of salvation? Begin in verse 29, and look at this verse here—Romans chapter 8 and verse 29—the Bible says, "*For whom he did foreknow...*" (Romans 8:29)—"*for whom he did foreknow...*" The first of the five pillars of salvation is what I call the supreme wisdom of God—the supreme wisdom of God. God's wisdom is unlike any other man's knowledge or any other person's understanding. Of course, God is not a man; God is God, as we've just heard sung. Great is He, greater than anything, greater than everything, and all things—is God. So His wisdom is supreme.

Now we know after the fact, but God knows things before the fact. This verse speaks of the foreknowledge of God, the Greek word *proginosko*. And it sounds very much like our word *prognosis*, from which we get our word *prognosis*—we get it from this Greek word—or *prognostication*. What is a *prognosis*? Well, if it deals with man, it's an educated guess.

Now the weatherman—he makes a prognostication, a prognosis, concerning the weather, but the weatherman is sometimes wrong—just when you plan a picnic, right? I heard of a weatherman who had to leave one town and go to another because the weather didn't agree with him.

And sometimes, the doctor makes a prognosis. The doctor examines you and thumps around at you, on you, for a dollar a thump, and then he makes a prognosis; and, he says, "You're going to get better"; "You're going to get worse"; or this or that. But the doctor, sometimes, is wrong.

I heard of a doctor who said to a man, "You've got a year to live. That'll be 500

dollars.” The man said, “I don’t have 500 dollars.” The doctor said, “Well, I believe I’m going to give you another year, so you’ll have time to get it.” The doctor is sometimes wrong.

But God’s prognosis, God’s foreknowledge, is not based upon guess or whim. God knows things before they happen. You say, “Well, I don’t understand that.” Well, you don’t have to understand it, because you’re not God. And as a matter of fact, I’m glad you don’t understand it. I’m glad I don’t understand it. I wouldn’t have much confidence in a God I could understand. I’m grateful that there are some things about God that I don’t know.

But let me try to illustrate it, if I might. If you watch a parade from the ground level, you see the floats as they come past, one at a time. But suppose you could go up in a 20- or 30-storey building and look down upon that parade. And you’d see the first float, you’d see the last float, and you’d see all between, at the same time, because you have a different vantage point. Now we live in history. We see events as they come past, one at a time. But God dwells in eternity, and God sees the beginning, and God sees the end, and God sees everything in between, all at one time. And so God foreknows. He just knows everything.

And God, knowing everything—He’ll never learn anything and never forget anything; He just knows. Of course, even when the Bible says He forgets our sins, that means He doesn’t remember them against us, anymore. But God has all knowledge—all knowledge; and so, therefore, I was in the heart and mind of God before He swung this planet into space. He knew that one day I would repent of my sins. He knew that one day I would receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. He knew that I would be standing in this place, this day, preaching this sermon, and you would be sitting here listening, for God knows the future. And so there’s the supreme wisdom of God. And how we thank God for it! How we rest in that mighty wisdom of God!

## II. The Sovereign Will of God

Now the second thing I want you to notice... Let’s continue to read here, in Romans chapter 8, verse 29: “*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate*” (Romans 8:29). Now right behind the supreme wisdom of God, I want you to write “the sovereign will of God”—“the sovereign will of God.” “*For whom he did foreknow, then he also did predestinate.*” That is, God has predestined certain things to happen.

Now theologians have raced their theological motors talking about predestination. What is *predestination*? Well, Dr. Scofield, who edited the *Scofield Bible*, said—and I think rightly so—that, “Predestination is the effective exercise of the will of God by which things before determined by Him are brought to pass.” That is, God says, “I am determined to do something,” and then, He does it. And the Bible calls that

*predestination*. And when God predestined something to happen, all Hell can't stop it, because God has predetermined that He's going to do it. And then, He puts His omnipotence behind it to get that thing done.

Now does this mean, therefore, that some are predetermined, predestined, to go to Hell, and that others are predetermined and predestined to go to Heaven, and there's nothing we can do about it? Absolutely not! The Bible teaches that any man who wants to be saved may be saved. There's nothing more damning, more debilitating, more stultifying, more killing and chilling to evangelism than the idea that some are going to be saved, regardless, and some are going to be lost, regardless, and there's absolutely nothing that anyone can do about it.

Let me give you some Scriptures that will put that idea to rest. You jot them down: 1 Timothy chapter 2, verse 3 and following: *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved,"*—did you hear it? Did you hear that? *"God will have all men to be saved,"* or, that is, He wants all men to be saved. That's what the Word wills: all men to be saved—*"and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all"* (1 Timothy 2:3–6). Not a ransom for some. There are some who say that Jesus Christ only died for the elect. He died for all—all! Listen to it again: *"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all"* (1 Timothy 2:5–6).

And then, listen to this verse—2 Peter chapter 3, verse 9: *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Read it, again: *"all should come to repentance."* God doesn't want anybody to die and go to Hell. It is a slander on the character of God to say that God created some people to die and go to Hell. If people are not saved, it is because they choose not to be saved.

Let me give you another scripture—Matthew chapter 23 and verse 37. Jesus is sitting on the Mount of Olives. He's weeping over the city of Jerusalem. Great salty tears course down His cheeks, and He says this: *"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"* (Matthew 23:37). That is, Jesus said, "I would have saved you. I would have forgiven you. I would have gathered you together. I wanted to redeem you, but you said *no*. It is not because I did not will it; it is because you refused it."

Now some people think, if you say that man has a free will, that that takes away the sovereignty of God. It does not. The Bible teaches both the sovereign will of God and the free will of man. These are not contradictory; they are mutual truths. Somebody says, "Well, how can God be sovereign, if man has a free will?" Because the sovereign

God has ordained that man would have a free will—that's how. God says, "Because I'm sovereign, that's the way I want it." And if God wants it that way, whether you can understand it or not, that's no problem. The sovereign God has said that, "Whosoever will, may come" (Revelation 22:17). And so dear friend, there is a sovereign God.

"Well," you say, "what's all this stuff about predestination, then? What does that mean?" Well, read it. The Bible says, "For them that he foreknew"—or, those that he foreknew—"he predestined to"—*what?* Well, let's read it: "*For whom he did foreknew, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son,*"—now, this is not some being predestined to be saved, but it is those that God foreknows who are predestined to be conformed to the image of God's Son—"that he"—that is, God's Son—"might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). What does that mean? It means that God only had one Son. His name was Jesus. And God loved Him so much He said, "I want some more like Him." And so God is redeeming a whole race of men, that all of these men might be conformed to the image of God's Son.

I tell you something, friend: You're looking at a man who is predestined to be like Jesus. It's settled! And if you're saved, you're predestined to be like Jesus, and all Hell can't stop it. When God foreknew that I would receive Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, when I, of my will, would repent of my sin and receive Christ, then God says, "It is settled! Adrian, one day, will be like the Lord Jesus Christ." And so the Bible says, in 1 John chapter 3, verse 2: "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is*" (1 John 3:2). We know it! We don't guess it. We don't think it.

*You say, "You're dogmatic!" Friend, I'm bulldog-matic!* I am going to be like Jesus. It is predestined. "For those whom he foreknew, them did he also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." Don't get the idea, dear friend, that you don't have a choice about it. You do. And you're going to give an account for the choice that you make today.

I heard of a preacher who tried to figure out whether he wanted to be in that group of people who believed that you were called and sent by the Holy Spirit, or whether you came by your own free will. And there was a group of theologians, over here, who believed one thing; there were a group of theologians, over here, who were emphasizing free will on this side; and, on this side, were the theologians who were emphasizing the sovereignty of God. And he was torn between the two. And he said, "Well, I've got to be in one camp or the other." So he went to this camp over here, and he said, "I'd like to join this group of theologians." And they said, "Well, why did you come?" He said, "Well, I just came because I wanted to. I came of my own free will." They said, "Of your own free will? You can't come of your own free will. You don't

belong here. Go to that group over there.” So he went to the other group, and they said, “Why did you come?” He said, “Well, I was sent.” “You can’t come unless you come of your own free will. You can’t belong to this group.” So the poor fellow didn’t have a group to belong to.

Friend, let me tell you something: There is no contradiction between the sovereign grace of God and the free will of man. Both are taught in the Bible. But you put it down big, put it down plain, put it down straight: *“The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). And our job is to preach the gospel to every creature, as the Great Commission commands us to do so. And so first of all, you see, dear friend, the supreme wisdom of God. He knows all things. Secondly, you see the sovereign will of God. This God has predetermined that those that He knows will receive Christ will be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **III. The Seeking Word of God**

Now the third thing I want you to see—the third pillar that rests upon the omnipotence of Almighty God, and upon which this temple of truth stands—is what I call the seeking Word of God—the seeking Word of God. Let’s continue to read verse 30: *“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called”* (Romans 8:30). God seeks us. God calls us. This word *call* literally means, “to issue a summons.” You see, God foreknows that we will receive Him. God predestines that those who receive Him are going to be like the Lord Jesus. And then, God sends His Word. God sends His gospel.

Now what is the call of God? You know, there are people who say, “Well, one of these days, if God wants to save me, He’ll just call me; and then, I’ll be saved.” Now what do you think the call of God is? Do you think God’s going to say, “Hey, Adrian”? He’s never called me that way. Sometimes, I think it would be nice; but I hope He doesn’t. It would scare me to death. Well, what is the call of God? You say, “Well, it must be an emotional feeling. You must be sitting in church sometimes, and then you get all warm around the heart and wet around the lashes; and, you get goose bumps, and the angels play tic-tac-toe on your ribs, and you say, “Hey now, that’s the call of God.” You don’t read anything like that in the Bible. What is the call of God? The Bible says, “Whom he foreknew, he predestinated...and those that he predestinates, he calls” (Romans 8:29–30). Now what is the seeking word of God? How does God call? Through the preaching of the gospel, friend.

Let me give you some scriptures that will make that very clear and plain—2 Thessalonians, the second chapter, verses 13 and 14: *“But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto he called you by our gospel”* (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14). Did you hear

it? How did He call you? By the gospel! Do you know what is happening here today? God has seen this scene before it ever happened. You're here; I'm here. I have an open Bible. God has called me to preach. God has ordained me to preach. God has filled me with the Holy Spirit to preach. God has given me His Word to preach. God brought me here to preach. God brought you here to hear it. And God is calling you through His gospel. That's what He's doing: He is calling you. When God wants somebody, He calls that person, and he calls you through the gospel.

Let me give you another scripture—1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 23 and following: *“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:23–24). Now it's not that God just goes through a congregation, and He calls this one, and He doesn't call that one. Friend, He's calling everybody here today. *“The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).

And God called a preacher and said to that preacher, “Call My people by preaching the Word of God.” And one of these days, God is going to hold you accountable for what you do with His summons. It is a call from God—not from Adrian Rogers, not from the Baptist denomination, not from Bellevue Baptist Church, but from the gospel that says, “Repent of your sin, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ.” There is the seeking Word of God. That's the third of these pillars of truth.

#### **IV. The Saving Work of God**

What's the first one? The supreme wisdom of God. What's the second? The sovereign will of God. What's the third? The seeking Word of God. Now what's the fourth one? And friend, here's the good part: the saving work of God—the saving work of God. Continue to read, as we read: *“Them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified”* (Romans 8:30). That's the saving work of God. When He calls a man by the gospel, and that man answers the gospel call, then that man is justified. Now what is *justification*? Well, it is God's act, whereby He declares those who have trusted in Christ to be as righteous as Jesus Christ Himself is righteous.

Now put your bookmark there, in Romans 8, and turn back to Romans 4 with me, and look, if you will, in verse 5—Romans 4 and verse 5: *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness”* (Romans 4:5). Now what does that say? It says that salvation is not because of the works that we do, but when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God counts our faith for righteousness. God says to the believer, “You are righteous.” Verse 6: *“Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works”* (Romans 4:6). Do you know what *imputation* means? You know what

*amputation* is: You take something out. *Imputation* is where you put something in. God imputes righteousness—that means He puts righteousness on your account.

You go down to the department store and buy something. You have a charge card. You say, “Charge it!” Next time, just say, “Impute it!” It means the same thing. “Put that on my account.” Now God puts righteousness on your account. “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord imputeth righteousness without works.” That is, I don’t deserve it; I didn’t earn it; I don’t merit it; but God—when I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—God just imputes that righteousness. And when God sees me, He sees that righteousness. Do you know what God sees when He looks at me today? He sees Jesus Christ. You say, “That’s arrogant.” No, it’s not; it’s Bible. I am in Christ, and, therefore, He cannot see my sin. He sees the righteousness of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

A Sunday School teacher asked a little girl, “Is there anything God cannot do?” And the little girl sweetly said, “Yes, there’s one thing God cannot do: God cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.”

But I want to tell you, dear friend, this thing called *justification* is more than just pardon; it is promotion. It is not just simply that He forgives our sin. He does far more than forgive our sins. He doesn’t just acquit us. He makes us righteous in His sight. You see, no court of law could ever justify anybody—no human court.

I mean, if you go to a human court, and the grand jury has indicted you, and you go through a trial, they can do one of two things: I mean, on the one hand, they could say, “You’ve been acquitted.” What does that mean? It means they couldn’t prove you were guilty. They didn’t justify you; they just couldn’t prove you were guilty, so you’re acquitted. Now maybe you weren’t guilty, but the court can’t justify you. It either says you were guilty or you’re not guilty. If they couldn’t find you guilty, they acquit you—like the man who stole a watch, and the judge said, “You’re acquitted.” He says, “Does that mean I have to give the watch back?”

The courts sometimes are wrong. Or, if you’re found guilty, the court may pardon you, or the governor may pardon you, or the President may pardon you. But whether they acquit you, or whether they pardon you, or whether they punish you, they cannot justify you.

Only God can justify. Only God can take someone who is guilty and take that guilty person, that sinful person, and give to that person righteousness. Only God can do that. That’s what the Bible calls *justification*. This is the saving work of God.

So many people think of being saved as merely getting their sins forgiven. But friend, that’s only part of it.

*Be of sin the double cure,*

*Save from wrath and make me pure. (Augustus Toplady)*

God sees the righteousness of Jesus Christ in every one of His blood-bought children.

Hallelujah! That is wonderful.

### A. **The Basis of Our Justification**

Now how can God do such a thing? What is the basis of our justification? Look in Romans chapter 3 and verse 24: *“Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood”* (Romans 3:24–25). Now look at that word *propitiation*. That’s a big word—hard to pronounce, hard to spell. What does it mean? You’d better learn what it means. It means “satisfaction.”

Now God is a holy God. And because God is a holy God, God’s anger and God’s justice burn against sin. God has sworn, by all that He is, that sin will be punished. Sin must be paid for. Sin must be satisfied. There must be a satisfactory payment for sin. And so God said, “If I punish man for his sin, if I gain satisfaction that way, man will die and go to Hell, and I love him. But on the other hand, if I don’t punish man for his sin, My righteousness will never be propitiated. My justice will never be satisfied. I will no longer be a holy God, because I am sworn by My holiness to punish sin.” So God says to Himself, “How can I, on the one hand, have that sin paid for, and, on the other hand, let the sinner go to Heaven?” God said, “I will become a substitute. I will take human flesh. I will go down to Earth. I will take the sin of mankind upon Myself. And in agony and blood, I will pay for that sin, and I will become a satisfaction for sin, a propitiation for sin, a righteous judgment and substitute for sin.”

And so look at it again, dear friend. This is the way it happens here, in Romans chapter 3. The Bible makes it so sweetly plain, so gloriously plain, in verse 25: *“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”* (Romans 3:25–26). Now God never overlooks sin. God is still just when He justifies me, because that sin has been propitiated. That sin has been satisfied. That sin has been paid in full. And when Jesus died on the cross, and bowed His head, and said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30), that is a Greek word that means “paid in full.” And therefore, God is both just and the justifier of the man who believes in Jesus Christ. Do you understand that? Isn’t that wonderful? That’s the gospel.

### B. **How Justification May Be Applied**

Now how can this justification be applied to me? How do I lay hold of it? We know what it is: God makes us righteous. We know how it comes: Christ died that we might have it. But how do we lay hold of it? Thank God we don’t have to guess. Look again, if you will, in Romans 3, verse 24: *“Being justified freely by his grace”* (Romans 3:24). Do you know what *grace* is? *Grace* is “the unmerited favor of God.” It’s what causes God to

love us while we were yet sinners. The Bible says, in Romans 5, verse 8: “*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8). Being justified by His grace. I want to remind you, again, there are three words you need never forget the meaning of: one is *justice*; the other is *mercy*; and the other is *grace*. Are you ready?

### **1. Justice**

What is *justice*? *Justice* is God giving us what we deserve. That is, if we get justice, we’ll die and go to Hell. Don’t ever ask for justice, because our sins deserve Hell. Justice is God giving us what we deserve.

### **2. Mercy**

*Mercy* is God not giving us what we deserve. Thank God for that.

### **3. Grace**

But *grace* is God giving us what we don’t deserve. Do you understand it? *Grace* is where God, in His love, says, “You don’t deserve this. It’s not by works of righteousness that you’ve done (Titus 3:5), but I am going to make you righteous. It is by grace I’m going to impute this righteousness to you. I’m going to lay this righteousness on your account. I’m going to make you as righteous in My sight and in My eyes as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is righteous.”

So it is by grace. But how do we get hold of that grace? Through faith. Look, if you will, in Romans chapter 4, verse 5: “*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*” (Romans 4:5). How do you lay hold of it? By keeping the Ten Commandments? By being baptized? By studying your Bible? By praying? By living a godly life. All of these are fine, but they’re all good works. But that’s not the way you get it. “*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*”

We’re not against good works. You ought to do good works. You ought to read your Bible. You ought to pray. You ought to keep the Ten Commandments. You ought to be baptized, if you’re a Christian. But these things don’t save you. You know, we’re not against good works. We preach that a Christian ought to live a godly, righteous, separated, sanctified life.

*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. (Author unknown)*

Amen? It’s not by works. The Bible says, “*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*”

When a man receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior, then, and then

alone, he's justified and has peace with God. Look in Romans chapter 5, verse 1: *"Therefore being justified by"—what?—"faith,"—by faith—"we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Romans 5:1). The moment any sin-soiled, sin-darkened, sin-ruined person bows his head and says, "God, in repentance and faith, I come to Jesus Christ; I trust You, Jesus," that moment, he's justified, and he has peace with God. The war is over! Hallelujah! Now friend, that is justification: that I am made as righteous, in God's eyes, as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

### C. **The Results of Justification**

Now what are the results of this? I mean, what difference is this going to make in my life? Well, let me show you something. Look in Romans chapter 4 and verse 5—we just read this. Let's read it again: *"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."* Now here's the result of it: *"Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works,"—well, that's a great blessing, but wait a minute—"saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,"—hey, that's wonderful; God forgives my sins. But wait a minute, there's more—"and whose sins are covered."* It's one thing if He forgives them; it's another thing if He buries them. Amen? Oh, that's great. He forgives them. And then, not only does He forgive them, but He covers them. But wait a minute. The best is yet to come: *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin"* (Romans 4:5–8).

Now just put a star by that. Underscore it. Now friend, that's not what Adrian says; that's what God says. That's what David said—or what the Holy Spirit said through David: *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not"—will not, will not—"impute sin."*

Now remember what *imputation* is? God puts that on your account. Now I may not be righteous in and of myself, but God has imputed righteousness to me. I do fail, but God will not impute that to me. *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."* If God were to impute sin to me when I fail, I'd be lost again. How much sin would it take to make me lost? Just one half of one sin.

You see, I'm not going to Heaven because I'm perfect. I'm not perfect. You're not perfect, and nobody's perfect. But *"Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."* Amen? That is what *justification* is. And friend, if you understand it, if you understand how wonderful this is—that God just imputes the righteousness of Christ, and God will not impute sin because we're received in Christ, we have received Christ—then you'll understand how wonderful this salvation is.

## V. **The Settled Ways of God**

Now the fifth and final pillar of this great salvation that I want to mention today.

Remember what the first one is? The supreme wisdom of God; He foreknew us. The second: the sovereign will of God. When He foreknows that we'll receive Christ, He predetermines, predestines, we're going to be like Jesus. What's the third one? The seeking call of Christ. He sends His Word, the gospel, to call us to Himself. What's the fourth one? The saving work of Christ. When we believe on Him, we are justified. He will not impute sin to us. He does impute righteousness without works. It is the gift of God. And He gives us peace with God.

Now the fifth of these is the settled ways of God—the settled ways of God. I want you to see something that's very outstanding, in Romans chapter 8, now again, in verse 30. Look at it—all right: *"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 8:30). The settled ways of God. Now you would expect Him to say, "Them he also will glorify." But He doesn't say He will glorify us. He says, *"Them he also glorified."* He put it in the past tense—that is, it's already done; it's already settled in the heart and the mind of God.

Do you know you're looking at a man, today, who is already glorified in God's heart, in God's mind, and in God's way, because God deals in eternity? And so God doesn't see merely the present; God sees the future. And right now, in the future, God sees Adrian Rogers, and He sees him glorified; and, He sees him like Christ; and so, God says, "He's glorified." I mean, that's the settled ways of God. It is predetermined I'll be like Jesus. All Hell can't stop it. That's the reason I believe in the eternal security of the believer. I mean, how could you be any more secure than being predestined to be like Jesus and already glorified, huh? Now that's not me; that's God. This is black print on white paper. We are secure—not because of our own righteousness. If it depended upon my works righteousness, I'd lose it.

There are people who think you can lose your salvation. Well, friend, whether or not you can lose it depends on how you got it. Now if you got it by works, then I could understand how you could lose it by works, right? I mean, if you had to work in order to be saved, then, if your works fail, you're no longer saved. But friend, if you get it by grace, then you're kept by grace. You see, you keep it the same way you got it. Of course, you can't get it by works; and, therefore, you wouldn't have anything to lose. But those of us who have come in through the door of grace, we are in that category of persons that the Bible says God imputes the righteousness of Jesus Christ to us. And *"Blessed is that man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."*

These people who think, "Well, you can lose your salvation." I say, "Well, what would cause you to lose your salvation?" Well, sin! I say, "Okay, how much? How much?" Friend, listen. If sin could cause you to lose your salvation, one half of one sin would do it, because God demands perfection. Don't think that God will tolerate a little, but He

won't tolerate a lot. He won't tolerate any! Not any! And if that sin were imputed to you—that is, if sin could cause you to lose your salvation—then everybody in this room would be lost, because is there anybody here who hasn't sinned? Anybody here who doesn't sin? Well, if you stand up and say you haven't, you just told another lie, because God's Word says, if we say we've not sinned, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (1 John 1:10).

And so if you're depending upon your works to get you to Heaven, the only way you're going to get there is to be absolutely, totally perfect. I said it before; I'll say it again: *I wouldn't trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to Heaven, much less some I'd rather not discuss.* Not the best I've ever lived. You see, I am counting on the fact that, when I received Jesus Christ, God made me righteous; God justified me; God imputed the righteousness of Jesus Christ to me; and, therefore, in God's eyes, I became righteous.

Now that doesn't mean that you can sin and get away with it. If you sin as a Christian, God will carry you to the woodshed and beat the living daylights out of you. "Whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receiveth" (Hebrews 12:6). And the Bible says, "*If ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons*" (Hebrews 12:8). That's what God's Word said in Hebrews. That is, "If you were My child, and you're living the way you're living, I would have whipped you a long time ago. And if I don't whip you, it's because I never fathered you. Had I fathered you, I would have chastised you. You're not My child." No child of God, because of eternal security, can live any old way he wants. With an eternal security comes an eternal responsibility. And we are told how to live righteous and godly lives.

But I want to tell you something, friend: Just because God may chastise us does not mean that we're lost. There's a difference between God's chastisement and God's judgment. If God were to impute that sin to me, rather than just chastise me for it—if God were to put that on my account—then I'd be eternally lost. "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*" Don't get the idea that sin can cause you to lose your salvation.

Now I want to say something else, here: I don't want to lull some, those of you, to sleep, who've never been saved. I mean, some of you waltz down a church aisle and shake hands with a preacher, and you think you're saved; and, you're living like the devil himself. It's going to be a sad day for you when you split Hell wide-open, because you've never been saved.

*You know, you go out. I've done enough soul winning. You go out and witness. You knock on a door. An old man comes out there, with a potbelly and a can of beer. And he says, "Yeah, I used to go down to that church. I guess you can call me an old*

backslider.” He’s not a backslider; he’s lost as a goat. No backslider says, “I’m just an old backslider.” Man, if you know God, you’ve been saved; His Spirit has come into you; you’re born of the Spirit, that God the Holy Spirit in you is grieved when you sin—you don’t laugh about it and make fun about it.

Sure, you may slip into sin, but I want to tell you *the most* miserable man *on* Earth—and, I said this last Sunday—*is not a* lost *man; he’s a* saved *man out of* fellowship *with God*. When God saves you, God puts into you His Spirit, and you become a partaker of the divine nature. And the Holy Spirit of God is grieved when you sin. And God will carry you to the woodshed when you sin. But you don’t lose your salvation when you sin. If you did, dear friend, we’d all be lost, every one of us, for who can say, “I’ve never sinned?” Who can say, “*I don’t fail some day, some way?*” “*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.*”

“Them that God justifies—those that He justifies—He glorifies” (Romans 8:30). And they’re already glorified. It’s already done. Hallelujah, it’s done! Somebody said, “Well, yeah, maybe your sin can’t take you out of the hand of God, but Satan can.” Pardon me, but that’s foolish. Do you think he, friend...? If he could, he would. Now be reasonable. If Satan could take you out of the hand of God, why hasn’t he done it yet? Hasn’t he been nice to you, hmm? That would be a strange doctrine, wouldn’t it? You’re going to Heaven by the goodness of the devil. I mean, he just could, but he didn’t, you see. You know, the only reason he hasn’t is because he can’t.

As, Eleanor sang, “*Greater is he that is in you, than he that is the world*” (1 John 4:4). And 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, and neither shall any 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*” (John 10:27–30). You see, He keeps us. And so God looks at me as already glorified. And friend, *what has been* settled *in* eternity *can never be* undone *in* time. The settled ways of God.

## Conclusion

What are the five pillars of salvation? The supreme wisdom of God; the sovereign will of God; the seeking Word of God; the saving work of God; and the settled ways of God. We’ve got a wonderful salvation, folks. I mean, this is the message the devil doesn’t want preached. We can relax—not let down—relax! So many Christians I know remind me of a man who swallowed an egg: afraid to sit still, thought it would hatch; afraid to move, afraid it would break. They remind me of the deep-sea diver who got a message on his headphones: “Come up quick; the ship is sinking.” I mean, we’re nervous, uptight. *It’s not* right *for the* upright *to be* uptight. That’s the reason the Bible says, in Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love

God.” I mean, no matter what happens, friend, God says, “There he is, glorified, sitting in the Kingdom. I have predestined he’s going to be like Jesus, and all Hell can’t stop it.” But friend, He’s not willing that any should perish. It’s your decision. He’s not going to force Himself on you. “Whosoever will, may come” (Revelation 22:17).

Boy, I wish I could do it for you. I mean, I wish there was somehow I could preach, and then go down there, and get in your seat, and come down here, and give my heart to Jesus. And friend, I want to tell you: I’ve done my part today. And I’m not trying to be arrogant, but I’ve soaked the message in prayer, and I’ve preached it from the Word of God. And if you’re waiting for God to call you, friend, God has called you today. He calls you through the preaching of the gospel. And one of these days, a million years from now, you’re going to look back on this service with joy or deep regret.

Let’s pray. Father, I pray that many who are listening by radio or television, and some later by tape, and these who are here in this place today, will say yes to Jesus Christ.

# Victory over Circumstances

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** October 10, 1982

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:28–30

“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

ROMANS 8:28

## Outline

Introduction

- I. God’s Plan Is Grounded in a Purpose
- II. God’s Plan Is Guaranteed by Predestination
- III. God’s Plan Is Guided by Providence
  - A. God Provides for Every Event
  - B. God Protects from Every Enemy

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, turn to Romans chapter 8 tonight—Romans chapter 8. And we’re going to look at some very familiar scripture, but I pray God that He’ll give us a fresh insight into it. We’ve been talking in these last days about spiritual warfare. And this morning, we talked about the fact that we were born to win. And when a man is born again, he is born to win. But many times we think that our battle is simply with Satan. But I want you to know that not only does God want you to have victory over Satan; He wants you to have victory over self; and not only victory over self, but victory over sin; and not only victory over sin, but victory over your situation. And I’m going to talk to you tonight about “Victory over circumstances.” And the victory that we have in the Lord Jesus extends to the area of your circumstances.

Now, look, if you will, please, in these familiar verses—Romans chapter 8, verses 28 through 30: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, 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 8:28–30)

Now you’re going to find yourself in two kinds of situations; you’re going to find

yourself in two kinds of circumstances: those you can do something about, and those you can't do anything about. Now, if you find yourself in the kind of circumstance where you can do something about it, and it needs changing, then you ought to change it. And it is your responsibility to change it. But if you find yourself in a circumstance that you cannot do anything about, then you need to understand that all you can do is rest upon the providence of God and learn to be victorious through that situation.

*For every evil under the sun,  
There is a remedy, or there is none;  
If there be one, try and find it,  
If there be none, never mind it.*

—MOTHER GOOSE RHYMES

Now, there are some things that we can change, and there are some things that we cannot change. So there are two classes of things we should never worry about: those we can do something about, and those we can't do anything about, amen? If you can do something about it, do it. If you can't do anything about it, "which of you by taking anxious thought can add one cubit to his stature?" (Matthew 6:27; Luke 12:25) But in every circumstance, whether we can do something about it or whether we cannot do something about it, we're to be victorious over that circumstance—really, not over that circumstance, but in that circumstance, and through that circumstance.

Now, there are three things I want you to notice in these verses that we've looked at tonight.

## **I. God's Plan Is Grounded in a Purpose**

First of all, I want you to see that God's plan for you is grounded in a purpose—God's plan is rooted and grounded in a purpose. And what is the purpose? Well, look at it, if you will, here in verse 29: "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.*" (Romans 8:29)

Now, what is God up to in your life? You want me to put it in one sentence? To make you like Jesus. I mean, that's what it's all about, friend: to make you like Jesus! God wants you to be conformed to the image of His Son. And this is what the Bible calls His great purpose. You see, when God created man to begin with, what did God say? "*Let us make man in our image.*" (Genesis 1:26) Now, you see, you were created to be in the image of God's own dear Son. That's why God created you. That's why God made you. But that image was marred.

Now, the image that you're created in is not a physical image. You were not created in the physical image of God. God doesn't have ears and eyes and a nose and hands and feet. God is a spirit. And so, the image that is in you is a spiritual image. God gave you something He didn't give to the plants and the animals. The plants have a body, but

they don't have a soul. Animals have a body and a soul, but they don't have a spirit. Only man has a spirit. And the thing that keeps you from being more than a clever animal that can talk is this: that God, when He made you, breathed into your nostrils the breath of life that is the spirit of life, and you became, dear friend, in the image of God, because God's very life is in you. You became a spiritual being. And that way, you can know God and you can have fellowship with God, for "*God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.*" (John 4:24)

You'll never see a donkey, an elephant, a cat, or an antelope going to prayer meeting. They just don't go. They have no capacity, no appreciation for God. And no matter how intelligent they get, some people say, "Will we ever be able to teach a chimpanzee to communicate? Will we ever be able to teach one to talk or to communicate? Can we communicate with the dolphin, with the porpoise?" Well, perhaps so. But even if we teach them that, you'll never teach them to pray. You'll never teach them to know God. You'll never teach them to worship God. Only man has a spirit. But this image, this spirit that we have in us, was marred by sin; not destroyed, but marred. We now have a fallen spirit, a deadened spirit, within us.

Now, what God wants to do is to revive that image in you. And God does it primarily in three ways. He wants you to be conformed to the image of God's Son. First of all, He gets you saved. That's what we call regeneration. Have you ever thought about that word *regenerate*? Do you know why you are what you are physically? You have certain genes and chromosomes. That's what makes you what you are physically. Well, when you get saved, you get *re-gened*. You are *re-generated*. That's right. You get a new set of genes. And God just put His nature in you. You have become *re-gened* in Christ. And you now have a spiritual maker. That's step number one in your being made like the Lord Jesus Christ. That is your regeneration. And then, after that regeneration comes sanctification. And sanctification is the process where He, the Lord, is making us day by day more like the Lord Jesus. And then, the final step is glorification. And when we see Him, we'll be like Him. He's going to change our vile bodies like unto His glorious body, and we are going to be like the Lord Jesus. And so, God is making us like His Son in three stages, by three ways: by regeneration, by sanctification, and ultimately, by glorification.

Now I want us to take the middle one of those and look at it tonight. And that's what we're talking about tonight is sanctification. The Lord uses circumstances to sanctify you. And so, God's purpose is to cause all things to work together for your good and His glory that you would be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, are you growing in Christianity? Are you growing in your faith? Let me just give you the test: Are you becoming more like Jesus? That's the test. No other test. Not how many verses you can quote. Not how many times you came to Church Training. Not

how big your gift was to Together We Build. Not any of those things. Now, those things may be included, and they may be indications; but, friend, the test of your sanctification is so simple: Are you more like the Lord Jesus today than you were yesterday? Are you? Think about it. You know, I'm asking myself that question, and it hurts me to ask it tonight, because I was just considering it just now. I may not be more like Him today than I was yesterday. And if that's true of me, then, to that degree, I have failed. You see, the test of your sanctification is just simply this: Are you being conformed to the image of God's Son?

Do you want me to tell you the proof of my ministry? Not how many buildings we build. Not how many people we have in Sunday School. Not, really, how large our budget is, or how many people we baptize, or how harmonious our fellowship is, nor how wonderful our organization is, nor how sweet our music. Thank God for all of these things. But the test of my ministry is: Am I making you through my preaching and through my prayers and through my care more like Jesus? That's it. That's the test of my ministry. And if the people of this congregation are not becoming more like Jesus, I am a failure as a pastor—an abject failure as a pastor—if you are not becoming more like Jesus Christ. And, dear friend, my sanctification is failing if day by day I am not becoming more like Jesus Christ. I want to tell you that God's plan for you is grounded in a purpose, and that purpose is that you might be conformed to the image of God's Son—verse 29.

You want to put in your margin 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 18. The Bible says, *“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.”* (2 Corinthians 3:18) The Spirit of the Lord is changing us from glory to glory, from glory to glory, from glory to glory, and we are being more and more and more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, the very first thing I want you to see is that God's plan is grounded in a purpose. It is grounded in a purpose. And that purpose is so clear, so plain: that we might be conformed to the image of His Son. That is His purpose, verse 29 tells us.

## **II. God's Plan Is Guaranteed by Predestination**

Now, the second thing I want you to see: Not only is God's plan grounded in a purpose, but God's plan is guaranteed by predestination. It is guaranteed by predestination. Now, look, if you will, in verse 29: *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.”* And then, down in verse 30: *“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 I'm probably biting off more than I can chew right here. You say, “Brother

Rogers, do you understand predestination?” No. So, just relax. I don’t understand it. But I’m not worried about it. Neither do you. And neither do all the folks over there at the seminary. And you professors who are here tonight, you don’t intimidate me. I know you don’t understand it either. None of you—none of you—understand this matter of predestination. You say, “Do you understand it?” No. “Do you believe in it?” Absolutely! I can read it. I read right here, *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate.”* That’s black print on white paper. There is predestination. Thank God I don’t have to understand it. Vance Havner said, “I don’t understand electricity, but I don’t intend to sit around in the dark until I do.” And there are a lot of things that we don’t have to understand.

And, you know, Spurgeon was a great Baptist preacher. I think he, as well as anybody, described man’s free will and predestination. He said, “It’s like a person walking down a street and he sees a beautiful building and he wants to enter that building. And over the door of that building is a sign: ‘Whosoever will.’ So he says, ‘Well, I want to,’ and he goes on in. But as he walks through that door, he turns around and looks on the other side, and it says, ‘Chosen before the foundation of the world.’” (Ephesians 1:4)

And those are the two sides. And sometimes we try to reconcile those things. We don’t need to reconcile them. Somebody asked Spurgeon again, “How do you reconcile the free will of man and the sovereignty of God.” He says, “Who needs to reconcile good friends?” Friend, listen. These are parallel lines, and you’ll never bring them together; but you’ll never make them cross. And God has predestined. God in His infinite wisdom has just predetermined. He has predetermined that certain things are going to happen.

Does that mean that we’re not to be soul winners? Absolutely not! Does that mean that we’re not to preach the gospel to every creature? Absolutely not! It means that we’re to preach and pray and weep and plead and warn, because our God has commanded us to. But I want to tell you, dear friend, it does mean that one day God has predestined me to be like Jesus, and all hell can’t stop it. All hell can’t stop it! *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”* And I am going to be like Jesus, folks. It is sure! It is predestined! The Bible says in 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.”* (Philippians 1:6) Isn’t that grand? Isn’t that glorious?

You see, let me give you another good verse in John chapter 6, verse 37. Jesus said, *“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”* (John 6:37) Now, that verse says, dear friend, that God has given certain ones to the Lord Jesus. And it means the ones that God has given to Jesus will

come. And it means that the ones that will come will be received: “those that the Father hath given me will come to me; and those that come to me I will in no wise cast out.” And I want to tell you, He went on to say, “Father, those that you gave me, none of them is lost, except the son of perdition, that he might go to his own place.” (John 17:12; Acts 1:25) And, of course, the son of perdition, he never was saved to begin with. Jesus said, that He knew who they were who believed not: *“Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?”* (John 6:70) Jesus never lost one. And, friend, when He gets to heaven, He’s going to say, “I and the children, Lord, that you’ve given me, they’re all present. They’re all accounted for. Not a one’s lost. Not a one is lost. Everyone that you’ve given me will come to me, and them that come to me I will in no wise cast out.”

Now, folks, I’m just preaching it tonight, not explaining it, okay? Just preaching it. But I’m just telling you, dear friend, that God’s plan is rooted in a purpose, grounded in a purpose. We’re going to be like Jesus. Number two: It is guaranteed by predestination. All hell can’t stop it. And what has been predestined in eternity will never be undone in time. We are going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. It is so certain, it is so sure, that God even puts it in the past tense. He already speaks of it as having happened. Notice in verse 30 again: *“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them...”*—you would think He would say, “them he will glorify.” That isn’t what it says. It says—*“them he also”*—what?—*“glorified.”* (Romans 8:30)

Now, what do you call that? A prophetic past? Well, I don’t know. But he’s just simply saying it’s as good as done. As that commercial we hear around here says, “Bank on it! Bank on it!” Friend, it is done! You’re already glorified. God sees you tonight as glorified. God looks at you, and God sees the finished product right now. You don’t look like Jesus right now, but you’re going to be like Jesus. You’re going to be conformed to the image of His Son.

### **III. God’s Plan Is Guided by Providence**

And so, what I’m trying to say is that God’s purpose is grounded in a plan. And, furthermore, God’s purpose is guaranteed by predestination. And, thirdly, and here’s the point: God’s plan is guided by providence. It is grounded in a purpose. It is guaranteed by predestination. And it is therefore guided by providence.

Now, look in verse 28—Romans chapter 8 and verse 28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose”*—*“we know that all things work together for good.”* (Romans 8:28) That word *for* is a preposition which means “with motion toward an object.” That is, everything that happens is moving towards a purpose. And all things are working together. That has the idea of gears meshing, of things coming together—that God has

a purpose.

Now we call this purpose the providence of God. Do you know why we call it providence? Well, that word *providence* is a combination of two words: *pro*, which means “before”; and *video*, “to see.” God just sees ahead of time, and He makes plans thereby. God sees the future. You see, the word *providence* just simply means to see ahead of time and to make plans because of what you see. So God just sees things that you don’t see. And since God has a purpose, and since God has predestined that His purpose is going to come to pass, then God looks ahead. God sees ahead. And God seeing ahead and making plans to bring His purpose to pass is called providence. So God’s plan for man is grounded in a purpose. It is guaranteed by predestination. And it is guided by providence. Now, that means that all things are working together for good. What is the good? To make us like Jesus. Not to make us healthy or wealthy, but to make us like the Lord Jesus.

Now, this is seen, I suppose, better than any place else in the life of Joseph. You remember who Joseph was? Joseph was the one who was hated by his brothers. And his brothers were envious of him, because of his father’s favor, because of his coat of many colors, because of his dreams and his visions, and because of his righteous life. Joseph was taken by his brothers, put in a pit, later on sold to the Ishmaelites, and sold as a slave, taken down into Egypt. The brothers came home and told a lie, and told their father that Joseph had been slain, and brought his bloody coat to prove it.

And, of course, he was down there as a slave in Egypt. And many things happened to him. All of them happened by the providence of God. And after seventeen years, when there was a famine in the land, and there was a lot of wealth in Egypt, and a lot of corn in Egypt, and a lot of food in Egypt, and all of the people from all over the known world at that time were coming to Egypt, to the granaries of Egypt to have their supplies met, Joseph’s brethren came. Seventeen years had passed. And they came. And finally, Joseph revealed himself to his brothers. When he revealed himself to his brethren, they were terrified.

But I want you to see what Joseph said in Genesis chapter 45 and verse 5. This is what he said to them. In Genesis chapter 45, verse 5, he said, “*Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither:*”—now, notice—“*for God did send me before you to preserve life.*” (Genesis 45:5) Now, they thought they did it, but Joseph was not going to let them get credit for what God did. And three times he says in this passage, “God did it. God did it. God did it.”

Now you say, “No, they did it.” Well, then, maybe you know more than Joseph knew about it. And maybe you know more than the writer of the book of Genesis knows about it. But I want to tell you, it seemed outwardly that they were doing it; but I want to tell you, where man ruled, God overruled. And God saw ahead of time and God made

provision to get Joseph down there in Egypt, because God had a plan that He was working out. And nobody else would have seen it. And everybody else would have said, “That’s bad news.” But as far as God was concerned, it was fitting precisely into His plan.

Years and years ago, I was reading about the life of Henry Ford, the one, of course, who created the Model T automobile. And I was reading how seemingly eccentric Henry Ford was. And I read this account that said that Henry Ford built all of the Fords in the assembly line except for the transmissions. And he let another company build the transmissions for those Model T Fords. But as he sent out bids for the Model T Ford transmissions, he said to those who were building the transmissions, “I want them crated in thus and such a way. And when you ship them to the Ford factory, they must be put in wooden crates, and they must be fastened together with screws, and those screws must be put in certain places on the boxes.”

Well, the people who wanted the job said, “Well, if the old coot wants it that way, we’ll send them to him that way. We’ve got to put them in boxes anyway, and so it’s just as easy to drill a hole there as it is to drill a hole here. And we’ll just fasten the boxes together the way he says.” And so, the low bidder got the job and sent the transmissions to the Ford factory. But when Ford’s workmen uncrated those transmissions, they took the sides of those boxes and laid them right in the floorboards of the Model T. And that company had made the floorboards for all those Model T Fords—and the holes in place. And all they had to do was just simply put the bolt in there, and the holes were exactly matched just as he sent the specifications out. It didn’t make sense to anybody else, but it made sense to Ford. He knew exactly what he was doing. He knew what he was ordering. And I want to tell you, dear friend, he had a little providence. He saw ahead of time and he made provision.

Other people may not know what God is up to, but God knows what He’s up to. And I’ll tell you, friend, when you finally see God putting the floorboards in His Model T with every hole right in the place, you’ll say, “What a great God we have! What a great God we have!” You see, “*And we know that all things work together for good...to them who are the called according to his purpose.*” (Romans 8:28)

Again, he says Joseph reminded his brothers in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20, he says to them, “*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.*” (Genesis 50:20) And if there was ever a man who was like Jesus, it was Joseph. As a matter of fact, Joseph, to me, is one of the most beautiful types of Jesus in the Old Testament. And I have a sermon—perhaps you’ve heard it—“The Gospel According to Joseph,” where I take the parallelisms and show on the one hand what Joseph was like, and on the other hand what Jesus was like: how Joseph was hated by his brethren, and how Jesus was hated

by His brethren, and so forth; and how a Jew there in Egypt became the savior of the world, in a physical sense, and how our Lord became the Savior of the world; how Joseph was given a Gentile bride, and so forth. But what I'm trying to say is that God took those events in the life of Joseph and worked them together so that Joseph was conformed to the image of God's Son. And the same God is doing that in your life today.

Now, that's maybe why you're having so much trouble, because maybe you're so unlike Jesus right now that the Lord's having to work pretty hard on you. And there are a lot of things. And He's not necessarily trying to make you happy, not necessarily trying to make you wealthy. He's not trying to make you anything but holy. He's trying to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, that just tells me that two things are definitely true if God is working this way.

### **A. God Provides for Every Event**

First of all, God provides for every event. I tell you, I don't believe that a blade of grass moves without God's permission. I don't believe that you take a breath without God's permission. Now I don't believe that God just gets in here and moves things around arbitrarily. I'm not trying to say that. And I'm not trying to put some grotesque interpretation on it. But I'm just telling you, dear friend, that over all is God. And the very hairs of your head are numbered. (Matthew 10:30; Luke 12:7) Not a sparrow falls but what He knows about it. (Matthew 10:29; Luke 12:6) He provides for every event.

You see things that Joseph never could have taken care of. Who caused that caravan to come along just at that time when Joseph was sold into slavery? Who caused the famine to come into all the world? It was God who did that, dear friend. And God is still in business.

I was reading several weeks ago in a news magazine about a man who was shipwrecked on an island. He was a survivor of a wreck. And he came to a lonely, uninhabited island, and he was able to gather some things from that wreck, and he built him a little makeshift hut. And he put all of the things that he salvaged in that hut. And then, he began to pray every day, "O God, O God, send a boat! Send somebody to take me off this island before I die of starvation! God, send someone! Please, Lord, send a boat to deliver me!"

And one day while he was out foraging and hunting for food, he saw smoke. He turned around and realized that his hut somehow had caught on fire. Perhaps his campfire was built too close to the hut and it had gone up in smoke, and everything that he had gathered was in that hut and it went up in smoke. He had been praying to God for so long. There was no answer to prayer. And now, every possession he had, the things that he'd salvaged, had gone up in smoke. He turned his face toward heaven and thought that he would accuse God and say, "God, why? Why, God, have you forsaken

me?” But after a while, he saw on the horizon a ship steaming his way. And they came and put out a small boat, and came to him and said, “We would have passed this island by completely, but we saw your smoke signal and knew that you were here.” Oh, dear friend, there are times when we don’t understand how God works. But God works, and He doesn’t make any mistakes.

## **B. God Protects from Every Enemy**

He provides for every event. And He protects from every enemy. Now I want to tell you something, friend. You don’t have any enemies that God will not protect you from in His providence. Now, Joseph’s brothers, would you say they were friends or enemies? Well, of course, they were enemies; but yet they became his friends. He says again, “*But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.*” (Genesis 50:20)

Now, a person who does you good, he has to be your friend. “*When a man’s ways please the Lord, he makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.*” (Proverbs 16:7) And God will use your enemies for your good. Did you know that? That’s the providence of God. His brothers were enemies. But they became his servants.

Think of the enemies that Joseph had. Potiphar’s wife was certainly his enemy. But she was the one who caused him to be cast into prison, and his being cast into prison, his abasement, made way for his advancement. And in the strange ways of God, even Potiphar’s wife, who was his enemy, became his friend.

Paul’s thorn in the flesh—was that an enemy? Indeed it was. As a matter of fact, we translate that phrase, “*thorn in the flesh,*” (2 Corinthians 12:7) the Bible scholars tell us that the word literally means it was a stake upon which he was impaled. Not just a splinter, but something horrible, was in the life of Paul. Would you call that a friend? No, it was an enemy. But it became a friend, because through that, Paul knew God’s grace in a sweeter, richer way than he ever would have known it.

The cross of the Lord Jesus Christ—was that an enemy? Indeed it was. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that the cross of Jesus that was His enemy became His greatest victory. And through the cross He has redeemed me and redeemed you and won us unto Himself. Bless His holy name! I am trying to tell you that God in His providence provides for every event and protects from every enemy.

Now, what’s the bottom line of all of this? What’s the bottom line of this? I think you need to understand, friend, that when you complain about the events in your life, when you criticize and grumble about the circumstances of your life, do you know what you’re doing? You’re criticizing God. That’s what you’re doing.

You remember there in the wilderness they were murmuring against Moses? And Moses went to God, and they were criticizing and complaining and murmuring and

gripping. And God said to Moses, “Moses, they are not murmuring against you; they’re murmuring against me.” (Numbers 14:27) And, friend, when you complain about your position in life, when you gripe, when you criticize, you’re murmuring against God. And you’re saying that Romans 8:28 is not true, and that God’s providence is not sufficient. And do you know why God may have you in that circumstance? He’s trying to do something. And you say, “Well, I want to get out of this circumstance,” and so you just move yourself out of that circumstance. And God will allow you to move yourself out of that circumstance, but still He overrules, and you find yourself right back in another circumstance just like it.

There are some preachers who move from one church to another to another and another. And, friend, I want to tell you, when you move from one church to another church, the same people that you left are in that new church. They just have different faces. They’re there. Every now and then somebody will come up, and I’ll meet them, and I’ll say, “I wonder where you’ve been.” They’re all there. And any preacher that’s been preaching long enough knows that is true. And you cannot move away from your problems. Some people think that they can. But, you see, God has you in school. And God’s going to keep you there till you pass the test. And you say, “Well, I’m going to go to another school.” Well, He’ll just give you the same test. And He’s going to keep you. And you’re not going to get away from it.

Have you ever known a girl who will marry and have a bad marriage, but one of the reasons that she is unhappy in her marriage is her husband? And you ask her, “Well, let me ask you a question: Were you happy at home?” “No, I wasn’t.” “Did you get along with your dad?” “No, I didn’t.” “Did you want to marry to get away from your dad?” “Yes, I did.” “Did you marry a man just like your dad?” “I sure did—I sure did.” It’s amazing. It is amazing how many girls will do exactly that, when God is trying to work on them. And God has them in a circumstance where He is trying to bring them and to conform them to the image of God’s Son. Oh, how often we try to change our circumstances!

I heard of a preacher who said he was really nervous. He was upset. Somebody asked him why. He said, “Well, when we got out of seminary, we went to Single Tree, Arkansas, for our first church.” And he said, “At Single Tree, Arkansas, we had our first child.” And he said, “Well, what happened then?” Said, “Well, we were called from there to Twin Falls, Idaho.” And he said, “Well, what happened when you got to Twin Falls?” He said, “You know, you wouldn’t believe it, but we had twins.” He said, “That’s remarkable. Then, what happened?” He said, “Well, it’s amazing, but we went from there to Three Oaks, California, and,” he said, “would you believe we had triplets?” He said, “That’s something.” He said, “What’s your problem?” He said, “Well, I’m really worried.” He said, “We’ve just been called to Thousand Islands, New York!”

And so many times we try to escape problems by changing where we are. What do

we do? We just run into them. I'm trying to tell you, dear friend, that the circumstances of life—the circumstances of life—are God's ministry to you. God is trying to take out of your life anything that's not like the Lord Jesus. And He knows what you can bear. And someone has well said, "He tempers the wind to the shorn sheep." *"For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust."* (Psalm 103:14) But it is God that rules all things.

## Conclusion

Friend, I want you to learn it again. God's plan for man is grounded in a purpose: you're to be like Jesus. God's plan for a man is guaranteed by predestination: you're going to be conformed to the image of His Son; it is predestined. And God's plan for man is guided by providence: God sees ahead of time, and God provides for every event, and God protects from every enemy. If that is all true—and it is true—then what should your response be?

Let me give it to you. And this will help you to understand this verse. Perhaps you've not understood it up until this time. Ephesians 5 and verse 20: *"Giving thanks always for all things"*—amen?—*"Giving thanks always for all things."* And if you're in a circumstance that you can't change, then perhaps you should begin at this time to thank God for that circumstance—not thank God that the circumstance itself has happened, as such; not thank God for the sin, the misery, the ignorance, the horror; but thank God in that and through that, that God is working, whether you see it or not. It makes no difference. Ephesians 5:20: *"Giving thanks always for all things unto God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (Ephesians 5:20) Thank God in your situation. And God will move into that situation and God will begin to work.

I hate to tell you this little silly illustration, because we're dealing with such a grand scheme, but it illustrates the thing so well to me. We were going to Florida about eight years ago, and a friend loaned us their motor home—dear friends—they're here tonight. I'll not call their name, lest you try and borrow it. But we were driving to Florida in that motor home. And I hadn't even gotten out of Tennessee before the thing started running badly. It just started slowing down. And I'd put it on the floorboard and it would do about thirty miles an hour, and got worse. And it was running worse. And I thought, "Now I don't know what's wrong with it." What I don't know about auto mechanics could be put in a book about *that* thick. And so I said, "I've got to get this thing fixed. And I don't want just to stop out in the middle of a highway somewhere; I don't want it to stop in the boondocks."

And so I went to one garage there in a place, and I said, "Can you look at this thing?" "Not today, mister." I limped over to another place, the next town: "Lord, help me to get to the next town." "No, we can't look at it." I went to another place, and a big

place, and the guy said, “Well, I think it’s the *ramsipaismdislaisla*. And I said, “What’s that?” And he said, “Well, we’re going to just have to take it out and spread it all over this garage floor.” I said, “What?” He said, “Yeah, mister, you’ve got bad troubles there.” I said, “Well, when can you do that?” He said, “Well, you’d better get a motel.” And I said, “O Lord, surely this is not your plan for me.”

And I pulled out. I just went a little further. And finally I pulled up into a small town there in Georgia and into a shopping center, and it died dead—wouldn’t budge; wouldn’t start. There I am in this shopping center. I said, “Dear Lord, help me to get it started.” And I turned the key: *rrrrrrrrmmmmmmmm*. Now, the battery was dead. The motor was dead and the battery was dead. I’m sitting there and Joyce said—you know, wives are so smart—and Joyce said, “Adrian, have you thanked God?” Now, if anybody tells you that, you want to say, “To the moon.” You know, when you’re in that kind of a situation: “Adrian, have you thanked God?” And it dawned on me I’d not done it. I had not thanked God in that situation. So I said, “Lord, I want to thank you this motor home won’t run. I want to thank you that the battery is dead. And I want to thank you I’m in the middle of this shopping center and I don’t know what to do. And I just praise you, Lord.”

You say, “Did you feel like doing it?” No, I didn’t thank Him by feeling; I thanked Him by faith.

*Feelings come and feelings go,  
And feelings are deceiving;  
My warrant is the Word of God—  
Naught else is worth believing.*

—MARTIN LUTHER

You just simply thank Him not by feeling, but by faith. I said, “Lord, I don’t know why, but I just thank you.”

I had no sooner thanked Him than I looked up to a tire store and I saw two men changing a tire. And I said to those men, “You men come over here and fix this motor home.” They had no reason to do it. It certainly wasn’t a mechanic’s place. I don’t even know why I asked them. I know why now.

They came over with a screwdriver. One man got to looking around, and he took the lid off that engine, and he looked in there, and he said, “The *whatsamagome* is *sewhfid sijfillcoba*.” And he says, “*Umph, umph, umph*,” and he turned that screwdriver three times. He said, “Try it now.” And by then, the battery had built up. It went *rrrrrrrrmmmmmmmm*, and in two minutes that tire changer with a screwdriver had fixed that whole engine. He just went *umph, umph, umph*, and there it was. The whole thing was fixed, and off I drove. I started to send this fellow a bill for fixing his motor home. I said, “Fellows, what can I give you?” “Not a thing, mister—not a thing.”

You know, I’m so glad that I didn’t let that man spread that thing all over that garage

floor. There was one screw loose. I know you mechanics want to know what it was. It was in the rotor in there, and some little screw was loose in there. And he just tightened the thing up. That's all there was to it—that's all there was to it—but right after I'd given God thanks.

Now, I'm not going to say, dear friend, that God's going to always work that dramatically; but I am going to say this: that when we begin to praise, when we begin to give God thanks, God moves in our lives in ways that He would not otherwise do. You see, we don't pass the test until we give Him thanks. We do not pass the test. "In everything giving thanks"—"In everything giving thanks"—"always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 5:20) Again, God doesn't say, "Feel thankful." He just simply says, "Give thanks."

So, let's review it. We're talking about victory over circumstances. Here it is, dear friend. God's plan for man is grounded in a purpose: you're going to be like Jesus. God's plan for man is guaranteed by predestination: "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.*" (Romans 8:29) And God's plan for man is guided by providence. And where God does not rule, He overrules. And God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28) What a great God we have!

# Victory over Circumstances

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 11, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:28–30

*“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

ROMANS 8:28

## Outline

Introduction

- I. God’s Plan Is Grounded in a Purpose
- II. God’s Plan Is Guaranteed by Predestination
- III. God’s Plan Is Guided by Providence
  - A. God Provides for Every Event
  - B. God Protects from Every Enemy

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Romans 8. Now, from time to time I talk to you about my favorite passage of Scripture in the Bible. Well, I think if I had to be shipwrecked with one book of the Bible, I really believe it would be the book of Romans. And if I could only take one chapter out of the book of Romans, it would probably be this chapter, the 8th chapter of the book of Romans. But, of course, that’s just for tonight. Tomorrow, I may feel a different way, but that’s the way I feel tonight about this wonderful, wonderful chapter in the Bible.

Tonight I want to talk to you about circumstances, and I want to talk to you tonight about “Victory over Circumstances.” Now, sometimes you ask an individual, “How are you doing?” and he’ll say, “Well, I’m doing okay under the circumstances.” Well, you have no business being under the circumstances. The circumstances are like a mattress. Under the circumstances you suffocate. You’re not to be under the circumstance, in a sense, through Jesus; you’re to be over the circumstances. But circumstances are very real.

I told you sometime ago about a man who applied for a leave of absence from his job, and, he said he wasn’t fit to work. He had been hurt on the job and so he had to fill out an accident report form. He was a brick mason, and he’d been laying brick on top of a roof and building a parapet wall. And when he finished, he had too many bricks, so he decided he had to get the remainder of the brick down the ground. So he rigged a

contrivance where he put a yardarm out over the edge of that building and put a pulley on the end of that yardarm, put a rope through that pulley, tied the rope to the ground and looped it all the way down and tied the other end to a barrel, a big barrel. Got on the ground and hoisted the barrel up to the roof, level with the top of the roof. And then he filled that barrel with the remainder of the brick. Then he went back to the ground and untied the rope. He said when he did that he realized he'd made a grievous error because the barrel full of brick was obviously much heavier than he was. So he said when the barrel full of brick started down, he started up. And he said, "I did not have enough presence of mind to let go of the rope until it was obviously too late to let go because I was then in midair." He said, "The barrel of brick came hurdling down at a frightening speed and struck me on the shoulder and gave me a severe laceration, but," he said, "I managed to hold on until I got all the way to the top." And then he said, "I wedged my fingers in that pulley." He said, "At that moment, the barrel full of brick struck the ground and the barrel broke apart. The bottom came out of the barrel. It deposited all those brick on the ground." He said, "At that moment, the barrel became lighter than I was, and so the barrel started up and I started down." But he said, "I still managed to hold onto the rope." And, again, he said, "The barrel met me halfway, but this time it banged me upon the shins, both shins, and gave me a severe laceration, but," he said, "I still managed to hold on," and he said, "I fell upon all things upon that pile of sharp-cornered brick." He said, "It was then that I lost my presence of mind and let go of the rope." And he said, "The barrel came down and hit me on the head." He said, "I need a few days off."

Now, I think many of us can identify with that man. You know, we are sometimes up, sometimes down. We're getting hit from both sides, and we don't know whether to hold on or let go. We call those circumstances. And we all face circumstances every day. "Thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." And we do have victory in Jesus, but what kind of victory?

Well, we have victory over sin. Thank God for that. And we have victory over Satan. Thank God for that. And we have victory over self. Thank God for that. But I tell you something else we have in Jesus. We have victory over the situation. Now that's the kind of victory that many of us need, those kind of things that are happening to us day by day, what we call circumstances, what we call the situation. Victory over circumstances.

Now look, if you will, at a classic passage of Scripture, Romans 8:28. We all know that one. "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. 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 whom he did predestinate, them he

also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” Now, what an incredibly deep, magnificent, wonderful, masterful passage of Scripture this is. No preacher, no theologian has ever probed the depths of these verses. But they all root around God’s plan, what God is up to.

## **I. God’s Plan Is Grounded in a Purpose**

Now why did God make me? You say, “That’s a good question.” Why did He make you? Why did God make you? What did God have in mind? Well, you ask some surface people and you say, “Well, God, God made us so He could redeem us, so He could ransom us.” Well, suppose you had a, a son who, somehow, for some reason, found himself in, well, let’s say in Lebanon today, and let’s say that he’s taken captive and he becomes a hostage, by some faction there, some group there. They say, “Your son, if you want to see him again, it’s going to cost you a million dollars.” And suppose that you could raise a million dollars and you felt that you wanted to pay that ransom. And so you pay the ransom and got your son back. And I say, “Why did you have that son? What is the purpose of that? Well, you say, “My purpose was to ransom him.” Well, is that why you had him, so you could ransom him? Is that the purpose in raising a son? Or suppose you have a little boy, a little girl, who’s out playing in the front yard and they get in the filth and the mire and the dirt. You bring them in and give them a bath and cleanse them. You say, “Well, is that why you had those children, so you could bathe them or so you could cleanse them? No!

You see, God did not create us so He could ransom us, redeem us, sanctify us, and cleanse us. That’s not why He had us. He just does those things so He can bring us to the purpose for what we were created to be to begin with. You see, what God really wants is sons, daughters, that He can fellowship with. God is love. What good is it being a God of love if there’s no one to love? And, and so many people have only a salvation mentality. They just see themselves getting saved and think that’s the end of the road. No! That’s only the means to the end. The end of the road is fellowship with God. God wants you to be like Jesus. Look in verse 29: “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son—His Son is Jesus—that he—Jesus—might be the firstborn among many brethren.” Now what that simply means is that God had one Son named Jesus. He likes Him so much He wants a whole lot more just like Him. And so He wants to have many sons. God wants to make me like Jesus. So here’s the first thought: God’s plan is grounded in a purpose. God’s plan, everything that God is up to, is grounded in a purpose. And that purpose is to make me like Jesus, to make you like Jesus. That’s the reason that you were created to begin with in the image of God.

When the Bible says that, man was created in the image of God, that does not

speak of the physical image. God doesn't have a body like we have because God is a spirit. It speaks of the spiritual image. You see, God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth. Plants have a body, but they don't have a soul or a spirit. Animals have a body and a soul, but they don't have a spirit. Only man has a spirit. Only man has the capacity to know and love and worship God. And that's why we were in the image of God. Now that image has been marred by sin.

We are in the image of Adam, not in the image of God. It was Adam that was in the image of God spiritually, and that image has been marred. And now God is restoring that image, and He does it three ways: through the new birth. In the new birth we are regenerated, re-gened, as it were. We get a new set of spiritual genes and chromosomes. We are regenerated. And then, not only is there regeneration, then there is sanctification. What is sanctification? Well, it's just a big double-jointed word that means to grow progressively more and more like Jesus. You see, when you get saved, you don't sprout wings and get a halo. You have to learn. You have to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And when our Lord makes you less and less of what you were by the first birth and more and more of what you are by the second birth, that, that process is just called sanctification. So there are three basic steps: Regeneration, sanctification, and glorification. That we're waiting on, the glorification when we are caught up and made like our Lord Jesus. And I talked about that this morning.

Now, the test of your spiritual growth is this: it's not how many Bible verses you know, not how many times you come to church, not how much money you give, or not even how many people you win to Jesus. They may be indications and indicators, but they are not the proof. The measurement as to how much you are growing is, how much are you like Jesus? Do you remind people of Jesus? When people see you, do they see Jesus? And, you know, the proof of my ministry is not the size of this building or how many people we have in Sunday school, the kind of budget we have, or how many people we baptize. Do you know the test of my ministry? Are you becoming more like Jesus? Are you becoming more like Jesus? Are we getting a generation of people who live here in Memphis, Tennessee who are being conformed to the image of God's Son? That's what God is all about. That's what the whole thing is about, folks, is to make us more like the Lord Jesus Christ. I mean, that's the goal. The goal is not just simply, redemption, ransom. The goal is not primarily sanctification, cleansing. Thank God for those. You had children that you might love them and that they might love you. And that's what God is doing. He is bringing many sons into glory. That's what He says over in the book of Hebrews. So, if you want to understand victory over circumstances, first of all, you have to see what God is up to. What is God up to? God's plan—God's plan—is grounded in a purpose. And what is that purpose? Let's say it clearly, plainly,

distinctly, that you might be conformed to the image of God's Son. That's what it's all about. That is the bottom line, that you would be conformed to the image of God's Son.

## **II. God's Plan Is Guaranteed by Predestination**

Now, God's plan is grounded in a purpose and, therefore, God's plan is guaranteed by predestination. Now look at it here in verses 29 and 30: "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate—now just underscore that word in your Bible, predestinate—to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he—God's Son—might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called..." Now, God's plan is guaranteed by predestination. That is, it can't fail. To predestine means to determine destiny ahead of time.

You say, "Pastor Rogers, do you understand predestination?" No. I don't think you do, either. The late, great Dr. Vance Havner used to say, "I don't understand electricity, but I'm not going to sit around in the dark until I do." I don't understand how God can predestine some people to be saved without predestining others to be lost, because He does not predestine anyone to be lost. "The Lord is not willing that any should perish," the Bible says, "but that all should come to repentance." And the Bible says, "Whosoever will may come."

Dr. Charles Haddon Spurgeon that I often refer to explains it this way: He said, "If you can imagine a door. Over the portals of that door it says, 'Whosoever will may enter. Whosoever will.' You see that door, and you say, 'You know, I want to go through that door.' On the other side of that door is fellowship with God. On the other side of that door is the forgiveness of sins. On the other side of that door is peace and power and purpose and a right relationship with God through Christ. I want to go through that door. And over the portal of that door it says, 'Whosoever will.' I am whosoever. So you go through that door. And then, as you close the door behind you and look back, you see over the portal of that door, 'Chosen before the foundation of the world.' You were chosen before the foundation of the world." But, you see, friend, both of those things are true. Both of those things are true, that whosoever will may come, and yet you are chosen in Him before the foundation of the world.

Now just stay there in Romans chapter 8, if you will, and turn to John chapter 6. I love this verse in John chapter 6. Our Lord is talking about those who are chosen before the foundation of the world. And look, if you will, in verse 37—Jesus said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me—oh, what an encouragement that is—All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." Now that verse says three things. It says many things, but at least it says these three. God has given them. They will come. And when they come, they will be received. God has given them. They will come. And when they come, they will be received. And

Jesus said, “Father, of those whom Thou hast given me, none is lost.” And one day we’ll stand before the Lord, and the Lord will present us, God the Son will present us to God the Father and say, “Here they are, Father. All present and accounted for.” Now that’s just wonderful. It’s just guaranteed. It’s just guaranteed. It’s going to happen. We are the chosen of God.

Now that doesn’t mean that God created somebody to go to hell. God didn’t create anybody to go to hell. He’s not willing that any should perish. Friend, if God made me to go to hell, I want to go to hell because anything does what God made it to do is happy. I’d be happier in hell, made to go to hell, than I would be in heaven, not made to go to heaven. Listen, friend. Anything that does what God made it to do is happy. And God didn’t make anybody to go to hell. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

But, having said all of that, God has predestined that those of us who know Him and love Him are going to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. Isn’t that a great thing to know? I mean, it’s just guaranteed. It can’t stop it. There’s nothing that can stop what God has predetermined. And so, God has predetermined it to such a degree He counts it as already done.

Look in verse 30: “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified—you think he would say, then he will glorify, but that isn’t what it says—they he also glorified.” Past tense.

Now God lives in eternity and we live in time, and so, we see sequential things as they happen, 1, 2, 3, 4. But God doesn’t see things sequentially. God sees the beginning and the end all at the same time. And God already sees you glorified. I mean, with God it’s already done. It’s as good as done. I mean, in God’s sight, in God’s mind, He sees you sitting in the kingdom just like Jesus. Isn’t that wonderful?

You know, people who think you can lose your salvation, they’ve got a verse here to deal with. I’ll guarantee you God says, “It is done. It is fixed. It is settled.” You are already glorified in the heart and mind of God. It is predestined; it is fixed; it is settled. Hallelujah!

### **III. God’s Plan Is Guided by Providence**

Now, listen. The plan—it is grounded in a purpose. What is the purpose? You’re to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. It is guaranteed by predestination. And all hell can’t stop it because God has predetermined that it will happen.

Third thing: Grounded in a purpose, guaranteed by predestination, and, therefore, it is guided by providence. It is guided by providence. Now we’re going to understand verse 28 a little bit more that deals with circumstances. Look in verse 28: “And we know—not guess, think, surmise—we K-N-O-W, know that all—not some, but all, A-L-

L—all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”

Now, when you put the word K-N-O-W, we know, and you put the word A-L-L together, we know that all things work together for good, that gives us some insight into circumstances. You see, God’s plan is guided by a predetermined providence that is bringing us to a very special purpose.

Now, look at the word for. Look at it in verse 28. “And we know that all things work together for good...” That word for is a preposition. It means “unto good.” That means, toward a goal. And we call this providence. Now providence is just, made up of two words that you and I are quite familiar with in English—pro, meaning “toward,” or, “ahead of time,” and video, which means “to see.” Providence. It means to see ahead of time. Providence. That’s all it means, that God just sees ahead of time and God makes provision.

You see, God, God sees the future. And what you think is just happenstance is not happenstance to God. The very hairs of your head are numbered. Not a blade of grass moves on this earth that God is not cognizant about and it cannot move without His permission. Now, many times circumstances happen to us and they are absolutely nonsensical, and we say, “Why did that happen?” Well, because it doesn’t make sense to you doesn’t mean that it doesn’t make sense to God, and it doesn’t mean that it won’t make sense to you later on. I think the classic example of that is a young man named Joseph that you find in the Bible.

You will remember that Joseph, his father’s favorite son, was hated by his brothers. And I’ll just shorten the story very much, but Joseph was sold to a band of Ishmaelites headed toward Egypt by his brother, conniving, sinful, selfish, proud, arrogant brothers. And then those brothers went home and told their dad that the favorite son, Joseph, had been killed by a wild beast. And Joseph went there to Egypt. And, obviously, when he was sold to the Ishmaelites, sold as a slave later on the slave market and went through an horrendous set of circumstances, he may have felt like God had forsaken him, or at least, if God had not forsaken him, things had gotten out of control and perhaps beyond God’s control. But later on, when Joseph became the Prime Minister of Egypt, and when Joseph became the key person in the great, grand plan of God in world redemption, Joseph faced his brothers. And Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis chapter 45 and verse 5, speaking to his brothers who had sold him into slavery, Joseph said to his brothers, “Now, therefore, be not grieved nor angry with yourselves that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life.” What was Joseph saying? Joseph is saying, “You didn’t do it. God did it.”

Now, seventeen years had passed when he met his brothers again. And, and all of this time they’d had a guilty conscience, and they were guilty, but yet Joseph saw

beyond that. Joseph saw over that and through that. He saw the providence of God. He saw God working all things together. And in this extended passage three times Joseph says essentially the same thing so that they cannot be confused about it. Joseph does not want them to get the credit, for he wants to give the credit to God. And three times he says, “It wasn’t you. It was God.” And then the classic passage there in Genesis chapter 50 and verse 20: “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 all of us have been mistreated by wicked people. All of us have been mishandled. Few of us have been through the excruciating pain and shame and sorrow and loneliness that Joseph went through. But Joseph, looking back on his life, could see Romans 8:28, God working all things together for good, though Romans 8:28 had not been even written in that day.

Now I want you to see how God’s providence works.

#### **A. God Provides for Every Event**

First of all, God provides for every event. You see God moving in the life of Joseph. It was God that caused the Ishmaelite caravan to come by just at that moment. And it was God that sent the famine all over the world at that time and taught Joseph how to gather grain and so forth, so that he would be the commissary of the whole world at that time. God is preparing. God is over world events.

Some years ago, I read about a man who was shipwrecked and he was on a desert island. He got some of the fragments from that ship and built a hut. He was able to squirrel away a few things—nuts and berries and things to live on. All of his earthly possessions were on that island in that little hut. He kept praying and asking that a ship would come and find him, that he’d not spend the rest of his life and die there forgotten, lonely on that island. One day, when he was out foraging for food, he saw smoke on the horizon where his hut was. He broke into a dead run because he’d left a little cooking fire there inside, and the entire hut was gone up in flames and the entire thing was being consumed. And he, he said, “O God, I prayed, I asked You to send somebody to come and get me. And rather than sending someone, now my house has burned and all of my possessions are burned.” And later, as the ship stopped to pick him up, several hours, they said, “We saw your smoke signal. We’re glad that you were wise enough to send a smoke signal. We would not have known you were here.” Now, what we think is failure sometime, and what we think is disastrous sometimes, God sees as working together for good.

#### **B. God Protects from Every Enemy**

God provides for every event, and God protects from every enemy. When Joseph’s brothers were his enemies, they were really his servants. They were the ones that made

it possible for him to become the Prime Minister of Egypt. Potiphar's wife, who lied on Joseph and accused him of attempted rape, in a strange way, had him cast into prison where he could not get out of prison and later on become the Prime Minister.

Paul's thorn in the flesh, his sickness, whatever it was, and we don't know what it was—that was not an enemy; it was a friend because it brought to Paul added power and added strength where God said, "My strength is made perfect in your weakness."

We think of the cross as Jesus' greatest enemy, but the cross of Jesus Christ became His greatest victory. We need to understand that God is a God of providence. Therefore, when we complain about our circumstances, and we're all want to complain about our circumstances. Tonight, I was looking at this passage of Scripture reading in the Bible. Turn to Exodus chapter 16. Let me show you something here about murmuring. I know you would never murmur, but you may know somebody who murmurs. And so, and we murmur about our circumstances. Look in Exodus chapter 16, verse 7. Moses says, the people were murmuring, and he says, "And in the morning, then ye shall see the glory of the LORD; for that he heareth your murmurings against the LORD: and what are we, that ye murmur against us? And Moses said, This shall be, when the LORD shall give you in the evening flesh to eat, and in the morning bread to the full; for that the LORD heareth your murmurings which ye murmur against him: and what are we? Your murmurings are not against us, but against the LORD."

Do you know that when you murmur you find yourself in a circumstance and you murmur, and isn't that an ugly word—murmur? I don't even like the sound of the word murmur. There are murmurings in churches. You say, "Pastor, has anybody ever murmured in Bellevue?" Who are you kidding? People murmur; they just murmur. They don't like this. They don't like that. You know, murmuring is kind of like quicksilver. You can't put your hands on it. They're just little half-uttered complaints, little things about the circumstances or about the way things go.

The people of Israel were murmuring to Moses about the situation. They were out there in the desert and they said God had forsaken them, or why did Moses led them out there and there was no water to drink, and so forth. And Moses went to God, and God says, "Moses, you tell those people that when they're murmuring they're not murmuring against you; they are murmuring against Me because I'm the one who gave you to them, and I'm the one who is over the circumstances that they're murmuring about." And it was God that brought them just to that place. It was God who had been guiding them through that wilderness. And it was God that brought them to that dry hole and to those bitter waters.

And, kids, when you murmur against your parents, you're murmuring against God because God gave you those parents. And, parents, when you murmur about your children, you're murmuring against God because God gave you those children. You

murmur about your pastor. God gave you that pastor. You murmur about your boss. God gave you that boss. You murmur about your health. God gave you your health. You murmur about your job. God is the one who is over all of that. I want to remind you, friend, that God is in control of this world. I mean, God is in control. And the Bible says, “All—not some, but all, A-L-L—all things work together for good to those who love God, who are the called according to his purpose.” Now, we complain and gripe and criticize. And when we do, we are sinning against God.

Some people get in trouble and they, they move away to get out of trouble. That’s a strange thing. You know, you, you just, you move to another city and you have the same problems in the other city you had in this city.

I heard about a man who lived in Single Tree, Arkansas. And his wife conceived, and he went in the hospital and he had a son. But then he moved to Twin Falls, Idaho, and his wife conceived and went in the hospital and he had twins. Then he moved to Three Oaks, California, went in the hospital, he had triplets. Then he went to see his pastor. He said, “You know, I need advice. I need to talk to you. I’ve just been called to Thousand Island, New York.”

You know, and you move. You don’t get away from your problems. There’s no way that you can get away from your problems, not in the true sense of the word. Oh, obviously, you can move for a better situation, and so forth, but if God is engineering trouble for you, let me tell you about God. And God never flunks you out; He just re-enrolls you—just re-enrolls you. He keeps on giving the test until you pass. And so, what’s He doing? God is not really as interested in your being happy as you are in being happy. God is not really interested in your being healthy as you are interested in being healthy. But God is very interested in your being holy, you being like the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, that’s God’s school, that you might be conformed to the image of God’s Son.

So, if this is true, if this is true, and it is true, that all things work together for good to those who love God, then what should your response to the circumstances of life be? What should your response be? It’s found in Ephesians 5 and verse 20, and here it is: “Giving thanks always for all things,” because doesn’t He say, “And we know that all things work together for good...” Isn’t that what He says? Now, if it’s for your good, shouldn’t you thank God for it? “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now it doesn’t say feel thankful. It just says be thankful. Feelings come and feelings go and feelings are deceiving. The Bible is the Word of God and nothing else is worth believing. Just simply give God thanks.

It doesn’t say all things are good. If your child is hit by an automobile, that’s not good. If your little baby is stillborn, that’s not good. If you go to the hospital and the doctor says, “Your wife has cancer and it’s throughout her body and she won’t live

long,” that’s, that’s not good. If you get fired from your job and don’t have enough money to pay the rent, they come and take the house away, that’s not good. We live in a world that’s not a good world. And this eighth chapter of Romans says in this world we groan, we groan. But it says this, folks, that God works all things together for good.

## **Conclusion**

And I don’t know there’s a better affirmation of faith than this: to just say, “God, I can’t understand it. I don’t know why You’re doing it. It hurts. I don’t even know how I’m going to make it through, but I know that You’re the sovereign God and Your purpose for me is one day I’ll be like the Lord Jesus.” And the Bible says in Romans 8:18: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that shall be revealed in us.”

Father, seal the message to our hearts. We love You and praise You. In Jesus’ dear name. Amen and amen.

# Blessed Assurance

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 2, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:28–31**

*“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*

ROMANS 8:29

## Outline

Introduction

I. Link #1: Foreknowledge

II. Link #2: Predestination

III. Link #3: Calling

IV. Link #4: Justification

V. Link #5: Glorification

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want to talk to you today about “Blessed Assurance,” Blessed Assurance. You know, a child of God ought to be an exclamation point, not a question mark. He ought to be able to say, “I know I am saved and going to Heaven.” I want you to take God’s Word and turn please to Romans chapter 8, and we’re going to begin reading in verse 28. And, I’m going to show you in these verses, the basis of my Blessed Assurance.

Romans chapter 8, and verses 28–31. I like the way it begins, “*And we*”—what? Know.—“*And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he*”—that is Jesus—“*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. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*”

Now, ladies and gentlemen, a chain is no stronger than its weakest link. I want you to imagine yourself suspended over a chasm and in the bottom of that chasm is an inferno of flame, and you’re suspended by a chain. There are five links in that chain, four of the links are made of forged steel and one is made of crepe paper. How safe are you? You’re no safer than that weakest link.

I have just read to you of a chain, not a steel chain, but a golden chain forged on the anvil of God's grace with the hammer of God's omnipotence, that links eternity past with eternity future. Five golden links in a magnificent chain that cause me to say,

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
O what a foretaste of glory divine!"*

—FANNY CROSBY

And, it is for that reason that I can say in Romans 8:28, "For I know that all things work together for good to those who love God." No ifs, ands, or buts about it. I love what William R. Newell wrote, and we sing it today in our hymnal:

*Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan!  
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!  
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span  
at Calvary."*

I want you to take your Bible's now, and we're going to go down deep, but I hope not come up dry. I want you to see how you can say, with great thanksgiving and incredible joy, I know that I am saved, redeemed and on my way to Heaven. All right? Now, let me give you these five links that give to us a blessed assurance, a rock ribbed certainty, that we know beyond the shadow of any doubt that we will be with our God in the glory.

## **I. Link #1: Foreknowledge**

Link number one is foreknowledge, foreknowledge. Look in verse 29: "*For whom he did foreknow...*" Do you see that? It's speaking of God, and it speaks of the supreme wisdom and knowledge of God, who knows everything before it ever happens. He foreknows everything. God sees the future. This comes from a Greek word, *proginosko*. The noun form is our word prognosis, and it just simply means to know ahead of time. Put this verse in your margin, Acts chapter 15 and verse 18: "*Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.*" Nothing ever surprises God. God changes not, therefore He cannot learn anything or forget anything. I've asked you before, has it ever occurred to you that nothing ever occurs to God. I mean, the Bible says, listen, "Known unto God are His works from the beginning of the world." Nobody else but God foreknows.

My wife showed me an advertisement of a psychic that was left on her windshield. She said, "If you'll just come to me I'll tell you the future, and I'm going to give you a five dollar discount." Isn't that nice? They don't know the future. Even the weatherman doesn't know the future. Amen. I heard about a weatherman who had to move out of the city because the weather didn't agree with him. The doctor doesn't know the future. The doctor examines you and he makes a prognosis, and he says you are going to get well, or you are going to die. He may be wrong in both instances. I thank God for our doctors,

I thank God for my personal physician, but he does not always know. I heard of a doctor who told a patient, "You've got one year to live." And he said, "Your bill is ten thousand dollars." He said, "I can't pay it." He said, "I'll give you another year." The doctor doesn't know the future. The weatherman doesn't know the future, the psychic doesn't know the future, but known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world. You say, I don't think I understand that. That's all right, you don't have to understand it. You can't understand God. I'm grateful we have a God we can't understand; as a matter of fact I wouldn't trust a God I could understand.

But, you see, let me give you an illustration, and granted it's a poor illustration, but it helps us in some degree. If you've ever watched a parade, like the Rose Bowl Parade or the Orange Bowl Parade or any particular parade, you're there watching, standing on the curb side, and one by one, the bands come through. One by one the floats pass, and you observe them as they come. But, now let's suppose that you're up on a tall building, exceedingly tall, and you're watching the same parade. You see the first float, you see the last float and you see all in between at the same time because you have a different vantage point. We live in time, we see things as they happen this way, but God lives in eternity, and God sees it all at one time. That's where God lives. That's where God dwells, and known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world. And, that just simply means that I was in the heart and mind of God before He put this planet in space. And, God knew that I would repent of my sin. God knew that I would receive Jesus Christ as my personal Savior, God knew that I would trust God. He foreknew that, for He knows all things. Link number one in this golden chain, that gives me that blessed assurance.

## **II. Link #2: Predestination**

Link number two, go back now and look in God's Word, verse 29: "*For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate...*" Now, not only is there the foreknowledge of God, there is the predestination of God. Now, what is the predestination? Dr. Scofield said, "Predestination is the effective exercise of the will of God, by which things before determined by Him are brought to pass." So, not only do you have the knowledge of God, you have the will of God. God determines, He predetermines, He predestines that certain things are going to happen. Now, this does not mean, and I want to emphasize that God predestined some to be saved and God predestined some to go to hell. God wants everybody to be saved. Put it down in your heart and in your mind. God wants everybody to be saved. He doesn't want anybody to go to hell. He doesn't want you to go to hell.

And, before we talk about what predestination does mean, let me show you that God wants everybody to be saved. Put these verses down please, if you're taking notes. 1

Timothy Chapter 2, beginning in verse 3: *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.”*—Who wills that all men be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth—*“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all,”*—when Jesus Christ died on that cross, and His blood poured out as a ransom, it was a ransom for me for you—*“Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”*

Put this scripture down, 2 Peter 3 and verse 9, concerning the second coming of our Lord and the promise of that coming: *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”* Do you know why Jesus Christ has not yet split the skies and come back to this earth? He’s waiting for more people to be saved. That’s it. He’s not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Oh, dear friend, the great heart of God is a heart of love and a heart of grace that is reaching out to all. There are some who say, “Well, only certain ones may come, and if God calls them you are going to come, you have no choice about the matter.” But, oh dear friend, it is not the heart of God that keeps you from coming, it’s your own hard heart that keeps you from coming.

Put this verse down, one of the poignant in all of the Bible, Matthew Chapter 23 and verse 37. The Lord Jesus is on the Mount of Olives, and He’s looking down at that wicked city that rejected Him. And, Jesus with great salted tears, copiously weeping, and the word in the Bible here for weeping means He is sobbing. I mean He is convulsing. He is weeping over the city of Jerusalem. *“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!”* I would, but you wouldn’t.

So, whatever predestination means it doesn’t mean that God has predestined some to go to hell, that God created some people for hell, and God created some people for Heaven. Oh, no. Christ died for the sin of the world. 1 John 2, verse 2: *“And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”* Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight. Men, women, boys and girls, all kinds people on the face of this earth are in the heart of God.

Well then, what does it mean? It means dear friend, that when God sees you trusting Him, He predetermines that you are going to be like Jesus. Look at it. *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son...”* You’re looking at a man, take a good look, it’s already determined I’m going to be like Jesus. It’s predestined. It is predestined. And, all hell can’t stop it. I have been predestined by God to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, blessed assurance, blessed

assurance.

### III. Link #3: Calling

Third link in this chain, first link foreknowledge, second link predestination, third link calling. Look, if you will, also in this verse, *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”* God had one Son, and He loved Him so much, He said, “I’m going to make the whole family just like Him. He’s going to be the first-born among many of His brothers.” *“Moreover whom he did predestinate,”*—here’s the third link—*“them he also called:...”* Do you see it? There’s the calling of God. There is, my dear friend, the supernatural wisdom of God. There is, dear friend, the sovereign predestination of God. And, now here’s the seeking summons of God. The word “call” here is a word that was used in first century legal practice for a summons. Just as a man is summoned to come into a court.

Well, how does the call of God come? What is the call of God? How did God call me? How does God call you? How is anybody called to be a child of God? That calling comes, my dear friend, through the anointed preaching or sharing of The Word of God. Whenever the Gospel is preached, God’s call is extended. Therefore, God’s call is going out to all who hear this message today. Let me show you what I am talking about. 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2, begin in verse 13. Put it down. 2 Thessalonians Chapter 2, and verses 13–14. Now the Bible says there concerning God’s call, the Apostle Paul is talking to those in Thessalonica and he says, *“But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel...”* Now when God chooses, and dear friend, God has chosen us. He chose me and He chose you, and when God chooses, God calls.

The same thing is true in 1 Corinthians Chapter 1, verses 23–24, the Apostle Paul says, *“But we preach Christ crucified,”*—now notice it’s the preaching of a crucified Christ—*“unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”* And, so here’s the wonderful thing about preaching the Gospel, you see, when I preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and I say come to Jesus, it’s not just the words of a man. The Apostle Paul says, *“we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him.”* (Acts 5:32) So, this is not just a lecture, I’m not just giving good advise, I have been called and ordained and anointed with the Holy Spirit to take the infallible Word of God, and the truth of the Gospel, and preach it, and a call goes out. It doesn’t just tell a blind man to open his eyes, it has

power to open the eyes of the blind. It doesn't just tell a dead man to come forth from the grave, but it gives power to the dead man to come forth from the grave.

Jesus stood outside the grave of Lazarus and said, "Lazarus, come forth," (John 11:43) and a dead man heard, and a dead man came forth. That's the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. You were blind, you were even dead, and yet there is a summons sent from God, into your heart when the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached. Don't ever get the idea that it was your idea to be saved. Oh no my dear friend, God loved you before you were created. And, God loved you in your sin. And, the Bible says "There's none that seeketh after God, no not one, we love Him because He first loved us and sent His Son."

But, that doesn't mean that somebody cannot be saved, if you want to be saved you can be saved. And, people who don't have the idea that I don't have a right to stand up here and just tell anybody to come to Jesus. Not only do I have a right, I have a command. Listen to Revelation Chapter 22, and verse 17: "*And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will...*"—let him come. Let him come. You say "Am I one of the elect?" Just come on. Just come on. "Will Jesus save me?" Yes, He'll save you! Come, whosoever will, anybody who is athirst, come to Jesus. He will save you. I promise you on the Authority of The Word of God.

People will say, "Well, certain people are predestined to be saved, and certain people are predestined to be lost, maybe you're one of the elect and maybe you're not." I'm going to tell you something dear friend, it's amazing how many more are elected in a red hot evangelistic service. It's amazing how many more get elected when a preacher preaches the Gospel of Jesus Christ and when Simon Peter, on Pentecost, stretches out his arms and says, "*Save yourselves from this untoward generation.*" (Acts 2:40) Three thousand were born into the Kingdom that day, and my dear friend, there's foreknowledge, there's predestination. There is the calling of the Gospel.

#### **IV. Link #4: Justification**

And, then fourthly, there is justification. Look at it again, if you will, in The Word of God, verse 30: "*Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified...*" That's the fourth link in this golden chain, Justification. What is justification? Why my dear friend, justification is God's act. Whereby He declared those who have trusted in Christ as righteous. God just declares you righteous. It's not an earned righteousness, it is the gift of God. Put down this verse, Romans chapter 4 and verse 5: "*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*" His faith is counted for righteousness. When God calls and you answer, God says, "That man, that boy, that

girl is righteous.” It is more than a pardon from sin.

Now, I thank God a pardon is there. It is wonderful that He pardons. But Augustus Toplady said, “Be of sin the double cure: save from wrath,”—that’s the pardon—“and make me pure,”—that’s the justification, my dear friend. You see, it is not only the forgiveness of sin, it is the impartation of righteousness. Not only acquittal, but approval, not only pardon, but promotion. When God looks down out of Heaven upon a justified sinner, God sees that sinner as righteous as Jesus Christ. Not one sin is put on your sin account.

Now, no human court therefore can justify anybody, not even in the legal realm, not even in the adjudication of men’s courts. For example, if I am charged with a crime, and I go into a court, and I am pardoned, they say, “Well Adrian you did thus and such, but you are such a sweet boy, we’re going to pardon you.” Well, if they pardon me and I did it, I’m still guilty, I just don’t have any punishment, you see. But, suppose the court said, “We don’t believe you did it, and we give you an acquittal.” Well, that means I didn’t sin to begin with. You see, no human court can justify. To justify is neither a pardon nor an acquittal. It is, my dear friend, a statement that though you once did sin, now there is no mark, no blemish against you whatsoever. Oh, I love it. I praise God for that justification.

The Bible makes it so clear and so plain, “*But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.*” (Romans 4:5) How can God do that? On what basis does God do that? How can God just simply say, “Adrian, you’re a guilty sinner, but I justify you.” Only one way, and I want everyone to listen to this, there’s only one way that God justifies, and that is through the blood of Jesus Christ. Now, Romans Chapter 5, verse 9: “*Much more then, being now justified by his blood,*”—justified by His blood—“*we shall be saved from wrath through him.*”

Now, if you were to have one word with which to describe God, what would that word be? Thank God no one word can describe God, and no boxcar full of words can describe God, but if you had to ransack the Lexicons and Dictionaries of this world to get one word that would describe God. In my humble, but correct opinion, that word would be holy, holy. God is holy. Holy holy, holy, is what the angels say.

Now, being holy means that He is the complete other. He is the antithesis; He is the sworn enemy of sin, which is a clinched fist in face of God. If sin were to ever prevail, if God were to ever let one sin go unpunished, God would cease to be holy. God would topple from His throne of holiness. God does punish sin, sin must be paid for. When God justifies a man, God never merely overlooks that man’s sin. God sent His darling Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, who left Heaven, born of a virgin, lived a sinless life, died upon that cross, and poured out His rich, red, royal blood as a sacrifice, an atonement for sin, to satisfy the righteous demands of a holy God, and your sin is paid in full by the blood of Jesus Christ. “Therefore, being justified by His blood...”—by His blood.

*I must needs go home by the way of the cross,  
There's no other way but this;  
I shall ne'er catch sight of the gates of light,  
If the way of the cross I miss.*

Put it down big, put it down plain, put it down straight. Your sin will be pardoned by Christ, or it will be punished in hell, but it will never be overlooked. It is justification, my dear friend, and how does the blood of Jesus Christ and justification, how is that applied to you? Romans 5:1: *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God...”*

I've told you how it was, I've told you how God does it, and now I'm telling you, my dear friend, how it becomes applicable to your life. Romans chapter 5, verse 1: *“being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

I may have told you of a dream a man reported. He said he dreamed that he stood outside the gates of Heaven, and he watched those as they tried to come and get into Heaven. One man knocked at the gate of Heaven, and a voice within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into Heaven?” And this man said, “I am a moral man.” He said, “What is the password into Heaven?” And the voice within said, “Depart from me, ye who work iniquity. I never knew you.”

Another came and knocked at the gate of Heaven. And the voice within said, “Who is it that seeks entrance into Heaven?” He said, “I am a humanitarian.” He said, “What is the password into Heaven?” He said, “Love, service to my fellow man.” The voice from within said, “Depart from me ye that work iniquity. I never knew you.”

A third came and knocked on the door of Heaven. “Who is it that seeks entrance into Heaven, and what is the password into Heaven?” This man said, “I am a religious man.” Oh, we'd think he'd make it, wouldn't we? But the voice from within said, “Depart from me, ye that work iniquity. I never knew you.”

At last a fourth man came, he knocked. The voice, “Who seeks entrance into Heaven?” He said, “I'm just a poor, faltering, stumbling Christian. In my hand, no price I bring, simply to thy cross I cling.” And the voice said, “Open wide the gates and let him in, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.” I'm not against love. I'm not against humanitarianism. I am not against religious service, but I'm telling you my dear friend, none of these nor all of these can justify you. We are justified by the blood of Christ, and we lay hold by faith, and that's the reason, that's the reason I have this blessed assurance.

## **V. Link #5: Glorification**

Now, dear friend, what are the results of this. Well, let's go down to the last link in this chain. I wish I had more time on justification, but let's go right on down now, as we continue to read. Verse 30: *“Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called:*

*and whom he called, them he also justified.*”—Now, watch, Glory to God—“*and whom he justified, them*”—you expect Him to say, will glorify, but He doesn’t say that—“*them he also glorified.*” That is, He puts it in the past tense. Well, you say, “Adrian are you glorified yet?” Well look at me, you can tell. No, not in your eyes, but in God’s eyes it’s already done. God puts it in past tense. Remember, we’re watching the parade one float at a time, but God not only sees me here preaching, my dear friend, God sees me over here in the glory. He sees me there, already. Already like Jesus. Already leaping and dancing and praising God on streets of gold. He sees that, already like Jesus, already glorified.

That’s the reason I believe in eternal security. That which is settled in eternity, can’t be undone in time. I mean it’s not dear friend, that I’m going to be glorified, I am glorified in the mind and heart of God. What a marvelous future. I’m getting excited. There are people, they say, “Oh, well, I don’t believe in eternal security. The devil can take you out of the hand of God.” Oh, you think so? Jesus said, “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.*” (John 10:27–28)

Hmm, do you think the devil could? Well, if he could, my dear friend, has he taken you out? Well, if he hasn’t taken you out, why hasn’t he, if he could? Hasn’t he been good to you? So you’re going to Heaven by the goodness of the devil. Friend, I’m going to Heaven by the grace of God. Don’t you know, if he could he would. Well, you say, “What if I sin?” What do you mean, what if? If sin could, you’d be out. I wouldn’t trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to Heaven, much less some other fifteen minutes I could name.

*Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine*

## **Conclusion**

There’s that golden link of foreknowledge, predestination, the calling, where my dear Lord called us. Foreknowledge, predestination, calling, justification and glorification. Therefore I know that all things work together for good to those who love God. Bow in prayer.

Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. O dear God, I pray in the name of Jesus that many in this service today will hear the call that opens blind eyes and gives life to the dead, and will say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ. Thank you Lord, thank you for your mighty grace. We don’t understand it, but oh how we rest in it. In Jesus’ precious name. Amen.

# You Can Be Sure

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: April 19, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:28–31**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. You Can Be Sure of God's Foreknowledge of Your Salvation
- II. You Can Be Sure of Your Predestination to Be Like Jesus
- III. You Can Be Sure of Your Calling to Salvation
- IV. You Can Be Sure of Your Calling to Salvation
- V. You Can Be Sure of Your Eternal Glorification

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to Romans chapter 8, and when you've found it, look up here for a moment. There is a phrase in that song that struck me just then: forever running. Of course, that's what the song's about: forever running, still losing the race. Have you ever been in a department store and seen a little child, maybe a boy—generally it will be a boy about eight—who is trying to run up the down escalator? The escalator's coming down, and he's just trying to see if he can go up while that thing is going down. And he's going with all his might, but still is going down faster than he can go up.

Now, that's what it's like for people who are trying to earn salvation by their own strength. There is the downward pull of sin, and there's that human effort, but, friend, the downward pull of sin is so much greater than that human effort. They are just simply running up the down escalator, and never making it, were it not for grace. We're going to be talking about that grace today, and how that grace can give you absolute, rock-solid assurance.

Now, look in verse 28, and notice the first few words there: "And we know..."—do you see that?—"And we know"—K-N-O-W. Now, that's what I want to talk about today: Knowing. I want to talk to you today about being sure, having assurance, having a know-so salvation, so you can be a shouting Christian, and not a doubting Christian; so you can be an exclamation point rather than a question mark with your head bent over; to say praise God, I know that I know that I know that I am saved and on the way to heaven. Wouldn't you like that?

Don't you know people need assurance? I've been in the ministry for a long time,

and I've never known anybody who was any good to the service of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who did not, first of all, have a rock-solid assurance that they're saved and on the way to heaven. Now, friend, we don't need a hope-so, a maybe-so, a think-so, feel-so, salvation. We need a know-so salvation. Amen? And, you need to be sure. Now, I'm not trying to talk you into being sure if you're not saved. If you're not saved, you have no right to be sure; but if you are saved, you can have that wonderful, wonderful assurance.

Now, let's begin to read in verse 28, and look at it: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." And that's the key phrase: His purpose. Now, that introduces verse 29: "For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he—that is, God's Son—might be the first-born 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. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Now, friend, I want to tell you something: God's on your side; God is for you. And salvation, from start to finish, is of the Lord. William R. Newell wrote that great song:

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan,

Oh, the grace that brought it down to man.

Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span, at Calvary.

Now, there are five foundational facts, five great stones upon which our faith rests, and I want you to look at these right now, and, in verse 29: "For whom he did foreknow—underscore the word foreknow—he did also predestinate." Now, hey, don't let this get too complicated to you, and check me out. You just stay with me. "He did predestinate." All right. And then, verse 30: "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called." So you've underscored foreknow, predestinate, called, and now notice this: "and whom he called, them he also justified—underscore justified—and whom he justified, them he also glorified." So, you have those five words, because, friend, those are the bedrock of your salvation, and the basis of your assurance; and don't miss those wonderful five bedrocks of assurance, because God's plan for you, and every mother's child that knows Him, is to have assurance.

Now, let me tell you five things you can be sure of—five things that you can bank on, five things that you can say I know it is true—and, by the way, the only way you know these things is by divine revelation. You don't know them because you've figured them out.

## **I. You Can Be Sure of God's Foreknowledge of Your Salvation**

All right, first of all, you can be sure of God's foreknowledge of your salvation. Now, in plain English, God knew that you were going to be saved before you ever got saved. God foreknew. Now, you see, God doesn't learn anything. God already knows everything. Do you believe that? Of course you do. We call that God's omniscience. And this word foreknow is the word, prognosko. Well, I know you've been waiting all morning to hear that. I know you've been blessed by that. But that just simply means—it's the same word, the noun form of that is prognosis—prognosis. You go to the doctor. He pokes around on you and makes a prognosis. That means he tells you what he thinks is going to happen to you. He just makes a prognosis based on his investigation. It may be a good prognosis; it maybe a bad prognosis; but I want to tell you it's only an educated guess, as far as the doctor is concerned.

I heard about a doctor who told a man, he said, "You've only got a year to live." And he said, that's the news. I'm sorry." And he said, "Your bill to me is \$5,000." The man said, "I can't pay it." He said, "Well, I'll give you another year." Sometimes the doctor's prognosis is not always correct, it is not always exact; but when God foreknows something, God is not making an educated guess. God knows beyond a shadow of any doubt.

Now, that's the reason that sometimes we get confused when we get into things like foreknowledge, because we're looking at it from a human vantage point. Can you imagine a little boy watching a parade through a knothole? He can't even get over the fence to see the parade, so he just sees epochs in that parade as they go past. But then suppose somebody takes the little guy, feels sorry for him, and says, "Come, son, into my office building, and come up here, and we'll look over the parapet wall from ten stories." The little guy can see the parade as it's forming down here. He can see it as it's dispersing down here, and he can see everything—all the bands, all the floats, everything in between, because he has a different vantage.

Now, that's a very poor illustration, but it illustrates, poorly, what I'm trying to talk about, is that, folks, we are limited. We are looking at life through a knothole. Do you understand that? I mean the events pass by this way, but God sees it all. God inhabits eternity. God sees the beginning; God sees the middle; God sees the end. God sees it all at one time, so God saw you getting saved before you ever got saved. God foreknew it. I mean, God can't learn anything. That means that you were in the heart and mind of God before He swung this planet into space.

Now, the elect are people that receive Jesus. The elect are whosoever will, and God foresees these people receiving Him. Now, let me give you a verse for your margin, and it will clear up a lot of things. I Peter chapter 1 and verse 2. The Bible says we are,

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God”—elect according to the foreknowledge of God.”

There was a boy down in West Palm Beach, Florida disobeying his parents, skipping school, cheating in school, using bad language, getting in fights, but he heard the gospel, he repented of his sin. He said, “Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me,” and God said, before He ever made the world, God saw that boy doing that, and God said, he’s one of my elect—he’s one of my elect. By the way, you want to know his name? His name’s Adrian. That’s his name. God saw that boy. God saw that boy repenting of his sin and trusting Christ before He ever made the world, and He said, he’s one of my elect—elect according to the foreknowledge of God. That’s what the Bible says.

Now, the Bible teaches that God chooses certain people to be elect, you know. Jesus said, in John chapter 6 and verse 37, “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.” That’s looking at it from God’s viewpoint—from God’s viewpoint. That’s looking at it from eternity. We look at it from time. That’s the reason we sometimes get confused. Yes, God has given the elect to the Lord Jesus. Yes, God says they will come to Him—no ifs, ands, and buts about it. And yes, Jesus said they will be received. And one of these days, concerning the elect, the Lord Jesus is going to say, Father, there they are, all present and accounted for. Now, that’s from heaven’s viewpoint.

Now, the reason we get so confused about this election, and free will business, and all of this, is we try to put God in a box. We try to think with the mind of God, and friend, you can’t do that. If you put God in a box, and you call that box the sovereignty of God, and you say man has nothing to do with it, God is completely, totally sovereign, and so God just zaps everybody and makes them saved, the free will of man will pop out of that box. But if you just put God in another box, and say, it’s all of man, and God has nothing to do with it, and God is not sovereign, and man just decides everything, then the sovereignty of God will pop out of that box. You’re just not going to put God in a box, folks. I want to tell you that God is God, and what we do sometimes, we’re just looking through the knothole. We have never seen the thing from eternity.

But the point I want you to understand is that your election is based upon God’s foreknowledge. To foreknow does not mean to cause. It doesn’t mean from before the foundation of the world God says I’m going to send this one to hell and I’m going to send that one to heaven. Oh no. God foreknows. That doesn’t mean that God causes. Do you know the astronomer can tell you when Haley’s Comet is going to appear again? He foreknows it. That doesn’t mean he causes it to appear. He just simply knows, as he studied astronomy, that this is when Haley’s Comet is going to appear

again.

Let me ask you a question. See if anybody can disagree with this question, or disagree with this statement. Everything that's going to happen eventually will. Isn't that right? That may sound like a silly statement, but you think about it. Everything that is going to happen eventually will. Right? God knows everything that's going to happen. God knows I just scratched my ear, but God knew from eternity I was going to scratch my ear. God knew I was just going to pat my head. You say, you're being silly. No. Listen. God can't learn anything. Not a blade of grass moves but what He knows it, and friend, everything that's going to happen eventually will. That doesn't mean that God's great plan was for me to scratch my ear. No. That's silly. That's inconsequential. But I'm just simply saying that God foreknows everything. Do you understand that? He knows it all. He knows it all. He's omniscient. And God foreknew that you would receive the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are elect according to the foreknowledge of God. That's what the Bible said. God saw those who are going to receive Him. Nothing takes God by surprise. God never says ooohh, I never thought of that, and God never makes any mistakes. God never says, oops. No. God is God. All right now, you can be sure of God's foreknowledge of your salvation. Right? Okay.

## **II. You Can Be Sure of Your Predestination to Be Like Jesus**

Now, number two. You can be sure of your predestination to be like Jesus. You can be rock-solid sure of that. Now, look again in God's Word here. God looks at those that are receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, and so, God says, here's my plan for that person. Look: "For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son" Now, predestination is not dealing with the lost; it's dealing with the saved—it's dealing with the saved. God doesn't predestine some people to go to hell, and God doesn't predestine some people to go to heaven. God predestines every child of God, everyone who is born again, to be like Jesus.

Now, just read it: "For whom he did foreknow, them did he also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." God, when He saw you receiving the Lord Jesus Christ, in His omniscience, says by His omnipotence, I am going to make him just like Jesus. That little teenage boy who gave his heart to Jesus Christ is now predestined—predestined—to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, listen. Don't get the idea that God has predestined some people to heaven and God has predestined some people to hell. God—listen—God wants everybody saved. Now, there are some people who don't believe that. There are some people believe that, concerning heaven, God sort of says eenie meanie minie moe, this must stay and that will go. But, no. Listen. God wants everybody to be saved.

Now, let me give you some Scripture, and don't come up here to argue with me after this. You just argue with these scriptures. Second Timothy chapter 2, verses 3 through 6: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, who will have all men to be saved and come unto the knowledge of the truth." God wills for all men to be saved. All right—2 Peter 3, verse 9: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all—A double L—should come to repentance." God wills that all men should be saved. God is not willing that any should perish.

You see, the problem is not that God doesn't want people to be saved; the problem is that God also gives human beings a will, and if God had not given human beings a will, he could have no more fellowship with us than I could have with that potted plant. No. You have a will. That's the reason.

Put this scripture down. In Matthew chapter 23 and verse 37, the Lord Jesus, as He was approaching Jerusalem and realizing that soon Jerusalem would be destroyed by Titus, the Roman general, and realizing that they had refused the king, and that they were saying on that day, hail Him, hail Him, but in a few, days, a few hours they would be saying, nail Him, they'd be putting Him upon a cross, and Jesus, coming down the slopes of the Mount of Olives, heading towards Jerusalem, was weeping great salty tears, and with a heart broken, he convulsed in sobs, and said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee, as a hen gathereth her chicks beneath her wings, but ye would not." I would have, He said, but ye wouldn't.

You see, it's not God's will that any perish. God would have redeemed them, Jesus would have saved them, but they chose not to be saved. Put this scripture down—2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 13 to 15. They were accusing Paul of being crazy. They said, Paul, you are a madman. You're so driven. He says this: "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that, if one died for all."

There are some people who just say, well, Jesus only died for the elect. No. "One died for all, then were all dead. And that he died for all, they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." Paul said, some people think I'm a driven man, but he said no, Jesus died for all, and I want all to be saved.

You say, why are you getting so excited about this? Because there are some people teaching God doesn't want everybody to be saved. And when you believe that, and when you believe it's already finished, already done, already signed, already sealed, already delivered, and you don't have any choice about it, that's stultifying to evangelism and missions. You just say, well, they're going to be saved; nothing I can do

about it, I can't change it at all. You say I thought God already knew. Yes, He does already know, but He already knows the people must decide. It is their decision that God already knows.

Put this scripture down—1 Timothy 2, verse 3. “For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior, who will have all men to be saved.” Now, what does predestination mean, then? It doesn't mean that God says, you're going to hell, and you're going to heaven. Predestination means just what it says. “For whom he did foreknow, them did he also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.”

When God saves somebody, God predestines that that somebody is going to be just like the Lord Jesus Christ. First John 3, verse 2: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God”—yes, we are. Thank God—“and it doth not yet appear what we shall be.” Who can understand what the resurrection body is going to be like? I can't. Neither can you. “But we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” So you're predestined to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, by the way, friend, you talk about eternal security. I'd have to believe in eternal security, if this was the only verse in the Bible that talked about it. Think about it: “Whom he did foreknow, them he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son.” Predestination is the act of an omnipotent God who says it's going to be done. I have settled it. I mean, there's no way. What has been settled in heaven cannot be annulled by hell or humanity. It is fixed. You are going to be like Jesus, if you're saved.

Now, if you're not saved, you are going to spend eternity in hell with the devil. But, friend, if you are saved, you are predestined to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, there are some people, they foolishly say, well, but wait a minute. What if the devil were to take you away from Jesus? What if the devil were to take you out of Jesus' hand? Now, you think about that. Do you think he could? Well, if he could, why hasn't he? Why hasn't he? Well, if he could and he hasn't, hasn't he been good to you? So now you are going to heaven by the goodness of the devil. Think about it. See. Listen—listen. The only reason—the only reason—he hasn't is because he can't; he can't, because you are predestined to be like the Lord Jesus.

### **III. You Can Be Sure of Your Calling to Salvation**

Now, here's the third thing. Watch. You can be sure that God foreknew that you were going to be saved. You can be sure, dear friend, that because you're saved you're going to be like Jesus, and you can be sure of your calling to salvation. Look, if you will, here in this same passage of Scripture, and it says, “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 first-born among many brethren—that is, he's going to have a whole family like

Jesus. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called...”

Now, does God just call some people to salvation, and not call others? No. Whenever the gospel is preached, God is calling people to salvation. How does God call? Through the preaching of the Word. Put this scripture down—2 Thessalonians 2, verses 13 and 14. Paul said to the church at Thessalonica, “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation.”

You say, uh oh, it looks like we don’t have anything to do with it. But continue to read. Here’s where people get into mistake. They take a part of a verse and don’t read the whole verse. But listen to it: “Beloved, we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” You see, it’s when you believe the truth that’s what makes you part of the chosen. “And whereunto he called you by our gospel.” How does God call people? By the gospel, by the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and this message is God calling you.

Now, if you’ve not yet been saved, God wants you to be saved. And how does God call? God calls through the preaching of the gospel, and this calling, you see, is through sanctification of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God takes the Word of God, and when God has a man who is blind, God opens the eyes of the blind so he can see what he could not have seen otherwise. And when God has a man who is spiritually dead, and therefore deaf, God opens the ears of the dead and the deaf, that they might hear the gospel. I am totally incapable of bringing you under conviction or calling you to Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit. It is the sanctification of the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God that takes the Word of God, and this is the call that goes out. But I’m telling you, folks, that when you hear the gospel, it is God calling you.

Now, who does He call? Put down Revelation 22 and verse 17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come.” Now, the Spirit—that’s the Holy Spirit; the bride—that’s the church. “And let him that heareth say, Come.” If you’ve ever heard the gospel, you can tell it to somebody else. “And let him that is athirst come.” If you want to come, if you have a thirst for Jesus, come. “And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” Anybody. You say, “Well, Pastor, can I be saved today if I’m not one of the elect?” I’m just telling you, if you want to be saved, God will save you today. You’re whosoever. Whosoever will. The elect of the whosoever wills.

Now, I’m going to tell you something else. Somebody wrote me a nasty letter when I said this in a preaching service one time, but you’d be surprised how many more people will get elected in a red hot evangelistic service. They said, “You ought to know better than that. That’s not when people are elected.” I said, “You ought to know tongue-in-

cheek talking when you hear it.” What I am saying is, friend, with a burning heart we ought to preach the gospel, and plead with souls to come to Jesus Christ, and we ought to do what Revelation says: “Let him that heareth say, Come.” And we ought to tell everybody what the Bible says: “And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.” Our God calls. He calls the lost, wherever they are, and come to the Lord Jesus.

Now, there are some people who say, “Well, when God calls, you can’t resist the call.” They call this irresistible grace. No, you can resist the call. You don’t want to come? There are not enough angels in heaven to drag you down this aisle or to make you say yes to the Lord Jesus. Listen to these verses. Put them down. Acts chapter 7 and verse 51. Stephen is preaching to those religious leaders of that day, and he said, “Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as did your fathers.” The Holy Ghost can be resisted.

Remember the scripture that I read to you from Matthew 23 verse 37 where Jesus said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how oft would I have gathered thee, but ye would not.” Listen. Proverbs chapter 1, where the Lord is personified as wisdom—Proverbs chapter 21, verses 22 and 23. “How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity, and the scorner’s delight in their scorning. And fools hate knowledge. Turn you at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you.” In other words, He is saying, listen, I am pleading with you.

But then, in that same chapter, He goes on to say, you would not, you wouldn’t have any of my reproof. Now, friend, irresistible grace—that’s forced love. Forced love is a contradiction in terms. In order for it to be love, it cannot be forced. I talked to our college and high school students a while back, and I said, “Can you just imagine a boy who says to a girl, she doesn’t particularly like him, but he’s fixed on her,” and she says, “Well, I think we need to date around a little bit.” He says, “No, no, no. You can’t date anybody else.” She said, “Why not?” “Because I love you.” She says, “Well, thank you John, but I think we need a little space.” “No,” he says, “you don’t understand. I love you.” She says, “Well, thank you John.” “No,” she, he says, “you don’t understand. I love you, and I’m going to see to it that you love me. I’m going to make you love me, if I have to.” She’s looking around for the door about now, isn’t she? I mean, man, you get a spooky feeling when somebody says you are going to love me, and I’m going to make you love me.

Now, I don’t care how much tenderness or how much whatever it is that you might say is in the Almighty, still, dear friend, forced love is a contradiction in terms. You can resist the Holy Spirit if you wish to resist the Holy Spirit, but how foolish it would be to resist the Holy Spirit. I think C. S. Lewis summed it up real well. C. S. Lewis said that basically in life there are two categories of persons: those who are like Satan and those

who are like Jesus.

Now, in Isaiah chapter 14, you have the heart of Satan, and five times Satan says, I will, I will—I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will be like the Most High—I will, I will, I will, I will. Satan is vaunting himself, and what Satan was saying was to Almighty God, not Thy will; my will be done. That's what made Satan Satan. There was another, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus, who knelt in Calvary with blood on upon His face, bowed His head, and said, "Not my will, but thine be done." Satan, not thy will, but mine, be done; Jesus, not my will, but thine, be done. Two categories of persons—some of them are in this room today. Some are saying, I'm not going to give my heart to Jesus. It's my life; I'm going to live it. I'm going to go my own way.

And the Lord is not willing that you perish, but God has given you a will, and you are saying to Him, not thy will, but mine, be done. And, friend, when you drop into hell, a broken-hearted God will be there to say, not my will, but thine, be done. The Lord is not willing that any should perish. Not my will, but thine, be done. You said no. You trampled beneath your feet the precious blood of Jesus Christ. You spurned the wooing of the Holy Spirit. You heard the call, and refused the call, and God said, I was not willing that you should perish. Not my will, but yours, be done, as you drop into hell.

Is this too heavy for Sunday morning? That's one good thing about preaching through a book, you know. You just have to come to it. All right now, watch this. Foreknowledge—God knows whose going to be saved. Predestination—God says those who are going to be saved are going to be like Jesus. Calling—God calls people to salvation through the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, a call that can be accepted, or a call that can be refused. You can be sure, my friend, that God has called you. Don't get the idea that God calls some and God doesn't call others.

#### **IV. You Can Be Sure of Your Calling to Salvation**

Fourth thing: you can be sure of your calling to salvation, if you receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Look, if you will again, in this passage of Scripture: "whom he called, them he also justified" Now, what is justification? What is justification? Listen to me very carefully. Justification is an act of God where He declared those who've received Jesus Christ righteous. It doesn't mean that they've earned righteousness. It means that righteousness has been given to them, apart from anything that they have done to deserve it. The key verse is Romans 4, verse 5. We've already talked about it. "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." Did you see that? Your faith is counted for righteousness.

Now, justification is more than a pardon for your sins. Justification is more than an acquittal. You see, listen. If you went into a court, and the courtroom said, you are

guilty, but we pardon you, that wouldn't be justification. Or, if the courtroom said, you are acquitted, that means you never were guilty to begin with. But justification means that you are not only pardoned, but that God now, by a forensic act of His love and His divine righteousness, declares you, just declares you righteous, apart from works of any kind, not because you've been a good boy, not because you've kept the Ten Commandments, not because you've gotten baptized, but because you have trusted in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. "To him that worketh not, but believeth on him justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted unto him for righteousness."

Now, listen to me. What is the basis of this justification? It is the blood of Jesus Christ. Look in Romans chapter 5 and verse 9. Look at it. "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." The only way that you can be justified is through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross. You cannot by your own good deeds, by your own emotions, by your own intuition, by your own anything justify yourself. Friend, if you could be saved by any other way, then Jesus Christ would never have died on bloody Calvary. Your sin will be pardoned in Christ or punished in hell, but it'll never be pardoned, and you'll never be justified, apart from the blood of Christ.

How does justification become effective? When you trust Jesus. Look in Romans 3, verse 24: "Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." It's grace, friend. Romans 4:5: "But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Romans 5:1, "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

And what are the results of this justification? Romans 4 verses 6 through 8—listen: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works"—God just says, I count him righteous—"saying, blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven,—thank God for that, but it gets better—and whose sins are covered—thank God for that, but it gets better: Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." God will never again put sin on your record, when you get justified. If God put sin on your record, you'd be lost again. One half of one sin would take you to hell.

Does that mean, therefore, that you can sin and not worry about it? No. God will carry you to the woodshed and beat the daylights out of you. "Whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives." But God is dealing with you, not as a sinner now, but as a son and a servant, and God will chastise you, but the Bible says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." That's justification. Friend, that's glorious. If you can only understand what justification is. That's the reason

Romans 8, verse 33, says, “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect?” It is God that justifieth. All right, so you can be sure, you can be sure of your settled justification through the blood of Jesus Christ.

## **V. You Can Be Sure of Your Eternal Glorification**

Now, here’s the last thing, and I just can just touch on this. You can be sure of your eternal glorification. Look, if you will now, as we continue to read in this passage of Scripture, in Romans chapter 8, and look at it. Now, “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.” It doesn’t say, will glorify. Listen. Remember, God’s in eternity. God saw you a lost sinner. God saw you under conviction. God saw you receiving Christ. God saw you in your sanctification. And God sees you already in heaven.

Did you know that God can see you in heaven right now when you’re not even there? Because God knows it all. I mean, look—there’s no time with God. God is not looking through the knothole, and so, in the heart and mind of God, you are already there. I’m going to say it one more time, and I want you to say amen. In the heart and mind of God, you are already there. Listen, folks: God is going to glorify you. This is the why of our eternal security. What’s been settled in heaven can’t be annulled and undone in time. What a marvelous future is ours.

## **Conclusion**

Now, what does all of this mean, bottom line? Friend, if you’ll put your faith where God has put your sins—on the Lord Jesus Christ—you can be absolutely sure, absolutely sure, absolutely, totally sure. Have faith in God; He cannot fail. Have faith in God; He must prevail. Have faith in God. Have faith in God.

Bow your heads in prayer. Lord God, I just pray today that there are many who will say yes to Jesus and trust Him for salvation. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how many would say, Pastor Rogers, I have repented of my sin, I have given my heart to Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, and God has seen me do that? God knows. I heard the gospel. I answered the call. I have the settled assurance that one day I’ll be like Jesus. I know, I know, and thank God I know, that God sees me already in heaven. I know that by God’s grace—by God’s grace. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you can give me that testimony, would you just slip up your hand, and say yes, that is true. All right now, take your hand down. There are some, obviously, in a crowd like this who cannot lift their hand; but you’re interested in the things of God, or you wouldn’t be here. And you say, Pastor, I don’t have that

assurance, but I really want it, and if a person can know, a person can know that they're saved, I want to know it. All right, would you let me just lead you in a little prayer? And friend, it's like receiving a gift. Right now—I mean right now, right now—you can do that. Why don't you pray this prayer out of your heart? Dear God, I know that you love me, and I know that you're calling me to be saved. God, I need to be saved, and 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. I put my faith in you, right now. I receive you, right now, Jesus, into my heart, as my Lord and Savior. I believe you are the Son of God. I believe you paid my sin debt with your blood to justify me. I believe that God raised you from the dead, and now, like a child, right now, I trust you to save me. And Lord, give me the courage to make it public. In your name. Amen.

Now, look up here. Pastor, why did you put that on the end—give me courage to make it public? Because, you see, the Bible says, in Romans 10, verse 11, that when we believe on Him, we'll not be ashamed of Him. That's one of the marks that we really mean business. There's something about coming forward that helps settle it and seal it. I'm going to ask the ministers of our church to help me now. A minister will be at the head of each of these aisles, and a minister will be under the balcony, or in the balcony under the banner, in this corner of the balcony, and in that corner of the balcony—one says Redeemer, the other says Messiah. Somebody will be standing right there to welcome those of you in the balcony. And today—today—if you prayed, and said, Lord Jesus, come into my heart, when we sing this invitational hymn, I want you to leave your seat—listen carefully—and come forward. Now, walking the aisle doesn't save you. It's what it indicates that saves, that you are trusting Jesus so much that you are not ashamed of Him—for, when we believe on Him, we'll not be ashamed of Him. Oh, I know that it's not always easy when there are people around, but most of the people here have done just exactly what I'm asking you to do, and they are praying for you. I want you to leave your seat and make your way down one of these aisles, and I want you to say to the minister, I'm trusting Jesus—I'm trusting Jesus. Now, that'll help settle it and seal it in your heart. Furthermore, we want to give you some Scripture to stand on, and answer any questions, and seal it in prayer. It will take just a few short minutes. If you have friends, they can wait on you. If you are with a friend who needs to make this decision, you can volunteer to come forward with him or her. Do it friend. You prayed and asked Christ into your heart. Don't go halfway. Don't be ashamed of Him. Let it be known. Number two: If you're already saved and you need a church home, I'm going to invite you to come and say I want to place my membership here. Okay now, if you've not had believer's baptism as we understand it, we'd want the joy and privilege of baptizing you as a believer in Jesus. Some are coming, saying, I'm trusting Jesus,

others are coming saying I want to place my membership here. Okay now, we're not looking for mere joiners. If you don't mean business, don't come, but we are not looking for perfect people, because they're not to be found. We looking for people who are just sincere and want to grow in Jesus. Okay, nobody leave. We'll be praying. Let's stand together. You step out and come.

# You Can Be Sure

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 19, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:28–31

*“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.”*

ROMANS 8:29

## Outline

Introduction

I. Foreknowledge

II. Predestination

III. Calling

IV. Justification

V. Glorification

Conclusion

## Introduction

Have you ever been in the department store and seen a little boy, he'll probably be seven, eight years of age—won't be a little girl, probably a little boy—and he'll be facing the down escalator, and he wants to see if he can run up the down escalator. Have you ever seen a child do that, a boy do that? If you're a boy, you've probably tried it, to go up the down escalator, and it's always coming down faster than he can go up, and he makes a little progress, and then he goes backwards, makes a little more, and finally he ends up at the bottom. Now, that down escalator, that's the old nature that's against us, that downward pull. But, you see, folks, listen. When you're trying to save yourself, run the race, you're always losing, because your nature's going down faster than your good intentions are going up. Do you understand that—that you cannot be saved by self-effort. To try to be saved by self-effort is going up the down escalator, when you're a little guy, and you just can't make it. Thank God for the grace of God, and that's what we're talking about. And you be finding Romans chapter 8, and in just a moment we're going to look in verse 28.

Now, what I want to talk to you about is assurance. The title of the message: You Can Be Sure. Now, too many of us have a maybe-so, hope-so, think-so salvation, and, you'll never, never be a victorious Christian, you will never ever have victory, you will never ever have meaningful service until, first of all, you have the rock-ribbed assurance

of your salvation. Too many Christians are like question marks, with their head all bent over, when they ought to be like exclamation points. Too many Christians are doubting Christians, when they ought to be shouting Christians. Too many Christians are saying, Well, maybe I'm saved, I hope I'm saved, when they ought to be saying, Praise God, I know I'm saved; I'm heaven-born and I'm heaven-bound.

Now, look in verse 28, and notice how verse 28 begins. And, that's the theme of what we're talking about here: "And we know—and we know." Now, here are some things that Paul is not making a surmising about—this is not conjecture, this is not theory. Paul says, I want to tell you what we know. I want to tell you how we can be absolutely sure. "And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God, who are the called according to his purpose, for..."—and, this verse just builds on verse 28—"for whom he did foreknow,"—that is, whom God did foreknow—"he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he"—that is, God's Son—"might be the first-born among many brethren,"—that is, He might be the older brother to a great big family—"and 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. What shall we say, then, to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?"

Now, I want to give you five foundation stones that you can stand on, and together they make a wonderful foundation for your assurance. These words, now, they may sound technical, and they may sound too theological, but don't check me out. Look at them right now, beginning in verse 29, underscore the word foreknow—"for whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate"—underscore the word predestinate—"to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the first-born among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called,"—underscore the word called—"and whom he called, them he also justified,"—underscore the word justified—"and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Now, you have it; you have five words. And it's upon these five words that we're going to think about the basis of our assurance today, and when you see these things, you're going to step back and praise God for the grace that Steve was just singing about, and you're going to say with William R. Newell, Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan; oh, the grace that brought it down to man; oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary.

## I. Foreknowledge

Now, let's look at these five words right now, and the very first of these tells us what we can be sure of. Friend, you can be sure of God's foreknowledge of your salvation. Look at it in verse 29: "For whom he did foreknow." Now, this word *foreknowledge* is a Greek word *proginosko*. I knew you were waiting a long time to hear that, and I know you were

imminently blessed after you've heard that, *proginosko*, but what it just simply means is to know ahead of time—*proginosko*. Our English word *prognosis* comes from this word. It means to look out into the future and know what is going to happen. God foreknows everything. Now, we use the word today *prognosis*, a doctor will examine you and he will tell you what your state of health is going to be. We call that a prognosis.

I heard about a man who went to the doctor, and the doctor said, I've got some very bad news for you: you've got a year to live. And then he handed the man a bill for five thousand dollars. The man said, I can't pay that bill. The doctor said, I'll give you another year. Now, sometimes the doctor's prognosis is not very accurate, because the doctor's prognosis is based upon his training, and it is an educated guess. God never guesses at anything. God knows the future. God sees the future, the present, and the past, all as one. We don't understand that because we're humans and we're limited by time and space. God is not. God is above time and space, so God knows everything. God can't learn anything. God can't forget anything. God is never surprised. And God saw you accepting Jesus Christ before you ever accepted Him and before this world was swung into space. God saw you getting saved.

Now, you see, God already knows everything that's going to happen. Now, the reason that's difficult for us to understand is because we're humans and we think in finite terms. It's like a little boy watching a parade through a knothole. He sees the floats as they go past, and only what comes through the knothole of his perspective. Now, suppose somebody were to see that little guy watching the parade through the knothole, and they pick him up and take him to the top of a ten-storey building, and say, Son, you can see better from there. And there the little guy sees the parade making up down here, he sees the parade dispersing down here, and he sees everything in between. He has a different vantage. Now, that's a very poor illustration, because he can only still see so far; God can see all the way, and God sees all the time. But see, God sees from eternity. We live in time. So what takes place to us sequentially in time is known the beginning to the end, and the Bible says, "Known unto the Lord are all his works from the beginning of the age." God just knows it all. And so God foreknew—God saw you getting saved. God saw a boy down in West Palm Beach, Florida, kind of a mean kid, skipping school, cheating in class, taking God's name in vain, getting in fights; he wasn't a very nice little boy, but God saw that boy hearing the gospel, repenting of his sin, trusting Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. And God saw that boy doing that before the world was ever formed. That boy's name was Adrian; he's preaching this morning. Now, God saw that; God saw me getting saved. Now, you see, God doesn't learn anything; you can't teach God anything because God already knows everything.

And, you know, there are some people who wonder whether or not they are the elect. Well, does God just simply choose some people to be saved and other people not

to be saved? No. Who are the elect? Well, listen to 1 Peter 1, verse 2, and put this in your margin—1 Peter 1 verse 2. The Bible says there that "we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God." Let me just help you for a moment. The elect are the whosoever wills. The elect are the whosoever wills. When a person receives Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior, he is the elect.

Now, part of our problem is that we think if God already knows who's going to be saved, then it is settled, and we don't have any choice about the matter. No, God knows the choice that we're going to make, but it is still our choice. Now, here's where the problem comes: we try to put God in a box, and you can't put God in a box. You know, Romans 11:34 24 says, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord? Who hath been his counselor?" Do you think you can understand things as God can understand things? And so here is a box, and we say, Well, God foreknows everything, and therefore we don't have any choice. Well, if you try to put God in that box, man's free will, man's choice, will jump out of that box. Well then, on the other hand, if you put God in a box, and you say, Well, God doesn't have anything to do with it, God can't know it ahead of time, and God doesn't have any electing progress, it's all what man does, then the sovereignty of God will jump out of that box. You just can't put God in a box. And, Jesus said, in John chapter 6, "All that the Father hath given me shall come to me and him that cometh unto me, I'll in no wise cast out." Friend, you can be sure that everybody that God knows is going to be saved, will be saved, and they're going to come to Jesus, and Jesus will not refuse him but receive him. Now, you say, Pastor, I really don't understand that. Well, I'm glad to know there are some things about God that you can't understand and I can't understand. God is God. But I want to tell you this, friend: God knows the future before the future ever happens, and God foresaw you getting saved, and you know that He already knows that ahead of time.

Now, to foreknow does not mean to cause, to happen. Some people think that if God foreknows it, then God makes it happen. No, no, no, no. Let me ask you a question, see if you disagree with this. Everything that's going to happen eventually will. You disagree with that? You can't disagree with that. Everything that is going to happen eventually will. I don't care whether it is rape or praise or murder or mayhem or a picnic or my scratching my ear—everything that's going to happen eventually will. Now, when it happens, does that take God by surprise? Of course not! Does that mean that because God foreknew that there was going to be blasphemy or sodomy or rape that God caused it? Of course not! Everything that's going to happen eventually will, and God can't learn anything. God knows everything, agreed? But God gave you a choice, and God gave you a will, and God knows simply what choice you are going to make.

Now, the astronomers know when Halley's comet is going to appear again. I don't, but they do. Now, do you think that because they know when Halley's comet is going to

appear that they cause it to appear? Of course not! You see, foreknowledge just simply knows that—foreknowledge. Whom God foreknew. God knows; you can be sure that God ahead of time saw your salvation. Now, that's a great comfort that you're not an accident, an incident, God knows ahead of time. That's the reason Jesus said, "All that the Father hath given me will come to me." Of course they will, because everything that's going to happen eventually will.

## **II. Predestination**

Now, here's the second thing that I want you to see. Not only can you be sure of God's foreknowledge of your salvation, but you can be sure of your predestination to be like Jesus. Now, look at the Scripture again—look at it: "For whom he did foreknow, he did also predestinate." You know what some people think? They think that God predestined some people to go to hell and God predestined some people to go to heaven. No. He doesn't say anything here about hell or heaven. It says that when God foreknows somebody, He predestines them to be like Jesus. That's not looking backward to your salvation; it's looking forward to your glorification. When God saw that kid in West Palm Beach giving his heart to Jesus Christ, He said, That one's going to be like Jesus. I have settled it; I have predetermined it. It is done; he will be like Jesus Christ. That's God's eternal purpose. That's Romans 8:28—all things are working together for good, not to make you happy or holy or rich or wealthy or wise, but to make you like Jesus. You see, God's purpose is that Jesus might be the first-born among many brethren, and you are predestined to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, some people think that some people are predestined to hell and some people are predestined to heaven. Well, let me show you, friend, that God doesn't predestine anybody to hell; God doesn't want anybody to go to hell. God—listen to me; listen carefully—God wants everybody saved—God wants everybody saved. Let me give you some Scripture. Second Timothy 2, verses 3 and 4: "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who will have all men to be saved." Now, some would say, All of the elect, but it doesn't say that; it just says all. Let me give you another scripture. Second Peter 3, verse 9: "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." You remember there in Matthew 23 about verse 37, Jesus is coming down off the Mount of Olives, about to go up to Jerusalem there on that Palm Sunday, and that crowd is saying, Hail Him, hail Him, hosanna!—but He knows in just a few days there'll be bloody Calvary, and that same group that's saying, Hail Him, will be saying, Nail Him. And Jesus is weeping, convulsing great salty tears, and He's saying, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets that are sent unto thee. How oft would I have gathered thee even as a hen doth her chicks beneath her wing. But ye would not." I would have, but ye wouldn't. Now, folks, I want to submit to you that if He

had said, I would have, but ye couldn't, that whole thing would've been a great charade. And why those tears? Why is Jesus weeping? What is all of that about—when He said, I would have, but ye would not—if they couldn't be? I mean, if it was all settled, if some were predestined to heaven, and some were predestined to hell.

One preacher said, If God predestined me to go to hell, I want to go to hell, because anything that does what God made it to do is happy. I'd be happier in hell than I would be in heaven, if God made me to go to hell. That will give you something to think about, won't it? No, no. Do you think that God, Almighty God, fashioned a creature, and said, I'm making this one to fling him into hell? No. "The Lord is not willing that any should perish." Nobody's predestined to go to hell. But I'll tell you one thing: when you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you're predestined to be like Jesus. That's what it says. "Whom he did foreknow, them did he also predestinate to be conformed to the image of God's Son."

Now, you can be sure, therefore, that one day you're going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And, by the way, this is a great verse. If this were the only verse in the Bible that proved eternal security, it'd be enough. I mean, listen. Do you know what predestine means? That means it's done; it's settled. I mean, Almighty God, by His omniscience, foreknew, and, by His omnipotence, predestined.

Now, watch it. Do you think that what has been settled in heaven can be annulled in time or on earth or by humans or by hell? Some people get the idea, Well, you know, you got saved by your free will—you could get lost by your free will. No. Man, I can have my leg amputated by my free will, but I can't have it put back on by my free will. You come into a situation, Well, you say, but the devil could take you out of God's hands. Oh, he could? You think that? And you're still in God's hand? Well, why hasn't he taken you out, if he could? Don't you know he could if he would, and if he hasn't, hasn't he been nice to you? And now you're going to heaven by the goodness of the devil. Isn't that a strange doctrine? I mean, you think about it. No, he can't do it. That's why he hasn't done it. He can't do it. No, God says when you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, you are predestined to be like Jesus. That's wonderful news.

### **III. Calling**

Now, you can be sure—you can be sure—of God's foreknowledge of your salvation. You can be sure of your predestination, to be just like the Lord Jesus Christ. I'll tell you what else you can be sure of: you can be sure that God has called you to salvation. You know, some people get the idea that God calls some and God doesn't call other people. No, I want to tell you. Look in this passage of Scripture—the Bible says, "For whom he did foreknow, them he did also predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he"—God's Son—"might be the firstborn among many brethren." Now, verse 30:

"Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified."

Now, what is the calling? How does God call you to be saved? Well, God calls you to be saved through the gospel; it's the preaching of the gospel that is God's call. Let me give you a scripture to put it down—2 Thessalonians 2, 2 Thessalonians 2—just write it down, don't turn to it—verses 13 and 14: "For we are, but we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation." You say, I thought I chose Him. No, you only chose Him, because He chose you. "God hath chosen you to salvation." How did He do it? Watch it: "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." The Holy Spirit brought you under conviction, and you believed the truth. Those who are the chosen are those who believe the truth. Now, listen to it. How did you get to hear the truth? "Whereunto he called you by our gospel." Paul said the way you were called is when I preached the gospel. Now, I'm preaching the gospel today, and God is calling you to salvation, and it's such a wonderful calling. Because, you see, it's not just a preacher preaching; it's the sanctification of the Spirit. I can't open blind eyes. A man needs more than light to see; he needs sight. I can preach the light, but God has to give the sight. He needs more than words to be saved; he needs hearing. And God can make the blind to see, and the deaf to hear, and salvation is a miracle that God works. When the gospel of Jesus Christ is preached, then that is God calling people.

Now, some people have a doctrine that they call irresistible grace, that is, God only chooses some to be saved, and then, when God calls an individual, they can't help but come. Oh, yes, they can help but come. You can refuse the call of God, you can spurn the call of God—that's a dubious privilege, but God gave you a will, and God's not going to override your will. If God overrode your will, you wouldn't be a human being. God could have no more fellowship with you than I could with that television camera. No, listen. Stephen said, when he preached that message to those just before they stoned him—he said, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart, you do always resist the Holy Ghost, as did your fathers." See, the Holy Spirit can be resisted. That's the reason the Bible says, today, if you will hear His voice, don't harden your heart. God will be calling you today in this message, but you can say no to Him, or you can say yes to Him, and God is not going to override your will. You have the dubious privilege of saying no to Him. Now, He doesn't want you to say no; He wants you to say yes. But if you don't want Him, He's not going to force himself upon you. Listen to me. Forced love is a contradiction in terms. If you don't choose to love God, it's not love at all. God will woo you, God will incline your heart, God will open your understanding, but God wants you to love Him, and God will not force you to love Him, and there are not enough angels in heaven or out of heaven to drag you forward and cause you to confess your faith in

Jesus Christ today, if you stubbornly say no.

C. S. Lewis was a brilliant man. C. S. Lewis said, all of life is made of two categories of persons. I want you to consider which category you may be in this morning. C. S. Lewis says that there are those who follow Satan—they're like Satan. You remember over there in Isaiah chapter 14 where Satan is rebelling against God—Satan, who was a glorious angel, Lucifer, the sun of the morning, became Satan, the father of the night, because he rebelled against God. And five times Lucifer says, I will—I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will sit on the side of the north, I will be like the Most High—I will, I will, I will, I will, I will. His own will against Almighty God's will. What Lucifer was saying to God the Father was, Not your will, mine be done. Now, there are a lot of people like that here today. I hope not too many, but there'll be some. I mean, when they won't give their hearts to Jesus. They'll hear the gospel, but they'll say, No, it's my life. I'm going to live it. I'm not going to yield to His lordship. I'm not going to submit myself to Him. Not your will, mine be done. Now, you may not articulate it that way, it may be more subconscious; but that's what's happening. Now, Lewis said there's another category of persons. These are they who say, as Jesus said in the garden of Gethsemane, Not my will, but thine be done. Satan—not thy will, mine be done. Jesus—not my will, but thine be done. I submit to you, you are in one of those two categories, right? You're in one of those two categories. You're either saying yes to self and no to God, or no to self and yes to God, right? Okay, everybody's in one of those two categories. Either you're a follower of Satan or you're a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ. And then, Lewis said this, penetratingly, to the former group, those who say with Satan to Almighty God, Not thy will, but mine be done: when that man finally drops into hell, a brokenhearted God will say to him, Not my will, but thine be done. Did you catch that? The Lord is not willing that he goes to hell.

The Bible says the Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But just because God is not willing that any should perish, does that mean that none will perish? No, of course they will perish, if they say no to Him. But you can be sure that God is calling you. I want to give you a great verse, and I love this verse—it's found in Revelation. I want you to listen to it here, talking about God's call to salvation—listen to it—Revelation 22, verse 17: "And the Spirit and the bride say come." Who's the Spirit? That's the Holy Spirit. Who is the bride? That's the church. The Holy Spirit and the church are saying to you today, Come on to Jesus, "and let him that heareth say come." Friend, when you hear the gospel, then you need to share it, amen? "Let him that heareth say come." When you hear it, then you need to tell others. "And let him that is athirst, come." If you're thirsty, just come on. "And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." Now, friend, that's what motivates the great evangelists, and people who see churches grow: the whosoever will. Don't take the whosoever will

out of the Bible, and don't just give kind of a false whosoever will. Say whosoever will may come. Oh, I know they really can't, but let's just tell them they can. No, no, no, no. Whosoever will, let Him freely come. Friend, that was so good I broke my watchband. Now, listen to me—listen to me. Whosoever will, let Him come. God wants everybody saved. The Lord is not willing that any should perish. And, if you dropped into hell, God will say, Not my will, but yours is being done.

#### **IV. Justification**

All right, so you can be sure—listen—you can be sure of God's foreknowledge of your salvation; God saw it before it ever happened. You can be sure, my dear friend, of God's decision, of God's predestination to make you like Jesus. You can be sure of God's calling to everybody. God wants everybody saved, and God says, Whosoever will may come; and God is saying to you today that you can come. And then, you can be sure that when you do come, you can be sure of your settled justification. Look, if you will, here in verse 30: "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called and whom he also called, them he also justified."

Now, what does it mean to be justified? It means to be declared righteous. Now, what is the basis of this justification? I mean, what is this justification? Well, go back to Romans chapter 4 and verse 5, and look at it again—look at it, Romans 4 verse 5: "But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness"—that's justification. It's not being a good boy. I'm not saying you ought not to be a good boy, good girl—"but to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." When you put your faith where God puts your sins, God writes in His book, There is a righteous man, there is a righteous girl, not because of what we have done, but because of justification. You see, listen: it is not just simply pardon for your sin—most of us want to get our sins forgiven, pardoned. But pardon doesn't justify you; pardon is a part of it, but it doesn't justify you. It's not acquittal. God, if God acquitted, God would just over say you're not guilty—and you are guilty. You see, no court on earth can justify anybody—no court. Because, if they pardon him, he's still guilty, he's just not serving the punishment; if he's acquitted, he never was guilty. So there's no court on earth that can justify a person. What justification is, is God taking a guilty person, not only giving that guilty person a pardon, but making that guilty person as if he had never sinned, making him positively, totally righteous. That's justification.

Now, what is the basis of this justification? Don't miss this. Look, if you will, in Romans chapter 5 and verse 9. What is the basis? Look: "Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath." There's only one thing that will justify. Why does God count you righteous? Because of the precious blood of the Lord

Jesus Christ. He died in your place; He was your substitute. He took your sin that you might take His righteousness, and by His precious shed blood you have justification. There's no justification apart from the shed blood of the Lord Jesus—do you agree with that? Being justified by His blood. When God allowed His darling Son to die in agony and blood upon that cross, that's the basis of your justification. And I want to tell you, folks, when you try to justify yourself by your good works, you fling an insult into the face of Almighty God, who hung His Son upon that cross to justify you. Because there's only one thing that can pay your sin debt: it's not your good works, it's not your emotion, it's not your intention, it is not your good looks, it is not your wonderful, manners—it is the precious shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. And I tell you, if man could be justified by his good works, Calvary was the blunder of the ages, and the Bible says, Paul, over in the book of Galatians, if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. The basis of that justification is the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and God will not overlook your sin, but He'll justify you on the basis of Christ's blood.

Now, how does it become effective to you? Well, look, if you will, in Romans 5, verse 1: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we're at peace with God." You put your faith where God put your sins, upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and there you will be justified. You will be made like the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, what are the results of this justification? Look in Romans 4 again—this is the good part—watch it—beginning in verse 5: "But to him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." That's just another way of saying you can't get there by running up the down escalator. "To him that worketh not but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness,"—now, watch the blessedness of this—"even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man to whom God imputeth righteousness without works." God just says on the basis of what Jesus did on the cross, I impute righteousness; I put righteousness on your account. Now, that'd be good, but notice, it gets better, saying, "Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven." Listen to me. Look up here—listen: hallelujah, when you get justified, when you get saved, every blot, every blur, every blemish, every stain, that ever came across your soul is forgiven, forgiven, forgiven. That's a blessing.

Now, watch it—not only does He forgive it, but He doesn't leave it posted as forgiven sin. Watch it—"in whose sins are covered." He not only forgives it, but He covers it; it's gone, He removes not only the penalty but the stain. But now watch it, it gets better yet—verse 8: "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." That means that God will never mark sin up against your name. Just as God imputed righteousness to you, God will never, no never, no never impute sin to you. "Blessed is the man to

whom the Lord will not impute sin." It doesn't say blessed is the man who never sins again, because none of us would be blessed. "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Are you listening to me? Listen to me! Friend, when you get saved, you get justified, and God will never mark one half of one sin against your name. He will not impute sin to you. Well, you say, then I'll get saved and sin all I want to. Well, friend, I sin all I want to. I sin a whole lot more than I want to. I don't want to. And I'll tell you something else: if I fall into sin, God knows how to deal with me. He doesn't put sin against my name; He just carries me to the woodshed, and beats the daylights out of me. He'll do the same thing to you. "For whom the Lord loves, he chastens, and he scourges every son whom he receives." But God is not dealing with us now as sinners; God is dealing with us now as sons. And God is not dealing with us judicially, but paternally. God is dealing with us as a father. But the sin—the sin—is never marked against our name. How could it be, because we're predestined to be like Jesus?

Folks, now listen to me. If this ever gets between your ears and down here into your heart, you're going to understand what we have in the Lord Jesus Christ. You're going to understand why Steve would sing a song like this about God's amazing, glorious, marvelous, matchless, unfathomable, unlimited—g-r-a-c-e—grace, amazing grace.

## **V. Glorification**

Now, watch it. Something else you can be sure of. You can be sure of your eternal glorification. Look at it here. Just go back to chapter 8, and look at it now—in verse 30: "Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified,"—you would expect it to say, those He will glorify. Doesn't say that. It says He already glorified. I mean, it's a done deal—"he also glorified." Why is that? How can you be sure of your eternal glorification? Well, because God sees it as already done. Now, you see, God saw you over here, from eternity; God saw you when you were lost. God saw you hearing the gospel. God saw you getting saved, God saw you growing in Christ, and God saw you already in heaven. See, God sees it all. I mean, it's a done deal with God. I mean, God is in eternity, and God sees you already there, seated at the blessed feet of Jesus, praising Him and giving Him glory. As the choir sang, All hail the matchless name of Jesus when we crown Him King of Kings and Lord of Lords. That's already done; it's finished. God sees you there.

## **Conclusion**

You say, Pastor, I don't understand all that. No. Vance Havner said, I don't understand electricity, but I'm not going to sit in the dark until I do. No, you don't have to understand it. It's the grace of God. Have faith in God; He cannot fail. Have faith in God; He must prevail. Have faith in God. Have faith in God. And I'm telling you, the Bible says it clearly

and plainly: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." That doesn't mean you're going to be perfect, sprout wings, and get a halo. You'll grow. And we'll be talking about that next Sunday, that sanctification process, but you'll be on your way. And, friend, you listen to me—are you listening? You can be sure because of what God will do for you.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. If you already have that assurance of your salvation, if you already know that you know, then pray for those who don't. When I'm saying you can be sure, I'm not talking to lost people: you have no right to be sure; I hope you're not sure, if you're lost. The only thing you need to be sure of is your need of Jesus. And I can tell you that I'm sure that you're lost, if you've never made Him Lord, trusted Him by faith as your personal Lord and Savior. I'm not talking about being a church member, being baptized; I'm talking about knowing Jesus. You need to know Him, and I invite you to pray like this:

Dear God, I am a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy, and I want mercy. I need grace. And now, Lord Jesus, because you died for me and rose again, I just now receive you. In this message, you've been calling me, and I want to say, Not my will, but thine be done, Lord. I want to say no to myself and yes to you. I receive you now as my Lord and Savior. I yield my life now over to you. I take you by faith as my Lord and Savior. I will live for you, Lord Jesus, not in order to be saved, but because you've saved me. And by your grace and for your glory I'll follow you wherever you leave me. I'll not be ashamed of you. Amen.

# How to Be Sure That You Are Secure

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: July 21, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 8:29, 38–39**

*“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

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. The Doctrine of Eternal Security Is Important to Your Spiritual Health
- B. The Doctrine of Eternal Security Increases Your Productivity
- C. The Doctrine of Eternal Security Helps Win Souls to Christ
- I. God Has Made Me a Promise
- II. The Holy Spirit Will Finish What He Has Begun in Me
- III. I Am Predestined to Be Like Jesus
- IV. I Have Been Made Perfect by the Blood of Christ
- V. I Am a Part of the Body of Christ
- VI. I Already Have Eternal Life
- VII. Jesus Is Praying for Me
- VIII. It Is God’s Power That Keeps Me

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you be finding Romans chapter 8—the book of Romans, chapter 8? Romans has been called the “Constitution of Christianity,” and it is, indeed, a wonderful, wonderful book because it is from the book of Romans that we get those rock-ribbed truths that give us assurance. Tonight, I want to talk to you about that blessed assurance: “How to Be Sure You Are Secure”—“How to Be Sure You Are Secure.” Did you know there’s something greater than being saved? It is being saved and knowing that you cannot lose your salvation. Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, if that is true, that is a wonderful doctrine.” Well, I’m going to show you tonight, and I’m going to give you eight reasons why, if you’re saved, you can never ever again be a lost soul.

### **A. The Doctrine of Eternal Security Is Important to Your Spiritual Health**

Now, you say, “Pastor, is it an important doctrine?” Absolutely. It’s an important doctrine, first of all, for your own spiritual health. Did you know that, if you do not have the assurance that you’re saved, you will never be a well-balanced, happy, spiritual, mature Christian, in my opinion?

Take a little child in a physical family. Suppose that child from one day to the next never were certain that he or she were a member of the family—like today, they might say, “Well, Mom and Dad love me. I’m secure in the family,” but the next day they might say, “I was naughty, and I’m no longer a member of the family.” That little child would grow up to be an emotional wreck, an emotional neurotic.

And, I know some spiritual neurotics today who do not have the assurance of their salvation, and, therefore, they do not have that emotional and spiritual health that they need.

### **B. The Doctrine of Eternal Security Increases Your Productivity**

I tell you something else that eternal security will do for you: to know that you’re secure, that you have eternal security, it will make you a very productive Christian. Some people have the idea that if you have the assurance of your salvation, you will do less. To the contrary, you will do more.

Some years ago, I was reading about the construction of that great bridge in San Francisco, which, when it was built in 1937, was the world’s longest, largest suspension bridge. And, you know, the workers on that bridge were working hundreds of feet in the air with the swirling waters of the San Francisco Bay beneath them. It was a very frightening thing. And, one by one, workers would fall, and they had, in the first span of that bridge, twenty-three workers who fell to their death. And then, they spent an enormous amount of money—and in that day, the whole bridge cost seventy-seven million in that day—but they spent another one hundred thousand dollars before they started the second span to build a great safety net. It was the largest safety net, at that time, that had ever been built. And, when they built the safety net, ten people fell and were caught in the safety net. But, that’s not the important thing. The work went twenty-five percent faster. These workers working on that bridge knew that there was a safety net beneath, and they knew that if they slipped and fell, it would catch them. And, you see, folks, when you know that you’re secure in the Lord, that doesn’t slow you down; it really speeds you up. You say, “I know that I am safe, and beneath me are the everlasting arms of God.”

So, the doctrine of eternal security is necessary to your spiritual and emotional health, I believe. I think the doctrine of eternal security is necessary and helpful to your productivity in serving the Lord Jesus.

### C. The Doctrine of Eternal Security Helps Win Souls to Christ

And, it's certainly a wonderful tool in winning souls to Jesus Christ. You know, there are a lot of folks out there—and some of them may be listening to me tonight—who think, “I would like to be saved. I would like to be a Christian, but I'm just afraid that I would not be able to hold out. I would not be able to be faithful enough to be a Christian, and I don't want to be a hypocrite.” And so, they're looking to themselves rather than looking to the Lord. They get the idea that salvation is something like God giving you the down payment and you have to make the monthly payments, and if you fail, then somehow He repossesses your salvation. And, they don't see the Lord as a Savior. They see the Lord more as a probationary officer who sort of puts us on probation and calls that salvation. But, that's not what salvation is. And, I can tell a person that the same God that saved me when I was a teenage boy and has kept me all of these years is the God that will save you and will keep you, because I wasn't a likely candidate for holding out if it had depended upon me. As a matter of fact, I would have failed a long time ago. But, the God who has saved me is the God who has kept me.

Now, when I'm talking about being eternally secure, let me tell you what I'm not talking about. I'm not saying that somebody who's come down an aisle and joined a church and gotten baptized is necessarily eternally secure. They may be if they got saved, but if they didn't get saved, of course, they are not eternally secure. When I'm talking about eternal security, I'm talking about a person who has repented of their sin, who has trusted Christ as their personal Lord and Savior; therefore, he has become a partaker of the divine nature. He has been added to the Body of Christ—the mystical Body of Christ. And, he can never ever again be a lost soul. He has been born into the family of God, and he can never be unborn.

Now, I'm not talking about those, therefore, who are religious and may be religious but lost. Remember, our Lord said—and I'm going to get to the scripture in just a moment; just keep your Bibles open there to Romans 8—but remember what our Lord said in Matthew chapter 7 and verse 22 and 23: *“Many will say to me in that day”*—he's talking about the Judgment Day—*“Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?”*—and then, the Lord said—*“then...will I profess unto them...depart from me, ye that work iniquity. [I never knew you].”* (Matthew 7:22–23) Now, He didn't say, “I once knew you, and you lost your salvation.” He said, “You may have called me ‘Lord.’ You may have thought that you cast out devils and perhaps even did miracles, but I never knew you. You were never my child.”

Often we see people who join churches and then they fall away. Did they lose their salvation? No, they never were truly saved. Again, the Bible says in 1 John 2 and verse 19: *“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they*

would no doubt [had] 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, what does he mean by that? When these people come and get baptized, stay for a while, and then fall away and go back to the world, they go back because they were never ever twice born; they had never truly been saved.

So, I want you to get a piece of paper and a pencil or pen, and I want you to write down these seven reasons—seven Bible reasons—why you can never ever again be a lost soul if you’re saved. Now, if you’re not saved, they don’t apply to you. But, if you’re saved, these are seven Bible reasons—not seven Baptist reasons; seven Bible reasons. Now, you say, “Pastor, why did you say it that way?” Because every so often somebody will say, “Well, the doctrine of eternal security—that’s a Baptist doctrine.” No, it’s a Bible doctrine. And, the reason that I believe it is not because the Baptist church teaches it but because the Bible teaches it.

That’s why I am a Baptist, by the way. I’m a Baptist because, so far as I can tell, the Baptist denomination is closer to the New Testament than any I know. If I knew one that was closer, that’s what I’d join. Somebody, one time, asked a man, “What would you be if you were not a Baptist?” He said, “I’d be ashamed.” Now, I don’t say that boastfully, but I’ll tell you one thing: if I knew of a denomination that was closer to the New Testament than this, that’s what I’d belong to. This is not a club—that we just choose to believe certain things. The thing that makes us Baptist is that we take the New Testament as the Word of God. If the Bible teaches it, we’re supposed to believe it. And so, this is not some sort of a Baptist doctrine. If we have any Baptist doctrines, we need to get rid of them. What we need are Bible doctrines.

So now, I want to give you seven reasons, and I want you to write them down. These are seven reasons that, if you’re saved, you can never ever again be a lost soul.

## **I. God Has Made Me a Promise**

Write, first of all, “God has made me a promise”—“God has made me a promise.” And then, put down “Romans 8, verse 38 and 39.” Now, let me read them to you. Paul says, “*For I am persuaded*”—this is not something that he just says casually; this was one of his deepest convictions—“*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)

Now here, in this passage of Scripture, Paul mentions ten great enemies that cannot separate you from the love of God—ten enemies that it is absolutely impossible that they could separate you from God’s love. One is death. Anything that happens to you after you die, if that ever separates you from the love of God, then Paul just told a lie.

The other is life. Anything that happens to you before you die cannot separate you from the love of God. Another is angels—good angels, bad angels, fallen angels, or any kind of an angel. Another is principalities. That means kingdoms and authorities. Another is powers. What kind of powers? Spiritual power, psychological or judicial power, cannot separate you from the love of God. Then, “things present” is anything in existence now. And then, “things to come”—anything that may be created in the future, conjured up; anything that is not in existence now. Then, he says, “Height.” That is anything in heaven above. Then, he says, “Depth.” That is anything in hell beneath. Then, in case he left anything out, he says, *“Nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* (Romans 8:39)

Now folks, I read a lot. I read a lot of literature. But, I want to tell you, that’s one of the most all-inclusive statements—or, perhaps is the most all-inclusive statement—I’ve ever read. He doesn’t leave anything out. He covers the waterfront. If you can think of something that he left out of this statement that might separate you from the love of God, then you come tell me and I will do your dishes for a year—and cut your grass on top of it. Now, you just come and tell me—say, “Pastor, here’s something that he left out of that statement.” Friend, he didn’t leave anything out. I mean, that is an all-inclusive statement. He is saying there is absolutely nothing that can separate me from the love of God. That is a promise, and so you write it down: God has made me a promise. One great preacher said this: “For any of God’s elect to perish...” Well, excuse me, I’ll get to that in just a moment.

## **II. The Holy Spirit Will Finish What He Has Begun in Me**

All right, here’s the second reason. Write this down: the Holy Spirit will finish what He has begun in me. Put it down: the Holy Spirit will finish what He has begun in me. And then, turn to Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6. Again, Paul uses a statement that says he is speaking with great conviction. You remember he began this last statement by saying, *“I am persuaded...”* (Romans 8:38) Now, he begins this statement 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, Paul, here, is talking about the fact that the Holy Spirit will finish what He has begun.

Let me ask you a question: How did you get saved? When you got saved, the Holy Spirit did a work in you. It was the Holy Spirit that spoke to you. You love God because God first loved you. You chose Him because He first chose you. You were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. I don’t understand all of that because I believe with all of my heart that “whosoever will may come.” (Revelation 22:17) But, I know this: that in your salvation, the Holy Spirit was, first of all, the Convicter. He’s the One that convicted you of sin. And, not only was He the Convicter; He was the Converter. You

were born by the Spirit of God. And, I tell you this: that the Convicter and the Converter is also the Completer. *“He [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it.”* (Philippians 1:6) Now, if you have a do-it-yourself salvation, that’s something else. But, if your salvation is the supernatural work of God—if God, the Holy Spirit, began a good work in you—what God has begun, He will finish.

Now, I’ve taken on a lot of projects that I’ve not been able to finish, and I believe you have, too. But, God has never taken on a project that He’s not been able to finish. Arthur Pink puts it this way: “For any of the elect to perish would entail a defeated Father who has bought of the realization of His purpose a disappointed son who would never see the full travail of his soul and be satisfied and a disgraced spirit who has failed to preserve those entrusted to His care. From such awful errors may we be delivered.” What he is saying is that if God did not finish what He started, He would be defeated, Jesus would be disappointed, and the Holy Spirit would be disgraced. Paul said, *“Being confident of this very thing, that he [who has] begun a good work in you will perform it.”* (Philippians 1:6) What God starts, God finishes. Now, if God started salvation in you, God will finish it. If it’s a do-it-yourself salvation, then you’re on your own. Now, that’s the second thing I want you to write down: God will finish what He’s begun in me.

### **III. I Am Predestined to Be Like Jesus**

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to write down: I am predestined to be like Jesus. Write that down: I am predestined to be like Jesus. Now, go back again to Romans chapter 8, and look, if you will, in verse 29: *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son”—“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.”* (Romans 8:29) Now, theologians have raced their theological motors to answer the question: “What does it mean—‘whom God foreknew’? Does that mean that God caused it to happen or that God allowed it to happen?” I want to put that in back as to not discuss that tonight because it will digress just a little bit from what I have to say, but the Bible does say, *“For whom he [foreknew them] he...did [predestine] to be conformed to the image of his son.”* (Romans 8:29)

Now, there was a teenage boy in West Palm Beach, Florida. That boy used bad language. He skipped school. He cheated in school. He told lies. He got in fistfights. He would sometimes take things that did not belong to him. He was sometimes disobedient to his parents and gave his teachers headaches. That boy is now the pastor of this church. I was convicted of my sin by the Holy Spirit of God. I cried out to God and asked God to save me. God did save me. Now, God from eternity past knew that I would receive the Lord Jesus. He knew that I would give my heart to Him because He knows

all things. And God, in His foreknowledge, saw me giving my heart to Jesus Christ. And, God said of that boy, “One day, he’s going to be just like my son. He’s going to be conformed to the image of my Son.” *“Whom [God foreknew], he also [predestined] to be conformed to the image of his Son.”* (Romans 8:29) Now, look up here, and you’re going to see something wonderful: you see a man who is predestined to be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. Now, go stand in front of the mirror and look at yourself, and if you’re a believer, the same thing is true about you.

Now folks, I want to tell you, *predestined* is a strong word. Predestined means it’s going to happen. Your destiny is already settled. There’s nothing that can keep that from happening. It’s not “maybe so.” It is predestined by Almighty God. So, God has made me a promise. God will finish what He has begun, and I am predestined to be like Jesus. Pretty good, isn’t it? Amen. Well, that’s the third reason.

You say, “Well, what if God changes His mind?” The Bible says in Romans 11 and verse 29: *“For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.”* (Romans 11:29) Now, God doesn’t change His mind. He doesn’t repent or change His mind.

#### **IV. I Have Been Made Perfect by the Blood of Christ**

Now, here’s the fourth reason—fourth thing I want you to write down: I have been made perfect by the blood of Christ—I have been made perfect by the blood of Christ. And, here’s the scripture I want you to write down: Hebrews chapter 10, verse 14: *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* (Hebrews 10:14)

Now, the “one offering” is His death upon the cross. Jesus died, poured out His blood, once and for all. Now, when I got saved, God did not merely give me a fresh start. I’ve already said God is not a probation officer. He said, “I’m not just giving you a fresh start. I am giving you eternal perfection.” Listen to it again: *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* (Hebrews 10:14) The word *sanctified* means “set aside from God.” It means “saved,” “made a saint.” When Jesus Christ died on that cross, that was one offering. He will not die over and over and over again. Now, in the Old Testament, they had to offer these bloody sacrifices over and over again, but they were all just pictures to point to Jesus coming again. But, as we preached this morning, when Jesus hung in agony and blood upon that cross, Jesus bowed His head. He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30)—“Tel Telesti.” That literally means “paid in full.” It’s done. And, when I come in to that blood sacrifice, then I am made perfect forever.

Now, listen to me: you search the Bible, and you will never find where anybody was ever saved twice—never. You just can’t find it. I challenge anybody in this auditorium right now to stand up and say, “Pastor, you’re wrong.” Just go ahead—stand up and tell me. If you know it, say, “You’re wrong. I know somebody who was saved twice in the Bible.” You just can’t find that in the Bible. Why? Because you can’t be saved twice.

*“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* (Hebrews 10:14) If you could get saved and then be lost, in order for you to get saved again, Jesus would have to die again. *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* (Hebrews 10:14) When you got saved, you got a ticket stamped, “Good for one salvation only.” *“For by one offering”—“one offering”—“he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* (Hebrews 10:14) Thank God for that. That’s a wonderful, wonderful truth.

And so, write down, “I am made perfect by the blood of Jesus.” That doesn’t mean that you’re sinless. That’s not what he’s talking about. He means that your salvation is complete; it is secure. How many times can you be saved? You can be saved as many times as Jesus died. He died once.

Well, you say, “Well, well, that brings a problem, Pastor Rogers. What if I do get saved and then I sin?” Did I hear you say, “What if?” Is there anybody here who’s been saved any period of time who has not sinned after he or she has gotten saved? We have sinned. We have failed because we have not yet been conformed to the image of God’s Son. God is still working on us. *“He [has] begun a good work in [us],”* (Philippians 1:6) but He’s not finished with us.

But now, what does it mean to say, therefore, that we’re *“perfected for ever”*? (Hebrews 10:14) Put this verse down, and listen to it very carefully because it’s a wonderful verse: Romans chapter 4, verses 5 through 8: *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”* (Romans 4:5) Now, if you depend upon your good works for salvation, you’ll never have the assurance of your salvation because you’ll never know if you’ve done enough. But, the Bible says, *“But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness”*—now, let’s look in verse 6—*“Even as David also”*—that is, David in the Old Testament, in the Psalms—*“describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works”*—now, what does the word *impute* mean? It means “to put on your account,” “charge it to you,” “to put that down on your ledger.” The next time you go into Dillard’s to buy something, don’t say, “Charge it”; just say, “Impute it.” It means the same thing. Or Goldsmith’s, or wherever it is you shop. Now, God puts righteousness on your account. God imputes that to you. “Well,” you say, “that’s wonderful that I am made righteous by the precious blood of Jesus.” Yes, but there’s more to it. Verse 7 says—*“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven”*—well, that’s wonderful. Not only has He called me righteous, but He’s forgiven my sins. And, I’m glad that He has. Those sins are forgiven. But now, He does more than that. He says—*“and whose sins are covered”*—not only does He forgive them, but He covers them. Now, suppose I sinned against you and you forgave me. But, you couldn’t cover my sin; my sin would still be there. But Jesus, with His precious

blood, covers my sin. A Sunday School teacher asked a little girl, “Is there anything God cannot do?” And, the little girl rightly said, “There’s one thing God cannot do: God cannot see my sin through the blood of Jesus Christ.” He covers our sin. “Well,” you say, “that’s good. Righteousness is imputed to me. Iniquity is forgiven. Sin is covered.” But, the best part is still not yet. The best part comes in verse 8—*“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”* (Romans 4:5–8) Good morning. Listen; listen: *“Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”* (Romans 4:8) God will not put sin on your account; He will not impute sin to you.

Do you understand that verse—what it’s saying? You know, some people say, “Well, you know, I just believe if I am living good enough, when I die, I’ll go to heaven.” Folks, I’ve often said *I wouldn’t trust the best fifteen minutes I’ve ever lived to get me to heaven.* And, if God were to impute sin, none of us would get there. I mean, listen, if you think you’re going there because you’re living so hotsy totsy, I’ve got news for you: you don’t know what sin is. The Bible says, *“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.”* (Romans 14:23) You always have perfect faith? The Bible says, *“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him [that] is sin.”* (James 4:17) Do you ever fail to do what you ought to do? The Bible says, *“The thought of foolishness is sin.”* (Proverbs 24:9) I mean, when you understand what sin is, then you’re not going to try to say, “Well, I’m going to heaven because I’m living such a good life.” The reason that you’re going to heaven is that God does not impute sin to you. *“For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.”* (Hebrews 10:14) Does that mean, therefore, that you can sin with impunity? Does that mean, therefore, that if you sin, you just go sailing on to heaven? No, if you’re a twice-born child of God and you sin, God will carry you to the woodshed and beat the daylights out of you if you don’t repent. That doesn’t mean that He’ll put sin on your account. He does not impute sin to you, but *“whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he [receives].”* (Hebrews 12:6)

## **V. I Am a Part of the Body of Christ**

Now, I want you to write this down: I am a part of the Body of Christ—I am a part of the Body of Christ. Now, 2 Corinthians 5, verse 17: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

In the New Testament, Noah’s ark is used as an illustration of salvation because Noah came into the ark and God shut the door. And so, Peter uses Noah’s ark as an illustration of salvation, because when we come into Christ, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God into Christ. Now, Ephesians 1, verse 13: *“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) Now, when

God put Noah in the ark, God sealed the door. When I came into Christ, God sealed the door with the Holy Spirit of promise. Now, God shut the door.

Now, really, there are only two men who have ever really lived: one is Adam, and the other is Christ. And, either you are in Adam or else you're in Christ. Now, the Bible makes it very clear that *"in Adam all die...in Christ all [are] made alive."* (1 Corinthians 15:22) When you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you come into Christ. You are a part of the mystical Body of Christ. Everybody in this building tonight is either in Adam or in Christ. Now, I could never again be lost unless the head of this new creation, the Lord Jesus, fails. I am as safe as Jesus is safe because I am in Christ. For me to be lost would be for a part of Jesus to be lost. In the New Testament, Noah's ark is used as an illustration of salvation because Noah came into the ark and God shut the door. And so, Peter uses Noah's ark as an illustration of salvation because when we come into Christ, we are sealed by the Holy Spirit of God into Christ.

Now, Ephesians 1, verse 13: *"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) Now, when God put Noah in the ark, God sealed the door. When I came into Christ, God sealed the door with the Holy Spirit of promise. Now, God shut the door, and when God shut the door, He did two things: number one, He shut the water out; number two, He shut Noah in. God shut the door. God sealed Noah into the ark. That ark is a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ. Can you imagine Noah building the ark and putting some pegs on the outside to hold to? One peg for him, one peg for Mrs. Noah, one for Shem, one for Ham, one for Japheth, and one for their wives—all eight of them? It starts to rain. They get on step ladders. They grab hold of a wet slimy peg, and Noah says to Mrs. Noah, "Sweetheart, you pray for me. I'll hold out faithful to the end." He never would have made it. No, God put him in the ark. God shut the door. And, Noah may have fallen down several times inside the ark, but he never fell out of it. He couldn't fall out of it because he is in the ark and the door is shut.

How safe was Noah? Noah was as safe as the ark. His safety was no better than the ark. If the ark was leaky, if the ark went down, he would go down. How safe are you? Well, you're in Jesus. You'll go down when Jesus goes down. You are in Christ. And, once you come into Christ, you're sealed with the Holy Spirit of God into Christ. That's a wonderful thought when you think about it. Some people think, "Well, you know, I'm going to be secure one day when I get to heaven; then I'll be eternally secure." Well, what makes you think if you're not secure down here, you'd be secure up there? The angels fell from heaven. *Security is not in a place; security is in a person, and that person's name is Jesus.* He is your ark of safety, and if you're not secure down here, why would you be secure up there? So, you see, friend, you are in Christ, and for you to

perish would be for a part of the Body of Jesus to perish.

## VI. I Already Have Eternal Life

Now, write this down: I already have eternal life—I already have eternal life. Let me give you a verse of Scripture. By the way, I was just praying with someone this afternoon to receive Christ as her personal Savior and Lord, and when we finished praying, as she received Christ into her heart, I said, “Now, let me give you your spiritual birth certificate.” And, this was the verse I gave to this lady. She may be here tonight. But, this is the verse I want to give you; listen to it: “*Verily, verily*”—now, that means “truly, truly.” It means, “pay attention; pay attention”—“*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word*”—have you heard it?—“*and believeth on him that sent me*”—do you believe in God, who sent the Lord Jesus to be the Savior of the world?—“*hath everlasting life*”—what is modern English for “hath”? “Has.” Has everlasting life—“*and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed*”—not “will pass” but “is passed”—“*from death unto life.*” (John 5:24) When do you get eternal life? Not when you die, but when you believe. “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, [has] everlasting life.*” (John 5:24) Now, if you have believed on Jesus, you have everlasting life.

Now, if you have everlasting life, when will it end? It can’t end. Suppose you had it for fifty years and then lost it. What did you have? Fifty-year life. Suppose you had it for seventy-five years and lost it. What did you have? You had seventy-five-year life. Whatever you had, if you ever lose it, whatever it was, it wasn’t everlasting. And, everlasting life is something you get not when you die but when you believe. The moment you believe in Jesus you have “*passed from death unto life.*” (John 5:24) Now, now folks, if you have Jesus, you have everlasting life. Thank God for it.

## VII. Jesus Is Praying for Me

All right. Now, number seven—I said I’d give you seven; I’m going to give you eight—but number seven (write this down): Jesus is praying for me—Jesus is praying for me. Let me give you some verses. John 17, verse 9: Jesus is praying for His disciples, and He says, “*I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine.*” (John 17:9) Now, Jesus was praying for the disciples. And now, what did He pray for the disciples? Well, in John 17, verse 15, here’s what He prayed for them: “*I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil*” (John 17:15)—literally, “from the evil one.” He saying, “I’m not praying, Father, that you take them immediately to heaven, but I do pray for them, Lord, that you will keep them”—“that you will keep them.”

“Well,” you say, “that’s wonderful that He prayed for Peter, James, and John that

way. I sure wish He'd have prayed for me that way." Well, now look in John 17, verse 20: "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word*" (John 17:20)—"I'm not just praying for these disciples right now, but I'm praying for those later on. I'm praying for Dan Greer. I'm praying for Jim Whitmire. I'm praying for Adrian Rogers. I am praying for those who will believe on me through their word."

Now, what's He praying? "Father, keep them." I want to ask you a question: Did Jesus Christ ever pray out of the will of God or did Jesus ever pray a prayer that the Father would not hear? Of course not. Jesus always prayed in the will of God. "*And this is the confidence that we have in him...if we ask [him] any thing according to his will, he [hears] us.*" (1 John 5:14) Now, why would Jesus pray a prayer that would not be answered? His prayer is always answered. At the grave of Lazarus He said, "*Father, I thank [you] that [you always hear] me.*" (John 11:41) Isn't that true? Now, what did the One who always gets His prayers answered pray for? He prayed that the disciples be kept, and He prayed that all of us who believe on Jesus through their word would be kept. That's what He prayed.

Now, is that prayer answered? Well, if God always hears His Son, the Lord Jesus, then that prayer is answered, and that's the reason the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 7 and 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) Have you listened to the import of that verse? "*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him.*" (Hebrews 7:25) Now, what does that mean—"save unto the uttermost"? "Save to the uttermost"—I used to think it meant he could save the worst of people, and certainly, He can. I think I used to say, "He saved from the guttermost to the uttermost" or "the uttermost to the guttermost." He can save anybody. Well, that's true, but that's not what that verse teaches. When this verse says, "*Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost,*" (Hebrews 7:25) it means He can save you all the way to the end—all the way to the end. He's able to save to the uttermost. Why? Because "*he ever [lives] to make intercession.*" (Hebrews 7:25) And, right now, Margaret, Jesus is praying for me and for you on the basis of His shed blood. "*For [with] one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*" (Hebrews 10:14) And,

*I have a Savior, a dear, loving Savior,  
Who's interceding and praying for me.*

—IRA DAVID SANKEY

Let me give you an illustration of that. Before Jesus was going to the cross, He told Simon Peter that Simon Peter was going to curse and swear and deny Him. Luke 22, verse 31 and 32: "*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have*

*you, that he may sift you as wheat*”—that is, “Satan wants you, Peter. He wants to get his hands on you.” Listen to it again—“*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.*” (Luke 22:31–32) Don’t you like that? “Satan wants you, but I have prayed for you that your faith will not fail.” Simon Peter stumbled. He tripped. He cursed, denied the Lord Jesus, but he wept bitterly but came back. Why? Because Jesus had prayed for him.

Salvation is like a strong rubber band. God puts it around you. You may stray off, but He just brings you back—just brings you back.

Because He prayed for him... “*I...prayed for [you], that [your] faith fail not.*” (Luke 22:32) He didn’t say that about Judas because Judas went away. Judas never was saved. The Bible says concerning Judas—Jesus said, “*Have [I] not...chosen you twelve, and one of you is [the] devil?*” (John 6:70) For He knew who they were that believed not. But, Simon Peter, weak as he was, Simon Peter had faith in the Lord Jesus. And, because of faith in the Lord Jesus, Jesus said, “I prayed for you, Peter, that your faith will not fail.” (Luke 22:32) And, therefore, this Simon Peter became the flaming apostle of Pentecost because the Lord Jesus prayed for him and interceded for him.

And, you put it down big, plain, and straight: Jesus is praying for me. Put it down for yourself: Jesus is praying for me. “*Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost [those] that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*” (Hebrews 7:25) Isn’t that wonderful? Hey, folks, that’s good news. That is wonderful.

You know what some people have? The idea—they say, “Well, now, wait a minute. What if the devil gets me? What if the devil gets me?” The devil wanted to get Peter, but Jesus said, “I’ve prayed for him.” (Luke 22:32) You know, some people say, “Well, you know, the devil might get me if I get saved. The devil might take me away from God.” Come up close. I want to tell you something: friend, if he could, he would. If he hasn’t done it yet, hasn’t he been good to you? Now, that’d be a strange doctrine, wouldn’t it? You’re going to heaven by the goodness of the devil. No, the only reason he hasn’t is because he can’t, ’cause if he could, he would. And, he can’t because Jesus is praying for us and interceding for us. “*Simon...Satan [has] desired...you... But I have prayed for [you].*” (Luke 22:31–32) “*Neither pray I for these alone, but [I pray] for them [who have believed] on me through their word.*” (John 17:20)

## **VIII. It Is God’s Power That Keeps Me**

Now, write this down: “number eight”—go back and change the title when I said, “seven reasons”—it is God’s power that keeps me. Put it down: it is God’s power that keeps me. First Peter 1, verses 3 through 5: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord*

*Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us*—do you know what it means to beget somebody? It means “to become your father”—“*which...hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance*”—“a lively hope” means “living assurance”—“*To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.*” (1 Peter 1:3–4) Now, I’ve got an inheritance in the safety vaults of heaven, and the foul tooth of time and the breath of decay cannot take it away. It is reserved in heaven for me. But, what good is having an inheritance reserved for me if I’m not reserved for it?

So, now listen to it: “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a [living] hope*”—a blessed assurance—“*by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and 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 [days].*” (1 Peter 1:3–5) When you put your faith in God, you’re saved. And, He’ll show you in the last days that you’re saved because—I mean, it will become obvious because you have been kept by the power of God. You see, it’s not that you keep God; God keeps you. It’s not that you hold on to Him; He holds on to you.

Listen to this verse: John 10, verses 27 and through 29: Jesus said, “*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they*”—“will perish every once in a while.” “Preacher, you didn’t read that right.” You better believe I didn’t read that right. Listen to it again—“*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*”—and the word *man* there is italicized. It literally says in the Greek language “neither shall any pluck them out of my hand,” anything you can name—“*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, I want to ask you a question. You are His sheep. You are in His hand, and His hand—the Savior’s hand—is overlaid by the Father’s hand. Now, can you think of a power that is strong enough to open the mighty hand of God forcefully and take you out? No—no. That’s the point. You see, no one is able to take you out of the Father’s hand. Isn’t that wonderful? What I’m trying to say is this...

There’s somebody that says, “Well, what if you take yourself out?” You can’t take yourself out. In this verse, the word *perish* and *destroy* are the same word in the Greek language, and the verb is in the middle voice. And, what it literally says is “they shall never destroy themselves.” If He didn’t save me from me, He didn’t save me from my worst enemy. “*[None] is able to [take] them out of my Father’s hand.*” (John 10:29) And so, I’m kept by His power. It’s not that He holds on to me, or it’s not that I hold on to Him but that He holds on to me. Now folks, you’re in better hands than Allstate. When you

get saved, you are His sheep.

I have children. I've got four wonderful children. I've got some grandchildren. Now, suppose I have those children in my hand, and suppose they're in danger of falling over a cliff into a fire or on jagged rocks. Now, suppose I'm holding on to them with all of my strength, and suppose the wind is blowing. And, maybe somebody is pulling, trying to pull them out of my hand. Suppose they, themselves, out of fear or ignorance are struggling. And, I'm holding on to them, and I don't want them to perish because they're mine and I love them. They share my nature. They have become partakers of my nature because I've begotten them. And, there they are. Now, if I could, if I had the strength, don't you think I would hold them? I mean, if I could. But, suppose one of them is struggling. Suppose the wind comes. Or, suppose my hands get tired and I can't hold them any more, and they slip and fall. It would break my heart, but it would be entirely possible. Do you know why? Because I'm only human—I'm only human. I might not be able to hold them. Now, God is more than human. God is almighty. The Bible says, "[We] are kept by the power of God." (1 Peter 1:5) God is able to hold you and to keep you.

## Conclusion

So, I want to say to you tonight, if you're not a Christian, don't let the devil keep you from coming to Jesus by saying to you, "Oh, you'll never be able to make it. You'll never be able to hold out. You don't have what it takes." Just tell the devil, "Of course I don't have what it takes. That's why I need a Savior. He specializes in saving little weak sheep like I am, and I'm coming to Him—not that I will hold on to Him, though I will hold on to Him, but He will hold on to me. And, He will keep me through the ages." It's wonderful to be saved but even more wonderful to know that once you're saved, you're kept by the power of God. You say, "Aren't there some conflicting scriptures?" We'll deal with some of those, but they are all easily answered when you see them in their context. "[We're] kept by the power of God." (1 Peter 1:5)

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. If you're saved, why don't you just thank God for this great salvation right now? Why don't you just thank Him and say, "Lord, thank you that you have saved me, that you have kept me all of these years"?

And, if you're not saved, right now, I want to invite you to pray and ask Jesus to come into your heart. You may pray like this: "Dear God, you promised to save me if I would trust the Lord Jesus. I do trust you, Lord Jesus. Come into my heart right now. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me, and save me, Lord Jesus. I trust you and you only. I don't ask for a feeling. I don't look for a sign. I just sincerely, by faith, take myself off the throne and put you on the throne of my life and trust you once and for all, now and forever, as my Lord and Savior. Amen." And, amen.

# Five Questions the Devil Can't Answer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 22, 1992

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 8:30–39

*“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?”*

ROMANS 8:31

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Question of Intimidation
- II. The Question of Deprivation
- III. The Question of Accusation
- IV. The Question of Condemnation
  - A. Christ Died for Us
  - B. Christ Was Raised for Us
  - C. Christ Reigns for Us
  - D. Christ Makes Intercession for Us
- V. The Question of Separation

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take God's Word and turn to the book of Romans and the eighth chapter of the book of Romans—Romans 8. If you did not bring a Bible with you, probably there's one there in the pew right near to you. And, because we're going to have a Bible study, it will be important to you, if possible, that you have a Bible in your hand or that you look on with a neighbor who may have a Bible there for you to read with.

Now, while you're finding it, may I say that you have an enemy who's very real? He's not a figment of imagination. He is your sworn enemy. His name is Satan. He is your adversary, and he's doing everything that he can do to keep you from enjoying the blessings that are rightfully yours in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you may not know that he's doing business against you, but he is. And, to be forewarned is to be forearmed. And, I just want to tell you five ways that Satan will come against you, and when I give you these five ways, then I want to show you of God's antidote to each of these five things and to show you the incredible blessing we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me tell you the five ways that Satan will come against you as a believer. Here are five attacks. First of all, he will come to intimidate you. He comes with intimidation. As Martin Luther said, “His [power] and [craft] are great, and, armed with cruel hate, / On earth is not his equal.” And, he wants to intimidate you with his power. Not only will he come with intimidation, but he will also come with... He’ll plant in your heart and mind a fear of deprivation. That is, he will tell you that if you don’t follow him, you’re going to be deprived of this thing or that thing—that it costs to serve Jesus, it costs every day, it costs every step of the way. And, he’ll, very frankly, tell you that the cost is not worth it—you’re going to be deprived. Now, if that doesn’t work, he’ll come along with accusation. He will accuse you. He will inform you that you’re no good, you’re not worthy, you’re undeserving, you’re not fit to be a Christian, you’re not qualified to be a Christian. And, he will accuse you. Following on the heels of accusation will come condemnation. He will condemn you. He’ll tell you you’re not truly saved, that your sins are not under the blood—there is no forgiveness—that when you die, you’re going to hell, that you are condemned in the sight of a righteous and a holy God. And, on the heels of that, he’ll come along with the doctrine of separation—that God’s going to leave you, forsake you: you’re on your own, and you’re not going to make it. So, there are the key words here that we’re going to be looking at: intimidation, deprivation, accusation, condemnation, and separation. These are the enemies.

What I want to do tonight in our Bible study is to give you five questions the devil can’t answer. Now, the devil likes to ask questions. He came. He crawled his slimy, corroding path onto the pages of history with a question: “*Yea, hath God said...?*” (Genesis 3:1) It was a question. He’s good at asking questions. Why, he even had the audacity to ask God a question—an insinuating question: “*Doth Job [serve] God for nought?*” (Job 1:9) The devil likes to ask questions. I’d like for us to ask him some. I want us to ask the devil five questions. These questions are going to come right out of the Word of God, and these, my dear friend, are five questions the devil cannot answer and five questions, because Satan cannot answer them, that ought to start the joy bells ringing in your heart to show you that you do have victory over the adversary.

## **I. The Question of Intimidation**

Question number one: Romans chapter 8 and verse 31. Here’s the first question; look at it: “*What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31) I’d like to ask the devil that question: “*If God be for us, who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31) And, that deals with the question of intimidation. Now, the devil would like to intimidate you. And, you just say, “Now, wait a minute, devil. Do you think that you’re going to pull weight on me and intimidate me? I want to ask you this question: If God is for me, who can be against me?”

Now, the word used here, in the biblical sense, means “if God is our substitute.” Christ died for our sins. He died for me. That means He died instead of me. So then, for instance, it’s not just that God is on my side. That’s not what it means. It means that, but it means more than that. It literally means “if God is in my place, if God is for me, if God is my substitute, who can be against me?” Now, both God and Satan, in dealing with me, don’t really deal with me. They have to deal with my substitute. I mean, “*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.*” (2 Corinthians 5:19) So, when Satan comes against me, I say, “Now, wait a minute. Don’t deal with me. You have to deal with Jesus because I’m in Christ, and He’s in me, and He died for me. If God be for me...” And, when God the Father looks at me, He doesn’t see me; He sees Jesus Christ. God is for me. My safety is in my substitute. And, it’s so wonderful to know that God is for you.

I had an experience down in Florida some many years ago—just before I came to this church, as a matter of fact. In 1972, there was a newspaperman down there, a reporter, who hated Christians in general. He specifically hated Baptists, and he very specifically hated Baptist preachers. And, he very specifically, specifically hated one Baptist preacher who’s standing on this platform. And, he made up his mind that he was going to do a newspaper article on yours truly, and he said to me, “I am going to do an investigative report on you. I’m going to do a profile on you.” He said, “Whether you like or not, I’m going to do it. If you want to cooperate with me, you can. If you want me to do investigative reporting, you can. But,” he said, “I’m going to do a story on you.” I said, “Well, I don’t have anything to hide. If you want to do the story, just come on and do the story.” Said, “As a matter of fact, I invite you to just follow me along and come right after me.” I said, “If you want to, you can come sit in my study and listen while I counsel people.” Said, “I want you to come to the services. I want you to ask any questions you want to ask.” But, all the time I knew that I knew that he was out to do a job on yours truly. As a matter of fact, I had some people that worked in that newspaper office and said, “Pastor, I know that man. I know what he is writing, and I have already read part of it. And pastor, it is terrible.”

Well, you know, what do you do in a situation like that? Well, I said, “Well, first of all, I’ve got to get a verse,” because I knew it was a form of satanic intimidation. I said, “I’ve got to get a verse—something that I can stand on, something that I can pray from.” And so, God gave me a verse. It’s Isaiah chapter 54 and verse 17, and what a beautiful verse that was! I read that verse to the Lord and quoted that verse to the Lord so many times, and here’s what that verse said: “*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is [for] me, saith the LORD.*” (Isaiah 54:17) Isn’t that a beautiful verse? Listen to it again: “*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in*

*judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the LORD, and their righteousness is [for] me, saith the LORD.” (Isaiah 54:17)* And, God took that word from the Word, and God said, “That is my rhema for you. That is my word from the Word for you.” And, I stood on that, and I felt that God said, “I’m going to apply that, Adrian, in your life in this situation.” So, I prayed that and stood on it.

Well, upon a time, this man came to hear me preach at the First Baptist Church of Merritt Island. And, it just so happened that on that Sunday that he came with his beard and raggedy clothes that he wore, sat up there in the front and kind of obnoxiously took notes, God just came into that church. It was one of those services where just God came into it. God moved in a great way. I was standing at the front door shaking people’s hands as they were coming out. And, it was a smaller church, and I could do that. I wouldn’t know which one of these doors to go to. But, I was standing there shaking hands with people coming out. One of the ushers came up to me. He said, “Pastor,” he said, “guess who’s here this morning?” I said, “Who?” He said, “Johnny Unitas.” Now, if you’re a young person, you may not know who Johnny Unitas is. But, let me tell you that at that time, Johnny Unitas, quarterback for the Baltimore Colts, was the hottest thing in professional football. Everybody knew Johnny Unitas quarterback. Said, “Johnny Unitas is in our service.” He’s never been there before; never been there since. He’s not a Baptist; he’s Roman Catholic. What he was doing in our service I still haven’t got the foggiest—but sitting in that service. I didn’t even know the whole time I preached.

Well, when I went out and was standing at the door, the usher just whispered, said, “Johnny Unitas is in this line. He’s coming through this line.” Boy, I wanted to meet Johnny Unitas. You know, I tell you what: I’m a football fan from way back. And, that fellow was standing right behind me watching everything—watching my mannerism, you know. It’s kind of a little unnerving to have somebody you know who’s doing a hatchet job on you stand there. He’ll listen to everything I’m saying, you know. So, here comes Johnny Unitas. I said, “Hi, John.” Said, “Hi. It’s a good sermon.” I said, “Thank you. Good to have you.” That’s all I said. He said, “Who was that?” I said, “Johnny Unitas.” Said, “What’s he doing here?” Said, “He came to worship. How are you, Miss Jones? Good to see you. How are you, Miss Smith?” Boy, I tell you, I felt so good about that. I said, “That’s so neat, you know, that God just sent Johnny Unitas there that Sunday and I could act so cavalier about it.”

So anyway, this guy continued to write this article, and the people over there at the newspaper said, “Pastor, it’s bad. It is bad. He’s doing a hatchet job on you.” I began to tell Jesus on him and just say, you know, “Lord, this is what you’ve said: ‘and no tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment shall prosper.’” He called me up on the phone. He said, “Well,” said, “I just thought I’d tell you that I’ve finished the article. I turned it in.

The newspaper didn't like it." Said, "They have fired me." And, he said, "Somebody else is writing that story." Friend, they gave us the inside of the Sunday supplement with my picture on the front page. The title of the article was, "Reverend Rogers and His Island in the Sun"—and an incredible, beautiful article. And, we couldn't have bought that kind of publicity, and this bird got fired. And, you know, I thought, isn't that just like our God? You know, I just had to praise the Lord. But, all through that thing I thought how Satan wants to, in all kinds of ways, to intimidate the people of God. We need to understand that it's not always going to be all honey and no bees. I mean, Satan is going to come after us, and we will suffer—and we'll suffer unjustly sometimes.

I want you to turn to Luke chapter 21 here for just a moment. Turn to Luke chapter 21. If you think it's all just going to be pink lemonade, look in Luke chapter 21, verse 12. Jesus is talking about the calamities that are going to come on the earth, and He says in verse 12: *"But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer"*—and, by the way, have you ever wondered, "What would I do if they told me to deny Christ or they'd kill me?" or "What would I do if they said, 'Deny Christ or I'll cut the hands off your grandbaby'?" What would you do if they said, "Deny Christ or we'll torture your wife"? Don't even worry about those kinds of questions. God will tell you what to do. It'll be given you in that moment. Look at it again—*"Settle it...in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."* (Luke 21:12–15) The devil will try to intimidate you, but friend, listen, if God be for us—if God be for us, if God be for us; literally, "if God be in our place, if God be our substitute," which He is—who can come against Him?"

I was looking at a verse this afternoon—got me so excited. I want to share it with you. Over in Isaiah chapter 41 here just a moment—just turn to that: Isaiah chapter 41. This deals so emphatically with what I'm talking about—of God being for us. In Isaiah chapter 41, begin in verse 11, if you will: God says, *"Behold, all they that were incensed against thee"*—and, that is, "these who were angry at you"—*"shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought"*—it's like a zero with the edges trimmed off. Now, watch it—*"For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee"*—now, here's the pretty part, verse 14. Look at it—*"Fear not, thou worm Jacob"*—just underscore the phrase "worm"—*"thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."* (Isaiah 41:11–14) I can't think of anything more defenseless and more

apt to be stepped on than a worm. I mean, I can't think of anything more vulnerable than a worm, and God called Jacob "worm": *"thou worm Jacob."* (Isaiah 41:14) But, He said, "Look, worm. I'm with you." Now friend, I tell you what: you're coming up against a mighty army when you come up against a worm and Almighty God. I mean, you think about it. You're like a worm with God, and you've got an incredible amount of power. That's what He's saying. He's saying, "Look. It's not you." *"Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."* (Isaiah 41:14)

Now, when the devil gets on your case and he tries to intimidate you, you ought to just open your Bible to Romans 8 and verse 31. Don't argue with him; just say, "I want to ask you a question, devil: *'If God be for us, who can be against us?'*" (Romans 8:31) Isn't that a great question? You think the devil's got an answer for that one? Friend, he can't answer that question.

## II. The Question of Deprivation

All right. Now, here's the second question. The devil says, "All right. If you serve God, it's going to cost you. You're going to lose out. You're going to miss life. You're going to miss happiness. You're not going to have your needs met." Well, let's look in verse 32 at the second question. Here's the second question: *"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32) "Devil, that's a question I want to ask you: If God gave Jesus to me, how shall He not also with Him freely give us all things?"

Now, the Apostle Paul was a man of great logic. As a matter of fact, if you read the book of Romans, you're going to read one of the greatest legal treatises ever written. Now, it's written by divine inspiration, but Paul didn't put his mind in a closet when he wrote the book of Romans. God took his logic, his mind, and God anointed it with holy fire. But, Paul now is using reason in all this: "If God is our substitute, when they come against us, they're coming against God. And, if God be for us, who can be against us?" That's question number one—no intimidation. And then, if God gave us Jesus, He's going to give us everything else. There's no deprivation. Now, look at the logic: If God sent Jesus to die for us while we were enemies, how much more is He going to take care of us now that we're His children? If God gave us the great gift when we didn't ask for it, how much more shall He give things to those who ask Him? If God gave His beloved Son, *"how shall he not [also] with [His Son] freely give us all things?"* (Romans 8:32)

I think I've used this illustration in the pulpit before. If you were to say to me, "Adrian, can I have your son, David?" "What do you want to do with David?" "Or can I have your son, Steve?" "What do you want to do with Steve?" "Well, I want to take your son. I want

to abuse him, mistreat him, beat him, finally torture him and murder him. Will you give me your son, that I might do that to him?" Of course, I wouldn't. I would die before I'd let you do that to one of my children. I wouldn't give you my son. But, suppose, for some strange reason, you could persuade me to give you my son, that that might be done to him. And then, you said, "By the way, since you've given me your son, can I have his basketball and bicycle?" I'd say, "Sure." I mean, if I would give you my son, if I would not spare my son, how much more would I give you anything else? That's Paul's logic: "*He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not [also] with him...freely give us all things?*" (Romans 8:32)

Now friend, if there was a promise that God was ever going to go south on, it would have been the promise to send Jesus. He kept that one. All the rest of them are yea and amen in Christ. Isn't that right? I mean, "*My God shall supply all [of] your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" (Philippians 4:19) And so, if the devil comes to me and says, "Hey, Adrian, if you're going to serve God, you're going to come up short; you're going to be deprived," I just want to read this verse to him. And, I say, "Devil, can you answer that question—Romans 8 and verse 32?" That's the second question the devil can't answer.

### **III. The Question of Accusation**

Now, here's a third question the devil can't answer: the subject of accusation. Look in verse 33: "*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth.*" (Romans 8:33) Now, the devil is called "*the accuser of [the] brethren.*" (Revelation 12:10) Night and day he wants to accuse. He is "*the accuser of [the] brethren.*" (Revelation 12:10) Revelation chapter 12 and verse 10 calls him that. His very name, devil, means "slanderer," and he is just that. And, he will accuse you.

Now, this doesn't mean that you're not going to be accused. It means "who is qualified to do so?" Many are going to try, but there's only one who could rightly accuse you, and that's the One who has declared you justified. You see, God has already justified you. Look, if you will, in verse 30: "*Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified.*" (Romans 8:30) Now, if you're justified and there's only one who can accuse you—rightly accuse you—and that's God... And, God has justified you. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Universe is not going to reverse His decision.

Now, you see, in Rome—and Paul was a Roman citizen—in Rome, when a man would commit a crime, that man would be put in court, adjudicated guilty, then he'd be put in prison. And, on the prison door would be nailed a certificate of death; that is, "This is what this man has done. Thus and thus and thus has he done. Here is the penalty that has been prescribed by the court, and this is what he must do. This is the bill he

must pay”—a certificate of death. Now, when that man, if he’s been put in prison for a year, or two years, or five years, or whatever he must do, that is there on his cell door or that is there in the record. And, when he has paid the price to society, then they would stamp that bill “paid in full,” give it to him. He could carry that with him. That crime is now behind him because that bill is stamped “paid,” very much just like we do today when we stamp a bill “paid.” And, when they would write on that bill, they would write the same word that Jesus Christ uttered from the cross: “finished.” Now, it’s three words in our English language: *“It is finished.”* (John 19:30) One word that Jesus literally said: “Tetelestai,” and it means “paid in full.” It’s exactly the same word that they would put on the prison door. And, what Jesus said when He died for our sins is not “I am finished” but, *“It is finished.”* (John 19:30) What is finished? Redemption is finished. It is paid in full.

Now, with that in mind, I want you to—you’re in Romans—just go to Colossians for just a moment—Colossians chapter 2. And, Colossians is not that hard to find. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians—General Electric Power Company. All right. Now, go to Colossians chapter 2 and verse 13. Look at it: *“And you, being dead in your sins and [in] the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him”—*that is, you were dead. He’s made you alive together with Jesus—*“having forgiven you all trespasses”—*now, watch it—*“Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us”—*that’s what was nailed to the prison door. That’s what it is. That handwriting ordinance, it was against you. This is the handwriting of the ordinances, the laws that you have broken. He blotted that out—*“which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross.”* (Colossians 2:13–14) No longer is it nailed to your prison. He took it and nailed it to the cross. And then, when it was nailed to the cross, He paid that debt in full and said, “Now tetelestai. It’s paid. It’s paid!”

Now, my dear friend, if it is paid, then *“who [can] lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?”* (Romans 8:33) I mean, who can do it? And, the devil tries, dear friend, to accuse you. Just step out of the way. Don’t argue with him. He’s not worth it. Just read Romans 8, verse 33: *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.”* (Romans 8:33) You’re justified in the sight of God.

You say, “Well, what if I sin again?” Did I hear you correctly—“what if”? My dear friend, if your going to heaven depended upon your not sinning, there’s not a mother’s child in this building who’ll make it, except me. Say, “Pastor, I hope you’re facetious.” Well, I am. My dear friend, I’ve told you before *I wouldn’t trust the best fifteen minutes I ever lived to get me to heaven—much less some of my bad ones.* But, we are justified, counted righteous, by the blood of Jesus Christ, who paid our sin debt in full. And, who is he, my dear friend, that can accuse you or *“lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?”* (Romans 8:33)

## IV. The Question of Condemnation

So, my dear friend, there's no intimidation. There's no deprivation. There's no accusation. That brings us to the fourth question I'd like to ask the devil. It follows on the heels of the third question: *"Who is he that condemneth?"* (Romans 8:34) Look in verse 34 of this same chapter—Romans chapter 8 and verse 34: *"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."* (Romans 8:34) Now, my dear friend, the devil would like to put you under a load of condemnation and guilt, but I want to refer you back to chapter 8 and verse 1: *"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."* (Romans 8:1)

Now, there are a lot of people who try to condemn you. The world is full of people who'll try to condemn you. Anybody ever told you to go to hell? Sure. "You go to hell," they'll say. Well, they can't condemn you.

I think I told you about three men who were in a restaurant. One was a believer, and two were unbelievers. And, one unbeliever said to the other unbeliever—said, "You go to hell." The believer said to the man who'd just been consigned to the pit—said, "Look, I've got a Bible here. I've been reading the directions. You don't have to go if you don't want to." Thank God, you don't. You don't have to go if you don't want to.

I mean, ain't nobody can condemn a man who will put his sins under the blood of Jesus Christ. The only one who's qualified to condemn is Jesus, and He won't do it. That's what it says. Look: *"Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."* (Romans 8:34) The only one who is qualified to condemn... Who is the only one qualified to condemn? It's Jesus. You see, the Bible says in John chapter 5, verses 22 and 23: Jesus said, *"The Father [judges] no man, [he has] committed all judgment [to] the Son."* (John 5:22) Now, for Jesus Christ to condemn the one for whom He died, He'd have to reverse everything that He did. I mean, He would have to undo His four mighty works.

### A. Christ Died for Us

Notice the logic again of Paul: Christ died for us; He died in our place. For you to be condemned would negate Calvary. You say, "But what if I sin after I get saved?" My dear friend, the Bible says in 1 John 1:7: *"the blood of Jesus Christ [God's] Son [cleanses] us from all sin"* (1 John 1:7)—not *cleansed*; it *cleanses* us from all sin.

### B. Christ Was Raised for Us

But, not only did He die for us, dear friend; He was raised for us. Look at that verse again. Look at it—verse 34: *"It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again."*

(Romans 8:34) His resurrection was the receipt for our salvation. He's "[shown] to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:4) It's one thing for a man to say, "I'm going to die for your sins." It's another thing for God to prove that He did when He raised Him from the dead.

### **C. Christ Reigns for Us**

But, not only was He raised for us; He reigns for us. Look again at this verse. It says here, "*Who is even [seated] at the right hand of God.*" (Romans 8:34) In the Old Testament, a priest never sat down. There was no chair in the tabernacle. But, in that tabernacle in heaven, our Lord is seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high. That is, He is reigning. He is the Redeemer. He is the raised Redeemer. He is the reigning Redeemer. He's sovereign over this whole affair.

### **D. Christ Makes Intercession for Us**

And then, look again. It says, "*Who...maketh intercession for us.*" (Romans 8:34) He's constantly pleading for us and pleading on the basis of His shed blood. You know, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 7 and verse 25: "*Wherefore he is able...to save [unto] the uttermost [those] that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*" (Hebrews 7:25) Jesus is praying for me and praying for you. That's what He said. Look, who can condemn you? Christ died for you. Christ was raised. Christ is enthroned. Christ is interceding for you, for me. Who can condemn somebody who has such a Savior? And, every time Satan would come with accusation and accuse you before the Father, do you know what your defense is? It's the uplifted, nail-pierced hand of Jesus making intercession for me, for you.

## **V. The Question of Separation**

So, the devil comes, and he says with his bluster to intimidate you... I'll say, "Now, wait a minute, devil. You don't intimidate me. I'm not afraid of you. *'If God is for [me], who can be against [me]?'*" (Romans 8:31) The devil says, "Well, you're not going to have your needs met." I say, "If God sent Jesus to die for me, He'll give me everything I need." He says, "Well, I accuse you of this, or I accuse you of that." I say, "*Who [can] lay any thing to charge of God's elect?*" (Romans 8:33) He says, "Well, you're going to hell." I say, "There's only one who can send me there; His name is Jesus. And, He died for me, and He's interceding for me. And, how do you think I'm going to be condemned because of that?" Then, last of all, he says, "Well, what if God gets tired of you? What if God forsakes you? What if you get separated from God?" So, I want to ask him the final question. Here's another question the devil can't answer; look at it in verse 35: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*" (Romans 8:35) Friend, that's a question the devil can't answer: "*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or*

*distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.*" (Romans 8:35–39)

You get the idea that God's going to get tired of you and that somehow you're going to get separated from God. Now, what he does—Satan would like to list these enemies that can take you away, and what the Bible does here is list seven tragic experiences and ten enemies. Seven—perfect. Ten—complete. Look at it. What are these seven things that He says—these tragic experiences that can't separate you from God? What are they? Tribulation—it doesn't say you're not going to have tribulation. Distress—he doesn't say you're not going to have distress. Persecution—he doesn't say you're not going to have persecution. Famine—he doesn't say you're not going to have famine. Nakedness—he doesn't say you're not going to have nakedness. Peril—that means "danger." He doesn't say you're not going to be in danger. The sword, which may mean death—he doesn't say that won't happen to you. He says, *"In all these things"*—not "in the absence of these things"—*"in...these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Romans 8:37)

Now friend, you get your security not in circumstances but in the cross, and not in appearances, not in time, but in eternity and in Bible truth. All of these seven tragic experiences can happen to the child of God. As a matter of fact, the Apostle Paul wrote this in Romans. Just for second, turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11 here just a moment. Just turn right a couple of books and you'll find it. Look, if you will, verse 23. Paul talks about these false apostles; he says, *"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure"*—that is, "I can't even count the stripes they put on my back"—*"in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft"*—what does that mean? How many times can a man die? Paul said, *"I die daily."* (1 Corinthians 15:31) I imagine when they cut off his head, they said, "Are you afraid?" He said, "No, I've done this before." Say, "What do you mean?" "I die daily." I mean—*"in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one"*—that is, thirty-nine stripes. They had a law: you couldn't whip a man more than that because the physical frame couldn't take it; he'd die—*"forty stripes save one. Thrice [I] was...beaten with rods, once [I] was...stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day [have] I...been in the deep"*—that is, "I spent forty-eight hours, or twenty-four hours, whichever this means, floating around in the Mediterranean being pickled"—*"In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils [of] mine own countrymen, in perils [of] the heathen,*

*in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness*—boy, we have a pretty easy Christianity today, don't we? "Now, you know, pastor, it's raining. We just couldn't make it out to church." Or, "You know, it's Sunday night. It's kind of hard to get there. It's the only time we have together"—*Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of...the churches.*" (2 Corinthians 11:23–28) And then, he goes on. Now, Paul didn't say these things wouldn't happen to you. They certainly happened to him. But, he said, "They cannot separate you from the love of God."

And then, not only does he mention these seven tragic experiences; he mentions ten strong opponents that can't do it. Look. He says death can't do it and life can't do it—*"neither death, nor life."* (Romans 8:38) He's talking about things that happen in the visible world, things of life and death. And then, he says, "angels, and principalities, and powers can't do it." (Romans 8:38) He's talking not only about the visible, material world, but he's talking about the unseen world. There are demonic powers, and the host of hell come against the child of God—and will do more and more. But, he says, "Those things can't separate you from the love of God." Don't get the idea that the devil could take you away from God. Friend, if he could, he would. If he hasn't, it's only 'cause he can't, or else he's been mighty nice to you. And, if he's been mighty nice to you, that means that you're going to heaven by the goodness of the devil. That's a strange doctrine. No, my dear friend, the only reason he hasn't is 'cause he can't. If he could, he would have. You see, principalities and powers have no power over God's mighty love. The invisible world—and then, he says, *"things present, [and] things to come."* (Romans 8:38) Time can't do it. Anything now or anything that may ever come can't separate you from the love of God. I don't care how long you live or how long eternity is. *"Things present, [or] things to come."* (Romans 8:38) Then, not only does he mention time; he mentions space: *"Nor height, nor depth."* (Romans 8:39) He mentions every realm—the material, the spiritual. He mentions, my dear friend, time and space. And then, in case he left anything out, he just wraps it up and says, *"nor any other creature."* (Romans 8:39) If you think you can think of something that he left out, then he just covered the space. There's not a more complete statement in all literature. And, what is he saying? He's just saying, folks—now listen to it: there is nothing can separate you from God's love—nothing!

Now, the devil would like for you to believe that somehow God's going to cast you off, but He will not. He will not. He will not.

*The soul that on Jesus [hath] leaned for repose,  
[He] will [never; no, never; no, never] desert to its foes.*

—JOHN RIPPON

## Conclusion

Those are five questions Satan can't answer. Sometimes, when he gets on your case, say, "Devil, I've got some questions. I want to read them to you. I want to see if you've got an answer for them." And friend, there is no creative being that has the answer to those questions because there is no answer.

It's not because we hold on to Him. I think you've heard the story of the little boy and his daddy—busy intersection. His daddy said, "Son, hold on to daddy's hand. We've got to cross the street." The little boy put his hand up there to hold on to his daddy's hand. And, you know, a daddy's forefinger is about the size of a little boy's grip. The little boy got hold of the daddy's finger, and they started across the street. And, the light changed sooner than the father expected, and the oncoming traffic came. That dad just reached down, and rather than letting that little boy hold his finger, he just got that whole little boy's chubby fist in his hand and they start across the street, the little boy just dragging his toes as he went across the street. When they got to the other side, the little boy said, "I held on, daddy." Well, friend, that's the way we hold on because there's one who holds us, and He'll never let us go.

And, that dirty devil will pull all five of those tricks on you, but "*we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.*" (Romans 8:37)

Let's pray. Father, I thank you that there's no intimidation, no deprivation, no accusation, no condemnation, no separation for those who are in Christ Jesus. And Father, I pray tonight that you'd help the children of God to rejoice in that and, Lord, for those tonight who've never stepped out of sin into grace, that tonight they might receive Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. In His wonderful name I pray. Amen.

# The Heartbeat of Missions

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 30, 1980**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 9:1–3**

*“For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ  
for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”*

ROMANS 9:3

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Conscientious Concern
- II. A Compassionate Concern
- III. A Continual Concern
- IV. A Costly Concern

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn to Romans chapter 9—would you, please?—as we think tonight on “The Heartbeat of Missions”—“The Heartbeat of Missions.” Romans chapter 9. I believe that the greatest missionary that ever lived was a little Jew named Paul, and if you want to see what impelled him, what motivated him, what drove him on to be the world’s greatest missionary, I believe you can find it here in three verses in Romans chapter 9, verses 1 through 3 as we think about “The Heartbeat of Missions.” The Apostle Paul said, *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.”* (Romans 9:1–3)

The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has the greatest mission, and that is evangelism. We have the greatest message—that is, the gospel. And, we have the greatest Master, and He is the Lord Jesus Christ. And, with our mission and with our message and with our Master, we ought to be evangelizing the world, but we’re not doing it. And, it is not that Christ is a failure. It is not that the gospel is not relevant. It is somehow, some way, we’ve lost the heartbeat—we’ve lost the heartbeat of missions.

That early Church turned their world upside down and right side up, really, for the Lord Jesus Christ. And, it was really very simple: the Lord Jesus Christ went up; the Holy Spirit came down. The disciples went out, and the unsaved came in. And, they

came to know the Lord Jesus Christ. And, these early disciples—they did so much with so little against such great obstacles. They went out against the imperial might of Rome. They went out against the intellectual sophistication of the learned Greeks. They went out against the religious bigotry of the Jews of that day. And they, aided and abetted by the Holy Spirit of God, were such a force for Christ and for missions that they evangelized the known world. And, the greatest of these missionaries and the greatest of these soul winners was this man who wrote these words that I've just read to you from Romans chapter 9, verses 1 through 3. And, as we look at the heartbeat of the Apostle Paul, I want you to notice four things about his heartbeat.

## I. A Conscientious Concern

The first thing I want you to notice is that it was a conscientious heartbeat—a conscientious concern. Look at it again in verse 1: *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness.”* (Romans 9:1)

Now, I want you to look right up here at me for a moment. Do you mind if I get personal? May I get personal? Do you have a concern for souls? Now, be honest. Do you have a broken heart for lost people? Now, if I were to go ask you once by one, I dare say most of you would say “yes,” and here’s why I think you would say “yes”: I think you would be embarrassed to say “no”; and so, you would say “yes.” And, perhaps in your mind you would rationalize a little bit, but your conscience wouldn’t bear you witness. If I asked you, “Do you have a concern for souls?” you’d say “yes,” but on the inside, you’d feel a twinge of conscience, and your conscience would be telling you, “That’s a lie. You don’t really care about souls.” I know that most of the people of our congregation don’t care about souls, and I’ll tell you why: they never do anything about bringing the lost to Jesus. They are content to come to church Sunday after Sunday and hear Bible messages. They sit, they soak, and they sour while the world goes to hell. The Apostle Paul had a conscientious concern for souls. He could say, “I say the truth in Christ, and I’m not telling a lie, and my conscience bears me witness that I have this sorrow—this continual sorrow—in my heart.” (Romans 9:1)

It’s easy to talk about missions. I have an evangelist friend who was staying in the home of a lady who was one of the leaders in the missionary society in her church. And, they were having morning meetings there in the church. And, he was getting ready to go to the morning meeting there, and he was actually teaching the people how to win souls and so forth. And, he looked at this particular lady and said, “Are you going to the revival crusade this morning?” She said, “No, I cannot go.” And, he said, “Why can’t you go?” And, she said, “Well, we’re having an executive meeting of our mission society, and I’ve got to go to that.” Well, now, dear friend, when a church is having a revival crusade, any kind of a meeting needs to be set aside for that revival crusade. It’s not

wrong to have executive committee meetings for mission societies. But, she said, “I have a meeting of the missionary society, and I’m going to that.” But, he said, “But, we’re having revival. Everybody in the church ought to go.” And, she said, “Young man”—and he was a young man at this time—she said, “Young man, I want you to know that missions is as important as any revival meeting.” And, he said, “Well, all right. That’s okay. Go.” He said, “Because I don’t think you’re all that concerned about souls anyway.” “Well,” she said, “what makes you say that?” He was a guest in her home. I think he was pretty impertinent, don’t you? She said, “What makes you say that?” He said, “I just talked to your maid this morning. I asked her if she were a Christian. She said she wasn’t. I asked her if she wanted to be. She said she did. I asked her if she knew how to be, and she said she didn’t.” And, he said, “I have taken my Bible this morning and won your maid to Jesus Christ.” He said, “I asked her how long she’d been working for you, and she’s been working for you for several years; and you have yet to witness to her about the Lord Jesus.” So, he said, “I think it would be best that you just go off to the executive meeting of your mission society and talk about missions.”

Now, dear friend, talk is one thing; songs are another thing, but a heartbroken concern is something else. Are you really concerned about souls? Is it just rhetoric? Do you just nod your head? Do you sometimes give a sympathetic smile or cry a crocodile tear? The Apostle Paul said, *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness...That I have [continual sorrow] and [great heaviness] in my heart.”* (Romans 9:1–2) When’s the last time you ever shed a tear over some soul that was mortgaged to the devil? Oh, dear friend, do you care? Do you really care? Paul had a conscientious concern. His conscience could bear witness with him.

## II. A Compassionate Concern

But, the second thing I want you to notice about the Apostle Paul and his missionary heartbeat: not only did he have a conscientious concern, but he had a compassionate concern. Look again at this scripture. *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.”* (Romans 9:1–2) The Apostle Paul had a heartbroken concern. He had a compassionate concern. He knew what it was to weep over lost souls.

Do you know what’s missing in the average church? Tears—tears. I believe when our eyes are filled with tears, this altar will be filled with souls. I don’t believe there’s a substitute for tears. Now, some of us may not cry outwardly easily, but I believe we need to get on our face before God and weep over this lost world. You call the roll of those who’ve been used of God, who have been blessed of God, down through church history, and you will see that they were men of compassion, they were men of concern, they were men, dear friends, of a broken heart.

Listen to Moses as Moses prays and intercedes for his people. Moses said, “*Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin*”—and then, he said—“*[but] if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of [the] book which thou hast written.*” (Exodus 32:32) Have you ever noticed that this is an unfinished sentence that Moses prayed? “*[But] now, if thou wilt forgive their sin,*” (Exodus 32:32) and then he never finishes the sentence. It is as though he is so overcome with emotion that he cannot even finish the sentence. And, he says, “O God, if you don’t forgive these people; if you’re not willing to take them back; Lord, if they’re not going to heaven, then,” he says, “I don’t want to go. Just wipe my name out of the book that thou hast written.”

Listen to Jeremiah, the weeping prophet. Jeremiah said, “*Oh that my head were waters, and [that] mine eyes [were] a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!*” (Jeremiah 9:1)

Listen to the Lord Jesus Christ as Jesus weeps over Jerusalem. And, with big salty tears, with a heart broken, He says, “*O Jerusalem, Jerusalem...how [oft] would I have gathered [thee], even as a hen [doth] her [chicks], and ye would not!*” (Mathew 23:37; Luke 13:34)

Do you know what it is to weep over lost people? Do you know what it is to have a compassionate concern? The world can tell when we mean business. I had a medical doctor to call me and say, “Will you be in your pulpit?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “I’m bringing an unsaved man with me.” He said, “I’m a Christian, a born-again believer, and I’m bringing an unsaved man with me to your services.” I said, “Well, sir, why don’t you bring him to your church?” He said, “At my church they don’t seem to care about lost people.” He said, “I believe if I brought him to your church, he’d get saved.” And, he brought him, and he did get saved. And, I thank God for a doctor who cares and has a concern. But, I tell you, the people of this world can look around and they can see whether or not a church has a concern for people—that is, a conscientious concern that is a compassionate concern. O God, forgive our cold churches. God, forgive our lack of concern. Do you have that kind of a compassion? Do you have, dear friend, a compassionate concern?

### **III. A Continual Concern**

The third thing I want you to notice about the Apostle Paul that made him the great missionary that he was: not only did he have a conscientious concern and not only did he have a compassionate concern, but pay attention now: he had a continual concern. Look at verse 2 again: “*I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.*” (Romans 9:2)

I know human nature, and I know what’s happening right now. You’re feeling guilty, and you’re saying, “You know, I’m not really concerned as I ought to be. I’m going to do

better.” But, do you know what’s wrong with the members of Bellevue Church and with Christians in general? We get excited for a little while, and then it just dwindles away. We blow hot, and then we blow cold. There’s no consistency. The Apostle Paul had a continual concern. The Apostle Paul was always at it night and day.

I’m speaking to some of you who once had a burden for souls. I’m speaking to some of you who were once were soul winners. I’m speaking to some of you whose heart just trembled with the idea of winning someone to Jesus. And now, you’re very casual about the matter. Now, you don’t speak any more. You don’t have tracts by the door like you used to. You don’t have them in the glove compartment of your automobile like you used to. You’re not looking at people that you come in contact with and saying, “I’m wondering if that person is saved or if that person is lost.”

The Apostle Paul was the kind of a man who, day in and day out, he was concerned about souls. He said in Acts chapter 20, verse 31: *“Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every [man day] and [night] with tears.”* (Acts 20:31) Three years he ceased not—every one, night and day, with tears. Now, he didn’t mean after three years he quit. He just meant, “I was there three years, and the whole time I was there with you at Ephesus that’s the way I lived—for three years, the whole time I was there.”

Do you know, as I prepared this message and as God spoke to my heart, I got so under conviction I had to ask myself, “Adrian, do you really have a conscientious concern for souls?” I had to ask myself, “Adrian, do you really have a compassionate concern for souls?” Do you know what it is to have continual sorrow? Do you know what it is, with the Apostle Paul, to have heaviness of heart? And, I had to ask myself, “Adrian, are you consistent? Are you really consistent?” And, God said, “Adrian, you’re not consistent. Adrian, there’s a flaw in your life.” God spoke to my heart. I want to do something about it. I pray God He’ll speak to your heart. I pray God that God will help us to be like the Apostle Paul—night and day to cease not, to warn everyone with tears. Don’t tell me about your orthodoxy. Don’t tell me that you believe in hell if you’re not doing anything to save men from hell. You’re not warning them to *“flee from the wrath to come.”* (Matthew 3:7; Luke 3:7) Listen, friends, it is our job—it is our job—to go and to bring them. You can read this Bible through and you’ll not find one place in this Bible where God ever commanded an unsaved man to go to church, but you’ll read many places in the Bible where God commands the Church to go to the unsaved.

You know, we ought not to think it strange that they don’t come to church. You know, you can be thrown off your guard a little bit by looking around here. And, we might have in this auditorium, I’d say, oh, probably about twenty-five hundred here tonight. And, you could be thrown off your guard a little bit. You’d say, “Well, looks like everybody’s going to church.” You go out and drive around the city of Memphis, Tennessee. You see

where they are. You'll see that the nightclubs are filled. You'll see that the restaurants are filled. You'll see that the people are at home, the little kids are there watching television. They're doing this thing and that thing; they're not in church. Don't get the idea, because you happen to attend a church where quite a few people come on Sunday night, that this is the average. On my way to church tonight I drove past one church after another that was closed, and shut, and padlocked, and dark. This city is filled with unchurched people.

You say, "Well, we built some new buildings. We're on television. We're on radio. We advertise in the newspaper." Friend, the world has been trying to tell us something, and I think it's about time we listened. Here's what the world is saying: the world is saying, "Provide spacious buildings. Make sure that you have nice parking lots well lighted and patrolled. Provide a nursery for our children—air-conditioned. Have magnificent instruments and well-trained choirs. Be certain that your minister has a degree and is well prepared. And then, invite us to come by means of radio, television, and the newspaper, and we're still not coming." That's what the world's been trying to tell us: "And we're still not coming. In spite of all of that, we are not coming." And, we shouldn't expect them to.

I want to ask you a question: Do you find it hard to get to church on Sunday morning? Nod your head this way if you do. I do. Man, we have to start getting ready on Saturday night, and then sometimes we don't make it, or almost don't make it. And, I'll tell you, if we're not careful, by the time we get here, we need to be here 'cause we lost our religion getting here. Now, don't look so pious. And, that's especially true if you have little children. Man, it's harder to get to church than it is to go to work. It's harder to get to church than it is to go to school. Why? Well, the devil doesn't all that much care whether you go to work or go to school, but the devil just hinders you when you get ready to come to church. It's just a job; it's an ordeal, especially if you have little children and so forth. But, here's the point—listen: we do come. And, I'll tell you why we come in spite of all of those obstacles: we want to come. But, what about those who are not saved? What about those who could care less? Don't think it strange that they don't come. Think it strange that we don't go. We are to have a continual, a consistent concern for souls. The Apostle Paul said, "*I have...continual sorrow in my heart.*" (Romans 9:2)

Now, I believe in meeting down here on one night of the week to go out on a church-wide visitation. As long as I'm pastor, I believe we'll continue that format. But, let me tell you, dear friend, what God really wants out of us: He wants you to go to your workplace tomorrow morning and have a continual concern for lost people—He wants you to go into that schoolroom; He wants you to go in that office; He wants you to go into that playground.

Have you ever watched the shoeshine man as you walk past? He never looks at your face; he looks at your shoes. “Shine, mister? You need a shine?” Why? Because he’s concerned about shining shoes. Every person you meet you ought to say to yourself, “Is he saved or is he lost? Is she saved or is she lost? How can God use me? What can I do? Just a word? Perhaps a tract. Perhaps a prayer. Perhaps a smile. Is this the opportunity? Will God give me the opportunity now to close this man out for the Lord Jesus Christ?” Some of you are going to die and go to heaven without ever winning a soul to 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?*  
—CHARLES CARROLL LUTHER

Oh, dear friend, I don’t want you to win ten people to Jesus. I don’t want you to win five. I don’t want you to win three, not even two. I want you to win one to Jesus—just one, just one. If you can’t win a member of your family, win somebody else’s family. If you cannot win an adult, win a child. But, bring somebody to Jesus, and when you’ve just brought one to Jesus, then we’ll start on number two, okay? That’s it. Dear friend, just say, “Night and day, this one thing I want to do, and that is to be used of God to bring people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.”

#### **IV. A Costly Concern**

Now, the fourth thing about the Apostle Paul that made him the great missionary that he was: not only did he have a conscientious concern, not only did he have a compassionate concern, not only did he have a continual concern—are you ready for this?—he had a costly concern—a costly concern. Look at it again. I’m reading, now, Romans 9, verse 1: *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart”*—now, listen to this—*“For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”* (Romans 9:1–3)

Paul, did I hear you correctly? Do my eyes deceive me? Does this say what I think it says? There are some scholars who tried to explain it away because of the impact of what Paul said, but the best scholarship that I’ve read says that you can’t explain it away. Paul says in his heart what he says here on the paper—in plain English, “I would be willing to go to hell if they could go to heaven.” *“I could wish that [I] myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh”* (Romans 9:3)—“I would go to hell if it would bring them to heaven.”

Now, such a thing is impossible. No man could ever go to hell, that another might go

to heaven—no man other than the Lord Jesus, who did that. Jesus literally baptized His soul in hell, and Jesus literally walked the burning corridors of hell, that you and I might go to heaven. He took our hell, that we might take His heaven. And so, this is the Spirit of Christ in Paul. Paul was never more like Jesus, I believe, than he was right here in verse 3: “[*That*] I could wish myself...accursed from Christ.” (Romans 9:3) Jesus was made a curse for me. Did you know that? Jesus took the curse. Jesus bore the curse. Jesus took my sorrow. Jesus took my suffering. Jesus took my shame. Jesus took my separation. Jesus took the curse, that I might take the crown. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

Now, you say, “Brother Rogers, where do you get this kind of compassion?” Listen to what Paul said: “*I say the truth in Christ*”—“*in Christ.*” (Romans 9:1) Paul was in Christ. Christ was in Paul. And, the heartbeat, the sorrow, the heaviness, the concern, the consistency—it was not Paul. Paul said, “*Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ [that] liveth in me.*” (Galatians 2:20) Dear friend, don’t tell me that you’re filled with the Holy Spirit of God—don’t tell me that the Lord Jesus Christ is alive and vibrant in you—if you do not have what Paul had.

Andrew Murray said there are two classes of Christians—soul winners and backsliders. Now, you think on that: two classes of Christians—soul winners and backsliders. When a person is in Christ, when a person is walking in the Lord, abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ, he’s going to save souls at any cost; it doesn’t matter—no matter what the cost. What Paul was literally saying, I believe, in verse 3, is this: “I am willing to go to any lengths to see this lost world saved.” You know, the devil has a hard time handling a man like that. You know what Leonard Ravenhill had to say about the Apostle Paul? Let me read the tribute that Leonard Ravenhill had to say about the Apostle Paul. It tickles me every time I read it. Leonard Ravenhill gives this reason that the devil could not intimidate Paul. Are you ready for it? Ravenhill said—and I quote: “He”—that is, Paul—“had no ambitions; and so, he had nothing to be jealous about. He had no reputation; and so, he had nothing to fight about. He had no possessions; and so, he had nothing to worry about. He had no rights; and so, he could suffer no wrongs. He was already broken so no one could break him. He was already dead so no one could kill him. He was already less than the least so no one could defraud him.” And then, Ravenhill said, “Over this God-intoxicated man hell suffered headaches”—“over this God-intoxicated man hell suffered headaches.”

Here was a man who was sold out to Jesus Christ. Have you done that? Do you have a costly concern for souls? We have an air-conditioned, upholstered, streamlined faith. If you’re looking for a cheap way, an easy way, a lazy way to be a soul winner, forget it. We don’t mind asking you to give sacrificially to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. Why shouldn’t you if Paul was willing to go to hell, that people might come to Jesus? Don’t you think you could give sacrificially? We don’t mind asking you to go to

the mission field if Paul was willing to go to hell. What I'm saying, dear friend, is that this matter of being a soul winner, this matter of being a disciple, is not merely a Sunday school picnic; we must be at it with all of our heart, with every nerve and fiber and inch and ounce of our being. The Apostle Paul, I believe, was the world's greatest missionary because he had a costly concern for souls.

I was just reading recently some church history. I read about John Knox of Scotland—John Knox, that great preacher of the gospel, who said, “O God, give me Scotland or I die!” He had a son-in-law named John Welsh, and John Welsh was married to John Knox's daughter, Mary. And, he was a nonconformist preacher. James of Scotland was on the throne, and there was a state church, an established church. And, John Welsh was a nonconformist preacher. The established church was not preaching the gospel, but John Welsh would go out on the street corner or in the churches, wherever he could, and he would be preaching the saving gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They forbade him to preach, but he continued to preach. Finally, they took this man, who was not firm in health, and they cast him into a prison. It was a prison underground. It was dark. It was damp and cold, and it was vermin-infested. And, the health of this man began to fade very quickly. And, time after time again, Mary Welsh, his wife, went to James of Scotland, the King, and said, “Please set my husband free. If you don't let my husband out of the prison, he's going to die.” But, James would not release him from prison because he was a preacher of the gospel.

Finally, one day, Mary Welsh made her way to the park where the King would ride in his carriage, and she saw James coming down the road in his lavish carriage. And, she went out and threw herself in front of the carriage, in front of the horses. They came to a halt. And, she got down on her face and pled, and she said, “If you don't let my husband out of prison, he's going to die.” And, James was moved, and he said, “All right, I'll release him from prison on one condition—that you promise me he'll never preach again.” She stood to her feet. She held out her apron in front of him, and she said, “I'd rather have my husband's head in this apron than to make such a promise to you.” James was so moved he released this man from prison, and he continued to preach—one step ahead of the policeman, one step ahead of the King's guard. He preached all over the Highlands of Scotland.

And, one night he and his wife, Mary, found themselves in a little cottage there, bare and cold, with a dirt floor. They had gone to bed. It was freezing weather; they'd cover up to try to stay warm. But, in the middle of the night, she reached out and found that one side of the bed was cold. And, she looked down on the floor, and down on that frozen dirt floor was this man, John Welsh, and he was praying and agonizing. She said, “John, come to bed”—“come to bed.” He made some sign, and she thought perhaps that he was coming to bed. She went off to sleep, but when she awakened in

the morning, there he was still down there on the floor, shivering and crying and praying. She said, “John, you’ll kill yourself.” He said, “Woman, leave me alone. I have three thousand souls on my heart, and I know not how it is with many of them.” When I read that, I said, “Oh Adrian, you don’t know anything about compassion. You don’t know anything about concern. You don’t know anything about a costly concern for souls.”

## **Conclusion**

Let me tell you something, friend: it’s time we asked ourselves this question: Do we really believe it? Do we really believe there’s a heaven to gain? Do we really believe there’s a hell to shun? Do we really believe that Christ died on the cross to save men? Do we really believe that Jesus put the Great Commission in the Bible? I say, do we believe it? Do you believe it? Do you have a conscientious concern for souls? Do you have a compassionate concern? Do you have a continual concern? Do you have a costly concern? Think about it.

Let’s bow together in prayer. Someone wrote these words: “O, for a passion for souls. O, for a pity that yearns. O, for a love that is stronger than death. O, for a fire that burns.” Father, I pray that you would help us as a church, that you’d help us as individuals and as people, to have the right kind of concern for lost souls. Speak to my own heart. And Lord, help us tonight—not even, Lord, that we will try in our personal evangelism to win two people, but just one at a time that we might win people. But then, Lord, help us not to be concerned about just one person, but Lord, on the other end, help us to be concerned about every lost soul on the face of this earth. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

# The Missionary Motive

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: March 10, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 9:1–3**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Paul Had a Conscientious Concern.
- II. Paul Had a Compassionate Concern
- III. Paul Had a Continual Concern
- IV. Paul Had a Costly Concern

Conclusion

## Introduction

In the few moments that we have left, I want you to be finding a passage of Scripture. Turn, please, to Romans chapter 9. When you've found it, look up here. This morning, we talked about the world's greatest missionary, and we talked about his call. Tonight, I want to talk about his motivation, because, in a very real way, the way that God called Paul is the way that He might call you or me, whether it's here or overseas. And the very things that motivated Paul ought to motivate us. Motivation is very, very important. You will achieve according to your motivation.

There's an old story of a man who was in the woods, and he turned around and saw a ferocious grizzly bear sniffing at his tracks. The man started to run, and the bear began to run behind him. And the man could feel the warm, moist breath of that bear on the nape of that man's neck. He could almost hear the wind as it whistled, as the bear was making great swipes with those massive paws and those great claws. The man said, "I'm going to die in the grasp of this awful bear." But then, he saw a limb that went across the pathway in front of him. He thought, You know, if I could just possibly jump up and grab that limb, I might be able to swing free and escape this bear. But, as he got closer, he realized the limb must have been at least fifteen feet off the ground. He thought, Even the greatest basketball player can't jump that high. But he said, "I've got to. I've just got to. If I don't, I'll die." He said, "It's impossible, but I'm going to give it a try." And he made a tremendous, tremendous effort, and leaped for all he was worth, but he missed the limb—but he caught it on his way back down! The thing has to do with motivation.

If you want to see what made Paul the great soul winner that he was, you can find

his motivation in these verses—Romans 9, verses 1 through 3—listen to it: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”

Now, the apostle Paul had the greatest mission. He had the greatest message. And he had the greatest master. His mission was missions. His message was salvation. His master was the Lord Jesus Christ. And, as a result, he gives us a glimpse into his heart, in these three verses.

Now, I want to tell you very quickly, I realize the time is short, and I will not keep you long. But I pray God that the shortness of the message will really increase the impact. And I pray God that what I have to say about the thing that burdened and motivated Paul’s heart will burden and motivate my heart and your heart, whether or not God calls you to be a missionary in Albania, or whether God calls you to be a missionary at high school, or in the law office—wherever you are, that God will motivate you.

## **I. Paul Had a Conscientious Concern.**

Paul had a concern for the lost. Now, what kind of a concern was it? First of all, it was a conscientious concern. He said, “I say the truth in Christ, my conscience also bearing witness...” He had a conscientious concern.

Now, if I were to ask you tonight a rhetorical question, how many tonight have a burden for the world? How many tonight have a burden for the nations represented by these flags? How many have a burden for those represented by those black flags there that don’t have really much witness at all? How many have a burden for the man next door or my schoolmate or lost family members? If I were to ask that question rhetorically, or ask you to lift your hand, I dare say, almost everybody, if not everybody, here would lift your hand, because it’s the thing to do. I mean, that’s expected of us. But I wonder this: I wonder if, while we lifted our hand, we might not have a twinge of conscience. Listen to what he said now: “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost.” I wonder if you said tonight that you’re burdened for a lost world, would your conscience say you’re telling a lie? You know, it’s easy to talk missions.

I had an evangelist friend who was staying in the home of a lady who headed the Missionary Society in her church. They were having a revival crusade at the church. And this lady said to the evangelist, “I will not be at the evangelistic crusade, the meeting that you’re having.” She said, “We’re having a meeting of our Mission Society, so I can’t come to the crusade.” He said, “Well, I think that you ought to put aside all meetings, because the church is in a church-wide evangelistic crusade, and everybody

ought to be in the crusade.” She began to lecture him. She said, “Young man, missions is very important. You may not understand it, but we’re meeting with our ladies to study and to pray for the world.” And she lectured him about not having a missionary heart. You know what he said to her? He said, “That’s all right.” Now, he was a guest in the home, and this sounds mighty rude. But he said, “That’s all right. You go to the mission meeting, and you talk about missions, and you pray about missions, and you study about missions, but you don’t care about missions.” She said, “Why do you say that?” He said, “I’ve been staying here in your home.” He said, “Yesterday, I asked your maid if she was a Christian. She said, no. I asked her if she wanted to be. She said, yes.” He said, “I’ve led your maid to Jesus Christ. Your maid’s been saved. I asked your maid if you’d ever once witnessed to her about Jesus. She said, not one time.”

Now, here was a woman talking about missions, praying about missions, studying about missions, and failing to witness. Now, if you think that I’m talking Mission Societies down, or ladies praying about missions—if you think that I’m talking that down, you’ve missed what I’m saying 100%. I’m just saying it’s one thing to say we have a burden for the lost. But, when we say that we have a burden for the lost, I wonder if we have a life that backs it up? Paul said, “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bears witness.” The thing that made the apostle Paul the great soul winner that he was is that he had a conscientious concern for souls.

## **II. Paul Had a Compassionate Concern**

I’ll tell you something else he had for souls. He had a compassionate concern. Look again. He says in verse 2: “I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.” May I ask you a question? Do you weep over the lost? Do you weep over this city? Do you weep over the members of your family, your kinsfolk that are not saved? When was the last time you literally shed tears over souls that are mortgaged to the devil? Jesus was a man of tears. The apostle Paul was a man of tears. Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, was a man of tears. Jesus wept over Jerusalem. Would to God that the things that break the heart of Jesus would break the heart of Adrian and the hearts of others that are here tonight! The Bible says, “When we go forth and weep, bearing precious seed, we shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us.”

Now, let me say this about a compassionate concern. Where are you going to get the compassion? What would cause a person to weep over lost souls? Because we want the church to grow? That’s not good enough. Because America’s in trouble, and America needs to be redeemed? That’s not enough. Because of sagging statistics? That’s not enough. Because of our failing reputation? That’s not enough. What would cause us to have a compassionate concern? We have to have the Spirit of Christ. The

apostle Paul said, “I say the truth in Christ—in Christ...” It is to be in Christ, and Christ in you, to see the world through the eyes of Jesus. Jesus, when He saw the multitudes, the Bible says, He was moved with compassion. If the Spirit of Jesus is in you, the things that break Jesus’ heart will break yours. And I’m telling you, the heart of Jesus is broken over this city, and the heart of Jesus is broken over this world. “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not. I have great heaviness. I have continual sorrow.” We need to learn how to weep over lost souls. “He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come against with rejoicing.” I wonder sometimes in our service why we’re not more concerned. Sometimes I will preach and tear my heart out and give an invitation, and there are some in this congregation who are anxious to get away. They’re gathering materials. They’re looking. They’re thumbing. They’re heading for the door, trying to get out, rather than weeping and praying for lost souls. Somebody next to you in a service like this may spend eternity in hell if they don’t receive the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. I believe that one of the greatest indictments against the modern church is somebody has described it as a dry-eyed church in a hell-bent world.

The apostle Paul had a conscientious concern. His conscience bore him witness. He had a compassionate concern. He said, “I have great sorrow and continual heaviness and great sorrow in my heart.”

### **III. Paul Had a Continual Concern**

I’ll tell you something else he had. He had a continual concern. Look, if you will, in verse 2: “I have great heaviness and continual sorrow...” Now, what happens is this: We come to a service like this. We see what we saw this morning, or we see what we saw tonight. We hear somebody give a testimony. We hear a message from the Word of God, and we get moved emotionally. But no sooner do we get back to the ballgame, get back to the news, get back to the television, get back to the newspaper, back to the job, back to the club, back to the sports, or whatever it is, we lose that concern. Paul said, “I have continual sorrow.” It never left him. Part of our problem is, very frankly, folks, we get motivated for just a little while, and we run hot, and then we run cold. We need to have a continual soul-conscientiousness. Every person we see every day we need to ask ourselves this question: Is he saved or lost? Do I have an opportunity to move that man, that woman, that boy, that girl, closer to the Lord Jesus Christ?

How many of you remember Brother Tom Clayton? Used to be on our staff here. Most of you remember Brother Tom Clayton. Brother Tom Clayton told me a story. He said, “One time, Pastor, I was going on a trip,” and he said, “I had traveled by automobile and airplane. I just decided I would go on the train. I had not ridden a train

for a long time.” And, he said, “I decided I would go on the train.” And, he said, “I found myself sitting next to a woman.” He said, “I don’t think I could really call her a lady. She was a nightclub hostess.” He said, “She was heavily made up.” The way Tom described it to me, he said, “She looked like she’d put her makeup on with a trowel.” And, he said, she was heavily made up. And, her face was very hard. She was looking straight ahead. Brother Tom said, “I decided I would witness to that woman. And I turned to her and asked her about the things of God and spiritual things. That made her very uncomfortable. And in trying to escape,” she said, “You’ll have to pardon me. I’m going to go to the diner and get something to eat.” He said, “That’s all right; I’ll go with you,” and got up and went with her. You have to know Brother Tom Clayton to appreciate this. And sat down there in the diner and continued to press the claims of Christ on her with an open Bible. After a while, the finger of God touched her, and the mascara started to flow, and she got under conviction, and said she wanted to be saved. And so, he prayed with her. And there in that diner, she prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into her heart and to save her. Now, sitting next to her and to Brother Tom Clayton was a Jewish man and two Jewish women. They were doing what you would have been doing. They were eavesdropping. They were listening to this man talk to this woman with an open Bible, and pray with her, and watched her begin to weep. Then, she wanted to know what was going to happen now, and how a Christian should grow. I had just preached a sermon on the Middle East and prophecy and what was going to happen in the Middle East, and Brother Tom began to tell her about the fulfillment of prophecy. And he began to talk to her about Israel and the Jews. He didn’t know this was a Jewish man and two Jewish women. So, they tuned in all the more. After a while, this man could stand it no longer. He interrupted the conversation. He said, “How do you know all of that?” He said, “I’ve been reading my Old Testament. Come here. Let me show you.” And began in the Old Testament, and witnessed to that man, and told that man about Jesus Christ. And, he said, “Messiah is coming. Not the first time; He’s coming the second time. He’s already been here. He is the Messiah of Israel, and He wants to be your Savior. And the same Jesus that has just saved this woman will save you. Would you like to be saved?” Do you know what this man said? He said, “I would.” He said, “All right,” he said, “I want you to pray after me.” The two Jewish women said, “Can we pray, too?” He said, “That’ll be fine. If you want to pray,” he said, “just bow your heads.” And they’d seen this woman pray. And he started to lead them in the sinner’s prayer. And a man sitting at another table said, “Wait a minute. I have been listening to all that’s been going on.” He said, “This is my daughter. Could I pray? And my daughter, could she pray with you when you pray?” And there, going down the railroad tracks was a revival meeting: a nightclub hostess, a Jewish man, two Jewish women, a man and

his daughter, praying to receive Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. Now, I wish something like that would happen to me every day. It doesn't, but I want to tell you, folks, there are opportunities all around to share Jesus Christ. And, if you say that people are not hungry to know Jesus Christ, you're telling on yourself. You're telling that you don't know. You're telling that you don't witness. I am telling you, folks, that we need a continual burden night and day. We need to be instant in season, out of season.

#### **IV. Paul Had a Costly Concern**

Now, what motivated Paul? He had a conscientious concern. He could tell the truth when he said, "I'm concerned." He had a compassionate concern. He had a broken heart. He had a continual concern. It wasn't something that happened every so often. And I want to tell you this: He had a costly concern. Look, if you will, to what he said here in this verse. It's amazing—verse 3—for he says, "For I could wish myself were accursed from Christ my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Now, what does he mean by that? How could he be accursed from Christ? What did he mean? Well, in plain English, let me tell you what it means. Paul said, "I would be willing to go to hell if my Jewish brothers and sisters could be saved." That's what it means. "I could wish myself accursed from Christ if they could be saved." Now, such a thing is impossible. Number one: Paul was saved, and there was no way he could go to hell. Number two: Had he gone to hell, it would have done them no good. But what is Paul saying? Paul was saying, "Any time, anywhere, any cost." Paul was saying, "I would be willing to go to hell if they might go to heaven." I don't understand that. I don't think I've ever come to that place where I've said that. I probably never will. But I want you to understand something about the heart of the apostle Paul. How could Paul say this? I'll tell you how Paul could say this. Paul was so full of the Lord Jesus Christ that was the Spirit of Christ because, friend, that's exactly what Jesus did. Jesus took our hell that we might take His heaven. That's Calvary. That's what Paul is talking about. Paul is saying, "I would be willing to bear their sin, to bear their grief, to bear their guilt, to bear their shame, to bear their sorrow, to bear their separation."

#### **Conclusion**

Do you ever really believe that people are lost? We're not just talking about making Baptists out of people, not just getting more people into our club. Folks, when you lead a soul to Christ, you take them from eternal torment. You give them a new heart, or God does. And you bring them to heaven. We've got to understand what it means to have the missionary's heart.

Now, as we close our World Missions Conference, and I am just going to collapse

this message down to these few moments, but I want to ask you do the things that motivated the apostle Paul motivate you? Do you, tonight, my beloved brother or sister in Christ, do you have a conscientious concern for souls? Do you? Do you? I'm not asking if you could answer rhetorical question, and say, yes. I'm saying, does your conscience say amen, or does your conscience tell you that you're lying, when you say you're concerned about souls? Do you have a compassionate concern? Is your heart broken over a lost world? Do you have a continual concern? And do you have a costly concern?

We have so much here at Bellevue, but we're not doing much with it. The early church had so little, and they did so much. What was it all about? Jesus went up; the Holy Spirit came down; the Christians went out; and the lost came in.

# A Report from Israel

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** June 12, 1983

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 9:1–4; 10:1–4; 11:1–2

*“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”*

ROMANS 10:1

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. Israel Is the Geographic Center
- B. Israel Is the Revelation Center
- C. Israel Is the Spiritual Center
- D. Israel Is the Prophetic Center
- E. Israel Is the Storm Center
- F. Israel Will Be the Peace Center
- G. Israel Will Be the Glory Center
- I. The Miracle of Her Generation
- II. The Miracle of Her Preservation
- III. The Miracle of Her Restoration
  - A. A Military Miracle
  - B. A Sociological Miracle
  - C. An Agricultural Miracle
  - D. A Linguistic Miracle
- IV. The Miracle of Her Regeneration

### Conclusion

- A. Paul Had a Sincere Concern
- B. Paul Had a Steadfast Concern
- C. Paul Had a Sacrificial Concern

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Romans 9, as we’re bringing to you tonight a report from Israel. Romans 9: Paul says, *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.”* (Romans 9:1–4) I want to stop reading there, and I want you to turn to Romans 10:1: *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for*

*Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.*" (Romans 10:1–4) And then, I want you to notice Romans 11:1: "*I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. God hath not cast away his people which he foreknew.*" (Romans 11:1–2) Now, there's much more in these chapters that I could read, but that, indeed, sets the stage for what I have to say.

As you know, we recently have returned from Israel. As a matter of fact, as lately as last Monday, we came back. Fifty of us traveled together. We had a glorious time. We flew through Amsterdam by way of KLM Airlines into Tel Aviv, disembarked there at Tel Aviv and was met by Gabriel Conno, a godly Arab that I know who has the Guiding Star Tourist Agency there in Jerusalem; and our guide, Sod; and our driver, Abraham. And, we motored to Jerusalem, and there we went to sleep that night, the first night, in the beautiful high-rise Jerusalem Hilton Hotel, situated high upon a hill—a beautiful, magnificent, splendid hotel. The next morning we awakened early, went to breakfast, and then began our tour by visiting the Garden Tomb, where our Lord lay and spent three nights and then on that third day rose victoriously, triumphant over death, hell, and the grave. We visited the empty tomb. We visited the hill called Calvary. We had a time of commitment, a time of communion, a time of fellowship, a time of praise, and we began our tour that way.

Then, we visited the land of Israel. We went north up to the headwaters of the Jordan—right up to the very borders of Syria, right up to the very borders of Lebanon, right up into the Golan Heights. We went up there to a place called Banias, where the waterfalls come and the water gushes from the springs and the rivers run with the bubbling, clear, gorgeously beautiful water. And, we visited all of that area right there at the foot of snowcapped Mount Hermon—over nine thousand feet, with snow on her brow. We visited there, and we visited Galilee. It's still as beautiful as ever. And, that blue lake—one of the most beautiful seas in all of the world. We went to the Mount of Megiddo, where the Battle of Armageddon is going to be fought. We followed the Jordan River down her course. We visited all of the environs of Jerusalem. We went out into the Shepherd's Field and sang Christmas carols there in little Bethlehem. We continued on south and went down to the very southern part of Israel and down into what is the desert, down into Bathsheba, and there we saw the desert blossom as a rose. We saw the graves and the tombs of Abraham and Sarah at the cave of Machpelah there in Hebron. We went to Masada. Many of you know a little bit more about Masada now after having watched the episode on television. But, we went to

Masada down at the Dead Sea, thirteen hundred feet below sea level; went up on top of Masada by cable car; went on past Ein Gedi, the beautiful oasis in the hills where David hid from Saul; saw the Dead Sea; visited the Qumran Caves, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found. We just had a wonderful time.

People say, “Why do you keep going back to the land of Israel, pastor?” Well, you know, I sometimes wonder—I really do. Joyce and I went the first time because we wanted to go, and I just wanted to see where my Lord walked. I wanted to see where those things happened. And, we were a young preacher and wife, and she said, “Well, we can’t afford to go.” And, I said, “I know it, but I want us to go because...” She said, “Well, maybe one day when we retire you can go.” I said, “Joyce, I want to go before I retire. I want to go when I’m young. I want to see the places that I’m preaching about.” And so, we just—God almost miraculously provided the money for us, and we went. Then, after we went one time, we felt like we needed to go back again to see what we saw to understand it because it all just kind of seemed to run together. And so, we went back again. And then, we decided, well, we needed to go again and again. There’s just something about going that—somehow knowing that it’s the land of destiny and the land where God is fulfilling even now so many prophesies. There’s something about it that just seems to get together. And, each time we go it seems like it’s the last time. Then someone will say, “Pastor, are you going to take another trip to Israel? If you do, we want to be counted in.” And, it just seems like somehow we decide to go again. And, I guess we’ve been eleven or twelve times, and I really believe I know that land better than I know Tennessee—I really do. And, we’ve enjoyed traveling there.

Why? What’s so important about it? Well, let me say that the little tiny land of Israel is, in a very real sense, the center of the world—in a very real sense.

#### **A. Israel Is the Geographic Center**

You know, Ezekiel 5:5 says concerning that land, *“I have set [thee] in the midst of the nations.”* (Ezekiel 5:5) And, Israel has well been called “the hub of the world” or “the navel of the earth.” It is the very center; it’s the geographic center. It is there in the confluence of three great continents: Asia, Africa, and Europe.

#### **B. Israel Is the Revelation Center**

But, not only is it the geographical center; it is the revelation center because it was here that Moses and the prophets and the apostles lived and taught. From this area our Bible comes that I’ve read to you tonight from.

#### **C. Israel Is the Spiritual Center**

But, not only is it the revelation center; it’s the spiritual center of the entire world because it was here that Jesus was born. It is here that Jesus lived, that He walked, He taught. It was in that land that Jesus died. It was in that place that Jesus was buried. It

was in that place that Jesus rose again. From that place Jesus ascended, and to that place Jesus is coming again.

#### **D. Israel Is the Prophetic Center**

It's the prophetic center of the world. Did you know the land of Israel is the only nation whose complete history is minutely foretold? You see, the Jews and the land are the people and the land of destiny. If you want to know what God is really up to, if you want to know how God's prophetic time clock is ticking, then you need to study the Jew. As the Jews goes, so goes the world. He is God's yardstick. He is God's outline. He is God's blueprint. He is God's program of what He is doing with all of the other nations of the world. And so, the land of Israel is, indeed, the prophetic center of the world.

#### **E. Israel Is the Storm Center**

The land of Israel is the storm center of the world. And, we know right now that the nations of the world are on tender hooks, wondering what's going to happen. Will there be another war? We saw so many signs of the gathering clouds of war as we saw tank convoys moving northward and troop transports moving northward up into the Galilee area, up into the Golan Heights area, up into occupied Syria, up to the borders of Lebanon, across the borders into Lebanon, and we saw all of that. And, I could not help but think of the storm that's going to come upon that land getting ready for that last great war, the Battle of Armageddon.

#### **F. Israel Will Be the Peace Center**

But, not only is it the storm center; it's going to be the peace center of the world. Did you know there will not be peace until Jerusalem is at peace? Now, America will never have peace until Jerusalem has peace. Brussels will not have peace 'til Jerusalem has peace. Tokyo will not have peace 'til Jerusalem has peace. You see, dear friend, we need to pray for the peace of Jerusalem because the peace of Jerusalem means that the Prince of Peace, the King of Jerusalem, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will rule in Zion. And then, at that time, Jerusalem will be the peace center of the entire world. And, *"[men will] beat their swords into plowshares...their spears into pruninghooks: [and] nation shall not lift up sword against nation, [and] neither shall they learn war any more."* (Isaiah 2:4; Micah 4:3)

#### **G. Israel Will Be the Glory Center**

And, I tell you, one of these days it's going to be, therefore, the glory center of the entire world. One of these days the Lord Jesus Christ is going to rule and reign from Zion, and *"the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as...waters [that] cover the sea."* (Habakkuk 2:14) This entire nation is a miracle nation, and I want to mention to you the miracles of the nation Israel.

## I. The Miracle of Her Generation

First of all, I want you to think with me just a little bit about the very miracle of her generation—how this nation came into being. Turn to Romans 4 with me for a moment and look, if you will, in verse 17. Well, let's begin in verse 16. Paul is talking about the plan of salvation, and he says, *"Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end [that] the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but...also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all"*—that is, Abraham is the father not only of the Jews, but the Gentiles who put faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, because he's the father of faith. But then, Paul goes on to talk about Abraham's faith, and he says—*"(As it is written, I have made thee"—that is, Abraham—"a father of many nations"—he's not just the father of the Jews; he's the father of the Arabs. But, he's not just the father of the Arabs; he is my spiritual father and your spiritual father because he was the pioneer of faith. And then, he goes on to say—"I have made [him] the father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God"*—now, listen to this—*"who quickeneth the dead"*—that is, "who gives life to the dead"—*"and calleth those things which be not as though they were"*—and then, he speaks of Abraham, and he says—*"Who against hope believed in hope, that he might [be] the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed"*—or, "thy descendants"—*"be. 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: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform."* (Romans 4:16–21)

Now, what does this scripture tell us? Well, it tells us many things, but it tells us this primarily: that Abraham believed God so much that when he was a hundred years of age, far past the time of fathering a child, when the fountain of his strength and youth and virility was dried up, when Sarah had passed menopause and her womb was now dead and sterile, that God had said to Abraham, "Abraham, I am going to give you a son, and he's going to be a son that, through that son, all the nations of the world will be blessed," and the Bible says that *"[Abraham] staggered not [in] unbelief,"* (Romans 4:20) but he believed God and gave glory to God and thereby Isaac was born. And, through Isaac have come all of the Jews today.

Now, let me tell you this: that every time you see a Jew walking the streets of Memphis, Tennessee, or if you see one in Jerusalem, or if you see one anywhere else, you know he's here because of a miracle. This nation began with a miracle. And, I want to say to any Jewish friends who may be here tonight, or any Jewish friends who may be listening to me on the radio, or any who may listen afterward to this tape, that you ought not to have difficulty believing in the virgin birth. Friend, the virgin birth was a

miracle birth, but so was the birth of Isaac. And, if you can believe in one miracle, surely you can believe in another. The Bible speaks of your father Abraham, who believed God, and Isaac was born of a miracle. This nation began with a miracle.

## II. The Miracle of Her Preservation

And, this nation continues with a miracle. You see, God has promised in His Word that the Jewish nation will never ever be destroyed. I want you to look, if you will, in Psalm 89 for just a moment and see what God has said. God spoke to David. Now, David was Israel's greatest king, and God told David that He was never going to break the promise that He had made with Abraham, confirmed with Isaac and Jacob, and reconfirmed with David. And, God says, "I made a covenant, and I'm going to keep that covenant no matter what happens."

Psalm 89 and look with me, if you will, in verse 27. God says concerning David, *"[And] I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. My mercy will I keep for him for evermore, and my covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed"*—that is, the Jewish people—*"will I make to endure for ever, and his throne"*—that is, the throne of David—*"as the days of heaven"*—and then, God goes on to say something very interesting—*"If his children"*—that is, his descendants—*"forsake my law"*—and friend, they have—*"and walk not in my judgments"*—and they don't—*"If they break my statutes"*—and they have—*"and keep not my commandments"*—and they have not kept them—*"Then"*—here's what God says He will do—*"Then [I] will...visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes"*—and God has done that. Few nations on earth have suffered as the Jewish nation. Few people have known the chastisement that these people have known. But, does that mean that because they did not keep God's law, because they did not obey God's commandments, that God says, "I'm going to break my covenant with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David"? No, listen to what God says—*"Nevertheless"*—you underscore that word *nevertheless*; put a star by it—*"Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established for ever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven. Selah"* (Psalms 89:27–37)—which means "think about that," "think about that."

Now, it does not depend upon what they do. There are people today who call themselves amillennialists, and these amillennialists will tell you that God is finished with the nation Israel, that Israel did not keep her part of the covenant and, therefore, God cut them off. You better go back and read Psalm 89. You'd better read it clearly and plainly. And, God says that this nation is going to continue and the Jew is going to

remain. The King of Egypt could not diminish him. The Red Sea could not drown him. Jonah's whale could not digest him. The fiery furnace could not devour him. The gallows of Haman could not hang him. The nations of the world have not been able to assimilate him. The dictators of this world have not been able to annihilate the Jew because God has said that His seed is going to endure. (Psalms 89:29, 36) Other nations, when they're driven from their homeland, when they are dispersed, are soon assimilated, absorbed by those other cultures and those other nations, but not the Jew. After eighteen centuries, the Jew has not been assimilated. She's still clinging—he is still clinging—to his tradition. He is still clinging to his laws. He's still clinging to his statutes. He's still clinging to his language. You could no more destroy the Jew than you could remove God from His throne.

I want you to turn to Jeremiah 31, and I want to show you another amazing passage of Scripture. Jeremiah 31:35—Jeremiah 31:35: *“Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and...the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof road; The LORD of hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel...shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.”* (Jeremiah 31:35–36) You see what God is saying? God is saying, “If you want Israel to cease from being a nation”—go back to verse 35—“then you're going to have to take the sun out of the sky.” You're going to have to, with your hands, sweep down all of the stars that twinkle at night, if you, dear friend, are going to keep Israel from being a nation. Look in verse 37: *“[For] thus saith the LORD; If [the] heaven...can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off...the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.”* (Jeremiah 31:37) Friend, whenever you can measure the heavens and when you ever discover the foundation of the earth, that's the time God's going to cast off Israel. What he is saying in a poetic language is that in order to destroy the Jews, first of all, you'd have to destroy the power that regulates the universe. You'd have to snatch the sun, the moon, and the stars from the very hand of God. You could no more destroy Israel than you could destroy the universe. That's what God is saying here in this verse of Scripture.

And so, the Jew, by conception, is a miracle. The Jew, by continuation, is a miracle. The indestructible Jew has left his mark on history. As a matter of fact, all history revolves around six Jews. Did you know that? You think about it. I'm going to mention Jesus as one of the six, but I don't mean to compare Him with any of the others. But, Jesus was of the tribe of Benjamin; Jesus was a Jew. Who are these six? Moses, Jesus, Paul, Karl Marx, Freud, Albert Einstein. And, if you'll think about it, those six men have become the pivotal points of all history.

### III. The Miracle of Her Restoration

But, not only is Israel a miracle nation because of her generation, and not only a miracle nation because of her continuation or preservation, but she is a miracle nation because of her restoration, because God has brought this nation back after so many years. The most amazing and dramatic event of our times, in my estimation, is not when man first walked on the moon—no. This amazing and dramatic event of our day, our age—anything since I was a boy—was not V-J Day or D-Day or anything else. It was May 14–15, 1948, when the Republic of Israel was reconstituted as a nation. And, God brought these Jews back, and in fulfillment of prophecy, a nation was born in a day.

I want you to turn to Amos 9 and see what the Bible has to say about that event, and I believe that Amos is talking about that very event in Amos 9:14–15. And, God says here, *“And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; [and] they...also [shall] make gardens, and eat the fruit of them”*—now friend, you cannot drive around in that land without seeing those waste villages now that have been rebuilt, to see the vineyards that are there and the gardens that are there and say, “Yes, God has kept His word.” And then, look in verse 15, and God says—*“And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the Lord thy God.”* (Amos 9:14–15) God says, “I’m going to bring them back. I’m going to plant them there, and they’re not going to be removed.”

#### A. A Military Miracle

Now, really, militarily, Israel should not exist as a nation. When the Balfour Declaration allowed the Jews to go back and find a homeland, and then finally they were given statehood in 1948, there were six hundred and fifty thousand Jews in Israel. They were surrounded by six Arab states, forty million Arabs, six hundred and fifty thousand Jews, and they won that fight because the Arab nations, who were incensed by the idea of Israel being there like they were intruders and an interloper, had sworn by all they knew holy to drive Israel into the sea. But, it did not happen—not because, in my estimation, the Arab was inferior; not because, in my estimation, that the Jew was superior; but only because God was fulfilling His prophecy. God has brought them back into this land, and I believe He’s kept them there by a military miracle. The ’48 War, the Six-Day War in ’67, and all of these other wars seem to me that if you look at them, you’d have to say that somehow, some way, that there was another hand moving in these military affairs.

#### B. A Sociological Miracle

But, not only is the land of Israel and her continuation and her reimplantation in the land a military miracle; it’s a sociological miracle. I mean, they have returned back to Israel from many nations with many backgrounds. As a matter of fact, from more than sixty

different nations they've come. And, a noted sociologist, who saw what was happening as these Jews were coming back, said, "It will take three generations before you become a nation." That is, he said it'll be impossible to happen less than about a hundred years. But then, later on, it happened in less than one generation, and this sociologist said, "I eat my words. You have done it in half a generation." One of their famous generals, Moshe Dayan, said in Israel, "We do not have a melting pot. We have a pressure cooker." And, these people have come back into one land and become one people.

### **C. An Agricultural Miracle**

The land is an agricultural miracle. You travel in Israel... You want to know what Israel is rich in? It's rich in rocks. I tell you, boy, if they could find a way to export those, they wouldn't have any problems. Sixty percent is desert, and it rains primarily only in the winter. And yet, the land is as fertile as can be. And, as we traveled from Dan to Beersheba, we could not help but see fertile crops after crops after crops all up and down as we looked because the Israelis, with large-scale water projects, are making the desert to blossom as a rose. And, Israel is one of six nations in the world that produces enough food for itself and for other nations—only one of six, an agricultural miracle. You can stand on the Mount of Megiddo and look out to the Valley of Jezreel, where the Battle of Armageddon is going to be fought. At one time, that was a malaria-filled swamp, and now, the most verdant pastures and farms that you've ever seen. It has become a breadbasket. Avocados are grown there. Strawberries are grown there. Cotton is grown there. Peaches are grown there. Plums are grown there. Record-producing milk cows graze there. Bananas and all of these things are growing in abundance and shipped to the other nations around the world.

### **D. A Linguistic Miracle**

Israel is a linguistic miracle. Do you know what they speak there now? They speak Hebrew, but Hebrew was a dead language. A hundred years ago nobody spoke Hebrew for a primary language. And, when languages die, they don't come back. And yet, Hebrew is being taught, and it is one nation where the children teach the parents to speak the mother tongue because the children go to school and learn Hebrew and then teach the parents to speak Hebrew. And, if Amos or Isaiah were to come back today and go to Jerusalem, he could walk up and down the streets of Jerusalem and carry on a conversation speaking the Hebrew language of that day and of that age. It is a miracle nation.

## **IV. The Miracle of Her Regeneration**

But, I want to say, dear friend, not only her conception, and not only her preservation,

not only her restoration, but her regeneration is going to be a miracle. My heart was moved by the plight of the Arab people. The Arab people are so loving, so friendly, so warm. Sometimes we get the idea that God loves the Jew more than He loves the Arab. I don't think so. "With God there is no respect of persons." (Romans 2:11) And, God loves the Arab people. Sometimes we have the idea that all that the Jew does is righteous. I don't think so. I think they've made many mistakes. I think they're making a great deal of mistakes right now, and I believe they're headed for the judgment of Almighty God. It breaks my heart to say that. So many times we want to wave the flag for Israel and sprinkle a little bit of holy aura over all that they do because of these prophecies. But, if you know the prophecies, dear friend, you know that the nation Israel is headed for dark days, and they're headed for a conflict and a confrontation with the Almighty.

I want you to look into the book of Zechariah with me for a moment, and I want you to see what God is going to do in the last days. This, on the one hand, frightens me. On the other hand, it encourages me. I want you to look here in Zechariah 12:2: God says, "*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in...siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.*" (Zechariah 12:2) There is coming a time when all of the nations of the world are going to be tightening the noose against Judah and Jerusalem. That's what Jeremiah—excuse me, that's what Zechariah—has to say. One of these days in the Tribulation period, the nations of the world, under the control of antichrist, are going to, one more time, try to exterminate God's ancient people. This tribulation, this trouble, this battle, this war, this persecution is going to bring the Jew, many of them, in a wholesale way.

Yet, one by one they are coming to Jesus Christ. Look, if you will, in chapter 12 of Zechariah, verses 9–10: "*And it shall come to pass in that day, that I*"—that is, Jehovah—"will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David"—that is, upon the Jew—"and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced"—I tell you, I asked a Jewish rabbi about this verse one time. I said, "Explain that to me: '*They shall look upon me whom [they've] pierced.*'" (Zechariah 12:10) Jehovah is speaking here. How can you pierce Jehovah? I'll tell you how: "*[God became] flesh, and dwelt among us,*" (John 1:14) and they nailed Him to a tree. I asked the rabbi; I said, "Explain that verse to me." He said, "I can't explain it." I can explain it, dear friend. "*They shall look upon me whom they have pierced*" (Zechariah 12:10): they're going to see the Lord Jesus when He comes in power and great glory—"and they shall mourn for him, as one [that] mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn." (Zechariah 12:9–10)

And, what's going to be the result of that? Look, if you will, in chapter 13:1. Glory,

hallelujah! Thank God for it. *“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness.”* (Zechariah 13:1) Hallelujah! Glory to God. They’re going to come to the Lord Jesus in repentance and faith. Turn to chapter 14. Look with me, if you will, in verse 2: *“For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half...the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city”*—it’s going to look dark. It’s going to look dismal. It’s going to look like the very end for God’s ancient people. But remember, God has sworn by His holiness that Israel will endure as a nation. And, therefore, verse 3 says—*“Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle”*—now, here’s a sweet verse—*“And his feet”*—the Lord’s feet—*“shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it [to] the south.”* (Zechariah 14:2–4) And then, look in the last part of verse 5: *“and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.”* (Zechariah 14:5)

What a day that’s going to be when our dear Lord, who left from that Mount of Olives, was taken up, will come again in like manner as we’ve seen Him go. (Acts 1:11) And, those blessed nail-pierced feet will touch that Mount of Olives, and all the saints will come with Him. And, He will destroy the antichrist at the Battle of Armageddon. And, the scales will fall from their eyes, and they will mourn for Him. And, a nation, indeed, will be born in a day, and they will come to know their precious and glorious Messiah. That’s why we go to the land. I tell you, it just thrills me and excites me as I think about these things that are coming to pass.

## Conclusion

But, I want you to go back to the text that we started with, and I want to make an application to you tonight. I want you to go back, if you will, to Romans 9 for just a moment, and I want you to see the heartbeat of the great Apostle Paul. Romans 9—and let’s look at this scripture again. Paul said, as he thought about all of these things... Paul, being a student of prophecy—Paul, having the revelation of the Holy Spirit, being an apostle—said this: *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”* (Romans 9:1–3) Let me tell you how Paul felt about Israel and how you need to feel about Israel—but not only how you need to feel about Israel; how you need to feel about every unsaved person.

### A. Paul Had a Sincere Concern

Paul had a sincere concern for Israel. Look at it. Paul said, *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness...That I have [a broken heart for my people].”* (Romans 9:1–2) Do you have a broken heart for your people? Do you agonize over the lost? Do you have a burden for lost souls? If I were to ask you tonight, “How many of you are burdened for lost souls,” would you lift your hand? I dare say almost everyone would lift his or her hand because you’d be ashamed not to lift your hand. But, many of you would have a twinge of conscience because the Holy Ghost would not bear witness, and you know in your heart you’d be telling a lie. Listen to what Paul says: *“I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.”* (Romans 9:1–2) Do you love lost souls? Paul did. Do you love the nation Israel? Paul did. God, give to me a sincere concern for the lost and for God’s ancient people, Israel.

### B. Paul Had a Steadfast Concern

But, I want you to notice something else: not only was it a sincere concern; it was a steadfast concern. Look at it again. He says in verse 2, *“I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart.”* (Romans 9:2) You know what’s wrong with many of us? Pay attention: we hear a message on soul winning and a concern for the lost, and we get all motivated about it. We get all stirred up. We get all warm around the heart, all wet around the lashes. But, no sooner has the sound of the preacher’s voice died out in our ears and we get to the restaurant or back to the ballgame, back to the television, back to the desk—we forget it. Paul said, *“I have...continual sorrow.”* (Romans 9:2) I want to be like that. I want to have a sincere concern for souls. I want to have a steadfast concern for souls.

### C. Paul Had a Sacrificial Concern

I want you to notice the last thing he said. He said—and I want you to read with me here in verse 3: *“For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”* (Romans 9:3) He had a sacrificial concern for souls. Do you know what Paul was saying in this verse? Look at it. You have to read it, reread it, and read it again because you don’t really believe he said what he said. But, if I can understand what black ink means on white paper, if I can understand what Paul is saying, it is this: Paul was saying, “I would be willing to go to hell if they could go to heaven”—*“I could wish that [I] myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”* (Romans 9:3)

Now, of course, he could not go to hell, that they might go to heaven, and a man who is saved can never be unsaved. That’s not what Paul is trying to teach or imply. But, how could Paul make such a statement? The only way that I can possibly figure

this out is this: that Paul was so full of Jesus that this was the Spirit of Jesus speaking in Paul, because that's exactly what Jesus did: He made Himself a curse, that we might be saved. That's exactly what He did. Jesus allowed Himself to be separated from God, and Jesus took the curse and bore the separation, that we might be saved and go to heaven. And, the great heart of the Apostle Paul so agonized for souls. He had a sincere concern. He wasn't lying; he was telling the truth. The Holy Ghost was bearing him witness. He had a steadfast concern. It was continual sorrow. He had a sacrificial concern for his people, for the Jews.

God, give us that kind of concern for the Jews—but not just for the Jews, but for our people, too. Sometimes people ask me, “Brother Rogers”—almost every person who interviews me at length, may it be the television, or radio, or something like that, they'll say—“I want to ask you a question: Do you believe that a Jew without Jesus Christ is lost?” And, if I say, “Yes,” I sound like a bigot. And, if I say, “No,” I deny everything that I believe. And, let me tell you how I answer that question. When somebody asks me, “Mr. Rogers, do you believe that a Jew without Jesus Christ is lost?” I want to tell you how I answer that question. I tell them, “I believe that one of my own children without Jesus Christ is lost.” Nobody is lost because he's a Jew, and nobody is saved because he's a Gentile. You're saved or you're lost according to what you do with Jesus Christ. Get that down big, and plain, and straight. It is not a matter of race. It is not a matter of place. It is not a matter of face. It's a matter of grace. *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”* (Acts 16:31) And friend, if that's bigoted to believe that Jesus is the only way for Jew or Gentile, you're looking at a bigot. But, that's not bigoted; that's the gospel, friend—that *“God so loved the world, that he [sent] his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16)

I want every head bowed and every eye closed. Father, thank you for your Word tonight. Lord, we just are excited tonight as we think of what is happening. And Lord, we realize that your Word in many ways is being fulfilled before our very eyes. Lord, we pray tonight that if there are those here tonight without Jesus Christ, be they Jew or Gentile, be they young or old, rich or poor, educated or ignorant, that, Lord, they might say “yes” to Christ and be saved. For we pray in His wonderful name. Amen.

# Predestined for Hell? Absolutely Not!

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 3, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 9:1–23**

*“And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory,”*

ROMANS 9:23

## Outline

Introduction

- I. God’s Sovereign Choice
  - II. God’s Spotless Character
  - III. God’s Steadfast Concern
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 9? And, when you’ve found Romans chapter 9, would you look up here? Let me ask you a very serious and a very somber question. Did God just predestine some people for heaven? And did God just predestine some people for hell? Are we just pawns on the chessboard of faith? No. Absolutely not! We’re just going to learn some things about the character of God this morning, and about the sovereignty of God, and the God who predestines, and the God who elects. But we’re going to learn that God wants everybody saved. We’re going to learn that today, and I want you to take God’s Word, and look here in Romans chapter 9, verses 1 through 3. Paul says, “I say the truth in Christ; I lie not. My conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.”

Now, here you have the heartbeat of the apostle Paul, and it’s the heartbeat of an evangelist. It’s the heartbeat of one who wants souls saved, and he had a sincere concern for the lost. He said, “I say the truth in Christ; I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness.” He wasn’t telling a lie; he was sincere. If I were to ask you if you have a concern for the lost, most every person in this building would lift his or her hand, but you might have a twinge of conscience. Paul says, “my conscience bears me

witness”—I am telling you the truth.

Not only was he sincere in his concern; he was steadfast in it. In verse 2, he says that I have continual sorrow—that is, he didn't blow hot and blow cold. Night and day, everywhere, the thing that drove him, and impelled him, and gave him no rest, was his concern for the lost. And he even had a sacrificial concern. He says, in verse 3, "I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ." If I read this correctly—and most commentators agree—that what Paul is saying is that I would be willing to go to hell, if they could be saved. That was impossible. Jesus had already died for him. Jesus had already baptized His soul in hell. But this is the Spirit of Christ that was in this man. He's concerned, and what he is primarily concerned about, are his brothers and sisters in the flesh. Paul was a Jew—I believe the greatest Christian ever lived. And Paul is concerned about fleshly Israelites—not spiritual Israel; there is a spiritual Israel, but here he's talking about natural Israel—my brothers, my sisters, according to the flesh, Paul said, I want them saved.

Now, what brought this up was this: that Paul had been talking about the gospel, how Jew and Gentile could be saved, and some Jews were saying, Now, wait a minute; wait, Paul. We're the chosen people. God's made some promises to us. Has God gone south on His promise? I mean, isn't God going to keep His promise to us? Aren't we the chosen people? What's all this about the Gentiles. Where does that come in? Now, there are three things I want you to learn today as we think about this: Is man predestined for hell? And they all three, really, deal with the character of God, because, until you understand the character of God, you don't know really anything about salvation or anything else. Now, I didn't say understand God; none of us understand God. But we understand some things that God has chosen to reveal to us about His character.

Now, here are the three things I want you to notice, and it's going to help to solve the problem, because, very frankly, folks, the ninth chapter of Romans is one of the hardest chapters in all of the Bible, and you can get led astray very easily. And there are some who read this, and say, God has just chosen some when they're little children; little babies just to go to hell, there's nothing they can do about it; and God has chosen others to go to heaven, and there's nothing they can do to keep it from happening. And there's a lot of theology that believes that. I don't believe it. I don't accept it for a moment. And I want you to see three reasons why.

## **I. God's Sovereign Choice**

Now, the first thing I want you to see is what I'm going to call God's sovereign choice—God's sovereign choice. Paul is reminding these people that God is a sovereign God, and He can choose whom He will, for what He will. Now, begin again in

verse 3—he says, “For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen, according to the flesh.”

Now, he mentions now fleshly Jews, and he talks about nine prerogatives—nine blessings, nine privileges—that God gave to these His chosen people. He calls them Israelites—what a glorious name is Israel, it means prince—and so they have a great heritage. And then, he says, “to them pertaineth the adoption.” God said, Israel is my son; God adopted a whole nation. “And the glory...”—that means the Shekinah glory of God that led them out of Egypt and into Canaan, that rested in the tabernacle and in the temple—“The glory and the covenants”—what is this? Solemn promises that has God has made agreements with His people. We talk about the Abrahamic covenant, we talk about the Davidic covenant, and these are covenants that God has made that are unbreakable. “And the giving of the law”—he’s talking now about the Ten Commandments, and the law that God gave on Sinai, which is the basis of all true law in the world today, God’s Ten holy Commandments. God gave them to the Jew. “And the service of God”—he’s talking about all of the types, and sacrifices, and all of the wonderful ways that the Jews worship God, the Levitical offerings and all of this—all of them pointed to the Lord Jesus, but God gave them to the Jew. “And the promises”—God made a promise to Israel, and, friend, God is not finished with the Jews. God loves Israel. Never forget it. The Jews are people of destiny; they are people of promise. They are a God-ordained, God-decreed, God-raised-up, God-protected nation, and if you want to know what God is doing in the world, just look at Israel, and it is the center point of all world history; it all revolves around Israel. And God has made these promises, and not a one of God’s promises will fail. And then, he talks about “whose are the fathers”—the fathers, now, he’s talking about are the patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, David, Jacob—what a lineage! These stars in the Hebrew heaven—he’s talking about them. And then, he saves the best for the last: “and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came,”—Messiah came—“who is over all, God blessed forever.” That is, God came, Messiah was God, He’s over all, He’s Lord, He’s blessed forever, He is the eternal God. Messiah came from the Jews. I was speaking to some Jewish rabbis, and they said, Now, you Baptists ought not to be trying to win Jews to Christ, that’s not right. I said, Listen. You proselytized me. I serve a Jewish Messiah. All that I believe is rooted in that Old Testament. He is the Messiah. And so, God is talking here about His sovereign choices. God chose the Jewish nation.

Now, watch this. Not all of Israel is, is Israel, though. Look in verse 6. God is saying, I haven’t failed to keep my word; you might think I have: “Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect, for they are not all Israel which are of Israel,”—that is, not every Jew is a part of the spiritual promise—“neither because are they the seed of Abraham are they all the children,”—it’s not necessarily according to parentage or lineage—“but

in Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac. God did not choose Ishmael; God chose Isaac. And Isaac had two sons, Jacob and Esau. Look down to verse 13: “As it is written, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated.” Now, there were two sons; they were twins, but God made a sovereign choice, and God said, I choose Jacob. Now, this is God’s plan. Don’t argue with it. You may not like it; you may like to say, as one man said, How odd of God to choose the Jews, but He did. He chose Abraham out of all the people, and then, Abraham’s son, Isaac, and then, He chose Isaac’s son, Jacob. And so, what God is showing here is just simply His sovereign promise.

Now, right now, we’re starting to get into some deep water. Okay, don’t check out on me now. This is important. You need to listen to this very carefully, because, it’s in this verse where God says—look at it—verse 13: “Jacob have I loved and Esau have I hated.” How could God ever hate a little baby? Well, actually, it says that, even before the children were born, look in verse 11: “For the children, being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth.” Why did God call Jacob and not Esau? Was it anything that Jacob had done? No, he hadn’t even been born. It is God’s sovereign choice.

Now, be very careful. God here is not talking about two little babies, one born for heaven and one born for hell. That’s not what it’s talking about at all. This is national, not personal. Write that down on a piece of paper. It is national and not personal. Let me give you a verse that will help clear this up. Genesis 25 and verse 33—put that down in your margin. Now, speaking to the mother of these two little twins—”and the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb”—she might have said, It feels like it—”Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels. And the one people shall be stronger than the other people, and the elder shall serve the younger.” He’s not talking about one particular baby and another particular baby, one born for blessing and one born for bane; he’s talking now about two nations. God, in His providence, said, I’m going to use the Jews. My choice is for the Jewish nation.

Number two: God here is not talking about salvation at all. Look, if you will, in verse 12: “And it was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger.” He’s not talking about salvation; he’s just simply saying that Israel is going to be my choice, and the descendants of Jacob are going to be my spiritual leaders in the world, and the elder, that is, Esau, will serve the younger. Nothing is said here about one twin going to heaven, and another twin going to hell. You don’t spell saved s-e-r-v-i-c-e.

And also, here’s something you need to be very careful about. When it says that, verse 13, “Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated,” it doesn’t mean that God

despised Esau. It doesn't mean that God had vehemence toward Esau. He may have had, later on, because of what Esau did, but not before Esau was born. It wasn't that God said, All right, you don't have any choice about it; before you were born, I hate you. You mean, you're going to die and go to hell, because I hate you. Friend, anybody who can read the Bible knows that God doesn't despise little unborn babies. He's not talking about despise. What he's talking about here is preference. Now, this, you have to understand the way this word is used in the Bible here. We're talking about preference, not abhorrence. The Bible uses the word hatred differently than we do. For example, the Bible says, "No man can serve two masters; he'll love the one and hate the other." That doesn't mean he says, Well, I really love this boss. I despise you. It just means he prefers one. You can't have two lords in your life.

Let me give you the classic passage here that helps to illustrate this. Turn in your Bibles, or write down Luke 14, verse 26. Now, our Lord is talking to all of us. Now, listen to me: "If any man come unto me and hate not his father and mother and wife and children and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Now, do you think in order to be a Christian, you've got to despise your father and your mother? Do you think in order to be a Christian you have to despise your brother and your sister? You think in order to be a Christian you have to despise your own precious children? Do you think because I gave my heart to Jesus Christ I hate the girl named Joyce? I love her all the more. She knows that she gets far more love out of me being second in my life than she'd ever get being first, because Jesus Christ is first. The word here does not mean to despise; it does not mean to abhor, not in Bible terms. He's only speaking of preference. Jesus is saying, I must come first. And, back in those days, God said, Jacob will be first. I have chosen, I have preferred, Jacob. Now, God just makes His sovereign choices. That's all there is to it. God chooses whomever He wants to choose.

Now, God loves lost sinners. We're in the book of Romans. Put down Romans chapter 5 and verse 8. If you think that God hates you, let me tell you God doesn't hate you. You say, Well, I'm a sinner. He still loves you. Romans chapter 5, verse 8: "But God commendeth his love—His love—toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." God loves the lost; God loves sinners. Don't get the idea that God predestined Esau to go to hell and God predestined Jacob to go to heaven. Now, Esau may have gone to hell; but he wasn't predestined to go to hell. But you can be sure that God is a God who makes sovereign choices.

Now, the choice that God made was to service, not to salvation. God called me to preach. I have two brothers. God called me to preach, He didn't call either of my brothers to preach, that I know of. Now, because God chose me to preach, does that mean that God consigned both my brothers to hell? No. Because God chose Jacob to

serve, to lead, for a spiritual blessing, does that mean that God consigned Esau to hell? Not at all! So, the very first thing I want you to do is that you need to recognize God's sovereign choice. God chooses whom He will, when He will, for what He will. He's God. You might as well admit it: He's God. God's sovereign choice—and God is working in the nations of the world. And here, God is talking about nations, God is talking about service, and God is talking about preference.

## **II. God's Spotless Character**

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see: not only God's sovereign choice, but I want you to notice God's spotless character—God's spotless character. There are some who might want to argue with God, and say, Well, God, you don't have a right to do it that way. Maybe you're a little unrighteous if you just choose one person above another. Look in verse 14: "What shall we say, then? Is there unrighteousness with God? For he saith to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy." Now, who decides whether or not God's going to have mercy? You want to know? God—God. God says, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy. Well, does that mean God will not have mercy upon you? No. Do you want mercy? You may have it. The Bible says, in Titus 3:5, "It's not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." The Bible says, "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." God does as He pleases, but He always pleases to do right, and there's no unrighteousness with God. And I'm telling you that anybody who will call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved, and any mother's child who says, God have mercy on me, God says, I will have mercy on him. "God will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy," and He will have mercy on him who uncovers his sin that God might cover it. He will have mercy on the man that comes unto Him "in faith, not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost."

Yes, listen to me, folks. Pardon—pardon—is according to God's sovereign will. God always wants to be merciful, but punishment—punishment—is according to man's sinful wickedness. You have God's sovereign will; you have man's sinful wickedness. Look at the illustration he gives here, beginning in verse 17 of this chapter: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up." Now, who was Pharaoh? Well, Pharaoh was a high muckety muck of Egypt. Pharaoh was the king, the most powerful man upon the face of the earth, and he was raised up to sit upon that throne. Now, here it's not talking about God raising him from childhood; it's talking about God raising him up in power and authority. Sometimes we get all upset when we see

powerful people in high places who are not doing right, isn't that right? Well, let me tell you something: God is sovereign. Here's one of the great verses in the Bible now, and you need to pay attention to it. He says, "For this purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth. Therefore, having mercy upon whom he will have mercy,"—now, watch this—"and whom he will he hardeneth." Now, God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and then God judged Pharaoh, and God made Pharaoh an example.

You remember the story of Pharaoh pursuing the Israelites? They came to the Red Sea—the Red Sea 48-lane super highway, opened up that Red Sea, and Israel went through, and then, when Pharaoh and his chariots began to go through, it all closed in on them. Remember that? You haven't read the book, but you've seen the movie. Now, listen. God said that all the world, everybody in the world, knows the story of Moses going through the Red Sea and then God judging Pharaoh. And it is example, a picture, of God's righteousness, and God's judgment. Just as God is good, God is righteous. God says, I will have mercy upon whom I will have mercy, and whom I will, I will harden. Now, this is a very interesting thing. You say, Well, Pastor, what hope did old Pharaoh have—I mean, if God, just simply sitting off on a throne, hardened his heart, and then judged him, and cast him into hell—what chance did he have? Now, listen carefully. God did not say, I have chosen to send him to hell. God says, I'm going to give glory in my judgment upon him. You see, God makes even the wrath of man to praise Him. There was an example that was needed of God's righteousness and God's judgment. God said, I'm going to use Pharaoh. Now, God is going to be glorified. Just put it down. God is going to be glorified, and God's love is magnified in heaven, and God's justice is manifest in hell. But whether it be love or justice, God is going to be glorified in His love; He's going to be glorified in His justice. People say, Well, God is too good to punish sin. No, friend. God is too good not to punish sin. God is a holy God.

Now, the reason that God hardened Pharaoh's heart is very simple: Pharaoh first hardened his own heart. Now, you read about seventeen to twenty times in the Exodus passage where Pharaoh's heart was hardened. About half of those times, Pharaoh's heart was hardened by Pharaoh, before it was ever hardened by God. God did not take a little tender child, and say, Now, I'm going, from childhood, I'm going to make your heart hard, and you're going to get harder and harder and harder and harder, and then I'm going to cast you into hell. No, first of all, Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Let me give you a couple of scriptures to put down—Exodus chapter 8 and verse 15: "But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart." Put down Exodus 3, verse 32: "And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also." Now, before God ever hardened Pharaoh's heart, his will was set. All God did was to crystallize the sin that was already in him. The Bible says, "To the froward, God will show himself froward." When a man

has a hard heart against God, all he does is rebel against God, and what happens is that his heart gets harder. The Bible says, “Beware, lest there be in any of you a heart of unbelief,” and then, “and in the day of provocation, harden not your heart.”

The Bible speaks of those whose hearts are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. First of all, Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and, as a righteous judgment, and in order to make an example of this man whose will was already set against God, God crystallized the thing. God brought him judgment, and God used him as an example. But Pharaoh was already a wicked sinner. He had murderous ways. He’d killed thousands of people. He’d blasphemed the God of heaven, and God had warned him, and God had entreated him, and God had sent His word to him, and God had sent His messenger to him, but this man stubbornly, arrogantly said no to God. It was then that God hardened the heart of a man whose heart was already hardened. Now, don’t get the idea that God just raised up Pharaoh to send him to hell. No, God warned Pharaoh. He wouldn’t take the warning.

Here another example that some people wrongly use. Begin in verse 19. It’s a classic passage about the potter and the clay. Paul, you know, is a very logical man, so you can just hear the wheels turning in the minds of people. And, when he’s talking about the sovereignty of God, and how God rules over things, people—look in verse 19: “Thou wilt say then unto me, Why did thee yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will.” I mean, if God is sovereign, how can He blame me for sinning? If I was created to be a sinner? And, what Paul is going to say here in just a moment, as one preacher said somewhere, Your arms are too short to box with God. Don’t you start arguing with God about that. “Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Have not the potter power over the clay? Of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? What if God, willing to show his wrath and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction, and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he hath afore prepared unto glory.” Somebody said, Well there it is, Pastor. There’s God—He just takes a lump of clay, takes humanity, says, This one is for heaven, this one’s for hell; this one’s for heaven, this one’s for hell; this one’s for heaven, this one’s for hell. These I’m going to keep; these I’m going to destroy.

Now, use a little sense. What potter in his right mind would be making vessels so he could turn around and destroy them? What potter is going to sit there, and say, I’m making this one, I’m going to get a whole stack of them over here on the wall, and then I’m going to take a broomstick, and I’m going to break them all. It sounds more like a madman. No, the Bible says God formed these vessels; it doesn’t say He created them. Now, God is the Creator, but that’s not what he’s saying here. It’s not the idea that God

is creating some for honor and some for destruction. The Bible says that c is forming them. God has a plan; God has a purpose. And, the Bible says that God is molding these, that he is long-suffering with them. Look, if you will, in this passage of Scripture here. Look in verse 22: “What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath?” Here’s God working with them. Here’s God’s hand on them—a patient, loving, long-suffering God; not an arbitrary God—a long-suffering God. First Peter 3, verse 9: “For the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is”—what? he’s—”long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Here is the potter, long-suffering with these.

But you say, But, wait a minute—it says the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction. Well this is adjectival use. He’s saying here vessels of wrath that are ripe, ready, for destruction. Doesn’t mean that he made them fit for destruction; it is that they are ready for destruction. Well, how did they get ready? Vincent, in his word study, says this, and I want you to listen. I don’t want to get too involved, but this is a very important part. This is the middle voice. You say, Oh, Pastor, what a blessing to know that; I wanted all morning for you to tell me about the middle voice. No, this is the middle voice. What does it mean? It means simply that they fitted themselves for destruction. It is not the potter that fits them for destruction, it is not the potter who makes them for destruction; it is the potter who is long-suffering. It is the vessels of wrath who fit themselves for destruction. Friend, I want to tell you something. God never made anybody to go to hell. God never made anybody to go to hell. God wants people saved; He wants you saved. Put down 1 Timothy 2, verse 4—it speaks of “God, who will have all men to be saved and come into the knowledge of the truth.”

Now, you can harden your heart, and if you harden your heart, God may harden it also. That’s the reason the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 3 and verse 15, “Today, if you’ll hear God’s voice, harden not your heart.” There may be somebody here today, you’re listening to this sermon, you say, I don’t want that; you become stiff, recalcitrant clay, and you will not yield yourself to the potter’s hand, you’ll harden your heart. God will just put you in the kiln and harden you further, and then you’ll be destroyed—but you can be saved. The Bible speaks of those who are hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. God does not create a man in order to damn him.

Now, if you go to hell, you’ll take all the blame. If you go to heaven, you’ll give Him all the glory. “God shows mercy to whom he will show mercy, and whom he will he hardens,” but He did not harden Pharaoh until Pharaoh first hardened himself, and God did not destroy that vessel until that vessel made itself fit for destruction—fitted for destruction.

### III. God's Steadfast Concern

Now, here's the third thing I want you to notice. What we're talking about is the nature of God. We're talking about God's sovereign choice. God is sovereign; He's absolutely God. We're talking about God's spotless righteousness. Is God unrighteous? No! Is God unfair? No! Well, let me say, God may be unfair. You know, God is not fair; He's just. When we talk about God being fair, we think we're owed something. We don't get it. We're dissatisfied, further dissatisfied; somebody else gets it before we do, if they get more than we got. No, God is just. God doesn't owe us anything, but God is just. But it's not until you see the justice of God that you cry out for the mercy of God. But God will give mercy to whom He will give mercy. Now, here it is—look: there's God's sovereign choice. God chose Israel; they're His chosen people, and He's not forgotten His promise. There's God's sovereign choice. There is God's spotless character. And the third thing—and here's what I want you to notice: there's God's steadfast concern.

What is the book of Romans all about? It's about redemption; it's about salvation; it's about getting people saved. Notice in verse 23: "And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, whom he hath afore prepared unto glory." God is making us, friend, ready for glory, "even us whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but thank God also of the Gentiles. As he saith also in Osea,"—that's Hosea—"I will call them my people which were not my people, and her beloved which was not beloved"—all hell-bound sinners like we were, Gentiles, the aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. God has taken both Jew and Gentile, and God has called them with His mighty love, that we might be saved. God wants you saved; God wants me saved.

I'm going to give you some scriptures, quickly; you just jot them down in case you think that God ordained some people to hell. Listen to these scriptures—John chapter 3, verses 16 and 17: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,"—it doesn't say God just loved a certain portion of it; He loved the world—"that whosoever..."—not a few, but—"whosoever believeth on 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." Isaiah 53, verse 6: "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." I'll tell you, the iniquity of my sin was laid on the Lord Jesus. He didn't just die for some elect; He died for every person. The Bible says, in Romans 8, verse 32: "He that spareth not his own Son but delivered him up freely for us all." He died for you, my friend; He wants you saved. First Timothy 2:4, it speaks of God, who will have "all men to be saved." First John 4, verse 14: "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." And then, that classic passage in 1 John chapter 2: "And he is the propitiation"—that means He's the satisfaction—"for our

sin, and not for ours only, but also for the sin of the whole world.” And then, the way God just wraps up the final invitation in the Bible, over there in Revelation chapter 22 and verse 17: “And the Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that heareth say, Come; and let him that is athirst, Come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.”

Whosoever will—if you want to be saved, just come ahead. You want to see if you are the elect—just come on to Jesus. You are, my friend: Whosoever heareth shall shout the sound, spread the blessed tidings all the world around. Tell the joyful news, wherever man be found: whosoever will may come, and whosoever cometh need not delay. Now, the door is open, enter while you may. Jesus is the truth, the only living way. Whosoever will may come, whosoever will. The promise is secure, whosoever will forever must endure. Whosoever will, ‘tis life forever more; whosoever will may come, whosoever will. Whosoever will, sound the proclamation over dale and hill, ‘tis a...—listen to this—’tis a loving Father calls the wanderer home. Whosoever will may come.

God so loved the world, and that’s the reason Jesus said, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” God says, Yes, I’ll have mercy upon whom I’ll have mercy, and I’ll tell you, upon whom He will have mercy, that one that will come to Jesus Christ. Jesus said, “Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.” That’s the reason I’m glad to be a gospel preacher. You show me any time, any place, anywhere where anybody ever came to Jesus Christ in repentance and faith, and He didn’t save them, I’ll close my Bible, and never preach again. I’ll promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, He’ll save you.

## Conclusion

Now, He’s a sovereign God, and He’s a righteous God, but He’s also a loving God. And, when you’re saved, you’re predestined to heaven; but, when you’re born, you’re never predestined to hell. And God sent you here today to be saved. Do you believe that? Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Begin to pray for those round about you now. Friend, if you want Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you might pray this prayer: Dear God—just pray it out of your heart. I know that you love me. I’m a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. I’m not going to harden my heart against you, Lord. I open my heart. Come into my heart, into my life now. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Pray that from your heart. Precious friend, just say, Save me, Jesus, and mean it. Then pray this: Thank you for saving me, Lord. I’ll not be ashamed of you. Give me the courage now to make it public. Don’t let me deny you, because you died for me. In your name I pray. Amen.

# Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 16, 1989

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 10

*“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”*

ROMANS 10:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Source of Salvation
- II. The Simplicity of Salvation
- III. The Submission of Salvation
- IV. The Security of Salvation
- V. The Satisfaction of Salvation
- VI. The Scope of Salvation

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn please to the book of Romans, which has been called the constitution of Christianity. And, open please to Romans chapter 10. When you've found it look up here and I want to ask you a question. What is man's greatest need? What is it? Is it education? Is it in the realm of economics? Is it social reform? Is it healing? What is man's greatest need? Jesus Christ did not come primarily as an educator. He didn't come as a social reformer. Though he healed, he did not come primarily as a healer. Jesus Christ is speaking in Luke chapter 19 and verse 10 and he said, *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). Man's greatest need is salvation. Man needs to be saved.

Now, when you say salvation some people tune you out. But, my friend, we saw here on this platform just a few moments ago a display of man's three great problems. He doesn't have four and he doesn't have two. He has three. They are Sin, sorrow, and death. That's all of the problems that mankind has. And, the only answer to those problems is salvation. Man's greatest need is salvation, to be saved. That's the reason when the apostle Paul looked at his Israelite relatives who were very religious but like so many today—Jew and Gentile—so very lost he said this, *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved”* (Romans 10:1). That's what I want for us to think about salvation.

The message is going to be very simple, deep, and important. And, if you're not absolutely certain that if you died right now whether you'd go to Heaven, I want you to pay attention. If you are certain that you're saved, but you have an unsaved loved one—all of us do—and you want to learn how to more clearly present the Gospel to that unsaved loved one, by all means pay attention.

## I. The Source of Salvation

Now, the very first thing I want you to notice beginning in verse 2 is what I'm going to call the source of salvation. Look. The apostle said, *“...that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God—that is, they're very zealous about God—but not according to knowledge. 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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them”* (Romans 10:1–5). Now, what is he saying? He's saying this. That nobody can behave themselves into the Kingdom of Heaven. That's what he's saying.

What is the source of salvation? The source of salvation is in the grace of God not the goodness of man. It is in the mercy of God, not the merit of man. Now he says, here that, “the law, keeping the law, the Ten Commandments, it can't save. It doesn't help to save.” Now, so many people don't understand that. Man is so ignorant. There, man is ignorant of God's righteousness. He always gets it not only wrong but backward. For example, the Bible says, Believe and be baptized. What do we do? We sprinkle little babies and call it baptism. And, then later on we hope that child grows up and will believe. The Bible never says, “Be baptized and believe.” It is always, Believe and be baptized. **If you're baptized before you believe that's like having your funeral before you die.** It's backward. First believe and then be baptized. Baptism pictures that death, burial, and resurrection with the Lord Jesus Christ. Or, for example the Bible says, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33). What do most of us do? We seek things first and God second and we wonder why it doesn't work.

Again the Bible says that we're to become like little children so we can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. What do we do? **Well, a little child comes forward and says, “I want to give my heart to Christ.” And, sometimes we ask that child a lot of adult questions and if a little child can't answer the adult questions then we say the little child is not ready. When Jesus said, the adult has to become like the little child. We get it backward so many times.** And, especially this is true in belief and behavior. We have the idea that first somehow if you behave then that brings you into a right relationship with God. We

think that the works come first and the righteousness comes second. But, I want you to put this down. Look at it really clearly and plainly in verse 3. It says, *“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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”* (Romans 10:3–4). That is, quit trying to keep the law and start trusting the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me give you the testimony of the apostle Paul. It's found in Philippians chapter 3 beginning in verse 4. He says, *“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more”* (Philippians 3:4). You want to brag about your goodness? Paul says. Let me tell you about me. *“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel...”* (Philippians 3:5). Well, circumcision was wonderful. To be of the stock of Israel was wonderful. Of the tribe of Benjamin. What a noble tribe. A Hebrew of the Hebrews. As touching the law, a Pharisee. Now, the Pharisees were the most punctiliar in keeping the law. They were so careful about every detail. He was a Pharisee *“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless”* (Philippians 3:6). Nobody could point a finger at the apostle Paul and say, “He's an adulterer, or he's a liar, or he's a thief, or he's a Sabbath-breaker, or he's a blasphemer, or that he has not honored his father or his mother.” He said, “Nobody could point the finger at me and say that I am not keeping the law. The righteousness is which is by the law,” he said, “I'm blameless.” But now, notice what he else he said. He says, *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ”* (Philippians 3:7). Now what did he mean? He said, “I took all of those things that I had been trusting in that I thought were on the profit side of the ledger and I took them off the profit side of the ledger and I put them on the loss side, the debit side of the ledger. I put them on the loss side of the balance sheet. Not only were they were they not helping me. They were actually keeping me from Jesus because I was trusting in those things.” “Well,” you say, “there's nothing wrong with them.” Well, there's nothing wrong with a super highway. *As a matter of fact, I'd rather ride on a super highway than ride on a rocky road. But, suppose you're on a super highway headed the wrong way. And then the further you go and the better the highway, the worse it is because you're getting further and further from your destination.*

You see, friend, listen to me. The worst form of badness is human goodness when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth. Paul said, *“...what things were gain to me—the very things I was trusting in—those I counted loss...”* There are about 5 billion people on the face of this earth. If you were to take all 5 billion people and extract from all 5 billion one character trait from each one of them—the very best character trait of the best thing in that person, take all of those things, distill them, and put those things into one man—that one man would still have to bow before God and cry out for mercy to

be saved. Salvation is not in the merit of man but the mercy of God, not in the goodness of man but the grace of God.

Now, let's look at verse 4. *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness..."* (Romans 10:4). Quit trying to be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments. The law says do this and thou shalt live. The Gospel says live and then thou shalt do. The law says pay me what you owe me. The Gospel says I fully forgive thee all. The law says, *"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might"* (Deuteronomy 6:5). The Gospel says, *"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins"* (1 John 4:10). The law says, *"...Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them"* (Galatians 3:10). But, the Gospel says, *"Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered"* (Romans 4:7). The law says, The wages of sin is death. But the Gospel says, *"...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"* (Romans 6:23). The law demands holiness. The Gospel provides holiness. The law says do. The Gospel says done. It is done in full. The law makes blessing the result of obedience. The Gospel makes obedience the result of blessing. The law places the day of rest on Saturday, at the end of the week. The Gospel places the day of celebration on Sunday, the first day of the week. The law says if. The Gospel says therefore. The law says that salvation is wages. The Gospel says salvation is a gift. The law says run, but it gives us no legs. The Gospel says fly, and it gives us wings of grace.

Dear friend, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness. Quit trying to be saved by being good. Listen, dear friend. Salvation is not a goal to be achieved. It is a gift to be received. You simply receive salvation. And, how do you receive it? Look again at verse 4. *"For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that—what?—believeth"* (Romans 10:4). Not to the one who tries, but to the one who trusts. **John G. Pathen was a missionary to the South Sea Islands. And, those people who lived on a particular island did not have the Gospel in their language. So, he set out to put the Gospel in their language to give them a New Testament. And, when he came to this word "believe", which doesn't mean just mere head belief, and it doesn't mean just mere intellectual belief. It means commitment and trust. He was searching for a word. And, he kept asking the natives, "What is your word for trust? What is your word for heart faith? What is your word for commitment?" They never could understand just the word that he wanted. He kept searching for that word.**

**One day he was in his thatched hut writing a messenger came in—one of the natives who had come running across the island with a message—and delivered the message. And, he was out of breath. And, there was a big chair there. And, this native**

just simply sat down in that chair and just leaned back and just relaxed. Pathen said, “What did you do to that chair?” He said, “I didn't do anything to the chair.” “No, no, no, when you sat down, what were you doing? When you just placed all of your weight upon that chair and just relaxed and trusted that chair, what were you doing? Give me the word.” And, he gave him the word for what it meant to sit down on a chair and just relax and put your weight upon that chair. And, that's the word he put in there for believe. To whosoever rests his weight and commits himself to Christ that—my dear friend—is the end of the law when a person quits trying and begins to trust the Lord Jesus. That's the source of salvation. Not the goodness of man, but the grace of God.

## II. The Simplicity of Salvation

Second thing I want you to see is not only the source, but I want you to see the wonderful simplicity of this salvation. Notice if you will beginning in verse 6. *“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 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 10:6–10). I call that, my dear friend, the simplicity of salvation. Some people do not understand just how gloriously simple it is. Friend, it is simply glorious, but it is gloriously simple.

Now, look at it. Watch it. He says, in verse 6 *“...Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:)”* (Romans 10:6). Friend, we don't need to send a messenger and say, “Lord Jesus, would you please come down and become a man and die for us?” We don't need to send a messenger to Heaven to plead our case and say, “God, planet earth needs a Savior. Please send him.” You don't have to ascend to Heaven to do that.

Now, let's continue to read. Verse 7 says, *“Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.)”* (Romans 10:7). We don't need somebody to go down into the nether world—into the gloomy recesses of the grave and death, and hell, and Hades—and rescue and liberate Jesus and bring him up from the dead. We don't have to do that. Why? Because, dear friend, he has come down from Heaven and he has come up from the grave already. Listen. *“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach”* (Romans 10:8). Let me tell you how close salvation is. You, it's not way up there. You don't have to go up there. It's not way down there. You don't have to go way

down there. Let me tell you how close salvation is and how close it is to you today. You're going to be surprised when I tell you this. You want to know how close it is? You want me tell you where it is? He says it's near you, "...*is nigh thee...*" (Romans 10:8). But, then he goes on further to say how close it is. Watch. It's in your mouth, and it's in your heart. "...*The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart...*" (Romans 10:8). You say, "In my heart?" I said, "Yeah." You say, "Well, I'm not even saved." I said, "It's still in your heart. In my mouth?" I said, "Yes. It's in your mouth." You said, "How did it get in my mouth? How did it get in my heart?" I said, "I just put it there when I preached. I just preached it into your mouth. I just preached it into your heart." "...*The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart...*" (Romans 10:8). That is the word of faith that we preach. I have just put it in your heart. I have just put it in your mouth. Does that mean you're saved? No. But, it means you're very close. The word is near you. It's not way up there and it's not way down there. Here and here. Now, that doesn't save you. That only increases your judgment unless you do something with the word that I just preached into your heart, and the word that I just preached into your mouth.

What do you do with the word that has been placed there? Well, look at what he says in verse 9. "*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). What do you do with the word that's been preached into your heart? You believe it. What do you do with the word that has been put in your mouth? You confess it. My dear friend, when you take this salvation that is so close, it's already in your heart. The Word of God is there. When you believe it and confess it, that's salvation. And, that's simple. The Word is there. It's close to you. It's in your heart. It's in your mouth. And, so you believe with your heart. You just put all of your weight upon the Lord Jesus Christ just like that man did when he walked into that room and sat upon that chair. And you say, "Glory to God. It is so. I am saved." You see, the heart is private and the mouth is public. What a man believes in his heart is what he confesses with his mouth. Do you know what confession is? It is faith turned inside out. That's the reason God always links the heart and the mouth together. For a person to say, "Well, I'm saved, but I'm not letting anybody know about it," is a contradiction. The Scripture says when we believe on him, we'll not be ashamed. When we believe with our heart, we confess with our mouths. Confession shows possession.

So, dear friend, here's the way it works. You witness to somebody—and all of us who are soul winners have done this—and we get down to where we're drawing the net and we say, "You need to receive Jesus Christ. Will you right now with all of your heart and soul trust Jesus Christ, believe on him, quit trying and start trusting, commit your life to him? Would you pray this prayer?" And, we lead them in a prayer. And, then we

check them out. And, we say, after they've prayed that prayer and asked Christ to save them, we say, "Are you saved?" They say, "Well I really don't know. I don't think I am." Well, are they saved? No, they're not. They're really not. But, then you come to somebody else and you share the Gospel with him. You tell him that Christ has died for them and that He's come down, that's the incarnation. And, you tell them He's come up, that's the resurrection. You tell them that he died, and that salvation is by trusting him. And, you say to that person, "Ask him to save you." And, he does. And, then you say, "Are you saved?" He says, "I sure am. I sure am." Is he? Yes, he is. You see, when he says amen to what God has said, God says, "amen" to what he has said. If you say, "you're not," God says, "That's right, you're not." If you say, "I am," God says, "That's right, you are." Isn't that wonderful?

You see, dear friend, just confess and mean it. What's in your heart is in your mouth. The word "confess" means to agree with God. You say, "amen" to what God has said. And, God says, "amen" to what you have said. And, dear friend, you believe in your heart, you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus Christ. How wonderful. How simple it is just to trust Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. I've talked to you about the source of salvation, it's the grace of God. I've talked to you about the simplicity of salvation, it is a commitment to Christ that leads to a glad confession. I am saved. Hallelujah!

### **III. The Submission of Salvation**

Third thing I want you to see. I want you to see, dear friend, the submission of salvation because some people may think that I'm talking about what they call an easy believism or cheap grace. Oh no. Look again in verse 9. What is it that we confess? "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...*" (Romans 10:9). The Greek language puts it a little different. That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus, Lord. Now, you see, dear friend, when you receive Christ, you don't receive him as Savior. He is Savior. But, you just receive him. Your salvation is not like a cafeteria line where you'll say, "Well, I'll have a little savior hood today, but no lordship, thank you." No. Listen. "*...Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...*" (Acts 16:31). What is it that you confess? What is it that you confess? That Jesus Christ is Lord. That, my friend, is a very serious commitment. Nobody's saved who just simply tries to patch Jesus Christ onto their life. You see, salvation is free, but it is not cheap. You pay nothing, but it costs everything. You come to Christ and you commit yourself to him as Lord and Savior, Master, Mediator, and Messiah.

Now, have you made that commitment to him? We have some people who have the idea that you can receive Christ as Savior one time and receive him as a Lord the other time. Oh no. "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...*" (Romans

10:9). All right, that's what I call the submission of salvation. You know, back in Bible times it meant something to say, "Jesus is Lord." Because you know what the Roman you've said in order to keep everybody together? They said, "you can have whatever religion you want." That's fine. We'll just take all of the religions together in a great big syncretism and mish-mash. We'll just homogenize everything. That's fine. But, in order to have a unifying force—no matter what else you believe—you must believe this, Caesar is Lord. And, so sometimes they'd find a Christian, and those Roman soldiers—like that Roman soldier portrayed here on the platform—would come to that Christian and say, "Say this. Kaiser kurios. Caesar Lord." The Christian would shake his head. He would say, "Christos kurios. Christ is Lord." Do you know what that meant? It meant the dungeon. Do you know what that meant? It meant the rack. Do you know what that meant? It meant the lion's den. It meant death. Many Christians could have saved their life if he would just offer a pinch of salt to Caesar. But, he wouldn't do it. Why wouldn't he do it?

#### **IV. The Security of Salvation**

Why, my dear friend, was there this submission of salvation. I'll tell you why. Because there was this security of salvation. Listen to it now. Listen. I've talked to you about the source. I've talked to you about the simplicity. I've talked to you about the mission of it. Let me talk to you about the security of it.

Look at verse 9 again. "*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...*" (Romans 10:9). Hey folks. The reason that these Christians would not say that Caesar is Lord, the reason they would say that Christ is Lord—they gladly and fully confessed it—is because they knew that he'd come up from the grave. And, they were no longer intimidated. They had perfect security. No man is ready to live until he's no longer afraid to die. They believed that God raised him from the dead. Why did God just choose that one thing? Why doesn't it say, "Believe that he was virgin born? Or believe that he lived a sinless life? Or believe that he died on the cross?" Why does the Bible say, "*...believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead...*" (Romans 10:9). Because all of the others are included in that. You see, he had to come down as a man in order to be raised from the dead. He had to die in order to be raised from the dead. He had to be the Son of God in order to be raised from the dead. God would not have raised a liar, a fake, a fraud, or an impostor. He is shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection. They knew that he'd come out of that grave. You see, that's the security, that's the security of salvation.

## V. The Satisfaction of Salvation

You believe that God raised him from the dead. But, think with me a little further. Think with me not only about the security of it, but think about the satisfaction of it. See what happens here. For the Bible says in verse 10, *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him”* (Romans 10:10–12). That's the satisfaction of it. The Lord is rich to those who call upon him. In Phillips translation he gives it this way. Whose boundless resources are available to all who call upon the Lord. That's the satisfaction that we have in the Lord Jesus. That's the reason the verse just before that says that we'll not be ashamed. Look at it again. He says here in verse 11, *“For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed”* (Romans 10:11). The word ashamed actually has the idea of being in a hurry to get away. Have you ever noticed that when you mention Jesus in some circles they want to change the subject? Have you ever noticed that? They kind of get hot under the collar. And, they're just like switching channels on a television set. They say, “Hey, how about that ball game the other night?” They want to get away and they're kind of in a hurry to get away. They're a little embarrassed in a restaurant if you bow your head to ask God's blessing, mention Jesus. They kind of rub their eyebrows when they're praying, you know. They they're just a little embarrassed about the whole thing. Do you know why they're ashamed? They don't know what they have in Jesus. They don't know, they don't know of his boundless resources that are available to all. Ashamed of Jesus? Ashamed of the one who meets my every need, supplies? Oh no, dear friend. There's the satisfaction of salvation. Not satisfied with yourself. Oh no. We fail, but I'm satisfied with Jesus.

You see, dear friend, that salvation is that wonderful gift when I have in him that submission. He is Lord and I have that security. God has raised him from the dead and when I have that supply his boundless riches are available to me. I can't be ashamed of him, just can't do it. If you're ashamed to let it be known he is your Savior, you haven't got the right stuff in here. Cause if you had in here, you'd have it up here. *“For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed”* (Romans 10:10–11).

## VI. The Scope of Salvation

One last thing I want you see is not only the satisfaction of it, but I want you to see the scope of it. Oh, my dear friend, look at verse 13. Ha, and this, oh, what a wonderful verse this is. This says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be*

saved" (Romans 10:13). If you're a whosoever would you lift your hand? See? That's everybody, folks. That's all of us. It doesn't leave anybody out. You want to be saved? Ask him. You say, "Well I think I've committed the unpardonable sin." Friend, ask him to save you and he will. Anybody who wants to be saved can be saved. Anybody who is committed the unpardonable sin doesn't want to be saved. You want to be saved? I tell you, if you're whosoever, ask him. You say, Well, "I've sinned too deeply. I've done a terrible, horrible thing." You're a whosoever. Just ask him. I don't care what you've done. You say, "Well, maybe I'm not one of the elect." Just call on him. He'll save you. The elects are the whosoever wills. I mean, you want Christ? Call on him. You say, "Well I need a special feeling." He doesn't say anything about a special feeling. He says, "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Romans 10:13). Man, you ask him to save you. He will. You don't have to go up in Heaven and ask him to come down. He's already done that. You don't have to go rescue him from the grave. He has risen from the dead. The word is in your heart and in your mouth. It's the word of faith that we preach. And, I'm telling you right now. I say, "Lord Jesus, save me. I trust you." And, you just cast your weight on him and he'll do it. He will.

## Conclusion

Let's pray. I want to help you right now to do it. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you're not absolutely certain if you died right now you'd go to Heaven, would you pray a prayer like this? "O God, I know that you desire to save me. Jesus, you died to save me. You've been raised from the dead. I'm going to quit trying and start trusting right now. I trust you to save me right now. I believe on you. I trust you. Come into my heart, Jesus. You are Lord, Master, Messiah, Mediator. You're all of these and more. I trust you, Jesus. Thank you for saving me, Jesus. Thank you. Just thank you.

Hallelujah. It's done by your grace. And. now, Lord, I will confess with my mouth what's in my heart. In your name I pray. Amen."

# Man's Greatest Need

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: June 9, 1985**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 10:1–4**

*“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

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Righteousness That Is Needed
- II. The Resource That Is Near
- III. The Requirement That Is Necessary
  - A. Confession
  - B. Commitment
  - C. Confidence
  - D. Courage

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take your Bibles please this morning and turn to Romans chapter 10 and if you need a Bible there may be one there in the pew rack before you. God's Holy Word, Romans chapter 10. I want to begin reading in verse 1. *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them”* (Romans 10:1–5).

I want to speak to you on *Man's Greatest Need*. A while back I was on an airplane and I was at the front of the airplane to get a newspaper. And, while I was up there I met another man, very well dressed man, he looked like a professional man when I first saw him. And, he also was looking for a newspaper and he was complaining about the nature of the newspapers on the airplane. I thought he, like myself, was dissatisfied with the newspaper because it did not have a conservative solid base to it. But, he was

disturbed because the newspaper was not liberal enough and so we got into a discussion and I said, "Sir, what do you do?" I found out that he was a Washington lawyer and then he turned to me and he said, "And, what do you do?"

I said: "I'm a minister."

He said: "What kind?"

I said: "A Baptist minister." Then we got to talking about reading and what we read.

He said: "Well, what do you read?" And, I told him the scope of my reading and how I read.

And, he said: "Well, you read in a very narrow scope."

He said: "How do you know what is really going on in the world?"

And, he said: "Now, do you know what the real problems are so you can preach to them?"

I said: "Sir, a man only has three problems."

"Oh, no," he said, "A man has many more than three problems."

I said: "Oh no, man just has three problems."

"Oh," he says, "No, man has more than three problems."

I said: "Sir, man only has three problems."

He said: "Well, what are the three problems that man has?"

I said: "These three sin, sorrow, and death. He doesn't have any other problems."

"Oh", he said, "He has more problems than those."

I said: "All right, think about it for a while and let me know of a fourth one." So, he took his lawyers mind and began to think and then he came back to me.

And, he said: "Man only has three problems, sin, sorrow, and death."

And, I want to tell you, dear friend, that I have the one book and the only book that has the answer to those three problems. Isn't that right? The problem of sin, the problem of sorrow, and the problem of death and the last two problems are rooted in the first problem, the problem of sin. Life is short. Death is sure. Sin the cause and Christ the cure.

Now dear friends, there's only one cure, one answer to man's problem, and that one answer is man's greatest need. And, that is salvation, to be saved. Now, when you talk about being saved, somebody says, "Oh, that's not so important." My dear friend, it was for salvation of the lost world that Jesus Christ came out of the ivory palaces and into this world of woe. Jesus said in Luke chapter 19, verse 10: "*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*" (Luke 19:10).

Jesus did not come primarily as the great social worker. Jesus did not come primarily as the great educator. Jesus Christ did not come primarily as the great physician or the great healer. Jesus Christ came primarily to seek and to save that which is lost. And, the great Apostle Paul said this, "*This is a faithful saying, and worthy*

*of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners...*" (1 Timothy 1:15). That is man's greatest need, and that is what causes the great heart of God to throb and beat with love today, that He wants to save a bruised and bleeding humanity. Salvation is man's greatest need. That's the reason he says here in Romans chapter 10, verse 1, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." Notice what a poignant statement. "My heart desire," "My heart's desire and prayer" because prayer follows desire, like night follows day, and the bosom of a spiritual man. "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved." And, God's desire and my prayer for you this morning is if you're not saved that you might be saved.

Now, Paul discusses salvation in the rest of the tenth chapter of Romans and there are three basic things I want you to notice with me this morning. The very first thing that would have you notice is the righteousness, the righteousness this morning that is needed. The second thing that I would have you to notice is the resource that is near. And the third, the requirement that is necessary.

## **I. The Righteousness That Is Needed**

All right now, look at the righteousness that is needed. I begin now in verse 2. I want you to hear this word "righteousness" over and over again. "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them."

It is very obvious, very clear that God here is talking about righteousness, what it is, how to obtain it. Now, man is always backward when it comes to spiritual truth. He always gets things a hundred and eighty degrees out of phase. Man thinks that a man is righteous because of what he does. Man thinks that righteousness is a reward, man thinks that righteousness is a goal to be achieved. That if he can do certain things that will make him righteous. But, Paul said in another place, "...if righteousness come by the law"—that is, by keeping the Ten Commandments, by being good—"then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

If a man could be saved by living a good life, I ask you, my friend, why then did Jesus die? "...if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." Now, Paul, the Apostle, said in Philippians chapter 3 and you might want to put this in your margin, verses 4 through 7: "*For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in*

*the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”* (Philippians 3:4–7).

Now, what is Paul saying here? Paul is saying, “Folks, I had it all, everything that you want to name, I had it. I had race. I was a Hebrew. Of the Hebrews, of the tribe of Benjamin, I had religion. I was a Pharisee. I had righteousness. That is, my own righteousness as touching the law blameless. I had ritual.” You’ve never seen anyone more ritualistic than was Paul.

Paul had all of that, but he said, “I count all of these things but lost.” He said, “I used to have them on the positive side of the ledger. I took them off the positive, I put them on the negative side, not only were they not assets, they were actually liabilities.” You see, a road may be a very good road, but if you’re headed the wrong way on it, no matter how good it is, it just helps you to get to the wrong destination all the faster. What good is a super highway if you’re headed the wrong way. That’s what Paul was on. Paul was on a road that seemed like a good road, but he was headed the wrong way because he was trying by his own righteousness to be right with God. Over, and over, and over again, preachers have to preach this message that it’s not by works of righteousness that we have done. “...but according to his mercy he saved us...” (Titus 3:5). Salvation is not a reward for the righteous, it is a gift for the guilty.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church was raised in a very godly home. You could not have had a better background than John Wesley. When he got to be a young man he went off to Oxford University there to study the reading of theology and he studied theology. When he was at Oxford he and some other young men got together and they got a club. Do you know what they called it? The holy club. Oh, how these men longed to be holy, how these men longed to be right with God.

John Wesley said to himself, “If I know all of this theology, then I must I must share this theology.” And, he went off to America, to Georgia, to be a missionary there to the heathen. While he was there he realized that he himself had never been born again. He said, “I went off to convert the heathen, who shall convert me?” When John Wesley came back to England at Aldersgate, he was there in a meeting and you remember those words. He said, “I felt my heart strangely warm.” And, he repented of his sin and like a little child cast all of his self-righteousness, all of his theology, all of his good deeds in the dust, and said, “Lord Jesus I trust you always to come into my heart. Forgive me and save me.” Have you done that?

Look at verse 4 here in this passage of Scripture. “For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” You are not saved by keeping the law. The law says, “Do this and thou shalt live.” The gospel says, “Live and thou shalt do.” The

law says, "Pay me what thou owest." The gospel says, "I freely forgive all." The law says, "*And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might*" (Deuteronomy 6:5). Gospel says, "*Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins*" (1 John 4:10). The law says, "*Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them*" (Galatians 3:10). The gospel says, "*Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered*" (Romans 4:7). The law says, "*...the wages of sin is death*"—the gospel says—"*...the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 6:23).

The law demands holiness. The gospel provides holiness. The law says, "Do." The gospel says, "Done." The law places the day of rest at the end of the week. The gospel places the day of rest at the beginning of the week. The law makes blessing the result of obedience. The gospel makes obedience the result of blessing. The law says, "Run," but it doesn't give us any legs. The gospel says, "Fly," and it gives us wings. Oh, thank God for the gospel. What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, Christ dying for sinful flesh brought to us light, and life, and immortality in the gospel.

Dear friends, if you want to be saved, let me tell you this morning, you're going to have to stop trying and start trusting. Stop trying and start trusting. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." And, that word, "believe" means to "cast yourself upon Him totally, completely, wholly." Him and Him alone.

John G. Patton was a missionary to the South Sea Islands and these people did not have a written language. So first of all, what he had to do was to learn their language. And, then he had to reduce their language to writing, then he had to translate the Scriptures into that language. Then, he had to teach them to read in order that he might teach them the Scriptures. And so, he was learning the language, translating the Scriptures, when he came to this word that we find here in Romans chapter 10 and verse 4. "Christ is the end of the law to him that believeth" the same word that is found 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...*"

When he came to this word he thought he wanted a word in their language that would translate "belief." Now, it couldn't be just mere intellectual belief, he knew that word, but he was looking for the word that meant, "to rely on completely" and "nothing else to trust." And, he kept asking the natives, "Do you have a word like this?" And, none of them seem to understand the word that he wanted.

And, so he kept asking and finally he brought one of the more intelligent natives in and he said, "I want you to watch what I'm doing." And, John Patton sat down in a chair and relaxed in that chair completely, put all of his weight on that chair, and he asked the native, he said, "Now, what am I doing to this chair?" "Well," he said, "You're sitting in

that chair, you're resting in that chair." That wasn't quite the word that John Patton wanted so this time he took both feet off the floor and put his heels on the rungs of that chair and sat back and just relaxed completely and leaned on that chair and placed all of his weight on that chair. And, he said to the native, "Now, what am I doing to this chair? The native said, "You have no other means of support, you have put all of your weight, you're resting fully, totally, completely upon that chair."

He said, "Say it in your language. He said, "Fokaronagrongo." "Say it again." "Fokaronagrongo." He said, "That's my word for, "God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son that whosoever 'fokaronagrongo' believes on Him"—who places all of his weight, who trust Him, Him only, Him always to support him, "that person shall not perish." "Christ is the end of the law to everyone that believeth." 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. Not by works of righteousness that we have done, "but according to His mercy He saved us." Now, that is the righteousness that is needed.

## II. The Resource That Is Near

The second thing I want you to see, I want you to see what I am going to call the resource that is near. Look if you will in verses 6 and following. "*But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee...*"—just underscore that phrase—"even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach" (Romans 10:6–8).

Now, look if you will at verses 6 through 8. Now, what Paul is saying is, "You don't have to go off to find Jesus, you don't have to go on some pilgrimage, you don't have to go to some Tibetan mountaintop, you don't have to go on a safari to Heaven. You don't have to ascend up into Heaven to bring Christ down from above. You don't have to go up, up, up, and say, 'Lord Jesus, won't you please come down and save this sinful race.' Why? Cause He has already come down." And, then Paul says, "You don't have to go into Hell to bring up Christ again from the deep, from the abyss, to bring Him again from the dead." Why? Listen folks, not only has He come down from Heaven, but He's come up from the grave. He's already done that.

He has suffered, bled, and died for us. And, His incarnation, His crucifixion, His resurrection, that's already done. You don't have to get Him to do that that is done. It is, salvation is not spelled D-O, it's spelled D-O-N-E, done, do you see? Now, Paul says, "Listen, Jesus is so close The Word is so near that it's even in your mouth and it's in your heart. You say, "Well, wait a minute Preacher, how did it get in my mouth? How did it get in my heart?" I preached it there. I just put it there.

You see, Paul says, “The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, it is the word of faith that we preach.” I have just preached Christ crucified into your heart. It’s there right now in your heart. I just put it there. It is there in your mouth, I just put it there. “The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart, that is the word of faith which we preach.” Now, you can have it in your heart and not be saved. You can have it in your mouth and not be saved, but oh, you are so close to being saved. The resource that is near, you are just a confession away from being saved.

You see, dear friend, this is how close you are to salvation. Everybody in this building this morning is just a hairbreadth from being saved. Jesus Christ is here, you don’t have to bring Him down. You don’t have to bring Him up. He is here, the Word of God is here. Salvation is so very close to you. It is right now in your mouth waiting to be articulated, it is right now in your heart waiting to be received and believed.

### **III. The Requirement That Is Necessary**

Now, the third thing I want you to notice. Number one, the righteousness that is needed. Only righteousness from Christ, that’s the only kind. Secondly, the resource that is near. The word is so near that it is in your mouth and in your heart. Third thing, the requirement that is necessary. What does God say is necessary, therefore for you to be saved? Begin now in verse 9. *“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. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him”*—Hallelujah—*“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:9–12).

Now, notice the requirement that is necessary.

#### **A. Confession**

First of all, there is a confession. Look at it in verse 9. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth.” Dear friend, the word is in your mouth right now. I have preached it there, but you now confess with your mouth. Now, dear friend, when a man believes in his heart, he’s always willing and ready to confess with his mouth. Do you know what confession is? Confession is faith turned inside out.

I hear people say that they’re saved, but they’re not going to confess it, they’re not going to make it public, they say, “It is a private matter.” They’re absolutely correct when they say, “It is a private matter.” The heart is private, but the mouth is public. And, the Bible says, “That private thing, that happens in the inner sanctum of your heart will be made outward if it is real.” Confession is faith turned inside out. Jesus Christ said, *“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” (Mark 8:38). But Jesus said, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32).*

Now I want to make it very abundantly clear, it is believing in the heart that saves us. It is confession with the mouth however that shows that we’re saved. And, I am totally convinced that the faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to Heaven. If you are ashamed of the Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ is ashamed of you. You are not saved because you confess, but you do confess because you’re saved. “With the heart man believes unto righteousness and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

### **B. Commitment**

Number one, a confession, but number two, a commitment. What do you confess? “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus.” Literally, in the Greek language, “that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus Lord,” “Jesus Lord,” or “Jesus is Lord.” You see, this is the conviction of salvation, that Jesus Christ is Lord. Do you believe that? Are you willing to confess it? Sometimes we hear people talk about receiving Christ as your Savior. I use that language sometimes, but really, dear friend, that’s not Bible language. The Bible doesn’t say, “You receive Jesus Christ as your Savior.” The Bible says, “You receive Jesus Christ, as many as received Him.” You don’t receive Him as anything. You just receive Him.

Now, you say, “What’s the difference?” Well, suppose I married a couple here last night. And, suppose when that couple stood right down here at the marriage alter I said to that young man, “Do you take this woman to be your lawfully wedded wife?” Suppose he said, “Well, I take her as housekeeper.” I’m afraid we might not have had a wedding. No, you see, he just takes her. Now, He is Savior, but He’s also Lord. He’s also Lord.

I’ve heard people say, “Well, you know, about twenty years ago, I made Jesus Christ my Savior. Now today, I’m going to make Him my Lord.” I beg to differ with you, dear friend. If He’s not your Lord, He’s not your Savior. He’s not your Savior. The Bible says, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord.” He’s called Lord many more times in the Bible than He’s called Savior. Savior He is, Lord He is. Salvation however, is not a cafeteria line where you say, “Well, I believe I’ll have a little Savior hood today, no Lordship thank you.” That when you come, and make that commitment, if you’re ready to say, “I take myself off the throne, no longer am I ruler in my own life, I advocate the throne, Lord Jesus, by faith I enthrone you. Take control of my life, make me the person you want me to be.” That is the commitment of salvation.

### **C. Confidence**

Now, the third thing I want you to notice. Look at the requirement. First of all, the

confession, the confession is because of the commitment, and the commitment is rooted in the confidence. Listen, “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth that Jesus is Lord and shall believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead.” That, my dear friend, is the confidence that God has raised Him from the dead. Why do I confess Him? Because He’s Lord. How do I know that He is Lord? Because God has raised Him from the dead.

And, the Bible says He is *“declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4). By this one miracle. Why doesn’t the Bible say, “That if thou shalt believe in thine heart that he was born of a virgin?” Or that He died upon the cross? Why doesn’t He speak of the incarnation or something like that? Why the resurrection? Because, my friend, listen, the resurrection is the capstone of all of the other miracles. If you believe in the resurrection you believe all the other miracles. You see, there can’t be a resurrection without an incarnation. There cannot be a resurrection without a crucifixion. He would not have been raised from the dead had He not been the sinless Son of God. You see, when you believe in the resurrection from the dead that means that you believe the rest of it, that is the cornerstone miracle, that is the capstone miracle and that is the confidence.

Listen friend, if I believe that Jesus Christ walked out of that grave, what a confidence that is. Somebody has clearly said of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, “If Jesus Christ is still in that grave, nothing really matters, but if Jesus Christ came out of that grave, nothing but that really matters.” Amen? I believe that with all of my heart. You see, the confession is rooted in the commitment, and a commitment is rooted in a confidence. I believe that God raised Him from the dead.

#### **D. Courage**

Now, watch, that confession that is rooted because of a commitment, that commitment that is rooted in a confidence gives us a tremendous courage. Continue to read verses 10 and 11. “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” That’s the courage of salvation. Confession, commitment, confidence, and courage.

You see, dear friend, if I believe that God raised Him from the dead, if He is the Lord of the living and the dead, He is Lord of all, sovereign God, a very God, can I be ashamed of Jesus Christ? “For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” One way that I can know that I really believe in Jesus Christ is I am not ashamed of Jesus Christ. This word “shall not be ashamed” literally means “will not be in a hurry to get away.” That’s what the Greek language means.

“Oh,” you say, “What does that mean?” Have you ever been in a conversation where the name of Jesus is brought up and somebody wants to change the subject? I mean,

just like switching the dial on the television set. And, some of them claim to be Christians. They don't want to carry a Bible in public. They they're embarrassed to talk about the Lord. Even in a restaurant when it's time to pray they just kind of rub their eyebrows. You know what I'm talking about? Just kind of ashamed of Jesus. Friend, listen, if you believe these other things, gladly openly, freely, exuberantly, enthusiastically, you're going to want to let it be known that you love the Lord Jesus.

That's why we ask people to come forward in a service like this and make it public, that they've trusted Christ as their personal Savior. They're not going to get all hot under the collar when Jesus Christ is mentioned. If you could put me on the highest mountain and give me a megaphone that would reach the universes and every person on planet earth I would be absolutely thrilled to say, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." He is my Lord and my Savior. Wouldn't you? I would, I'd tell the world that I'm a Christian, I'm not ashamed of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, if you're ashamed of Him you probably don't know who He is or you've never trusted your life to Him. The Scripture says, "Whosoever believes in Him shall not be ashamed." That's the reason why we ask people openly and publicly to come and confess their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Not just in this church, but everyday, everywhere you go.

I heard a story a long time ago about a young lady in a worship service, it was an evangelistic service, she was under deep conviction, a revival crusade, she was weeping, she was in the back of the auditorium. A personal worker went back there to talk with her and said, "Young lady, would you like to be saved?"

And, she said: "Yes, I would."

The personal worker said: "Would you come to the front and confess Christ as your personal Savior?"

And, she said: "Oh, no."

She said: "I can't go down there in front of all those people."

She said: "I'd like to be saved back here."

The personal worker said: "You can't be saved back here. If you want to be saved you will have to go to the front."

She said: "I won't do it." The next night, it was like the second stanza of the same song, she was under deep conviction. The same personal worker went back and talked to her according to the story that I heard and said, "Would you come forward?"

She said: "Oh no, no, I can't do that. I can't go down there in front of all of those people. Can't I be saved back here?"

He said: "No, you have got to come forward." Now, I know what you are thinking, but let me finish the story. The third evening, again, she was under deep conviction. Deeply broken. This personal worker came back and said, "Young lady, will you come forward and confess Christ as your personal Savior and as Lord?"

And she said: “Oh, yes, I will. I will go anywhere, I will do anything, if I can just have peace with God.”

He said: “Now, you don’t need to come forward, you can be saved back here.”

## **Conclusion**

Amen. Oh, friend listen you don’t have to be saved down here. You can be saved back there. You can be saved anywhere, but I will tell you one thing, if you are saved, if you have given Christ your heart and life, if you do believe that He is Lord, if you do believe that God has raised Him from the dead, you will not be ashamed of Him. You will count it a privilege to come forward and say, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I am not ashamed of Him.” That, my dear friend, is the courage of Salvation.

Now, I want you to see the consequence of salvation. Look at it again. Verse 12, “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him” That means that God’s amazing resources are available to those who have trusted Christ. And, I’ll tell you, dear friend, for almost forty years now, I’ve proven that to be true. I recommend Jesus Christ to you today. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed.

# The Simplicity of Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 16, 2000

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 10:1–7

*“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”*

ROMANS 10:4

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Righteousness That God Rejects
- II. The Righteousness That God Reveals
- III. The Righteousness That God Receives
  - A. You Must Confess Christ as the Reigning Lord
  - B. You Must Confess Christ as the Risen Lord
  - C. You Must Confess Christ as the Redeeming Lord
    1. The Relationship Between the Heart and the Mouth
    2. The Results of the Confession
      - a. Jesus Is Satisfying
      - b. Jesus Is Sufficient

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to Romans chapter 10. Romans has been called the Constitution of Christianity. And the more we read it, the more I believe that to be true.

Let me ask you a question. Think of the person that you love the most. What is your deepest desire for that individual? Perhaps, your children, your parents, your kinfolks—what do you desire for those that you love the most? Do you desire for them, for example—parents, do you desire for your children an education? Is that your great desire? If that’s all you desire, you’re going to raise a clever devil. That’s all. Do you desire for your children culture? Now, we’re trying to refine young intellects and add culture. But if that’s your heart’s desire, if culture is your hope, all you’re doing is making the world a better place to go to hell from. Is that your desire? I mean, what do you want? You say, “Well, I want them to be materially well off. I want them to have sufficiency.” Well, what difference will that make, if they have it all, and then die and rise in the judgment to face a God they do not know?

You see, Jesus came not as a great philosopher, not as an educator, not as an economist, not as a social worker; Jesus came as a Savior—as a Savior—for man’s

greatest need, and the desire that you ought to have for all of your loved ones, is that that need would be met. Man's greatest need is salvation.

Now, salvation is an old-fashioned word, and some today, in our more cultured churches, have kind of shoved the word salvation out the back door. And that's something that the church across the railroad tracks talks about, but not us. But, friend, if you listen to the words of Jesus in Luke 19, verse 10, Jesus said, "For the Son of man..."—He called Himself the Son of man. He said—"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

And the angel, when the angel announced His birth, said, "Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins." And, when the apostle Paul thought of his loved ones, those who were his relatives, notice what he said in chapter 10, verse 1: "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." My heart's desire: O God, that they might be saved. And so, we're going to think a little bit about salvation. And we're going to think about it under three headings.

## **I. The Righteousness That God Rejects**

Heading Number One is the Righteousness that God Rejects. You would think that God would accept righteousness, wouldn't you? But there is a righteousness that God rejects. And I believe, in a sophisticated audience like this, perhaps the first point may be the one that needs to be heard the most.

Look again here—Romans 10, verse 1: "Brethren, my heart's prayer to God for Israel is—and by the way, Israel was the most religious nation on the face of the earth at that time—my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness..."—you say education is costly. Friend, I want to tell you, ignorance is far more costly than education—"For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness—underscore that—have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith..."

And I'm going to stop reading right there for a moment. But let me tell you there is a certain righteousness that God rejects. And the righteousness that God rejects is self-righteousness. When a man tries to be righteous by the deeds of the law, by keeping the Ten Commandments, by being a nice person, a better person, by doing good deeds, God rejects that righteousness. Now, why would God do that? Well, because God is holy and God, being a holy God, cannot countenance any sin, none whatsoever. And man is sinful at his best, and the best that man can do is not enough, not enough.

That's the reason keeping the Ten Commandments can't save you.

Number one, you can't keep them. You don't have what it takes to keep them in your own strength. And, even if you kept most of them, what good is that? If you're hanging over a fire by a chain of ten links, and nine of them are forged steel, and one of them is made of paper, how safe are you? A chain is not stronger than its weakest link. That's the reason the Bible says, if we should keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, we are guilty of all. God demands perfection, and we just can't supply it. Man really, basically, is ignorant—ignorant—when it comes to spiritual things. That's the reason we need to go to the Word of God.

We have people today that say, "Well, I'm looking for a church that suits me." You'd better stop that. I mean, who are you—God? You'd better find a religion—a salvation, a church, a truth—that suits God, and submit yourself to what God has said. Man always gets it backward—always gets it backward—naturally.

For example, the Bible says, "Believe and be baptized." Well, what does man do? He baptizes little babies, and hopes one day they'll believe. That's backwards. The Bible says, for example, that adults are to become like little children. What do we do? A little child comes forward to give his or her heart to Jesus, and we take the little child and we ask the little child a lot of adult questions. And if the little child can't answer the adult questions, we say the little child is not ready. But God says the adult is going to have to become like a little child, and just come with a child-like faith.

The Bible says, "Seek ye first—seek ye first—the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." What do most of us do? We seek things first, and put God second, and wonder why it doesn't work. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Now, what difference does it make if everything seems to be going right for you, except for the main thing?

I may have told you about an experience I had not so very long ago. I flew into Tampa, Florida. Had to go across the state. I rented an automobile, and it was a nice automobile; not an expensive, but a very nice, brand new automobile. I got in there. It had the greatest radio, and I found a station that had the most glorious music. The sun was shining. It was a beautiful Florida day. This car smelled so good, looked so good. I got on the road. It was a great road. Just going along fine, listening to the music, having a wonderful time. But, you know, there was one thing wrong. I was on the wrong road—in the wrong direction. And the fact that the road was so good and the weather was so fine and I'm so oblivious, that was not wonderful, that was horrible, because there I am just sailing along, feeling everything is fine, but, in my ignorance, going the wrong way. And that's the way the people of Paul's day were. "They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

Now, listen to me—big, plain, and straight: Salvation is not a reward for the righteous; it is a gift for the guilty. Do you understand that? You'll never be saved. Salvation is not a goal to be achieved; it is a gift to be received. And Paul's heart was just full of compassion for these people. He said they're ignorant of God's righteousness, going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. And many will come to a church and perhaps say, "You know, I need to change my way of living. I'm going to change my lifestyle. I want to be right with God." And so they begin to reform themselves. I've often used the illustration. If you go a sawmill—and I've done that on an occasion—and watch an old log being straightened out, an old crooked tree trunk, they'll drop that log on that cradle, and run it through that big saw. And it lops off one side. They'll turn it, and run it through again. It lops off the other side. Run it through again. It lops off the other side. And, finally, all four sides have been cut, and that log now is perfectly square, perfectly straight. But, if you go to the end and look, the heart is still crooked, is it not? Now, that's what so many people do. They're just trying to establish their own righteousness, and they say, "I don't do this, I don't do this, I don't do this, I don't do that. What a good boy am I!" Jesus was talking to the religious leaders of His day when He said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved." He had, primarily, the religious leaders in mind, and the Pharisees. If you saw the Passion Play, these were the ones who hounded Jesus to the cross—the Pharisees.

I've often wondered what a church full of Pharisees would be like. Suppose I were the pastor of a church full of Pharisees. Let me tell you what it would be like. Number one: they would attend a lot more faithfully than many of you. Number two: all of them would tithe. Number three: they would live outwardly clean, pure, moral lives. Number four: they would be very busy about church work. Sounds like a good church, doesn't it? Oh, did I forget to mention number five? They'd all be going to hell—all be going to hell. Why? Because they're ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness; they have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. So the first point is this: The Righteousness that God Rejects. The worst form of badness is human goodness, when human goodness becomes a substitute for the new birth.

## **II. The Righteousness That God Reveals**

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see. Not only the righteousness that God rejects, but the Righteousness that God Reveals. Now, there is a righteousness, and God has revealed that righteousness, so continue to read verse 6: "But the righteousness which is by faith, which is of faith, speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above); or,

Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith, which we preach.”

Now, there is a righteousness that God rejects, but thank God, there is a righteousness that God reveals, and He mentions that in these verses, verses 6 through 8. Look up here. If you're not a Christian, let me tell you, you are so close to being saved. I cannot tell you how near salvation is to you. I wish I had better words to express it. You may think that you're a long way from being saved. No, no. You are so close. Look in verse 8: “But what saith it? The word is nigh thee...” That means near thee. How near is it? It's in your mouth and in your heart. You don't have to go on some safari to find salvation. He says, “...Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven, to bring Christ down from above?” You don't have to go up there and say, “Holy Father, would you send us a Savior. Would you let somebody come from heaven, come down to this earth, to save us?” Nor if that one came down and did die for you on that bloody cross, you wouldn't have to go down into the pit, down into hell, and say, “Oh, let's bring Him from the dead, let's bring Him to life again, let's bring Christ from the dead.” He says, “You don't have to do that.” Why? Look at it in verses 6 through 8. He has already come down. Friend, He has come down. Christmas is an established fact. Furthermore, not only has He come down from the heavens, but He has come up from the grave. Christ walked out of that tomb. It is done. He did it—He did it. It's already done. It is an accomplished fact. And that is the reason that it is so close to you, so near to you. “What saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart and in thy mouth...” You say, “It's in my heart and in my mouth? I'm not even a Christian.” Yes, but it's in your heart and in your mouth. “Well, how did it get in my heart?” I just put it there. “Adrian, how did you put it in my heart?” The word of faith which we preach—I just put it in your heart and it's in your mouth. You say, “In my heart?” Yep. “In my mouth?” Yes. Be careful what you do with it, because it is there. And, in a moment, we're going to see, since it is there in your heart and in your mouth, what do you need to do? You need now to believe with your heart and confess with your mouth. You don't have to go off looking for salvation. Folks, it is there. “The word is nigh thee, even in thy heart and in thy mouth.”—that is, the word of faith which we preach. And God has revealed that righteousness. You see, there's the righteousness that God rejects; there is the righteousness that God reveals.

I prayed before I preached this morning. God brought you here today. And God sent me to tell you that Jesus Christ has come down from heaven; the Son of God, that He died upon that cross, that He stepped out of that grave. He is risen. And the Word is in your heart and in your mouth, ready today for you to receive it and be saved. Isn't that good news?

### **III. The Righteousness That God Receives**

You see, there is the righteousness that God rejects, and there is the righteousness that God reveals. And now let me show the Righteousness that God Receives. What should you do? Well, let's continue to read. Look now in verse 9. Here it is. Here's what God will receive. Watch it in verse 9: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth—remember, it's in your mouth—the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart—remember, it's in your heart—that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." That's black print on white paper. Look at it: "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there's no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."

Now, the righteousness that God receives is this: It all centers around Jesus Christ. Look in verse 9, and let me tell you what you're to do with Jesus. Are you listening? Are you paying attention? In the balcony, listen—your destiny here. We're talking about you. We're talking about your soul. We're talking about heaven and hell. Pay attention. Don't you let that devil take this word out of your mouth and out of your heart today. Listen to it.

#### **A. You Must Confess Christ as the Reigning Lord**

Number one: you must confess Christ as the reigning Lord of your life—the reigning Lord. I've chosen the word reigning very carefully. Look in verse 9: "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus—the Lord Jesus..." The Lordship of Jesus is the central confession of the Christian church. Why did Jesus come to this earth? Why did He suffer, bleed, die on that cross? Why Easter morning? Put in the margin of your Bible, Romans 14, verse 9: "For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord of the dead and the living." That's why. That's why Jesus came to this earth, suffered, bled, died, walked out of that grave, that He might be Lord.

Now, what is God all about? Listen to Philippians 2, verses 9 through 11: "Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him—speaking here about Jesus—and given him a name which is above every name." And that is true. There's no sweeter name than the name Jesus. "That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." Somehow—somehow—we've gotten the idea that Christ is Savior. And we use this word, "Oh, would you accept Christ as your Savior?" I've been guilty of saying that. But, friend, that's not really New Testament language. The New Testament doesn't say accept Christ as your Savior. He is that, and He is Christ. But the New Testament says confess Christ as

Lord. “That is thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...” Every time, ever, ever, ever so often, somebody will say something like this: “You know, when I was a child, I accepted Jesus as my Savior, and that settled whether I was going to heaven or hell. And now I have made Him my Lord.” I’m sorry. God sent me here to tell you, if He’s not your Lord, He’s not your Savior. Salvation is not some sort of a cafeteria line where we say, “Well, I believe I’ll have a little Savior here today, but no Lordship, thank you.” No! Jesus is Lord. We have a lot of people who come down church aisles like they’re doing God a wild favor, so they can have a little fire insurance and not go to hell, accepting Christ, “as their Savior.” Now, He is Savior, and He does save; but, friend, you cannot have what He gives unless you receives what He is. He is Lord. Have you ever taken yourself off the throne and put Jesus Christ on the throne?

You know, the church is called the bride of Christ. Let’s just imagine there’s a wedding. The vows have been said. The cake has been cut. The rice has been thrown. Tom and Susie are in the car. They’re driving off. Susie looks over to Tom, and says, “Tom, would you please take me home?” He says, “Well, Susie, I can’t take you home. You know our home won’t be finished for two weeks. We’re going on our honeymoon. And then, when our home is finished, I’ll take you home.” Susie says, “No, Tom. I don’t mean that home. I mean my home. I want you to take me back to my mother. I want to go home. Now, Tom, I want you to understand something. I am glad that you are my husband. When we got married, I took you as my husband. I’m glad that you’re my husband, but I want you to take me back to my home. Now, Tom, I know that you love me, and I want you to know I’m grateful to be your wife. And, Tom, I’ll try to come see you on weekends. And, Tom, if I get sick, I’ll call you. And, if I need anything, I’ll call you, but Tom, I’m going back to my old way of life, but I’m happy to have you as my husband. I’m going back to my old way of life. Tom, take your hands off my life.” Have you ever known anybody that said, “Now, Lord Jesus, I take You as my Savior; thank You; that’s done; now, I’m going back to my old way of life; oh, yes, Lord, I’ll come and see you a few times on weekends; and, Lord, if I need anything, if I’ll get sick, I’ll call on You”? Friend, that is the kind of religion that is filling hell—filling hell. People have never really made the authentic confession that Jesus Christ is Lord. You’re not saved by doing good works—I don’t mean that. We’re talking about the righteousness which is by faith, but it is faith in Christ as the reigning Lord. Now, have you seen Him as your reigning Lord?

## **B. You Must Confess Christ as the Risen Lord**

Not only are you to confess Him as reigning Lord, but look in verse 9: as risen Lord—as risen Lord. “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead...” Why does He say that? Why doesn’t He say, if you believe in the virgin birth, or if you believe that He died on

the cross, or if you believe that He's the Son of God? Why did He say that you're to believe that God has raised Him from the dead? Well, friend, that's just shorthand for all of the rest of it. You see, the resurrection that we're celebrating this time of the year is the capstone of all of the rest of it. You see, in order for Him to be raised from the dead, He had to be a man, to come and be raised from the dead. That's the incarnation. In order for Him to be raised from the dead, He had to die on the cross in order to be raised from the dead. That is the crucifixion. In order for Him to be raised from the dead, He had to be the Son of God in order to be raised from the dead, because the Bible says, "He's shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead." All of our Christian faith is wrapped up in that. The incarnation, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the deity of Christ—it's all in this one statement. You see—listen—to be a New Testament Christian, you believe in Christ as the reigning Lord. You believe in Christ as the risen Lord, believe that He walked out of that grave. I believe that with all of my heart. There's more proof that Jesus Christ rose from the dead than there is that Julius Caesar ever lived.

### **C. You Must Confess Christ as the Redeeming Lord**

And then, thirdly, you confess Him as the reigning Lord, as the risen Lord, and, therefore, as the redeeming Lord. Look again in verses 9 and 10. Look. What saith it? "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus—the reigning Lord—and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead—that's the risen Lord—thou shalt be saved." He is the redeeming Lord. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." And that's what man needs. That's why Paul said, "Look, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they might be saved."

#### **1. The Relationship Between the Heart and the Mouth**

Now, I want you to see the relationship, therefore, between the heart and the mouth. He says, "Believe with your heart; confess with your mouth." You're not going to bootleg a blessing. You're not going to sneak into heaven. Jesus said, "If you are ashamed of me and of my words before this sinful and adulterous generation, 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 will confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father." Now, notice the relationship. The heart is private; the mouth is public. What man believes in his heart, he will confess with his mouth.

In a few moments, I'm going to give a public invitation. I'm going to ask you to do something all glorious and all wonderful. I'm going to ask you to leave your seat, and openly and publicly, unashamedly, come forward, letting the whole world know, if possible, that you believe in Jesus Christ. You say, "Oh, no, pastor. I couldn't do that. I

don't want all those people to know I believe in Jesus. I don't want all those people to know that I'm a sinner and lost and on my way to hell, and now I've received Christ, and I've been saved and redeemed. I don't want everybody to know that I have associated my life with Him." You know what's going to happen to you? You're going to die and go to hell. Why? Because you're ashamed of Jesus.

Walking down one of these aisles doesn't save anybody. Shaking the hand of any preacher is not going to save anybody. We all have enough good sense to know that. That isn't what saves. It's what it indicates that saves. What does it indicate? We're not ashamed of Jesus. Friend, if you could give me a megaphone or a microphone and put me on the tallest mountain or building in this world, I would be happy to tell the whole world I believe in Jesus Christ. He is my Lord. You're not going to sneak into heaven, ashamed of Jesus. Can it be? Somebody who hung naked on a cross for you, and suffered excruciating pain of the cross, and you say, "I'm going to preserve my dignity. I'm not going to go forward."

People leave churches two ways; some leave dignified, and some leave justified, and you're going to have to make up your mind. You can't be ashamed of the Lord Jesus. You know, what confession is? It is just faith turned inside out. "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..." You see, a confession literally means an agreement. You agree with God. You just say amen to what God has said. God says, "Look. Jesus is your Lord. He died for you. He was buried. He rose again." You say, "Amen to that. Hallelujah. I receive it, I believe it, and that settles it."

Put down Matthew 10, verses 32 and 33: "Whosoever, therefore—Jesus is speaking—shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father, which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father, which is in heaven."

## **2. The Results of the Confession**

Now, let me tell you what happens when you do this. Here's the two-fold result. Now, look at it. We're coming into the landing strip here, but look in verse 11.

### **a. Jesus Is Satisfying**

Here's the first result of that. "For the Scripture saith, whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." Now, that is true that you'll not be ashamed of Jesus, but that's not the full meaning of that word—"...whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed." What the full meaning is this, and listen to it very carefully. And you may have a translation that gives it this way: "...whosoever believes on him will not be disappointed"—will not be disappointed. I've lived long enough to know one thing. I have never, never known, nor will I ever know, a person who ever really truly gave his

or her heart to Jesus Christ who was disappointed in Jesus. I have been serving Him more than a half a century and I can tell you, He is more precious to me this moment than ever. I am not disappointed in Jesus. Nor will you be. Nor has anybody ever been. You'll never find anybody who, in repentance and faith, has given his or her heart to Jesus Christ who says, "Oh, I am disappointed." No, you will not be. What is the first result? Jesus is satisfying.

#### **b. Jesus Is Sufficient**

Here's the second thing that you'll find. Not only is Jesus satisfying, but you're going to find that Jesus is sufficient. He is sufficient. Look in verse 12—look at it: "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." Phillips translates that, "...whose boundless resources are available to all"—rich unto all.

I read in the paper yesterday where old Bill Gates lost 11 billion dollars. It breaks my heart. Riches fly away. What do you have that you cannot lose? You want to know how rich you are? You add up everything you have that money cannot buy and death cannot take away. Then you'll know how rich you are. "The same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him." True riches, true wealth, in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dr. Bill Bright, who founded Campus Crusade, is a friend of mine. I love him. He's a dear man. He told a story that moved me greatly about a very rich Englishman. His name was Baron Fitzgerald—Baron Fitzgerald, very wealthy. He had a wife and a baby son. The wife, the son, and the Baron lived together in their wealth and their opulence. And then the wife sickened and she died, and left Baron Fitzgerald with the boy, who was now in his teens. This father, who already loved the son, began to pour more and more love into his son, his only son, his beloved son. And he loved his son, and almost doted on the son. But then, the tragedy compounded. The son got sick. And after many sleepless nights on the father's behalf, praying for his son, yet the son died. Now, Baron Fitzgerald was a connoisseur of art, and he collected magnificent art from all over the world. They had this art treasure. And then, of course, the time came when Baron Fitzgerald died. And he left in his will that his art was to be auctioned at his death, because there were no heirs. All of the collectors and all of the people from around came that were connoisseurs of art to buy these precious, precious treasures worth many millions in English pounds. And they were all there as the auction began. But there was one painting, done by an unknown artist, not particularly significant. It was a painting of Baron Fitzgerald's son, his beloved son. And the auctioneer said, "The rules of the auction are these. This picture is to be auctioned first. What am I bid?" There was an embarrassing silence, because nobody wanted that painting of his man's son that he loved so much. Finally, a thin voice came from the back of the room and made a bid, just a pittance, a little bit. Nobody else bid. The gavel came down, and said, "The

painting is sold, and the auction is over.” “Over? What do you mean over? It’s just beginning.” He said, “No, it’s over. Let me read the stipulations of the will.” And the lawyer read, “That the picture of my son is to be auctioned first. And whoever buys the picture of my son gets the whole collection—gets the whole collection.” Why? What was this man doing? He knew none of those people. He didn’t need the money. He’d already gone. He wanted his own dear son to be honored, and so what he said is, “Whoever gets my son, gets it all—gets it all.” And that’s what God is saying here in the gospel. “I love My Son—I love My Son. And when you get My Son, when you get Jesus, you get everything that comes with Jesus.” Well, “the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.”

## Conclusion

In just a moment, I’m going to ask you to give your heart to Jesus Christ. In baseball, you have three chances to get on base when you come to bat—or three opportunities, basically. You’re standing there, and the ball comes to you, and you have three strikes. You miss the ball three times, and don’t get walked—you’re out. It’s three strikes and you’re out. In order for you to go to heaven, you have three opportunities. You say, “Wait a minute, Adrian. I thought you said there’s only one way.” Well, listen to me. Three opportunities. Number one, you could die before the age of accountability. You could die as a little baby. All little babies that die go straight to heaven—do you know that? Straight to heaven. You could die as a little baby. See, if you died before the age of accountability, before you knew the difference between right and wrong, then you go straight to heaven. Do you understand that—do you? If you understand that, that’s strike one. I mean, if you can understand what I’m saying, you’ve already passed the age of accountability. So that opportunity for you to go to heaven is gone, right?

Now, number two. There’s another opportunity for you to go to heaven, and this is purely theoretical. You could live an absolutely perfect life, never sin, ever one time, deed, word, thought—never, never, never, ever sin, be absolutely perfect. You wouldn’t need to be saved. Now, would the person who’s has done that, would you stand up? I want to see you. No. There’s not a person in this building who could say, “Pastor Rogers, I have never sinned ever in thought, word, or deed—never.” “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” May I tell you, you’ve got two strikes against you.

There’s only one other way, therefore, that you can be saved, and that is to give your heart to the Christ who died for you on that cross. And the Bible says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” And God sent me here to tell you that you need to be saved, and He will save you. And I want you to confess Him today as the reigning, risen, redeeming Lord, say, “Lord Jesus, thank You that You did come

down. Thank You that You rose from the dead. Thank You that You died for my sins, and I now receive You as my Lord and my Savior.”

Would you bow your heads in prayer? And those of you who are saved, would you begin to pray for those round about you who may not be saved? Thank God for your own salvation. How many here today would say, “Pastor Rogers, I am saved and I know it, not because of my own self-righteousness, but because I have truly repented of my sin, trusted Jesus Christ as my Lord and my Savior, and I know, by God’s grace, I am saved”? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you can share that testimony with me and give God the glory, would you just lift your hand? Hold it up. “I know I’m saved.” That’s most of us, but not all of us. Those of you who could not lift your hand, the reason I did that is to cause you to think, because you’re the one I want to invite to pray this way, and I want you to pray in your heart this way: “Dear God”—that’s right, just speak to Him—“Dear God. I know that You love me and I know that You want to save me. I’m a sinner and I need to be saved. Jesus, I believe You’re the Son of God. I receive You now as the Lord of my life. I believe that You were raised from the dead. And I trust You now as my reigning, risen, redeeming Lord. I give you my heart. Thank You—thank You—for saving me. Now, Lord, what I believe in my heart, help me to confess with my mouth. Help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

# Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 10, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 10:1–13**

*“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

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Freeness of Salvation
- II. The Nearness of Salvation
- III. The Richness of Salvation

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and be finding Romans chapter 10? As you’ve found it, look up here and let me ask you a question. Of all of the needs that humanity has, what is the greatest need? Is it education? If it were education, when the Lord Jesus came to this earth, He would’ve come as an educator. Is it finance? If that is true, when the Lord Jesus came, He would’ve come as an economist, perhaps as a banker. Is it peace? Well, if that’s true, Jesus would’ve come as a diplomat. But what is man’s greatest need? Why did Jesus come? Well, we don’t have to guess about it. Luke 19:10, Jesus said, “[I have] come to seek and to save that which was lost.” Now, salvation is man’s greatest need. To be saved is man’s greatest need. But do you know when I say that—I know having preached as long as I have preached—that that falls flat, to say that man needs to be saved? That’s an old-fashioned word. It’s almost out of vogue; it’s out of date to be saved. Well, we’ve heard that before, haven’t we? But one of these days, friend, it will make a colossal difference.

¶ Now, we’ve heard a lot about the Titanic, and when people sailed on the Titanic, there were some who sailed with very exclusive provisions and very fine accommodations, and there were some below in the steerage. But do you know when the final tally came back to the New York office, they put them in two categories: saved and lost? Now, some of you may be going to hell first class, but there’s coming a day when you’re going to stand before God, and the thing that’s going to matter more than

anything else in this world is this: Are you saved or are you lost?†

Look in God's Word here—Romans chapter 10. I begin in verse 1: *“Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.”* Paul's heartbeat, Paul's passion, Paul's prayer for Israel, is that they might be saved. *“For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness [for] everyone that believeth.”* (Romans 10:2–4) Now I just want to pause right there, and I just want to talk about this salvation.

## I. The Freeness of Salvation

And the very first thing I want to tell you about is the freeness of this salvation. It is absolutely, totally free. Now, most people who even think of salvation think that salvation roots in the merit of man. If you were to walk up and down the streets of this city, or any city, and ask people, “Are you going to heaven”, they'll say, “I hope so.” And if you were to say, “Why,” they would say, “Well, I'm trying to live as best I know how.” They think that salvation is a reward for the righteous. But salvation is not a reward for the righteous; salvation is a gift for the guilty. And if you don't understand that, you're never going to have salvation, because Paul talks about his brothers in the flesh, the Jewish nation, and he says, *“...I bear [the] record...they have a zeal for God,”*—they're very religious, very zealous—*“but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness...going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.”* (Romans 10:2–3)

You see, that's when something good can become something bad: if it keeps you from the best. There are many people in this congregation and many who are listening to me across the nation. You're going to go to hell, not because you're a drunkard, not because you're a thief, but because you never were. You think the gospel is for the harlot; you think the gospel is for the thief; you think the gospel is for the drunkard. Most of the people in America are egomaniacs strutting to hell, thinking they're too good to be damned, trusting in their own religion.

The Apostle Paul was one of these. I want you to put in your margin this passage of Scripture—it's very insightful. Philippians 3, verses 4 through 7. Here's what the Apostle Paul said of himself. Now, I want you to listen to a very religious man talking. He says, *“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any...man thinketh...he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.”* (Philippians 3:4) Paul said, “If you want to get in a bragging contest about who's a good boy,” he said, “Let me just tell you about myself.” He said, *“[I was] circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews.”* (Philippians 3:5) He said, “You ought to know

my ancestors; you ought to know my lineage. You ought to know I am a blueblood. ‘As touching the law, a Pharisee.’ (Philippians 3:5) You want to talk about accomplishments? I rose up in the ranks until I held the highest religious position in the nation. ‘Concerning zeal, persecuting the church.’ (Philippians 3:6) You talk about a man who practiced what he believed, I was the one.” He said, “Touching...righteousness which is [by] the law, blameless.” (Philippians 3:6) “If you were to take the Ten Commandments,” Paul would say, at least outwardly, “I have kept every one of them.” But then notice verse 7—here’s the thing I want you to see: “But what things were gain to me...I counted [but] loss...” (Philippians 3:7) Paul said, “I’m going to take my heritage, my pedigree, I’m going to take my accomplishments, I’m going to take my zeal, I’m going to take my good-old-boyishness, and I’m going to take that from the positive side of the ledger, and I’m going to put it on the negative side of the ledger.” He says, “I’m going to count it as loss. I’m going to take my goodness, and I’m going to count it as badness, as loss.” Well, you say, “Pastor, that doesn’t make sense. How could you put striving to keep the Ten Commandments and striving to be religious, how could you put all of that on the negative side? Granted, it may not get him to heaven, but at least let’s keep it over here on the positive side.” No, he said, “I count all these things but loss.” Why? Because those were the things he was trusting in, and those were the things that were keeping him from the Lord.

¶ Now you see, well, let me illustrate it this way. I was down in Florida one day; I had an engagement in South Florida. I had a wonderful flight, got off the plane in Tampa, and I was going over to Ft. Lauderdale. So I rented an automobile, and they gave me a very nice car. I think it was an upgrade, and I was so happy to have it. The sun was shining. It was one of those beautiful Florida days—we’ve got some good ones down there. It was a beautiful day, and so I turned on the stereo, and I got the most gorgeous music—oh, it was beautiful, violins and all of that playing—I just turned it up real loud, nobody in the car but myself, and then I got on this road. It was an incredible road, very little traffic, the sun was shining, the road was good, the car was beautiful, the music was glorious, and here I am on my way to something I looked very forward to, just driving along, just so happy. And then, after I’d driven about two hours, I thought, “I ought to be there by now, ought to be getting closer. This doesn’t look familiar; something is wrong.” And I got to looking around, and I said, “Where is the sun? Let me get myself oriented here.” And then it dawned on me. I was going the wrong way. I was on the wrong road. I was making good time on the wrong road. And the good car, and the music, and all of these things that might be good, were bad because they were taking me in the wrong direction.¶

Now folks, that’s what religion is without the Lord. You see, the worst form of badness is human goodness—if human goodness keeps you from salvation. Paul said,

“The things I counted for gain, they were loss.” He said, “My brothers, my sisters, the Jews according to the flesh,” he said, “*I bear them record...they have a zeal [for] God, but not according to knowledge. ...And [they] going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.*” (Romans 10:2–3) You see, then, in verse 4, he says this: “*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that [believes].*” (Romans 10:4) You see, there’s the law. The law says, “Do,” and we can’t. But the gospel says, “Done.” The law demands perfection, but only the gospel gives perfection in the Lord Jesus Christ.

John Patton was a missionary in the South Sea Islands, and he was with a tribe that did not have a Bible. So he was translating the Bible into their language, a very laborious thing to do. They did not know the Bible, and he had to learn their language, and so he got to the word *believe*, “trust”. “*Christ is the end of the law*”—you’re going to see it in verse 4—“*to everyone that believeth.*” (Romans 10:4) And so he’s saying, “Now, what is the word for *belief*?” So they gave him the word for intellectual belief, like I believe two and two is four. He said, “No, that’s not the word I want. I want the word for *belief* that means ‘trust, confidence, reliance upon’.” And he kept asking, and they couldn’t give him the word. He kept asking. He said, “What is this word, what is this word?” They couldn’t understand him. He was in his hut, a straw hut, and it was a sweltering day, and he was writing, and a native came into the hut. The native had been running; he was absolutely exhausted. That native came into that hut, and he was just so tired. There was a chair there, and he just sat down in the chair like this, and Patton looked at him. He said, “What did you do?” He said, “I’m sorry, I just sat down.” “No, no, no, no. What did you do?” “Well,” he said, “I just sat down.” He said, “But what do you call it when you just committed yourself completely, totally to that chair? What did you do?” “Oh,” he said, “That. *Facca-ron-rongo.*” He said, “What?” “*Facca-ron-rongo.*” That’s the word he put in his Bible for “reliance on the Lord Jesus Christ.” When you just say, “Lord Jesus, I just cast myself upon you. Not just intellectual belief, but Lord, here I am; I trust you.” And you see, salvation is the gift of God. We’re thinking now of the freeness of it. Don’t miss my point: the freeness of it.

There was a Baptist preacher. He told a wonderful story. I could never get it out of my heart. It was his own testimony. He said, “I was doing things before I was saved that I ought not to have done. My eyes were watching things, my hands were handling things, my feet were going places, that were all wrong. So,” he said, “I went to the doctor to see if the doctor could help me.” He said, “The doctor I went to was named Dr. Law”—Doctor Law—“and I said, ‘Dr. Law, I’ve got some problems, and I want you to help me. My hands—I’ve got a hand problem. My hands are handling things they ought not to handle.’ And Dr. Law said, ‘Let me look here,’ and said, ‘No, the problem is not your handsF the problem is your heart.’ He said, ‘No, Doctor, it’s my hands.’ ‘You trust

me. It's your heart.' He said, 'Well now, Doctor, it's not just my hands; it's my eyes. My eyes have been looking at some things they ought not to be looking at. What's wrong with my eyes, Doctor?' 'It's not your eyes; it's your heart.' 'No, Doctor, it's my... ' 'No, it is your heart.' 'Well, Doctor, what about my feet? They're going places they ought not to go. I've got a foot problem.' 'No, you've got a heart problem.' 'Dr. Law, are you absolutely convinced that I have a heart problem?' 'Yes, and furthermore, it's fatal. You're going to die of your heart problem.' 'Well, Dr. Law, can you cure me?' 'Oh, no, I can't cure you. As a matter of fact, I don't cure anybody. All I do is diagnose. That's my job. I'm just here to diagnose. I cannot cure anybody.' 'Well, and you say I'm going to die. Is there no hope?' 'Oh, no, there's hope.' 'Well, where's my hope?' 'Well, Dr. Grace.' 'Dr. Grace? Where is he? Can I find him?' 'He's right across the hall.' 'Well, do I need to make an appointment?' 'No, just go knock on the door. He never turns away a patient.' 'Oh well, will it cost a lot?' 'No, he has never charged a patient.'" So, he leaves Dr. Law, and he goes and knocks on Dr. Grace's door, and there, as Dr. Grace opens the door as a kindly physician standing there, he says, "Come in. How did you know to come?" "Well, Dr. Law told me I had a heart problem, and you could help me. Can you help me?" "Yes, I can." "What medicine are you going to give me?" "I'm not going to give me any medicine; I'm going to give you a transplant." "A what?" "I am going to give you a transplant; I am going to give you a new heart." "Will it hurt?" "It might." "What will it cost?" "Not a thing in the world." "And Dr. Grace opened my chest," he said, "And reached in while I was still conscious, and pulled out the most vile, filthy, stinking heart. I could not believe that such a thing had been in me, causing my eyes to do what they did, my hands to do what they did, my feet to do what they did. And then, Dr. Grace put within me a new heart. And when he did, I felt a change of nature that went through me, that affected my eyes, my hands, my feet." You know, Dr. Law, friend, is the law of God. Dr. Grace, His name is Jesus—Jesus. *"Christ is the end of the law for righteousness [for] everyone that believeth."* (Romans 10:4) What I need, what you need, what every mother's child in America and in the whole world needs, is Dr. Grace and a brand new heart, amen?

## II. The Nearness of Salvation

Now, we're talking here about the freeness of salvation, but now here's the second thing I want you to see: I want you to see the nearness of salvation. Begin reading now in verse 6: *"But the righteousness which is by faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is to bring Christ up again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee,"* that means near thee, *"even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach. 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 10:6–10)

Now, Paul wanted his brothers and sisters in the flesh, the Jews, to be saved, and he says, “Here’s the way to do it.” And he’s saying to them, and he’s saying to us, that if you want to be saved, salvation is very near. You may not dream how close you are today to being saved. Those of you in the balcony, you’re so close to being saved. Those of you in that far corner over there, you’re so close to being saved, you just don’t know how close you are. Now what is Paul saying? He’s saying you don’t have to go on a pilgrimage, you don’t have to go up into heaven, and appear before the throne, and say, “God, we’re a bunch of sinners down here, and we’re in a mess—can you help us out? Would you come down, Lord?” You don’t have to do that. Why? One Christmas, two thousand years ago, He already did that, amen? He stepped out of heaven. Well, they nailed Him to a cross, and put Him in a grave, but you don’t have to go down into hell, and say, “Lord Jesus, please come out of that grave, please give victory over death, Hell, sin and the grave. Come out, please!” You don’t have to descend into the deep; He’s already been raised. I mean these are accomplished facts. The incarnation and the resurrection, sandwiched with the crucifixion, have already taken place, so he says, “[Don’t say] in [your] heart, *Who shall ascend into heaven?…Or, Who shall descend into the deep?*”—bring Christ down to bring Him up—“*The word is nigh thee*”—let me tell you how close salvation is, now listen close, you’ll miss this—“*the word is nigh thee, even in [your] mouth, and in [your] heart.*” (Romans 10:6–8)

You say, “Pastor, that’s silly.” No, that’s what Paul said. The word is so close; let me tell you how close you are to being saved today. If you’re not saved, let me tell you how close you are to being saved. Jesus Christ and salvation are already in your mouth, already in your heart. Now, you say, “Now, wait a minute—in my mouth? In my heart? How did it get in my mouth. How did it get in my heart?” I just put it there. “Well,” you say, “Adrian, how did you put it there?” Listen: “*The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart…the word of faith which we preach.*” (Romans 10:8) You see what I did? I’m telling you right now that salvation is by grace through faith. I have put this in your mouth and in your heart; it is there. It’s in your mouth; it’s in your heart. Well, what do you do with what is in your mouth and in your heart? Listen—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.*” I put it there; I told you what it is. It is there; it is waiting on you.

Now, right now you confess and believe, and God says you’ll be saved—you’ll be saved. You don’t have to bring Jesus down; He’s come down. You don’t have to bring Jesus up; He has come up. It is done; it is a finished thing. “*Christ is the end of the law*

*for righteousness to everyone that believeth.*” (Romans 10:4) And now it is ready for you. So close you are—it is in your heart and in your mouth—*“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,”* (Romans 10:9) friend, you’ll be saved. That’s not what I’m saying; it’s what God has said. That means you will not go to hell; it means you will receive a new heart, a new nature, and one day you’ll spend eternity with the redeemed of all of the ages.

Now listen. What is the confession that you make? The confession that you make: *“if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord.”* (ESV, Romans 10:9) Now, here’s where many people are going to miss salvation: they want to receive Christ as their Savior and that’s it. Now, friend, He is Savior, but the Bible says, “Confess Him as Lord”—confess Him as Lord. Do you know what that means? That means to take yourself off the throne of your life and put Jesus Christ on the throne of your life. Salvation is not just some intellectual belief that you tack on. It is doing what that man did to that chair. It is trusting the Lord Jesus. It is committing everything to the Lord Jesus. It is saying, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” Now, He is Lord, isn’t He? And, friend, if you don’t receive who He is, you cannot have what He gives. He is Lord. That doesn’t mean that you’re saved by good works. It just simply means that you bow the knee to Him, and you say, “Jesus, I take hands off my life; I give you my life.”

¶ Let’s just imagine a scene. There’s been a wedding. The rice has been thrown, the confetti has been thrown, the cake has been cut, the hugs have been given, the gifts have been exchanged, and Sue and Bill are in the car driving away from the wedding. Sue and Bill, just been married, and Sue says to Bill, “It was a beautiful wedding; oh, it was so wonderful, I just enjoyed it so much. Now, Bill, will you take me home?” Well he says, “Sue, you know we can’t go home yet; the house is not ready, and this is our honeymoon.” “Oh, no, no, I don’t mean that home; I mean my home. I want you to take me back to my mother.” “What?” “To my mother, Bill, you know. I have accepted you as my husband, and that was a wonderful ceremony, but I want to go back home to my mother. And, Bill, don’t expect me to change the way I’ve been living. Now, Bill, don’t get me wrong. I love you, Bill, and I hope to see you on weekends, if it’s convenient, and also, Bill, I want you to know that I’m glad that you’re committed to take care of me, so, Bill, if I’m sick, or need money, or have any problems, you know I can call on you, Bill, because, after all, I’ve taken you as my husband. And, we did have a wonderful ceremony; it was just wonderful when I took you as my husband. But now, Bill, take me back to my house; don’t get any idea that what we did down there at the church is going to change the way I live. Take your hands off my life.” Now, what kind of a marriage would that be? It’s the same kind of salvation that some people think they have. They say, “Now, Lord Jesus, I take you as my Savior. Now, Lord, I may even come to Bellevue

and visit you every Sunday, or so often, and if I get in trouble, or I need some money, or if I'm sick, I'll call on you, but in the meanwhile, I'm going to go on with my life just the way it was.†

Friend, I'm going to tell you something: that's not going to work—that is not going to work. *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and...believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead...”* (Romans 10:9) You see, when you believe that God raised Him from the dead, you believe all the rest of it. I mean that's the capstone. He's shown to be the Son of God by the power of the resurrection from the dead. And so if you believe in the resurrection, you have to believe in the crucifixion. And if you believe in the crucifixion, you have to believe in the incarnation. And if you believe in the resurrection, the crucifixion, the incarnation, you have to believe in the Deity. So the capstone of the whole thing is, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and...believe...that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (Romans 10:9)

Friend, there's the freeness of it, and there's the nearness of it. He is so near—He is so near. *“The word [of God] is [near you,] nigh [you], even in [your] mouth, ...in [your] heart: [It] is, the word of faith, [that] we preach; 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...”* (Romans 10:8–9)

Now, confession is very important. Jesus said, *“[If you are] ashamed of me and of my words [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.”* (Mark 8:38) *“[But if you] [will] confess me before men, ...I will confess...[you] before my Father...”* (Matthew 10:32) The Bible says, *“Let the redeemed of the Lord say so.”* (Psalm 107:2) That's the reason later on in this service I'm going to give you an invitation to openly and publicly, unashamedly, say that you're trusting Jesus. Why? Well you see, confession shows possession. Now, walking an aisle can't save anybody. Shaking a preacher's hand can't save anybody. It's what that indicates that saves us. Jesus is simply saying, “Look, if you are ashamed of me, I have to be ashamed of you.” Do you know the mark that you're really trusting Jesus? Read it in verse 11: *“For the scripture [says that] whosoever believeth [in] him shall”—what?—“not be ashamed.”* (Romans 10:11)

† I've often told the story of a girl who was in a service, revival service, and she was under conviction in the back just weeping copiously. A personal worker went forward—it was during the invitation—and said, “Won't you come forward and confess Christ as your Lord and Savior?” She said, “Oh, no, there are too many people; I can't do that. I'd like to be saved back here, please.” And the personal worker said, “You can't be saved back here.” So the next night, same thing, same song, second stanza; she's under deep conviction. The worker goes back and says, “Won't you come forward and confess

Christ?” She says, “Oh, no, I can’t do that; I would be frightened. I don’t want to stand there in front of all those people. Can’t I be saved back here?” He said, “I’m sorry; you can’t be saved back here.” Now, I know what you’re thinking, but you let me finish the service. And so the third night, he goes back there, she’s weeping again, and he says, “Young lady, won’t you come and give your heart to Jesus, openly and publicly?” She says, “Yes, I will, I will; I’ll go anywhere, I’ll do anything, if I can just have peace with God.” He said, “Now you don’t need to come to the front; you can be saved back here.”<sup>f</sup>

Now, folks, that’s what we’re talking about. Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me, I’ll be ashamed of you.” If God would give me a microphone, I would stand on the tallest building of the world; I’d like to say it with all of my heart that Jesus is Lord and I love Him—if they kill me for doing it. I’d want to do it. So don’t you let your pride keep you from coming. The Bible says, “When we believe on the Lord Jesus, we will not be ashamed of Him.” (Romans 10:11) It is so near. “*The word is nigh thee, even in [your] mouth and in your heart*” (Romans 10:8)—but you’ve got to confess with your mouth and believe with your heart. And God says—God says—that you’ll be saved.

### III. The Richness of Salvation

Now, here’s the third and final thing I want you to see. I want you to see not only the freeness of it—“*Christ is the end of the law for righteousness*” (Romans 10:4)—and I want you to see not only the nearness of it, but I want you to see the richness of it.

Look, if you will, beginning now in verse 12 of this same chapter, if you will. Oh, this is such a wonderful scripture. “*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*” (Romans 10:12) Moffatt translates that, “His boundless resources are made available to those who call upon him.” “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” (Romans 10:13) I don’t believe that anybody is predestined to go to hell. I believe that God wants everybody saved. I believe that whosoever is in the Bible, and the same Lord over all, whether you’re Jew, whether you’re Greek, whether you’re the chosen race, or not the chosen race, whoever you are, wherever you are, if you will call upon the name of the Lord, He will save you. And if you show me any time, any place, anywhere, where anybody ever comes to Jesus in repentance and faith and He doesn’t save them, I’ll close my Bible and never preach again. I tell you He’ll save you; He will save you. “*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.*” (Romans 10:13)

Now, He is rich—“*[He’s] rich unto all [who] call upon Him.*” (Romans 10:12) I’ve been walking with the Lord now since I was a teenage boy, and I’ll tell you this: I’ve failed Him sometimes, but He has never failed me. His resources have been there for me every

time I've called upon Him. I'm not talking about financial resources, though He's done that; I'm talking about the life of God that's in my heart, and, friend, He has met my need. 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 riches in Jesus abound. "[He] is rich unto all who call upon Him" (Romans 10:12)—not some, anybody who wants to be saved.

Now, Paul started out telling these people who were very religious—"[had] a zeal [for] God, but not according to knowledge" (Romans 10:2)—they need to be saved. And yet Paul himself, talking about it, called himself the chief of sinners. So what does that mean? Listen to me. There's nobody in this building today, nobody so good you don't need to be saved. If you haven't been saved, say, "Amen." Nobody so good that you don't need to be saved, if you haven't been saved. And secondly, there's nobody so bad that you cannot be saved. See, that's what it's all about.

## Conclusion

Now, folks, salvation is by grace through faith; you trust the Lord Jesus. Let me just share this story and I'll be finished—true story. There was a preacher, a minister, and he was educated in a seminary, very religious. He was a so-called Christian minister, but he was what we call a liberal. Now, when I mean liberal, I don't mean he was just progressive in his ideas; I mean he doubted sincerely the blood atonement, the crucifixion, the bodily resurrection, the virgin birth. He just didn't believe these things. But he was one of these men that had a good heart, as men have good hearts. I'm not talking about a new heart; I'm just talking about he was a nice, loving guy. Would've made a good neighbor, a great granddaddy, and he just loved people. Went about as best he could, helping hurting people. A little girl knocked on his door one night late at night. He went to the door and opened the door, and there was a little ragged girl standing there, a frightened little girl. She said, "Sir, are you a minister?" "Well yes, young lady, I am." "Well, sir, are you a man of God?" "Well I would like to think I'm a man of God. Darling, may I help you?" "Sir, could you come with me and help get my mother in?" "Well, darling, what's wrong with your mother? She hasn't been drinking, has she?" "Oh, no, no, no, no. You've got to help get my mother in. My mother's dying. My mother doesn't know how to get into heaven. My mother doesn't think she has long to live, and my mother asked me if I would go find a minister to help get my mother in. Sir, you're a minister; you're a man of God. Sir, come help get my mother in." "Well let's go, child." They went down through the streets into the back part of that city, down to a little hovel of a home. There she was on a deathbed, no nurses to attend, no doctor there, no hospice, this precious little girl watching her mother die. The woman looked up at the minister and his heart was broken. She said, "Are you a minister?" "Yes, madam."

“Are you a man of God?” “Well I want to be.” “Can you tell me how to get to heaven? I’m dying.” Do you know what he did? He began to give her platitudes about God’s love, about the goodness of God, about the beauties of heaven, about how God is merciful, and all of this, and how it pays to live a Godly life. And after a while, she just shook her head at him and said, “Don’t you understand? I’m dying. I can’t do any of that. I can’t live a good life. I can’t do all of those things that you’re talking about, and I’m about to die. Don’t you have a message for a dying woman like me?” And this man realized he didn’t have a message for a woman like that, but he remembered—and mothers, I want you to hear this on Mother’s Day—he remembered his mother, who was a godly, praying woman, who believed in the old-time religion. And he told her the story, not really believing it himself, how Jesus came to this earth, took our sins, and carried them to the cross in agony and blood, and said, “It’s finished,” and paid the sin debt, and how Jesus walked out of the grave. And then he told her, “The Bible says, *‘For God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.’* (John 3:16) And, if you will pray and ask Him to come into your heart, He will forgive your sin, and He will save you.” Later on, here’s what that preacher said, and here’s how we know the story. He said to a group of preachers when he was giving his testimony. He said, “Gentlemen, that night that lady got Him, and so did I—so did I. I realized that my so-called religion was not enough. I needed Jesus. And so do you.” *“Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”* (Romans 10:4)

Now, Paul’s heart’s prayer and heart desire to God for Israel was that they might be saved, and that’s my desire for you today. Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Father, I pray, I pray now that many in this day, in this room, in this hour, will give their hearts to Jesus, and people who are listening, wherever it may be, will come into your fullness, O Lord, into your richness. We thank you, Lord. We thank you in Jesus’ holy name. Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you would like to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, if you would just pray and tell Him that you’re a sinner, that you cannot save yourself, that you believe that Jesus Christ paid your sin debt on the cross with His blood, then pray like this: “Lord Jesus, I turn from my sin to you. I confess you as Lord. I believe that God raised you from the dead, and I trust you to save me. Help me never to be ashamed of you. In your name, amen.”<sup>f</sup>

# This Thing Called Salvation

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** April 22, 1984

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 10:1–13

*“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

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Condition of Salvation
- II. The Confession of Salvation
- III. The Commitment of Salvation
- IV. The Confidence of Salvation
- V. The Courage of Salvation
- VI. The Consequences of Salvation

Conclusion

## Introduction

We’re reading Romans chapter 10. The Book of Romans has been called the Constitution of Christianity, and if you had to be shipwrecked on an island with the Bible, I don’t think you could do better than the Book of Romans.

Romans chapter 10: *“Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 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. For the scripture*

*saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:1–13).*

I ask you a question—I hope most of you already know the answer: What is the greatest need that man has? Is it education? Is man’s greatest need economic? Is man’s greatest need social? What is man’s greatest need? I say it without contradiction and without equivocation: man’s greatest need is salvation. If man’s greatest need had been healing, Jesus would have come primarily as a healer; but He did not. If man’s greatest need would have been economic, Jesus would have come primarily as one who led in that realm, but He did not. He did not come primarily as a social worker. Jesus Christ is a Savior—a Savior.

We don’t have to guess as to why Jesus came, because the Bible tells us in Luke chapter 19 and verse 10: *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). That’s why Jesus left the glories of Heaven; that’s why Jesus came to this old sin-cursed earth; that’s why he suffered, bled, and died, was buried and raised again: that he might save the lost. Salvation *is man’s* greatest need, *and as long as I’m the pastor of this church I’m going to be* preaching *salvation, so help me God.*

Now I was talking to some people the other day, and they said, “Well, there’s just one thing wrong with our pastor: he’s just too evangelistic.” Impossible! Impossible for a preacher to be too evangelistic! Now there are people who really don’t like an evangelistic church. There are people really who don’t like pleading for souls, and giving a gospel invitation. To some people, it’s undignified, and to other people, it’s a bother. There are some people that get a little hacked if the invitation goes to long, because they want to be first in the cafeteria line. I’ve never let those people bother me, and I know every now and then they’ll move their membership to another church. That doesn’t bother me either. I’m not trying to be arrogant about it; but I’ll tell you there’s something wrong with people that don’t know how to plead and pray for souls during an invitation period. There’s something wrong with their Christianity. I wonder if they even know the Lord Jesus that I know?

Friend, that’s what it’s all about, that’s the bottom line—and incidentally, do you know what I’ve discovered in many years of ministry? Those who leave because you’re evangelistic, go to somewhere else. Don’t worry about it. For every one you’ll lose, you’ll gain ten, and the ones you get will be a lot better than the ones you lose. I’ll just promise you that. And *if you try to* please everybody, *you’ll please the devil most of all.*

*A church that is* worthy *of the ground upon which it sits, must be an* evangelistic *church.* And may God always help this place to be, as my pastor friend in Florida says, “a lighthouse for the lost, and a greenhouse for the saved.” And I believe we have to

keep those things in balance. I believe we must preach in such a way as to help the saints to grow, but, at the same time, to be wooing the lost for Jesus Christ.

Now I want to talk to you about this thing called salvation, and since I hadn't given my message a title until just now, I'll just call it that: "This Thing Called Salvation." That sounds good enough to me, and that's what we're going to call our message this evening: "This Thing Called Salvation." And there are several things I want you to see about it, and they all come around an Easter theme.

## I. The Condition of Salvation

The very first thing I want you to see is what I want to call the condition of salvation. "*Brethren, my hearts desire and prayer to God*"—verses 1 to 4; here it is—"*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 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. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth*" (Romans 10:1–4).

Now what is the condition of salvation? If you were to go out here and ask the average man on the street, "How does a man get to Heaven? How does a man become a child of God?" I dare say, if you were just to go randomly, at least nine out of ten would tell you something that a man must do in order to be saved; that is, some form of works. He would say, "Well, do good; keep the Ten Commandments; obey the Golden Rule; go through particular rituals; treat a fellow as you want to be treated," or whatever. He'd have his little standard of morality; and he thinks that somehow salvation is a goal to be achieved by living good. Man, classically, gets things backwards and he just always does that. You know, the Bible says, "*Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*" (Matthew 6:33). Man generally puts things first, and God second, and they wonder why neither things, nor God, work out.

The Bible says, for example, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ...and then be baptized" (Acts 16:31–33). So many denominations take little babies, little infants, and baptize them; and then, when they grow up, they teach them to believe. That's absolutely backward. We just get it backward. Isn't that strange? When the Bible says, "Believe and be baptized," real baptism follows real belief. And *if you were* baptized before *you were* saved, *that's like having your funeral before you die. You have gotten it* backward.

Or, for example, the Bible says, "*Except ye...become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 18:3). What do we do when a little child comes forward? We ask that little child a lot of adult questions, and, if the little child

can't answer the adult questions, we say the little child is not ready to be saved. But to the contrary, God says it's the adult that has to become like the little child, and we just got everything all backward. When man comes to spiritual things, he generally gets things inverted, and he gets them 180 degrees out of sync.

Now the people in Paul's day, the Jewish nation, the custodians of the faith, they had it all figured out. They thought they knew how to be saved; they thought they could be saved by keeping the law. They were religious, but they were lost. And I want to tell you—*the hardest man to reach is not the thief, not the drunkard, not the dope pusher; the hardest man to reach for salvation is a religious man who's never met the Lord Jesus Christ. Because you can never get that man to see that he's lost.* He thinks that he has a form of godliness, he has a zeal of God. Look again in verses 2 to 3: *"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 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 10:2–3).

Now the Apostle Paul had that same problem. I want to read you something from Philippians, chapter 3. Here's how Paul describes himself in verses 4 to 7: *"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless."* Now you think a man who had all that religious zeal and all of those things going for him, you would think that certainly that would be enough. *"But,"*—Paul said—*"what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ"* (Philippians 3:4–7).

Now what does all that mean? Paul saw that all of his religious background, all of his good deeds, all of his law-keeping, all of the rest of it, all of his religious assets were actually liabilities. They had to be taken from the profit side of the ledger and put on the loss side of the ledger. All of the things that I count as gain, now I count them but loss.

Now how could all of these things, as wonderful as they seem, and as good as they seem, how could they be things that Paul said were loss to me? Well, let me explain it. You might have a beautiful highway, a super highway, fine as it can be; but, if you're going the wrong way on that highway, rather than getting to your goal, it is taking you further and further away from your desired destination. Now Paul's highway was a beautiful highway, but the only problem is that it was headed in the wrong way, away from Christ. As the Bible says, in the Book of Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 12: *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

Now listen to the way of salvation. Here's the condition of salvation—look in verse 4:

*“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”* (Romans 10:4). Now there’s nothing wrong with the law. God gave the law. But the law is but a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ. The law, the Ten Commandments, and all of the other things that cling to and around the Ten Commandments, all those were given for us to show us that we cannot keep them apart from Christ. The law says, “This do, and thou shalt live”; the gospel says, “Live, and then, thou shalt do.” The law says, “Pay me what you owe me”; the gospel says, “I freely forgive all.” The law says, *“Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might”* (Deuteronomy 6:5); the gospel says, *“Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins”* (1 John 4:10). The law says, *“Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”* (Galatians 3:10); the gospel says, *“Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered”* (Romans 4:7). The law says, *“The wages of sin is death”*; the gospel says, *“The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord”* (Romans 6:23). The law demands holiness; the gospel provides holiness. The law says, “Do”; the gospel says, “Done.” The law makes blessing the result of obedience; the gospel makes obedience the results of blessings. The law places the day of rest at the end the week’s work—those under the law keep Saturday; the gospel places it at the beginning of the week’s work—we keep the Lord’s Day. The law says, “If”; the gospel says, “Therefore.” Under the law, salvation is a wage; under the gospel, salvation is a gift. The law says, “Run,” but it gives us no legs; the gospel says, “Fly,” and it gives us wings. *“For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth”* (Romans 10:4).

You can’t be saved by keeping the Ten Commandments. You never could be saved. Salvation *is not a* reward *for the* righteous; *it is a* gift *for the* guilty. And so what is the condition of salvation? That we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and trust Him alone, and Him always, for our salvation.

## **II. The Confession of Salvation**

Now the second thing I want you to notice is the confession of salvation. Look in verse 6 and following: *“But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; 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 10:6–10). I’ve already spoken to you about

the condition of salvation, the confession of salvation. Now what these verses are telling us, verses 6 through 10, is this: that salvation is available to every person, no matter where he is; and it may be much closer to you than you think for you to go on a holy pilgrimage, for you to find the Lord.

While I'm speaking to you, there are those who have been in Bethlehem that we just sang about—"Bethlehem, He was Born There." And there are those who take a pilgrimage to Jerusalem this time of the year. There are those who take a pilgrimage to Galilee this time of the year. What are they going over there for? I enjoy going to the Holy Land, but I don't go over there to seek God. I certainly don't go over there to seek salvation. Friend, if the God that I serve is not right here, I don't want Him. As a matter of fact, He is everywhere and...—listen to what the Scripture says. The Scripture says, "*The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth*" (Romans 10:8), so we don't have to go on a pilgrimage.

Look. Look what he's saying. He's saying here, we don't have to, in verse 6—"Say *not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above...)*" (Romans 10:6). You don't have to go up to Heaven and say, "God, won't you send your Son? Please, God, send your Son into the world. Please let Him come down as the Savior of men." Friend, He has already come, He has already been born in Bethlehem, and so, I don't have to go to Heaven and invite God to send His Son. Or, notice again in verse 7: "*Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead)*" (Romans 10:7). I don't have to try to persuade God to raise His Son from the dead; Jesus has already been raised from the dead.

Now what is he saying here? Listen to me. Here's a great truth. If you're an unsaved person, pay attention. I don't need to go to the heights to bring Christ down. I don't need to go to the depths to bring Christ up. Christ has already come down, and Christ has already been raised from the dead. Salvation is near; He's already come from the grave. Jesus Christ is alive and well. He's in this building tonight. And the word is nigh thee. Let me just tell you how close Jesus is to you tonight. You might be surprised just how close Jesus Christ is tonight—Jesus Christ.

The Word of God that tells about Jesus Christ is already in your heart, and is already in your mouth. An unsaved person—listen to it now, listen to it: "*But what saith it?*"—verse 8—"The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart" (Romans 10:8). "Well," you say, "how did the Word of God get in my mouth? How did the Word of God get in my heart?" I just put it there. I just put it in your mouth. I just put it in your heart. How? It is the word of faith, which we preach. What I'm doing right now is putting the word in your heart. What I'm doing is putting the word in your mouth. You're not yet saved.

Now pay attention to what Paul is saying. Paul is saying you don't have to go and

turn your mouth up to Heaven and say, “Oh, God, please send Jesus to come down.” You don’t have to send Him to the heights, and you don’t have to say, “Oh, Jesus, please come out of the grave.” You don’t have to do that; that’s all been done. Now listen. All you have to do is to take this word that I’m preaching to you tonight. I have put it into your heart; I have preached it into your mouth. It is there, it is there right now—that’s how close your salvation is.

The Word of God is nigh in your heart, the Word of God is nigh in your mouth, and is waiting on one thing: for you to believe in your heart, and to confess with your mouth. The Word is already there. I mean, that’s how close you are to salvation. I have taken the Word of God tonight, and with the anointing of the Holy Spirit, I pray and I trust, I have put that word in your heart and I have put that word in your mouth; it is there waiting to be articulated, after you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are just that close to salvation.

Everyone sitting here tonight, listen to it again: *“But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach”* (Romans 10:8). And I want to tell you, dear friend, what you do with that word that I put in your heart and in your mouth is very, very important. You’re not yet saved, even though I put the word in your heart. You’re not saved, even though I put the word in your mouth. There is something you must do, you must say *amen* with your heart, and you must confess with your mouth. Notice in verse 9: *“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).

Now I want you to notice the relationship between the heart and the mouth. We’re talking here about the confession of salvation. You see, when you believe in your heart, that’s private; but when you confess with your mouth, that’s public. Are both a part of salvation? Absolutely, totally. For what a man truly believes in his heart, he will confess with his mouth. Confession is but faith turned inside out, and therefore confession brings possession.

Now pay attention. The condition of salvation is to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. How can a man believe? There must be a preacher. We don’t have to go off looking for Christ—He’s here. Not in the heavens above, or in the depths below—He’s here. And what we need is a man of God, a preacher, who will take the Word of God and preach Christ into the hearts of people, and into the mouths of people.

Now they’re ready to believe with their heart and confess with their mouth, and the moment a person who hears the Word of God says, “All right, I do believe with my heart, I say *amen* with my heart, and then, I confess with my mouth,” that person then is saved. Confession brings possession.

Now you need to understand what the word *confess* means. Look at it here in verse

9: “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus*” (Romans 10:9). Do you know what the word *confess* literally means? It means, “agree with”—“agree with.” That is, when you come into agreement with God, when you put away your own self-righteousness and your own ways, and you say, “Okay, God, I agree—I agree with you.” The moment you agree with God by faith, salvation takes place. You see, God doesn’t take rebels to Heaven.

Now here’s what happens. A preacher may preach, and someone will come forward in that service, and that person is seeking God, perhaps; he wants to know God. And so the soul winner takes the Word of God, and he reads the Scripture to him, and shows him how to be saved, by trusting in Christ. According to verse 4, it says, you’re not saved by keeping the Ten Commandments—you’re saved by faith in the Lord Jesus. Would you pray and ask Him to come into your heart? And so the penitent sinner bows his head and he prays like this: “Lord, I’m a sinner, and I’m lost, and I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. I open my heart, I invite you to come into my heart and save me Lord Jesus. Amen.”

Now is he saved? I don’t know whether he is or not. I know what he said; but I don’t know whether he’s saved or not, because, you see, just repeating words can’t save anybody. You understand that, don’t you? “But,” I ask him—I suppose I’m a soul winner—I say, “All right now, you prayed and asked Christ to come into your heart. Did Christ come into your heart? Are you saved?” He says, “Well, I don’t know. I hope so. I’d like to be. I need to be. I don’t know whether I’m saved or not. I said those words, but I don’t know whether I’m saved or not.” I’ll tell you, friend, he’s not—he’s not.

But now, let’s get somebody else. I bring him down here and I say, “There’s the gospel. I put it into your heart. I put it into your mouth. I preach it into your heart. I preach it into your mouth.” I say, “Let’s pray.” He prays, “Lord God, I’m a sinner. I’m lost. I need to be saved. I open my heart. I receive Jesus Christ as my Savior. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin, and save me.” I look up, I say, “That’s wonderful! Now let me ask you a question—Are you saved?” “Yes, I am.” “How do you know you’re saved?” “Well, God said if I believed and confessed with my mouth, that I am saved. And I do believe, I do confess—I am saved.”

And when he says he’s saved, do you know what? God says he’s saved too. Listen. *When you say amen to what God says, God says amen to what you say.* Do you understand what I’m saying? When a man believes in his heart and confesses with his mouth, he is saved.

Now some people just don’t believe that they can take God at His word, and therefore, they’re always hoping, wanting, wishing, but never saying, “Bless God, I believe I am saved.” Now when you come to that place of spiritual audacity, to take God at His word and say, “God is not playing games; God means business; I believe; I

confess; I'm saved," and God says, "Yes, you are saved," that's what it's all about. *"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). My dear friend, what you say about it is what God is going to say, and, if we could only learn to stand on the Word of God and say, "Yes, by God's grace—hallelujah!—I am saved."

You don't have to run off looking all over the universe for Jesus. He's here tonight. And you don't have to run off all over looking for the word of God. I tell you, you're so close to salvation, that salvation is right now. That word of God concerning salvation is right now in your heart. It is right now in your mouth, just waiting on you to believe with your heart, and confess with you mouth.

### **III. The Commitment of Salvation**

Now let's move on; just stay where you are, we're going to move on in the Scripture. All right now—number one, the condition of salvation: Christ is the end of the law for righteousness for everyone that believeth—that's the condition. The confession of salvation: *"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). Now the next thing I want you to notice is the commitment of salvation. Look again, if you will, in verse 9: *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus..."*—literally, "that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus is Lord"—*"thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:9). Now pay attention. Salvation is the gift of God; but you cannot have God's gift, you cannot receive what Jesus gives, unless you also receive who Jesus is, and Jesus is Lord. These are more than mere words. Early Christians were fed to the lions because they were willing to repeat these words: "Jesus Christ is Lord."

Now I hear people today talk about accepting Christ as your Savior. Have you received Christ as your Savior? I use that terminology sometimes, and I suppose we all do, but, if I wanted to be very technical about it, I'd have to tell you I don't find that terminology in the Bible. We don't receive Christ as our Savior. He *is* our Savior, but we receive Christ—period. Period. And that means all that comes with it.

Now just before I went into pulpit, I had a counseling session with a couple going to get married—that couple is here tonight. But suppose Jane and Steve stand before me and I turn to Steve and I say, "Steve, will you take Jane to be your lawfully wedded wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, in sickness and health," and so forth, and he says, "Well now, let me think about that. Well, I tell you what—I will take her as

housekeeper; I will take her as sweetheart; my, well, that's all I'm going to take her as." She says, "I won't take you at all, Bud." Now listen. You don't take her as something—you take her, you take her. You don't just take Jesus as your Savior. He is your Savior, but He is Lord. Do you know the Bible calls him Lord 433 times, and calls Him Savior 24 times? "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth, that Jesus is Lord." Is He the Lord of your life? I mean, is He the Lord of your life? People say, "Now that you've received Him as your Savior, why not make Him your Lord?" I want to tell you, dear friend, if He's not your Lord, I don't think He is your Savior.

Salvation *is not the* cafeteria line *where you say, "I believe I'll have a little* Saviorhood *today, but no* Lordship, *thank you."* "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus...*" (Romans 10:9)—this is the commitment of salvation. Are you committed to His Lordship? I am. I don't believe that I'm saved by obeying Him, but I obey Him because I'm saved. And the greatest desire of my life is to please the One who is my Lord. That's the commitment of salvation.

#### **IV. The Confidence of Salvation**

Now I want you to see something else—I want you to see the confidence of salvation. Notice again: "*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). Now why did the Apostle Paul say that? Why didn't he say, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in thine heart in the virgin birth"? Or, "Believe in thine heart in the crucifixion"? Or, "Believe in thine heart in this deity, thou shalt be saved"?

I'll tell you why: the resurrection of Jesus Christ includes all of those others; the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the capstone of all of those others. If you believe in His resurrection, of course you believe in His incarnation. He had to be a man in order to live and die, and be buried, to be raised again. If you believe in His resurrection, of course you believe in His crucifixion; because He had to be crucified in order to be raised again. If you believe in His resurrection, of course you believe in His deity; because God would not have raised a charlatan, a fake, or a fraud. And so you see, it is the resurrection of Jesus Christ which is the capstone of all of the other miracles, and that's the reason I have chosen this text for this Sunday night: "*That if thou shalt thou confess with thy mouth that [Jesus is Lord], and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*" (Romans 10:9).

Now don't you worry your pretty little head about trying to figure out how God raised Jesus from the dead, or how he's going to raise us up either—that's God's business; He's still God.

**There was a missionary many years ago before we had the communications that we**

have in the world today. And this English missionary was speaking to a Burmese prince, and he was telling this Burmese prince about life in England; and, among other things, he told him about the cold winters in England, and he told him about skiing, and he told him about ice-skating on the water. Now the man in Burma had never seen ice, and, after he finished, the man said to the missionary—the prince: “I know you’re a good man, and I know you try to be honest; but,” he said, “if everybody in the world were to testify to me that water could become so hard that you could walk on it, I still wouldn’t believe it.” He had no way to conceptualize, he did not know what ice was, and he just said it’s impossible. Those who live in Northern climates take it for granted. Now friend, just ’cause you can’t understand something, don’t say it can’t happen. Listen. Jesus Christ came out of that grave; and that is the confidence of salvation.

## V. The Courage of Salvation

Now there’s one other thing I want you to see, and that is the courage of salvation. Look, if you will, in verse 11: *“For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed”* (Romans 10:11). That’s why, when I finish preaching tonight, I’m going to ask those of you in whose heart I have put the Word of God, those of you in whose mouth I have put the Word of God; I am going to ask you, when I finish preaching tonight, to leave your seat and come forward—if you believe that Jesus is Lord, if you believe that God raised Him from the dead. If you are willing to say *amen* to what God says, I’m going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. Why? For the Scripture says, “Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.”

Do you know what this word *ashamed* literally means? It means he’ll not be in a hurry to get away. Have you ever been in a group of people, having a wonderful conversation, and you bring up Jesus? He’ll kind of look at his wife and say, “Excuse me, I’ve got to go.” Or, if you are in a restaurant and you say, “Let’s ask God to bless the food,” he gets all hot under the collar, and he looks around; you know, he’s just embarrassed. Brother, I want to tell you, I’m not embarrassed about Jesus. I’m not embarrassed about Jesus. I’m not in a hurry to get away when His name is mentioned.

Where is John Bramlett? John, I thought I saw you here somewhere. Where are you, John? There he sits. I remember after ole’ big, bold John Bramlett got saved, I saw you, John, at a Memphis State football game. And a couple of your old buddies from the old life came up to you, and they had a bottle of *hooch* in their hip pocket, and they said, “John!—John Bramlett! How are you doing?” John says, “Wonderful, brother! Did I tell you what Jesus has done for me?” And boy, did it get quiet around there. I’ll tell you. I don’t know whether you remember that or not, John? I’m not ashamed of Jesus; but I almost wanted to duck, you were so bold. That’s what the Scripture says. Oh, my friend, that is the courage of salvation: *“For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him*

*shall not be ashamed*" (Romans 10:11). I'm not ashamed of Jesus. God gave us a burning, passionate, blazing emotion—a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us. He's Lord. He has been raised from the dead.

## **VI. The Consequences of Salvation**

Now there's one other thing, and I'll be finished. I want to speak to you not only about the courage of this salvation, but I want to speak to you about the consequences of salvation. Look, if you will now, in verses 12 and 13. Paul says, *"For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved"* (Romans 10:12–13). And I have chosen this little phrase: *"the...Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him."* Do you know what that literally means? Phillips translates it this way: "His boundless resources are available unto all." He is rich unto all—His boundless resources.

I was sitting up here on the platform, thinking about something, and it almost frightened me when I thought about it. I realized that I have almost been saved 40 years. Now I know that's hard for you to believe, because I look like I'm 20; but I have almost been saved 40 years. I was sitting over here thinking about it before I got up to preach—40 years. And I was thinking about this verse, and I thought how true it is: His boundless resources have been available to me! And I am here to testify to you, not one time has He failed—not one, not one time. Oh, the same Lord over all is rich, rich, rich unto all that call upon Him! That's the consequences of salvation. Now of His infinite riches in Jesus, He giveth and giveth and giveth!

## **Conclusion**

Again, my testimony to you this Easter season is, we have a wonderful dear Savior. And the condition of salvation is, to believe in the Lord Jesus. The confession of salvation is, *"confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus"* (Romans 10:9). The courage of salvation is, not to be afraid of the Lord Jesus. The confidence of salvation is, that *"God hath raised Him from the dead"* (Romans 10:9); the consequences: He's *"rich unto all that call upon him"* (Romans 10:12). Let's bow in prayer.

# Authentic Christianity

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: July 14, 1996**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 10:11–17**

*“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*

ROMANS 10:17

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Object of Faith

II. The Origin of Faith

III. The Objective of Faith

IV. The Operation of Faith

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you be finding in God’s Word Romans chapter 10? When you’ve found it, look up here. In just a moment, we’re going to read some selected verses from Romans chapter 10, but let me tell you today that we are talking about faith. Now, faith—faith—is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of heaven. If you go to the grocery store for a loaf of bread, you use dollars, but when you come to heaven’s bakery for a loaf of bread, and pray, “give us this day our daily bread,” you must come with your hands filled with faith, because, you see, faith possesses what grace provides—faith possesses what grace provides. Now, grace is God’s ability; faith is our responsibility, and in order to have the blessings of God, in order to please God, we’ve got to be people of faith. And, folks, if there was ever a day, a time, for an earth-shaking, mountain-moving, devil-defying faith in God, this is the day, and this is the time.

The Bible tells us that unbelief is the supreme evil. Do you know why men today are lost, die, and go to hell? Not because they’re liars, thieves, or perverts, but people die and go to hell today because they believe not. The Bible says, “He that believeth on us is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed.” There’s no greater sin than to aim the gun of unbelief at God and pull the trigger. The Bible says, “He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.” Unbelief says, “You, God, cannot be trusted. If You exist, You’re not a trustworthy God.” It was unbelief that locked the doors of Canaan and kept the people of Israel in the wilderness for forty years. It was unbelief that tied the hands of Jesus in Nazareth when there were so

many sick that needed to be blessed, so many who needed His touch, but the Bible says, “He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief.” And I’ll tell you today that your unbelief can tie the hands of Jesus in your life, and Jesus wants to move in and to bless you. The Bible teaches that the very life of a Christian is to be the life of faith. Now, you are in Romans chapter 10, but in Romans chapter 1, verse 17, the Bible puts it in one sentence: “The just shall live by faith.” That’s the way you’re to live. That’s the way you’re to draw your breath. That’s the way you’re to serve God—by faith. The Bible says, if we can believe, nothing is impossible, but may I tell you that, in the spiritual realm, if you do not believe, nothing is possible.

I want you to notice with me today four things about faith, as they come out of our text that we’re going to read, but, first of all, let’s read together, beginning in verse 11: “For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.” That literally means you’ll not be put to shame, you’ll not be disappointed. It pays to serve Jesus. “For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever...”—and I’m glad that’s there—“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 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? and how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

## **I. The Object of Faith**

I’m going to stop reading there, and let me begin to talk to you about biblical faith, and, first of all, let me talk to you about the object of faith, because, you see, faith is no better than its object. Now, of course, our object, the true object of faith, is God Himself. Look in verse 11: “For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him”—I’m sick and tired of people saying, “Well, just believe. Just believe. Have faith.” The question that rushes to the threshold of my mind is, “Faith in what?” Faith is no better than its object. The power of faith, the authenticity of faith, is in its object. You see, friend, people think that there’s something mystical or magical about just believing, that believing makes it so. Believing does not make it so. It is God that our faith must be in. Now, we remember over there when Jesus had withered a fig tree, and the disciples were amazed, in Mark chapter 11, that Jesus had withered a fig tree, and He said, “Why, if you have faith in God, you can say to this mountain, Be removed, and be cast into the midst of the sea.” I often hear people say, “Faith moves mountains.” No, no, no, no. God moves mountains. It is God that moves mountains. “Jesus answered and saith unto them, Have faith in

God”—and, in the emphatic there. He’s not saying, “Have *faith* in God.” He’s saying, “Have faith in *God*.” When you have faith in God, it is God that moves mountains.

Faith is not, therefore, positive thinking. Now, I like positive thinking. As a matter of fact, I like to be around positive thinkers. I don’t like to be around negative people. I don’t like to get behind a person when I’m driving who expects every light to turn red, and by the time we get there it has. I don’t like that! I mean, I like positive thinking. And positive thinking can do some things, but it can’t do everything. A little boy came home and told his dad, he said, “Dad, I think I flunked my math test.” His dad said, “Oh, son, don’t say it that way. Be positive!” He said, “Okay, Dad, I’m positive I flunked my math test.” There, there are some things that positive thinking can do, and there are some things that positive thinking cannot do. But, you see, what positive thinking is, is merely faith in yourself, when you think about it. It’s not faith in God. It’s faith in your self. And if you simply live your life by positive thinking, I can tell you, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, that will only last you so long, and then you’re going to come to great disappointment, because it’s going to dawn on you that you do not have what it takes.

I’m going to tell you something else. When you put faith in faith, not only is it going to lead to disappointment; it’s going to make you a victim of Satan’s attack. You see, Satan wants to sever your relationship with God. Well, what is it that ties you to God? It’s faith. So, where is Satan’s warfare? Satan’s warfare is against your faith. Now, don’t spend so much time examining your faith. Spend time getting to know God. I’m going to say more about that in just a moment, because the object of faith is God Himself. Now, what the devil wants you to do is to look to anything but God. Satan will get you looking around at other church members, and he’ll say, “Look at those hypocrites.” Or Satan will get you to looking at sinners, and he’ll begin to tell you about all of the evil, wicked, diabolical schemes of the people of this world in order to get you discouraged. Or, somehow, Satan will get you to looking at your emotions, and how do you feel, and, do you feel like you’re saved? Or, do you feel like you’re a child of God? He’ll do anything to keep you from looking to Jesus, but the Bible says we’re to be looking unto Jesus—Hebrews 12, verse 2—the Author and Finisher of our faith. Sometimes Satan will get us to look at Satan.

Now, friend, you need to glance at Satan; you need to gaze at God. Don’t become obsessed with evil, but overcome evil with good. Look to God. Have faith in God. But if the devil cannot get you to look at others, if the devil cannot get you to look at yourself and your emotions, if the devil cannot get you to look at him, do you know what the devil will do? This is the slyest trick of all. The devil will get you to examining your faith, and he’ll give you this much. He’ll say, “All right, all right, yes, sure. Sure, you know God by faith; yes, I agree to that. But how do you know that your faith is strong enough?” Now,

folks, if the devil hasn't done that to you, just hang on to your wheel. Now, listen. Don't put faith in faith. Put faith in God. You see, it is not the strength of your faith or the quality of your faith. The weakest faith that links you to God is better than the strongest unbelief or faith in the wrong object. Just put your faith in Almighty God. And if the devil ever comes to me, and he says to me, "Adrian, your faith is so weak, it is no good." I just say, "Yeah, devil, you're right, but isn't Jesus wonderful?" Isn't Jesus wonderful? And, you see, folks, it is faith in Jesus, not faith in faith. Here's what Charles Spurgeon had to say about it. He said, "The weakness of your faith will not destroy you. A trembling hand may receive a golden gift." I love that. Don't put faith in faith. You see, it is the sort of faith—not the size of faith—that counts. Have faith in God.

I remember reading in Mark chapter 9 about a father who had a son, a demon-possessed boy, and the father wanted Jesus to do something for this boy. And the father said, "Lord, if You can, do something for my son." And here's what the Lord said, in Mark chapter 9, verse 23: "Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth"—If thou canst believe. Now, he said, "Lord, if You can do something." Jesus said, "You've got the if in the wrong place. I can do it. If you can believe, all things are possible." And then here's what this father said, and I've resonated with this so many times, and I know that this is the heartbeat of many hearts here today—verse 24: "And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief." Don't you love that? Lord, I believe! Help my unbelief! None of us have ever had perfect faith, but he had faith, and Jesus moved in and did for this man what needed to be done. So, we are to be looking unto Jesus.

Now, folks, let me tell you something. If you want strong faith, don't try to work up faith. Get to know God. Get to know God, the object of our faith. If you want to cross a bridge, and you're not certain whether it can hold you up or not, you could sit trembling on one side trying to stir up enough courage to cross that bridge, but if you observe the bridge, and you notice the bridge is made of steel and concrete, and then you see great semi-trucks going back and forth across it, then you don't have to make yourself believe, because as you see the bridge and what it can do, faith is what? It's the by-product. It's the outgrowth of just simply seeing what that bridge is and what it can do.

Now, you are to put your eyes upon Jesus, and the Bible says you are to be "looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Now, it's not great faith in God we need nearly, nearly so much as it is faith in the great God. I've often used this illustration. My lovely wife Joyce, who's here today, that I love with all my heart, and my grade-school sweetheart, has been a wonderful and a precious wife to me through many, many years. Sometimes I travel, and somebody might ask, "Well, Adrian, when you are gone, who watches Joyce for you?" I say, "What do you mean?" "Well, how do you know that Joyce doesn't have a boyfriend when you're gone?" "What's that?" "How do you know

that Joyce does not have a boyfriend when you're out of town?" "I'm not worried about that." "You're not worried about that?" "Not at all." "Not even a little bit?" "Not one scintilla of an iota, for a skinny second, am I worried about that." And you'd say, "Oh, what great faith!" I'd say, "Oh, no, what a great wife! What a great wife!" Now, folks, you see, it's not really a compliment to call somebody a great person of faith. If there is a compliment, the compliment goes to God, because the only reason any of us can have great faith is because we have a great God. Do you understand this? So, what should you do? If you want faith to grow in your heart, understand the object of faith is God Himself, and get to know God.

Put these verses in the margin of your Bible—Psalm 9, verse 10: "And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee." Now, the name stands for the character, the attributes, the abilities of God. "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." And, again, the Bible says, in Daniel 11 and verse 32—and I love this verse; it says this: "But the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits"—the people that do know their God. So, what is the object of faith? Who is the object of faith? God Himself—God Himself. So, if you would have strong faith, number one, you must know God. Because to know God is to love Him, and to love Him is to trust Him. To trust Him is to obey Him. And to obey Him is to be blessed.

## **II. The Origin of Faith**

Now here's number two: not only must you see the object of faith, but you must understand the origin of faith—the origin of faith. How does faith come? Well, look, if you will, in verse 14: "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?" Now, skip down to verse 17: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Plain English: faith comes by hearing God—by hearing the Word of God. And so, while the object of faith is God Himself, the origin of faith is the Word of God. It's not enough that you know God or even believe that God exists. You must hear God. You can never have faith unless you hear God. Now, folks, that was a good "amen," but it didn't get one. Maybe I didn't say it right. Now, there's a good place for an amen. Listen. You cannot have faith until you hear from God. Okay?

Now, faith is not guessing at the will of God. You can never have faith if you're merely guessing at the will of God. Faith is believing what God has said. You can't have a better definition of that. Faith is believing what God has said. The Bible says, in verse 17, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." We have these fellows on television today, these joy boys preaching, who say, "Just name it and claim it." There's a Greek word for that, and it's baloney. Now, listen. You can't name it and claim it. That makes you God. You can believe it and receive it, but you can't believe it until

you get a word from God. You see, if you were to name it and claim it, you'd make a terrible mess out of things. There's an ancient fable about a King Midas who wanted the gift, he loved gold so much, he wanted what is called the "Midas Touch," that everything he would touch would turn to gold. He got his wish, and for a while, everything was wonderful. He was turning everything to gold, until he kissed his daughter, and she turned to gold. Started to eat some food, and it turned to gold, and he realized what he had thought was a blessing was a curse. And if we had faith that we could spend for whatever we want, we'd make a tremendous mess out of things, wouldn't we? You see, faith is the way that God controls things, because God's not going to give you faith for anything that is out of His will. You don't generate faith. You don't work it up. Faith comes.

Now, in the natural realm, you can generate faith. I gave the illustration of crossing a bridge, and you can have faith in that bridge. You can have faith in a chair. You think the chair is strong enough, you're exercising faith in the seat that you're in. If you're out in a restaurant today, and eat a meal, that's faith, and it's taking more every day, but that's natural faith. If you get sick, the doctor tells you that you have a disease you've never heard of, he writes a prescription that you cannot read, for a medicine whose name you cannot pronounce, and a druggist that you don't know gives you a bottle of liquid that tastes like poison, and you take it, and go back for more. Now, that's faith; that's faith in the natural realm, but you can't take that kind of faith and put it over in the spiritual realm. In the spiritual realm, you've got to hear from God. It is not self-generated. You don't work it up. It comes down.

Now, let me give you a couple of verses. Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." What is the gift of God? The grace and the faith. The gift of God. That's the gift of God. God gives you salvation, and then God gives you faith to believe for salvation. Let me give you another verse—Philippians 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." It is given to you to believe on Him. You see, the instrument that God uses—the origin of faith—is the Word of God.

Now, if you want faith, stop asking God to give you faith, and start studying the Word of God. Saturate your soul with the Word of God. Learn how to meditate. Learn how to listen to God till you get a word from God. Now, without a word from God, you don't have real faith. You remember what the Bible says over there in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1? It says this: that "faith—faith—is the substance of things hoped for." Now, listen. We use the word hope in a different sense than which the writers of the Bible used the word hope. The Bible uses the word hope to mean bedrock, rock-ribbed assurance based on the Word of God.

For example, the Bible calls the Second Coming of Jesus what? The blessed hope. Not the blessed maybe; the blessed certainty. How do I know that Jesus is coming again? Because God has said so. He cannot lie, and I know that Christ is coming again. Therefore, that is a blessed hope. Now, the Bible says, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for." What does the word substance mean? Well, the English word substance, sub-stands, something beneath that we stand on, something that's solid. Substance means that we're not walking around on eggshells and Jell-O. Now, the Greek word has very much the same meaning. Faith is the solid ground that we stand on because of hope that is a rock-ribbed promise from the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Now, if you don't hear God, you're only guessing at the will of God, and if you're only guessing at the will of God, how do you expect to have faith? The origin of faith is the Word of God, because faith is believing what God has said. Oh, if we could only learn this!

Now, how does God communicate His Word? Well, look again in this verse. It says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." There are two Greek words for the word word. One Greek word is the word logos, and the other Greek word is the word rhema. Now logos means the revelation of God, like the Bible is the logos of God. It's the complete revelation; it is the factual truth of our faith. That's the logos. But He doesn't use that word in verse 17; He uses the word rhema, which means a spoken word, a communication, where somebody speaks to you and says, "This is right," and that's what He uses in this verse. So He says that faith comes when God communicates to you, when God speaks to you. So many people think that they use the Bible in the wrong way. They kind of use the Bible as sort of a talisman. They say, "Oh, I believe the Bible is the Word of God." Well, folks, I believe it's the Word of God, too, but if that's all you have, you've just got paper bound in leather. You know, you see one of these B-grade movies, and the vampire's coming in, and somebody gets a Bible, and says, "Back, back," you know, like there's something about this leather and these words. Oh no, no, no. Faith comes by hearing God. When you get a word from the Word, and you read the Word of God, and the truth of that word comes off the page and into your heart, and God speaks to you, and you have a word from God, then you can act on it, and live by it. Now, listen to me. The object of faith is God Himself. Know Him. Now the origin of faith is the Word of God. Hear Him.

### **III. The Objective of Faith**

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see: the objective of faith. What is the objective of faith? Well, the objective of faith is to honor God. See, faith honors God, and, therefore, God honors faith. Listen to me. Faith is not some way that man gets his will done in heaven; it is God's way of getting heaven's will done on earth. As Jesus

prayed, “Not my will, but Thine be done.” You see, if you know the will of God, then what would be the objective of faith? That would be that the will of God would be done. You say, “Well, I knew there was a trick. I knew there was some fine print in the contract. Now, you’re telling me that all I can have is the will of God.” Yes, that would be like telling a minnow that all he could have is the Atlantic Ocean. The will of God does not mean fewer blessings for you; it means more blessings for you. God wants for you what you’d want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it. God is a good God. God doesn’t need anything, but, you see, God is a rewarder of those that diligently seek Him, and this verse, this scripture that we have, says, “The Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him,” that God still is in control, that the objective of faith is that God is honored.

Recently, I was on a cruise ship, and I went out on the deck to see them dock that ship, and it’s always a beautiful thing to me to watch them bring a big ship into the wharf, because it’s a monstrous thing, and you could put a big gash in the side of the boat or take down the wharf if you don’t know what you’re doing. But when the tugs and the others get that boat just in the right position, they take some great ropes, the hawsers, and they connect them to the dock, to the wharf, and then the wenches on that ship begin to go round and round and round and they begin to bring that ship closer and closer, as gentle as a baby’s breath, right up to that wharf. It’s a beautiful thing to see. And as you’re on board the ship, as I was, and you’re watching those ropes go out, and you see that happen, when you’re standing on the ship, do you know what it looks like? It looks like they’re pulling the shore to the ship. It looks like they’re pulling that wharf over to the ship, but they’re not. They’re pulling the ship to the wharf, and that’s what prayer is. Prayer, sometimes it might seem like we’re pulling heaven down here, but what it’s doing, it’s just bringing us up there. Do you understand? What prayer is doing is just bringing us to heaven, bringing us to the will of God—not getting a man’s will done in heaven, but getting heaven’s will done on earth. That is the objective of faith. And remember this: that’s the reason that we must always pray in the will of God.

Put this verse in your margin—1 John 5, verse 14: “And this is the confidence that we have in him, if we ask him anything according to his will, he heareth us.” Any prayer to God in the name of Jesus, in the will of God, prayed in faith, will be answered. “This is the confidence that we have in him, if we ask him anything according to his will, he heareth us.” But what does that do? That keeps God in control. Faith is not something you have to spend for whatever you want whenever you want it. When God wants something done, He’ll put faith in your heart. Have you ever had God just put faith in your heart for things? I have. I’ve had God just put faith in my heart. There have been other times when I’ve wanted something. I would pray, and I would say, “Now, Lord, I really believe this.” But I didn’t believe. You know, I thought if I said it enough, maybe I

could fool God or fool me. I didn't fool either one. But there have been other times when I felt that God speaking to my heart, and God says, "I've heard you. I've heard you. This is my will. You have what you asked." Pray, believe, you'll receive. Pray in doubt, you do without.

#### **IV. The Operation of Faith**

Now, the object of faith is God Himself. The origin of faith is to hear God. The objective of faith is to honor God. So you must know God; you must hear God; you must be willing to honor God. Now, here's the last thing—here's the last thing. Now, listen to it. The operation of faith is to obey God. Now, look, if you will, also here in this scripture that we have here, Romans chapter 10. Go back to it, if you will, for a moment, and see what He says about the operation of faith. Look, if you will, in verse 16: "But they have not all obeyed the gospel, for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went out unto all the earth, and their words to the end of the world." It takes more than hearing God. Listen to it. Look in verse 20: "But Esaias is very bold, and saith, I was found of them that sought me not; and I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me." He's talking now about the Gentiles. "But to Israel, he saith, All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." Now, what does this tell us? It tells us that the operation of faith is to obey God.

Let me give you a definition of faith. One definition I've already given you, and that's "believing what God has said." But let me go beyond that. Faith is belief with legs on it. Got that? Faith is belief with legs on it. Now, some person might say, "Well now, Pastor, some people have faith, and some don't, and if I don't believe, it's not my fault. I just don't have it!" Friend, if you don't believe, it is your fault. The Bible says, in the book of Hebrews, "Beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." Unbelief never comes out of the head; it comes out of the heart. It is not an intellectual, mental thing; it is a moral thing, a spiritual thing. You say, "Well, I know some intellectuals who don't believe." I know some intellectuals who do. You say, "Well, I know some ignorant people who believe." I know some ignorant people who don't. What we believe is not contrary to reason; it just goes beyond it. But I'm saying this: that the operation of faith is to obey God. What we believe, we live by. Our English word believe comes from an old English word, by-live. James says very clearly and plainly, "Faith without works is dead." Can that kind of faith save anyone? Of course not! But the operation of faith is obedience.

Now, He says here, "All day long have I stretched forth my hands." Look, if you will, in verse 21: "...to a disobedient and gainsaying people." Now, look at the word gainsaying. Do you know what the word gainsaying means? It means to debate. It

means to speak against. Gainsaying. Now, when God speaks, for example, you're here today, and God is speaking to your heart, but do you know what you may be guilty of? You may be guilty of gainsaying. You may be guilty of being disobedient, because of gainsaying. You see, to gainsay means to debate. You take the Word of God, and you parade it past the judgment bar of your mind, and you say, "Well, I think I agree with that. No, I don't agree with that." Well, I wouldn't expect you to act like you agree with something you don't agree with, but if you do not agree to the Word of God, it is not because you cannot; it is because you will not. But you said, "Adrian, I thought you said that faith is a gift of God." It is a gift of God. Breathing is a gift of God, because God gives you lungs, and God gives you air, but you can smother it, if you want. You can smother it, if you want. And faith is a gift of God, but God will not force you to believe. But when you do believe, you act upon what you believe, and, therefore, you obey God, and the cycle is complete.

## **Conclusion**

Now, let me sum it up—let me sum it up. Now, listen to me. The object of faith is God Himself, not faith in faith, not positive thinking; and if the object of faith is God Himself, then wouldn't you be wise to get to know God? Wouldn't you be wise to get to know God? Because the Bible says, "They that know thy name will put their trust in thee." And name means character. So, the object of faith is God Himself. Now, the origin of faith is the Word of God. Now, how are you going to trust a God and obey a God that you do not hear from? So, you've got to hear from God, and the Bible says, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" That's why you're here, and that's why I'm here today. You've got to hear from God; not from the preacher, but from God. Anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of. But if the Holy Spirit of God speaks to your heart and says what He is saying is true, then you're hearing from God. So, the origin of faith is the Word of God. So you must not only know God; you must trust God. And then, the operation of faith is that God's will is done. Why else would you know the will of God, if God's will is not to be done? So, the objective of faith is that God is glorified, God is honored. "For 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." Faith honors God, and God honors faith. So, you must know God, you must hear God, you must honor God, and then you obey God.

Now, if you don't obey God, you're at the very threshold of faith, but all you have is what James calls is a dead belief. You become disobedient. You become gainsaying. But I can tell you, and I'll give you this testimony. As a teenage boy in West Palm Beach, Florida, on a summer night after I'd walked my girlfriend home, the girl I'm married to today, after I was already a church member, after I'd already been baptized,

but I had no assurance, I stopped on the corner of 39th Street and Calvin Avenue in West Palm Beach, Florida, and I prayed a prayer like this. I said, “God, I am confused. I don’t know whether I’m a Christian or not. I don’t know whether I am saved and the devil is trying to make me doubt it, or whether I am lost and the Holy Spirit has me under conviction. But I have read in Your Word that You said, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” And You said in Your Word, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” And I looked up into that starry sky that night; I didn’t bow my head, but I looked straight up into heaven. It wasn’t disrespect; I was humble, but I looked straight up, and I said, “God, I know now that You died for my sins. I know that You want to save me, because the Bible says so. And, right now, once and for all, now and forever, with all of my heart, like a child, I trust You to save me. I don’t ask for a feeling; I don’t look for a sign. I stand on Your Word. If I was saved already, this won’t take it away, but if I was not, right now, this moment, I trust You to save me, and, from this moment on, I am walking in that faith.” And, folks, a wonderful river of peace started to flow in my heart. I was a teenage boy, and that river is still flowing, for the Bible says clearly and plainly, “For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” Isn’t that wonderful? It’s wonderful. It’s wonderful.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. No one stirring please; no one moving. If you would like to be saved, you can do the same thing I did. You don’t have to look straight up into the heavens. You can bow your head. You can pray silently in your heart, but you can say, “Lord, today—today—I want to put my faith in You. I have heard Your Word. I want to honor You. And now, Lord, I trust You and I will obey You. I will follow You by grace, wherever You lead me, because You have saved me.”

Father, I pray that You’ll bless these today who will say yes to Christ, and I pray that many will do it. In Jesus’ holy name.

# Biblical Faith: What It Is and How to Have It

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** November 14, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 10:11–17

*“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*  
ROMANS 10:17

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Reality of Biblical Faith

II. The Root of Biblical Faith

III. The Release of Biblical Faith

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding please Romans chapter ten. Biblical Faith: What It Is, and How to Have It. When you've found it—Romans chapter ten—look up here, if you will, please, and let me tell you this: If there were ever a time for us to have an earth-shaking, mountain-moving, devil-defying faith in Almighty God, this is the time, this is the day, and this is the hour.

I don't know what you will accomplish in your Christian life, but I can tell you the measurement that will measure what you will accomplish. The Bible says this, clearly and plainly: according to your faith, be it unto you. Not according to your fame. Not according to your feelings. Not according to your fortune. Not according to your friends. Not according to your fate. But according to your faith, be it unto you. Faith is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of heaven.

When you go to the grocery store to get groceries, you get groceries with dollars. But we receive from God by faith. Faith is the medium of exchange. Faith is the greatest asset that we have. Unbelief is the greatest stumbling block. Unbelief is the chief wickedness. Unbelief is the mother sin, the father sin, the parent sin—the sin of all sins is unbelief. It was unbelief that caused Eve to sin against God in the Garden of Eden. She failed to believe the Word of God. It was unbelief that unlocked the doors to the Promised Land, and the Israelites did not go in, the Bible says, because of their

unbelief. It was unbelief that tied the hands of Jesus, when Jesus was there in His own hometown, and the Bible says He could do no mighty works there because of their unbelief. And the sovereign God has limited Himself to work according to the faith, the belief, of the people of God.

Did you know the sin that sends people to hell today? It is not lying; it is not murder; it is not rape; it is not arson; it is not sexual perversion; it is not pride; it is not arrogance—it is unbelief. You see Jesus died for all those other sins. Those sins have been paid for. So the Bible says, He that believeth on Him is not condemned, but he that believeth not is condemned already because he has not believed. It is unbelief that shuts the door to heaven.

Now, folks, if you can believe, all things are possible to Him that believes. And, in the spiritual realm, if you do not believe, nothing is possible. The Bible says, in this book of Romans, that the just shall live by faith. Just as you live physically by breathing and from nourishment that you take from food, you live spiritually by faith. Romans one, verse seventeen: the just shall live by faith.

Now, look here in Romans chapter ten and verse eleven: For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed. That literally means, He'll not be put to shame, for there's no difference between the Jew and the Greek. For the same Lord overall is rich unto all that call upon Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on Him in whom they've not believed? And, how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher? And, how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful of the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Several things I want to put into your heart today. And, how I pray God the Holy Spirit will rivet these things into your soul. How I pray God, He will indelibly write these things upon your heart. Now, please listen today—listen—because you need—desperately need—to believe God. Oh, the blessings of God that will come to you, if you will learn to believe God. Pray, believe, and you'll receive. Pray, and doubt—you'll do without. It is absolutely necessary that you learn how to believe God. So, as we look at this passage of Scripture, you keep Romans chapter ten open there before you, and look at the lessons that are there that tell you how to have a Biblical faith.

## **I. The Reality of Biblical Faith**

The very first thing I want you to notice is what I'm going to call the reality of Biblical faith. Look in verse eleven. For the scripture saith, whosoever believeth—now, watch this—on Him—underscore that—shall not be ashamed—whosoever believeth on Him.

Now, faith must have the right object to be real faith. I'm talking about the reality of faith. Now, you know there are sometimes people who just say to you, oh, just have faith. Oh, only believe. When a person says to me, just have faith, the first question in my mind is, faith in what? They say, only believe. I say, only believe what? There is no power in faith alone. Don't think there's something mystical or something magical about just believing. Put this down big, plain, and straight: your faith is no better than its object. Misplaced faith is a dangerous thing. It is not faith that moves mountains. It is God that moves mountains. Did that get it? It is not faith that moves mountains. The Bible says, in Mark chapter eleven and verse twenty-two, He said unto them, have faith in God—whosoever believes in Him. You see, there are so many people who think of faith as positive thinking. That's what people think faith is. Faith is not positive thinking. It will help you to think positively, and there's nothing wrong with positive thinking. But the majority of people think there's something mystical and magical of only believing. But the reality of Biblical faith is in verse eleven: that we are to believe on Him. Your faith is no better than its object.

Now, if you make faith just simply positive thinking, you know what's going to happen to you? You're going to get discouraged, because there's going to come times when you're trying to think positively, and you're not going to be able to think positively. A little boy came to his dad, and he said, Dad, I think I flunked my math test today. His dad said, now, you've got to be positive, son. He said, I'm positive I flunked it. I mean, if you look into yourself, and you're trying to think positively, actually, you're going to find that, rather than encouraging you, it's going to discourage you, because after a while, it's going to dawn on you that you don't have what it takes in the place of discouragement.

I'm going to tell you something else: If you put faith in faith, you're a sitting duck for the devil. Now, the devil will come to you, and the devil will say, well, you're not good enough to be saved. You say, well, I know it, but I don't have any faith in myself. Well, the devil says, there are hypocrites in the church. And, you say, well, I'm not putting faith in hypocrites; I'm trusting the Lord. The devil will say to you, but, you don't feel just right. And, you say, well, I'm not trusting my feeling; I'm trusting the Lord. You think he'd go away, wouldn't he? But you know what he'll do—and this is the slyest thing of all? He'll say, well, you say you're trusting the Lord, but how do you know your faith is good enough? How do you know your faith is strong enough? How do you know that your faith is the real thing? And, folks, if you're not careful, that's his dirtiest and most sly trick, and many people will go under when he says this. And, if the devil ever pulls that stump on you, you just tell him, look, devil, I am not putting my faith in faith; my faith is in Jesus. Now, there's a difference in that. You see, the least amount of faith in the right object is better than strong faith in the wrong object. We are to believe in Him.

Do you remember what the Bible says there in Hebrews chapter twelve, verse one?

We're to be looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith—looking unto Jesus. Don't look at your look. Don't put faith in your faith. Put faith in God. You see, the reality of faith is not positive thinking. It's not faith in faith. It is faith in God. Weak faith in the right object is better than misplaced faith in the wrong object. You say, will God honor weak faith? He certainly does. If He didn't, most of us wouldn't have anything from Him.

Do you remember that story in Mark chapter nine, where there was a man who had a little demon-possessed boy, and he came to Jesus, and he said, Lord, if you will, you can heal my boy? And, in verse twenty-three, Jesus said unto him, if thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And you know what his father said? And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe. Help thou mine unbelief. And, you know, Jesus gave him just what he needed. He had a weak faith. But, you see, it was weak faith in God. I'm not saying we ought to have weak faith; far better to have strong faith. But Jesus said, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, be thou removed, and be cast into the midst of the sea. What's He saying? The least amount of faith is greater than the greatest amount of difficulty, if it is faith in God. Put your faith in God. And, by the way, if you want your faith to be strong, don't put faith in faith. Put your faith in God. You see, that's the way to have strong faith: to find out who God is.

I've used this illustration many times: if you wanted to cross a bridge and you didn't know whether it could hold you up—let's say the bridge going across our Mississippi River here—you were afraid, and you tremble, and you try to make yourself believe, and screw up your courage, and get faith, so you can cross the bridge. That would be ridiculous. Look at the bridge. It's made of concrete and steel, and semi-trucks are going over it every day. And, when you see the bridge, and can understand what the bridge can do, then it's easy for you to cross the bridge, when you see who God is. Rather than putting faith in positive feelings, rather than putting your faith in faith, put your faith in God, and your faith will grow.

Let me use another illustration. I heard this so many years ago, but I can't get it out of my mind. Up in the northern parts, near the source of the Mississippi, it was a bitter cold winter, and the Mississippi River had frozen over, and there was a man who, rather than going to the bridge, decided he would walk across the frozen ice. He didn't see anyone else out there. It looked so crusty and so thick. He said, well, I believe I can walk across. I won't have to take the journey down to the bridge. And this man began to walk across that river on ice. When he got out there a pretty good distance from the shore, and he looked at the other shore, he said, maybe I ought not to be out here. I mean, maybe this ice won't hold me up. If I fall through, they'll never know what happened to me. I'm a fool. What am I doing out here? And he turned around to go back to the other side, and it was as far to the other side as it was where he's in the middle.

He said to himself, I'd better walk softly. Then, he said to himself, I'd better get down on all fours, so I won't put my weight in any one place. Then, he said to himself, that's not enough. I'd better lie down and squirm across. I'm going through. What a fool I am! My wife will never know what happened to me. He began to whimper and cry, and then he heard it, a roaring cracking sound. Oh, he said, the river, the ice is breaking. He said, I'm a goner. He put his face down. He began to pray, God, save me; help me, Lord. The noise got closer and closer, that rumbling roaring, but the ice didn't seem to be breaking. He looked up, and there was a man with a team of horses with a wagon loaded with logs driving across that river—that was the noise that he heard. Well, when he saw that, he jumped up and brushed the ice off of him, and took his stroll across the rest of the river.

Now, what was the difference in these two men? The second man knew the ice. The second man knew the ice. Friend, where does faith come from? It comes from a knowledge of God. He that believeth on Him—on Him—shall not be ashamed. Do you want to have strong faith? Don't try to make yourself believe. Get to know God. Put these verses down—Psalm nine and verse ten: and they that know Thy name will put their trust in thee. Put this verse down—Daniel eleven and verse thirty-two: They that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits. Now, that's the reality of Biblical faith. Your faith is no better than its object. You must know God.

## **II. The Root of Biblical Faith**

Now, here's the second thing I want you to see. Not only the reality of Biblical faith, but I want you to see the root of Biblical faith. All true Biblical faith is rooted not only in knowing God, but in hearing from the God that you know. Look in verse fourteen: How should 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? And then, look down, if you will, please, in verse seventeen: So then, faith cometh by hearing, by the Word of God. Are you listening to me? Please, listen. In order to have faith, you must hear from God. Did that sink in? Did that sink in? In order to have faith, you must hear from God. You cannot know the will of God by guessing at it. This verse says—verse seventeen—that faith comes—you don't generate it; it comes. God gives faith. Ephesians chapter two and verses eight and nine says this: for by grace are you saved through faith, and that not of yourselves. It what? Faith is the gift of God. Grace is the gift of God, and so is the faith to receive the grace. Philippians chapter one and verse twenty-nine: for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his faith. Now, that verse tells us two things—I'm going to choose one of them. It is given to us to believe. God gives faith.

No one can believe God, unless God enables him to believe. Did you hear that? No

one can believe God, unless God enables him to believe. And, how does God enable you to believe? God gives you His Word. God gives you a word. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Therefore, contrary to popular belief, you don't name it and claim it. God speaks, and you believe it, and receive it. Do you hear that? You don't name it and claim it. God speaks; you believe it, and receive it.

Now, Hebrews 11:1—put it in your margin right by verse seventeen. Faith is the subject of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Now, the word hope, what does that mean? Well, today, it means, maybe. It means strong desire. Liked I hoped FSU would win yesterday, but perish the hope—perish the hope. That's the way we use hope today, but, friend, the word hope in the Bible does not mean what our modern word means. Hope in the Bible—please listen—it means bedrock assurance based on the promise of God. That's what hope is. It means assurance mingled with anticipation. That's the reason the Bible calls the Second Coming of Jesus the blessed hope. That doesn't mean it's the blessed maybe; it's the blessed hope. How do we know? He's said so. He's not here yet, but we know He's coming. That is the blessed hope, not the blessed maybe. We know He is coming. How? Because He has said so. Now, listen to this. Faith is the subject of things hoped for. Look at the word substance. You know what the word substance means? Well, it could mean guarantee, but, actually, the Greek word is very much like our English word, sub stand—something beneath you can stand on. When you're living by faith, you're not walking around on eggshells and jell-o. Friend, faith is not jell-o. Why? Because it is the substance of things hoped for—things that God has said. Do you see that? That's where faith comes from. The root of faith is the Word of God. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Now, how does God communicate His Word? We said, you cannot have faith, unless God speaks. Well, how does God speak? Well, there are two words for the word word in the Greek language. One is logos, and the logos—Jesus, you know, is called the logos, the Word of God—the logos, we could say, is the Bible, the written Word, that tells of Living Word. Jesus is the logos; the Bible is the Logos.

The logos, we could say, is the Bible, the written Word that tells of the Living Word. Jesus is the logos; the Bible is the Logos. That just simply means the Word—the Word. The Revelation of God, given in Christ, revealed in the Bible, that's the logos. But there's another word that is translated word, and it is rhema—rhema. And that's the word that is used here in verse seventeen. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the rhema of God—the rhema of God. Not the logos, but the rhema. Now, what does that mean? What does the word rhema mean? It means an utterance. It means a spoken word. It is, I guess we could call it, a word from the Word. You take the Bible, that's the logos, and you're reading, the Bible begins to speak to you out of the Word of God. You get a rhema from the logos. You get an utterance from God, and God speaks to you,

and you hear in your heart, you hear from God. That's the reason, folks, that, before I preached today, I got on my knees back yonder, and said, O God, help me to preach. Because, friend, in order for you to have faith, you don't have to hear from Adrian; you've got to hear from God. You've got to hear from God. You see, all I can do is be the Western Union boy, but it is God that gives the message. It's not enough to hear a sermon. Look, if you will, in verse fourteen: "How shall they then how shall they call on him in whom they have not believed. And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" Now, look, if you will, in that phrase, "of whom." Now, the New American Standard gives it this way: "How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard." Not of whom, but whom. You must hear God. You must get a rhema from God. How does God speak? How does God speak to you and give you something? You're reading the Bible, or you're praying, and God puts that portion in your heart. God says, this is from me. You say, well, He never speaks to me that way. Are you listening? Do you have a quiet time? Are you saturated with the Word of God? Are you ready to do His will? Do you want to hear Him? Are you reporting for duty? The root of faith is the rhema of God. The reality of God is faith in God, not faith in faith. The root of faith. You must hear from God.

### **III. The Release of Biblical Faith**

Now, here's the third thing I want you to see quickly, and that is the release of Biblical faith. What does faith do? Well, I want to talk not only about the root of this faith, but the result of his faith, and then it will bring me the next point. What is the result of this faith? What does faith do? What does it do? Even before we talk about releasing it, let's talk about the result. What does biblical faith do? What is the purpose of faith? Listen carefully. Faith is not getting man's will done in heaven. It is getting God's will done on earth. Now, the result of faith is the will of God. Now, notice I said you cannot have faith unless you hear from God. Well, do you know what you're going to hear from God? You're going to hear the will of God. When God speaks, God is going to say, this is what I want done, and therefore, I want you to believe it. Now, you cannot have faith for anything that's not the will of God. If it's not the will of God, there's no possible way that you can have faith for it. Why? Because faith is the gift of God. Faith comes from hearing the Word of God, and God's not going to give you a word on something that's not His will. And that's wonderful, because that keeps God in control. Don't think that you can just believe, that you can believe for whatever you want and have it.

For example, if I had enough faith, could I turn this building into solid gold? Not unless God wanted it turned into solid gold. And, that keeps God in control. Do you remember hearing about King Midas, who wanted the Midas touch? He wanted the touch; that whatever he touched would turn to gold. He just loved gold. And so, he got

his wish. He said, now, I'm going to be very wealthy; whatever I want will turn to gold. But when he went to eat his food, it turned to gold. He couldn't eat it. When he kissed his beautiful daughter, and she was no longer a daughter that he could love, and what he thought would be a blessing became a curse. And, if you had unlimited faith, it would become the same curse to you. If you could just say, well, I can believe and have whatever I want, well, you'd make a mess of things; it would put you in the driver's seat rather than God. You see, the result of faith is that the will of God is done. You say, oh, that means fewer blessings for me. No, it means more blessings for you, because, friend, the will of God is not something that you must do; it is something that you get to do.

First John chapter five and verse fourteen: and this is the confidence that we have in Him: if we ask Him anything according to His will, He hears us. What is the reality of faith? It is faith in God. What is the root of faith? You hear from God. What is the result of faith? The result of faith is that God's will is done.

Now, how do you release faith? What do you do? How does it get down into private personal experience? How, today, are you going to release your faith? Now, true faith—listen to me—does more than merely believe. It obeys. If what you say you believe does not translate into action, you do not really believe.

But notice in verse sixteen: but they have not all obeyed the gospel. Wait a minute. I thought we are to believe the gospel. That's right—when you believe it, you are to obey. Let me tell you what faith is. Faith is belief with legs on it. Well, you say, Pastor Rogers, if I can't believe, then it's not my fault; it's God's fault, because God didn't give me faith. You said, no one can believe, unless God speaks to Him; and maybe God didn't speak to me, and it's not my fault. I've got a word for you. Look, if you will, in verse sixteen: but they have not all obeyed the gospel, for Isaiah saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? See, not everybody here is a believer. So then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God, but I say, have they not heard? Yes, but they didn't obey. God spoke, but why didn't they obey? Why didn't they believe? Look in verse twenty-one: but to Israel he saith, all day long have I stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people. God is speaking. God brought you hear today, and God said, I love you. But not everybody will obey the gospel. Not everybody will release their faith. God stretches out His hand, but there are people who are disobedient and gainsaying. Do you know what the word gainsaying means? It's not a very pretty word, is it? The word gainsaying means obstinate. You debate. You hear the Word of God, and God speaks; the Holy Spirit says, yes, that is true, but you parade it past the judgment bar of your mind, say, I don't think I'll believe that. I don't think I'll obey that. God says, I love you. And, God stretches out His hands—all day long have I stretched out my hands to a gainsaying and disobedient people. They've not all obeyed the gospel.

Oh, friend, listen. You must release your faith by obedience. Years and years ago, men dreamed of a railroad that would span the continent, coming from the west coast toward the east coast, and coming from the east coast to the west coast, obviously they called it the Transcontinental Railroad. They began on the west coast to build those rails; they began on the east coast. And they came to a place out west where the rails met. They got the governors of two states there, and they were going to connect those railroads, and when they came to the place where they were going to connect those rails, they brought a steam engine this way, and a steam engine that way. And they were there to blow the whistles, and there was a great fanfare, and other things, I imagine. But one of the things that they did, they took a golden spike, and a silver hammer, and when the railroad was almost complete, except the one spike, they took that golden spike, and drove it with the silver hammer, and when they did, the people gave a shout, because the East and the West were united.

## **Conclusion**

Friend, when Jesus hung on Calvary's cross, He did more than unite East and West; He united God and man. With one hand, He took sinful man, and with the other hand, He took Holy God, and, as they drove those spikes into His hands, the only silver that was there was the silver of His tears, the only gold, the gold of His blood. And, on the cross, with His blood, Jesus reconciled God and man. Now, listen to me. If you go to heaven—and I hope you will—you're not going to get there on the wagon of works. You're not going to climb up there on the ladder of logic, and your not going to ride there on the rocket of reason. You're going to get there on the railroad of redemption, the old T and O—Trust and Obey. Trust and Obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey. The release of your faith is you say, God, I believe it. And therefore, I obey it. I give you my heart, and I promise you this, on the authority of the Word of God: if you'll trust Him, He'll save you. For the Scripture that I'm reading from says, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

If you would pray a prayer like this: God, I'm a sinner; I'm lost; I need to be saved. I can't save myself. Jesus, you died to save me. You promised to save me, if I would trust you. I do trust you right now—right now, like a child. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me. Father, I pray today, please, O God, that many in this building will say yes to Jesus, and be saved. In His wonderful name I pray. Amen.

# Faith: What It Is and How to Have It

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 17, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 10:17–21**

*“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”*  
ROMANS 10:17

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Object of Faith

II. The Origin of Faith

III. The Objective of Faith

IV. The Operation of Faith

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word, find Romans 10. In a moment, we’re going to begin our study in verse 17. Now, the book of Romans is the foundation for our faith. It is the constitution of Christianity. It is the solid rock upon which we stand. And the book of Romans tells us, I suppose, more than any other book in the Bible, about the grace of God.

I love the word *grace*. It is a beautiful word. I think the only word more beautiful to me is the name Jesus. But grace, think what a beautiful word that is. And what is grace? Well, let’s make an acrostic out of grace—G-R-A-C-E—God’s riches at Christ’s expense—G-R-A-C-E—have you got that? God’s riches at Christ’s expense. That means Jesus Christ on the cross, dying in agony and blood for our sins, provides for us all of the riches of God. We studied about that last week. *“For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon Him.”* (Romans 10:12) God’s riches at Christ’s expense—that’s grace.

But listen, folks. Faith—faith—lays hold of what grace provides. Now, without faith there’s no way that you can acquire the grace of God. The grace of God can come into your life only through faith. Ephesians 2, verses 8 and 9: *“For by grace are ye saved through faith...”* Now, what is faith—F-A-I-T-H? Forsaking all, I trust Him. That’s faith. Forsaking all—forsaking my good works, my good intentions, forsaking my sin,

forsaking all that I am by nature and by the first birth—I turn my back on that, and I take Jesus. Grace—God’s riches at Christ’s expense. Faith—forsaking all, I trust Him. So, when I put my hand of faith in God’s hand of grace, that’s salvation. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith.”* (Ephesians 2:8) It is faith that receives what grace provides. And so, when Paul tells us about grace, then he goes on to talk to us about faith and tell us what faith is and how we can understand faith. You see, faith makes God’s grace available and real to us. Grace is God’s ability. Faith is man’s responsibility. Now, listen. Grace is God’s ability. Faith is man’s responsibility. Jesus died, but we must believe and receive, or the death of Jesus does us no good whatsoever. So, it is our responsibility to respond to God’s grace. All that we receive we receive by faith.

Do you want to be saved? Well, Romans 5, verse 1, says, *“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* You want to be sanctified? *“Sanctifying our hearts through faith,”* the Bible says. Do you want your prayers answered? *“Therefore...[whatsoever things] ye desire, when [you] pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.”* (Mark 11:24) Do you want to overcome the world? *“This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.”* (1 John 5:4)

It is faith that is the medium of exchange in the kingdom of heaven. That’s the reason the Lord Jesus Christ said, *“Be it unto you according to your faith”* (Matthew 9:29)—according to your faith. That is the measure. Your faith is the measure of your victory, your success; all of the things that grace provides, they come to us by faith. So it is so very, very, very—I’ll say it one more time—very important that you learn what faith is.

And so, Paul, now, who has been talking about the grace of God, now talks about faith in that grace, beginning in verse 17. So look at it: *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? [Yea] verily, their sound went into all the earth”—*now, he’s quoting the Scripture here, the Psalms, that say that the knowledge of the Lord is seen in nature throughout all of the earth—*“and their words unto the end of the world. But I say, Did not Israel know? First Moses saith, I will provoke you to jealousy by them that are no people, and by a foolish nation I will anger you. But [Isaiah]...[says], I was found by them that sought me not [and] I was made manifest unto them that asked not after me. But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands to a disobedient and gainsaying people.”* (Romans 10:17–21) Now, we’re going to think about faith today. Now, don’t think that this is just a nicety; this is a necessity. And I want to say that lack of faith is not weakness; it is wickedness. And no one who does not believe has the excuse to say they cannot believe, because *“[the Lord] [has] dealt to every man [a] measure of faith.”* (Romans 12:3)

Unbelief is a terrible, horrible sin. As a matter of fact, 1 John chapter 5, verse 10,

says, *“He that believeth not God hath made him a liar.”* Unbelief is a slander against the character of God. It was unbelief that led Eve to that sin in the Garden of Eden. It was unbelief that locked the doors of the Promised Land to the children of Israel. It caused them to wander in the wilderness. It’s unbelief that sends men to hell. Listen to this scripture—John chapter 3, verse 18. Here are the words of Jesus—listen carefully: *“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.”* There are some people that will tell you that Jesus only died for the elect, but that’s not what the Gospel of John says. It says the only reason men are not saved is not because Jesus didn’t die for them, but because they didn’t believe in him. *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed...”* (John 3:18) Jesus died; salvation is there. But they refuse to believe, and therefore—therefore—they’re not saved.

It’s the same thing when Jesus was in His hometown of Nazareth. And the Bible says that, *“[Jesus could do no] mighty works there because of their unbelief.”* (Matthew 13:58) He, the Almighty, the sovereign, limited himself—limited himself—by their unbelief. He allowed their unbelief to keep Him from doing mighty works there. *“[He can do no] mighty works there because of their unbelief.”* (Matthew 13:58) Do you mean to say that He was not sovereign, He’s not all powerful, He’s not all glorious? Of course He is; He’s all of those things. But He has said, *“Be it unto you according to your faith.”* (Matthew 9:29) He limited himself; He allowed himself to be limited by their unbelief. *“He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed...”* (John 3:18)

Unbelief is not mere weakness; unbelief is wickedness. Unbelief never comes out of the head. People don’t have intellectual problems. It may show up as an intellectual problem, but unbelief comes out of the heart. The Bible says, *“[Beware]...lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.”* (Hebrews 3:12) And over there in Romans chapter 1 and verse 17, the Bible says, *“The just shall live by faith.”* The way that we live the Christian life is not by striving, it’s not by trying; it’s by trusting. *“The just shall live by faith.”* (Romans 1:17) Now, I’m saying all of that, all of that is just the front porch to get us into the house. All what I’m saying is the importance of faith that lays hold and receives what grace provides. I want us to see what true biblical faith is.

## **I. The Object of Faith**

And the very first thing I want you to see is what I want to call the object of faith. What do you place your faith in? That’s so very important, because so many people call things faith that are not faith at all. Well, some people say, “Just believe, you know—it’s positive thinking.” Well, I like positive thinking. I’m very much in favor of positive

thinking, but positive thinking is not faith. Some people think hoping for the best is faith, or giving it your best, or whatever. They have all kinds of ideas about what faith is. But faith is no better than its object.

¶ Yesterday, I was in the Atlanta airport coming to Memphis. They called the flight. I got up, gave my ticket, along with Joyce, to the lady. We went through the thing, went to seat 15 D and E, and sat down. After a while, somebody else came and said, “You’re in our seat.” I said, “No, here we are; there we are—that’s us.” Then, after a while, I heard somebody say on the intercom, “Would Mr. & Mrs. Rogers please identify themselves?” I said, “How’d they know I’m on this plane?” So I pushed the little thing, and after a while the lady came to me—this was just yesterday—she said, “Mr. & Mrs. Rogers, you’re supposed to be going to Atlanta, but this airplane is going to Shreveport.” Now, friend, I didn’t want to go to Shreveport. Now, I had a lot of faith in Delta, had a lot of faith in that airplane, I had a lot of faith in the ticket system, and the person who took my tickets, and so forth, but folks, all that faith didn’t do me one whit of good if I’m on the wrong airplane, isn’t that right?¶

Now, misplaced faith is a terrible thing. You put faith in the wrong place. You’ve got to put your faith in your right place, and, you see, the Bible never tells us to put faith in faith. That’s just positive thinking. What is the object of our faith? The object of our faith is Almighty God. Now, you’re in chapter 10—go back to verse 11, if you will: “*For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth*”—now, watch this—“*on him...*”—underscore that: on Him—“*on him shall not be ashamed.*” (Romans 10:11) The object of your faith is Almighty God. There’s nothing mystical or magical about believing. Faith is no better than its object. Now, listen to me very carefully. Some people say, “Faith moves mountains.” That is not true. It is God that moves mountains. Pay attention. It is not faith that moves mountains; it is God that moves mountains. The Bible, in Mark 11, verse 22, Jesus in that context, “*Jesus [answered them, and said], Have faith in God*”—in God. Your faith is no better than its object. So many people just misplace this. Faith in faith is nothing but positive thinking.

¶ A little boy came home from school, and his dad said, “How’d you do on the test today?” He said, “Well, I think I flunked my math test.” The father said, “You need to be more positive than that.” He said, “Okay, I’m positive I flunked my math test.”¶

Positive thinking is not faith. Faith in faith is not faith. You’ve got to have faith in God. If you put faith in faith, faith in positive thinking, you’re going to get discouraged. There are people that will tell you that, if you believe it, you can achieve it, and all of this. And they tell salesmen this, and they tell athletes this, and they tell all these people this, but that’s just simply not true. That is not true. Just because you believe it, you can’t achieve it. And, just because you think you can do it, you cannot do it. And, after a

while, you're going to find yourself so discouraged, and Satan is going to say to you, "You really don't have what it takes."

Now, listen to me. Your faith is no better than the object of that faith. Weak faith—weak faith—in the right object is better than misplaced faith in any object. Weak faith in God is better than strong faith in anything else. Don't get the idea that because your faith is weak, it won't work. You may be afraid to fly on an airplane at all, but if you get on it, you've exercised faith in that airplane, and you're just as safe as the pilot and the steward. It's a weak faith. If faith is what counts, it's not the size of your faith; it's the object of your faith that really counts.

So many people fail to understand this. If you'll look in the Bible, almost everybody who got a blessing from God had weak faith. A few had strong faith, but most of them had weak faith. There was a man whose son was demon-possessed, and he came to Jesus, and he said, "Master, if you can do anything for my boy, please do it." Jesus said, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him that believeth." You know what that man said? He said, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief." Have you ever been there? We all have. "Lord, I believe, I have faith; but, Lord, help my unbelief." You know, Spurgeon said, "A trembling hand can receive a gorgeous, wonderful gift." It's not faith in faith; it's not the quality of your faith; it's the object of your faith that really counts.

Again, the Bible says, in Hebrews chapter 12, we're to be "*looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*" (Hebrews 12:2) Look to Jesus, the object of your faith. He is the author; He is the finisher of your faith. It is faith in Him. That's the object of your faith. If you don't have your faith in the right place, what good is your faith? Then you're going to Shreveport, friend, when you ought to be going to Memphis. You've got to put your faith in the right place. That's just all there is to it. Looking unto Jesus, Hebrews 12, verses 1 and 2. And that word *looking* unto Jesus literally means, "looking away from everything else" and looking unto Jesus. Now, the reason—the reason—some folks don't have faith is that they have their eyes on everything else other than the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't look at others; look to Jesus. Don't look to yourself; look to Jesus. Don't look at circumstances; look to Jesus. Don't look at Satan; look to Jesus. Look away from everything else. That's literally what the Greek word means when it says, "Looking unto Jesus." It literally means—literally translated it means—"looking away from everything else, and looking to Jesus." That's the reason why I said faith is what? Forsaking all, I trust Him. The object of your faith must be God. Your faith is no better than its object—looking unto Jesus.

You know what the devil will do to you? Let me tell you what a dirty devil the devil is. The devil will want to make you doubt your salvation, and here's what he'll say to you: "You say you trust Jesus? Well, just how strong is your faith? Maybe your faith is not strong enough to save you; maybe you don't have good enough faith; maybe you don't

have strong enough faith.” And the first thing you know, you get to examining your faith, open up your innards, and pull out your faith, and look it all over, and examine it. You say, “Well, I wonder if I really have that saving faith.” You know what the devil’s trying to get you to do? The devil is trying to get you to look at your faith rather than looking to Jesus. Now, listen. Don’t put faith in faith, put faith in Jesus. When the devil used to pull that trick on me, he used to say, “Well, Adrian, how do you know that you really believe enough?” I just learned how to turn the tables on him. I say, “You know, devil, you’re right; my faith is weak, but Jesus is wonderful. I’m not putting my faith in my faith. I’m putting my faith in Jesus.” Jesus never said, “Look at your look”; He said, “*Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth.*” (Isaiah 45:22) Don’t look at your look. Don’t put faith in faith, put faith in Jesus. Faith in faith is positive thinking. Faith in Jesus is salvation.

Now, the object of faith is God. So, what should be your ambition, then? To know God—to know God. That’s the reason the Bible says we’re to be “*looking unto Jesus the author and [the] finisher of our faith.*” (Hebrews 12:2) You see, if you look to yourself, you’re going to be discouraged and weak. Put your eyes upon Him. “*The scripture saith, Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.*” (Romans 10:11) I hope this is getting through to you. Your great need today is to learn of Him, to come to know Him. If the object of your faith is God then the ambition of your heart ought to be to know Him. The more you know about Him, the more you’re going to find faith as the byproduct of your heart. When you look to Jesus, when you discover the God of the Bible, when you come to see Him, you’re going to find out that faith is axiomatic in your heart and in your life. Let me give you a verse—Psalm 9, verse 10: “*And they that know thy name*”—that is, the character of God—“*will put their trust in thee.*” Daniel 11 and verse 32: “*And they that know their God shall be strong and shall do exploits.*” And so, the object of faith is God himself. Not positive thinking, not your own ambitions, not your own will, not your own intentions—just know God. “*They that know thy name will put their trust in thee.*” (Psalm 9:10) Romans 10, verse 11: “*Whosoever believeth in him shall not be ashamed.*”

## **II. The Origin of Faith**

Now, here’s the second thing about biblical faith: not only the object of it, but the origin of it—the origin of it. Now, if the object of this faith is to trust Him, then you’ve got to hear from Him, so the origin of your faith is the Word of God. The object of your faith is God himself—you trust Him. But the origin of that faith is to hear Him. Now, look, if you will, in verse 17: “*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*” (Romans 10:17) Go back to verse 14: “*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?*”

(Romans 10:14) That's a very logical question. Go back up to verse 8: *"But what saith [thee]? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith..."* (Romans 10:8)—the word of faith. Now, the object of faith is God himself, so you must know Him. But the origin of faith is the Word of that God—you must hear Him. You must learn to listen to God, if you would have faith. You see, you cannot pray outside the will of God and get your prayer answered. And in order to pray in the will of God, you've got to hear the Word of God. Now, where does this faith come from? You don't generate faith. You don't just clench your fist, grit your teeth, and say, I am going to believe. Faith cometh—look in verse 17: *"Faith cometh by hearing."* (Romans 10:17) That is, it comes from outside of you; you don't generate that faith.

Now, you can have natural faith in the natural realm; we all live by natural faith. You're putting faith in the chair that you're sitting in right now; you're putting faith in the engineer that put this roof over us. When you go to the restaurant, you're putting faith in the cook. That's natural faith. We all live by faith every day in chairs, planes, food. Ron Dunn, who spoke for us the other night, said this: "He says the doctor tells us that we have a disease that we've never heard of, writes a prescription that we cannot read, for a medicine whose name we cannot pronounce, which we take to a druggist that we do not know, who gives us a bottle of liquid which tastes like poison, which we take and go back for more." That's faith, but that's faith in the natural realm.

But we're not talking about that. We're talking about biblical faith that's in the supernatural realm. You don't generate that; God gives it. You don't work it up; it comes down. Peter said, in 2 Peter chapter 1, verse 1, he talks about *"[those who] have obtained like precious faith..."* And then, in 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."* That is, the believing on Him is given to you. Nobody can believe in God unless God enables Him to believe. Now, listen to me. The only way that you can believe in God is to hear from God, and God must enable you to believe. And the instrument that God uses to enable you to believe is His Word. Faith is not a leap in the dark; it's a step in the light. You hear from God. But without a word from God—listen to me very carefully—without a word from God you have no basis for faith. There are some people today who say, "You name it and claim it." That is absurd. You can't claim it unless God names it. *"Faith [comes] by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God."* (Romans 10:17)

Now, put in your margin Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1. Here's a description of faith: *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"— "...Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Think about that word *hope*. What does that word *hope* mean? It doesn't mean "maybe", not in the Bible. It may mean it in modern English, but in the Bible the word *hope* means "bedrock assurance", and that assurance is based on the Word of God. The Second

Coming of Jesus is called what? The blessed hope. That doesn't mean the blessed maybe; it means the blessed certainty. And *"faith is the substance of things hoped for."* (Hebrews 11:1) That is bedrock assurance based on the Word of God. Again, the Bible calls hope the anchor of the soul. Well, you, friend, you don't put your anchor in a chunk of cloudbank; you put your anchor in something that is strong and solid. So now, pay attention now, because we're going to learn something about hope. Hope is bedrock assurance.

Now, look at the word substance. The Bible says, *"Faith is the substance of things hoped for."* (Hebrews 11:1) I looked this up in some different translations, or studied some different translations. One gives it, "hope is"—for the word substance gives the word assurance. Another gives the word *confidence*. Another gives the word *guarantee*. Another gives it—and I love this—"the title deed". What happens is this: that we have bedrock assurance, we have substance, we have the title deed, according to the Word of God.

The point I'm making is this: that the object of faith is God; the origin of faith is the Word of God. If you don't hear from God, you'll never have faith. Well, let me just put it this way: if you don't hear God—not just hear from God, if you don't hear God—you'll never have faith. That's the reason I asked you to pray at the beginning of this service, "Help me not to hear Adrian; help me to hear God. Adrian—God, help him to be the Western Union boy, as he brings the word." But it is the Word of God that's going to bring faith in your heart.

Now, look in verse 17: *"...Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Romans 10:17)—that is, hearing the Word of God. The word that is translated *word* there is not the word *logos*, which means "the revelation of the Bible", like we call the Bible the Word of God—that's the *logos*; but it's a different word, it's the word *rhema*. *"...Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the [rhema] of God."* (Romans 10:17) And that word means "the communication of the Word of God", not just "the Word of God". I don't mean when I say, "Just the Word of God," to deprecate the Word of God, but it is not the Bible that you hold in your hand that's going to give your faith; it is God speaking to you out of that Bible. Not the *logos* that you have in your hand—that is the Word of God—that is—but you need to have God speak to you. You need a *rhema*, a communication of the Word of God. You can hear with your ear everything that I say this morning and not have faith, but, oh, if God speaks to your heart... You've got to hear God. You've got to get a communication of that Word from God. And my job is not to just teach you some sermon outline; my job is to get you to listen to God as God speaks to you. You've got to hear from God; you've got to hear more than a sermon; you've got to hear more than a pastor; you've got to hear God.

Look in Romans 10, verse 14: *"How then shall they call on him in whom they have*

*not believed?*” Now, look at that little phrase *in*. The New American Standard gives it this way: “*How [shall] they believe...*”—“*how [shall] they believe in him whom they have not heard?*” (NASB Romans 10:14) It doesn’t say “in whom”, but “whom they have not heard”. Now, what is the difference? Well, they basically mean the same thing, but it means that God has to be speaking to you. You’ve got to hear God today. I hope that you go away from here today not just simply hearing Adrian, but that you’ve heard God. Because faith comes when you hear God. God speaks to you. There is a *rhema*. God takes the Word of God, and the truths of the Word of God, and God applies those to your heart, and God is speaking to you. You must hear Jesus today. You must hear Jesus saying to you today, “*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*” (Matthew 11:28) He is speaking to your heart today, if you will listen.

### **III. The Objective of Faith**

Now, here’s the third thing I want you to see: I want you to see not only the object of our faith, which is God himself; the origin of our faith, which is to hear from God and to get a word from God; but I want you to hear, also, friend, the objective of our faith. Why does God use faith? What is faith all about? Is faith something that you can put in your pocket to spend for whatever you want? Can you just say, “Well, I have faith so I’ll have a bigger house. I have faith so I’ll get well. I have faith so I’ll have friends. I’ll have faith so I can get married. I’ll have faith so I can have a Cadillac. I’ll have faith so I...”—no, no, no, no, no, no. Faith is not man’s way of getting man’s will done on earth; faith is God’s way of getting God’s will done in heaven. Now, it’s very, very important that you see this, because so many of us think that faith is something that we can use for ourselves.

Look, if you will, in verse 12: “*For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.*” (Romans 10:12) Now, that’s the will of God—that you be saved. Go back, if you will, or down to 15, and look at verse 15 of this same chapter: “*And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!*” (Romans 10:15) Now, the preacher is to be sent; the preacher doesn’t originate his own message. I don’t sit back there in my study, or in my study at the house, and say, “Now, what do I want these folks to know? What do I think will be good ideas for them?” No, I am to be a messenger boy with beautiful feet, running with glad tidings. I have been sent where God says, “Go tell them this.”

Now, we have workers here at our church who buy things for the church, cleaning fluids, and paper goods, and so forth. Well, we don’t just say, “Go buy whatever you think you want, or whatever you think that we need.” There is a requisition, a purchase order, something that is given so that they come back with the right stuff. You see, they don’t originate all of that. The object of somebody who goes to the supply store with a

purchase order is to get what the leader says we need, what the administrator says we must have. And faith, faith is God's way of getting the things done that He wants done through us. And that's the objective of faith.

Now, if you make faith some sort of a Midas touch, that makes God your servant. But God is not your servant; you are God's servant. And again, faith is not getting man's will done in heaven; it is getting God's will done on earth. And you say, "Well, wait a minute, Adrian—you mean to say that I am hemmed up by the will of God?" Yep, just like a minnow hemmed up by the Atlantic Ocean. The will of God doesn't mean fewer blessings for you; the will of God means more blessings for you. But the objective of faith is that God's Word that He sends will have its effect, God's order form will be done, and God will do it through us. So what you need to do is to find the will of God, because the Bible says, *"This is the confidence that we have in him...if we ask him any thing according to His will, he [hears] us."* (1 John 5:14) Well, how do we know His will? We know His Word. Well, how do we trust His Word? We know His person.

So, the object of faith is God himself. The origin of faith is the Word of God. The objective of faith is the will of God. Now, if you're not interested in the will of God, forget faith. So, what should you do? If the object of faith is God, get to know God. If the origin of faith is the Word of God, begin to listen to God. If the objective of faith is the will of God, then submit to God. God doesn't give His faith to rebels. Friend, learn to trust the Lord. Let God stay in control.

#### **IV. The Operation of Faith**

Now, here's the final thing, and we'll just wrap this up. What is the operation of faith? The operation of faith is to obey God. Now, pay attention. For, the object of faith is God; so know Him. The origin of faith is the Word of God; so hear Him. The objective of faith is the will of God; so yield to Him. And then, the operation of faith is the work of God; so obey Him.

Now, watch this. If you say that you believe God, but you don't obey God, you don't really believe Him. Faith is belief with legs on it. Faith obeys. Now, if we believe, obviously, it is because God has enabled us to believe. But if we don't believe, we're the ones held responsible. Look, if you will, at this—look, if you will, in verses 17 and 18: *"So...faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went [out] into all the earth and their words unto the ends of the world,"* (Romans 10:17–18)—but skip down to verse 21—*"but to Israel he [said], All day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people."* (Romans 10:21) Now, they have not all obeyed the gospel. You must obey the gospel. *"All day long,"* God says to Israel, *"have I stretched [out] my hands [to] a disobedient and gainsaying people."* (Romans 10:21) Now, what does that mean? Well, you know

what disobedience is: just not obeying.

What about *gainsaying*? We don't use that word very much today, but it means "obstinate". It means people who just refuse the Word of God. Here's the Word of God, and it goes forth, and God is stretching out His hands. There are some people who say, "Oh well, God just calls some, and when God just calls some, they're going to come, and ain't nothing can stop it." You'd better read the Bible, friend. He says, "*all day long have I stretched [out] my hands [to] a disobedient and gainsaying people.*" (Romans 10:21) God is stretching out His hand, but they wouldn't believe—they wouldn't believe. They refused. Gainsaying means that they are not only disobedient, but they are obstinate. They say, "No!" They take the Word of God, and they parade it past the judgment bar of their mind, and they make a jury of themselves, and they say, "No, I don't think so; I'm not going to obey that."

Friend, the operation of faith is obedience to God. You're not saved by faith and works; you're saved by faith that works. And if it hasn't changed your life, if it doesn't get down into shoe leather, if it doesn't get down into your heart, if it doesn't make you a different person, if it doesn't cause you to obey the Word of God, don't tell me you have faith; don't tell me you're going to heaven. "*Faith without works is dead*" (James 2:26)—that's what James tells us. Now, you're not saved because of your works; you work because you're saved. But God stretches forth His hand, and people can say no to Him, and if they say no to Him, God says, "*I've stretched [out] my hands all day long [to] a disobedient and gainsaying people.*" (Romans 10:21) They've not all obeyed the gospel. So, when you believe, you obey.

*"Trust and obey,  
for there's no other way  
to be happy in Jesus  
but to trust and obey."*

—JOHN SAMMIS

## Conclusion

So, have you followed me? The object of faith is God—know Him. The origin of faith is the Word of God—hear Him. The objective of faith is the will of God—yield to Him. It is heaven's way of getting God's will done on earth. And then, the operation of faith is to obey God—say, "Yes Lord." It is belief with legs on it.

Now, that brings me to one last thing. You say, "Pastor, is faith the gift of God?" Yes, faith is the gift of God. "Does that mean if God gives it, then I'm going to automatically believe?" No. Breathing is a gift of God. God gives me lungs, and God gives me air. That was a gift from God—that was a gift from God; but I can smother, if I want to—foolish. Breathing is a gift of God. You can smother. Faith is a gift of God.

God gives you His Word, and God gives you His Spirit, but then, God says, “Whosoever will may come—Whosoever will may come.” *“All day long have I stretched [out] my hands [to] a disobedient and gainsaying people.”* (Romans 10:21) So, it’s time right now for you to do the most wonderful thing that you could possibly do, and that is to trust this great God for salvation. *“For by grace are ye saved through faith...”* (Ephesians 2:8) You put your hand of faith in God’s hand of grace, and that’s salvation.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you pray for those round about you who may not yet know Jesus. And, precious friend, right now—right now—I want to lead you in a prayer. If you don’t know Jesus, pray this prayer: God, I believe that you are the Almighty. I want to put my faith in you. I believe the Bible is your Word, and you’ve spoken to me out of your Word today. And I know, Lord, that you want to save me, and I yield myself to that today. And now, I will obey you by confessing you as my Lord and Savior, right now. Father, I pray that many will come to Jesus. In His dear name I pray. Amen.†

# Is God Through with the Jews?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 24, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 11:1**

*"I say then, Hath God cast away his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin."*

ROMANS 11:1

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. Israel Is the Geographic Center of the World
- B. Israel Is The Revelation Center of the World
- C. Israel Is the Spiritual Center of the World
- D. Israel Is the Prophetic Center of the World
- E. Israel Is the Storm Center of the World
- F. Israel Will Be the Peace Center of the World
- G. Israel Will Be the Glory Center of the World
- I. Proof #1: The Convicting Power of God
- II. Proof #2: The Careful Preservation of God
- III. Proof #3: The Controlling Plan of God
- IV. Proof #4: The Continuing Promise of God
- V. Proof #5: The Culminating Purpose of God
  - A. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel in His Time
  - B. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel Through His Son
  - C. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel According to His Word
  - D. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel by His Grace
  - E. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel for His Glory

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and find, if you would, please, Romans chapter 11. We're making our way through the book of Romans. We call that the constitution of Christianity, a solid word for an unsure age, foundations for our faith. That's what it's all about, and we've come today to chapter 11. Now, this chapter is a wonderful chapter, but it is full, and I'm going to try to go through thirty-six verses. Some of them we'll touch very lightly, and some none at all. As a matter of fact, I've already preached this message once this morning, and I took it back to the shop, went back to my study, and I said, How can I condense this a little bit more, and how can I clarify it a little bit more, because it's really

a convoluted passage of Scripture, but it has great, great blessings in it, and great significance for these days in which we live. Because all of us have a feeling that we are kind of looking into the muzzle of a loaded cannon, and the storm clouds of Armageddon are gathering more and more and more, and the central focus of all of that is Israel, the land and the people. And that's what we're dealing with today. Today is a message that deals in many ways with Bible prophecy, and it deals with the land of Israel. The title of the message: Is God Through with the Jew?

You may say, What does that have to do with me—I'm not a Jew; I'm a Gentile? Well, it has everything to do with you, and, friend, it has everything to do with Bible prophecy. Almost 100 percent of the Bible prophecies are related to Israel—the land and the people. So, you need to listen up today, because you're going to learn something that will be an encouragement to you. Now, I say that Israel—the nation Israel—is the focal point in today's world, and Israel is in the headlines of every newspaper, not only in America but around the world. The eyes of the world are focused on the little nation of Israel, and well they should be, for Israel is the land and the people of destiny. As the Jew goes, so goes the world. Israel is God's yardstick, God's outline, God's blueprint, God's program, and God's prophecy for all of the other nations of the world.

Now, Paul has been talking about God's plan, and how it includes the Gentile, and some of the Jews may have been asking, What about us? What about the promises that God has made to us? And so, Paul asks a rhetorical question in chapter 11 and verse 1: "I say, then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid." Now, He's saying, I'm not finished with the Jew. I have not cast away my people. I have not been unfaithful. I have not broken my promises. I have not altered my covenants. I have not forgotten my Word. Paul says, God forbid that God could ever do that. And so, Paul is going to show us, in just a moment, that God is not finished with the Jew. And I hope that you will understand that today.

Israel, in many ways—the nation and the people—are the center and the focus of the entire world.

#### **A. Israel Is the Geographic Center of the World**

The land of Israel that I've visited many times, and I'm looking forward to going back to, is the geographic center of the world. In Ezekiel 5:5, God says to that land, "I have put you in the midst of the nations." That is, you are in—as some give it—the navel of the nations. Israel is a land bridge between three continents, Asia, Africa, and, Europe. It's a great military and economic crossroads, right there in the very hub of the world.

#### **B. Israel Is The Revelation Center of the World**

It is the geographic center of the world; it's the revelation center. The book that I hold

in my hand, that I'm preaching from, was written in that land by those people, by and large. It's here where Moses and the prophets gave us the Word of God.

### **C. Israel Is the Spiritual Center of the World**

It is the spiritual center, because Jesus is of the tribe of Judah. Jesus is a Jew, and He was born in the land of Israel. He lived in the land of Israel. He taught in the land of Israel. He was crucified in the land of Israel. He was buried in the land of Israel. He rose in the land of Israel. He ascended from the land of Israel. He's coming back to the Mount of Olives, right there by Jerusalem. So it is the spiritual center.

### **D. Israel Is the Prophetic Center of the World**

It is the prophetic center. If you want to know what God is doing in the world, if you want to understand Bible prophecy, you'll never understand it apart from understanding what God is doing in Israel.

### **E. Israel Is the Storm Center of the World**

It is the storm center. As we've said, the clouds of Armageddon are gathering, even as we're talking.

### **F. Israel Will Be the Peace Center of the World**

But, thank God, it will be the peace center. That's the reason the Bible tells us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem. And there will never be peace in this world until there's peace in Jerusalem, and there won't be peace in Jerusalem without Jesus, the Prince of Peace.

### **G. Israel Will Be the Glory Center of the World**

And it is the glory center. One of these days, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as waters that cover the sea, the law shall go forth from Zion, and God is going to rule and to reign on this earth from Jerusalem.

Frederick the Great, it is said, one time asked his court chaplain, Can you give me proof of the inspiration of the Word of God? How can I know that the Bible is the inspired, infallible Word of God? And, Frederick the Great's court chaplain gave one answer. He said, The Jew, sire. That is, just look at God's dealing with Israel. You see, Israel, this nation, is a God-created, God-decreed, God-loved, God-called, God-elected, and God-protected people. And it is not without significance that Jerusalem, the capital of this land, is the most important city upon the face of the earth. Not Washington, not Moscow, not London, not Paris, not Tokyo, but Jerusalem—the most important city upon the face of the earth. And, in the book of Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 3, the Bible says, "In the last days Jerusalem will be a burdensome stone for all the nations of the world." And, friend, that is true today in a very real way. And there's more pressure being put on Israel right now to sacrifice her sovereignty, and to take Jerusalem, and to

make it an international city, rather than the capital of God's ancient people, and God's ancient lands.

So, Paul comes to this question in the book of Romans: "Has God cast away his people? God forbid." And then, he gives five proofs that he has not. And that's what the message is going to consist of today: these five proofs.

## **I. Proof #1: The Convicting Power of God**

And the first proof is what I want to call the convicting power of God—the convicting power of God. Write that down, and look, if you will, in verse 1 again: "I say, then, hath God cast away his people? God forbid." Now, notice the illustration he gives: "For I also am an Israelite of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin." Paul says, I am a Jew; I am exhibit number one. And why did Paul use himself as an example? Because there were other Jews around. Well, he was a believing Jew. He believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and he said that he was a pattern; God made him a pattern. He said of himself, in another place, he was one born out of due time—that is, he was not in the due time, but he was out ahead of his time.

I want you to think about how the apostle Paul was saved. He certainly wasn't a pattern for my salvation; he wasn't a pattern for Bob's salvation; for Jamie or Jim's salvation, that are sitting here on the platform with me. We weren't saved the way the apostle Paul was saved. Paul was on the road to Damascus, persecuting Christians, and suddenly he saw a light above the brightness of the noonday sun; he was knocked off his horse, he was blind. Jesus appears to him, literally, and the heavens are rolled back, he sees Christ, and the Lord speaks to him, and the apostle Paul is converted. And then, the apostle Paul becomes, as he says, a missionary to the Gentiles. Notice in verse 13: "For I speak unto you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office." God used him to evangelize the pagans of this world. Well, that's what God is going to do with Israel. There is coming a day, friend, when God will supernaturally appear to Israel. They will see Him. I mean, the heavens are going to roll back. They're going to see Jesus as Paul saw Jesus, and a nation will be born in a day.

Now, let me give you a scripture for that, in case you wonder about that. Zechariah chapter 12, verses 8 through 11: "In that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem." Now, the day he's talking about is the day that he's already talked about, when all the nations of the world are going to come against Jerusalem. This is the beginning of Armageddon. And the Antichrist and his forces will be bivouacked there in the Valley of Megiddo, and they're getting ready for that last sortie against Jerusalem, and it's going to look dark for the people of God. And God says, in that day—in that day—as the noose tightens around Jerusalem and the people of Jerusalem, God says, in that day shall the Lord defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. "And he that is feeble

among them at that day shall be as David.” Now, David was a mighty warrior, and God says, “in that day the puny Israelite is going to be like David, and the house of David shall be as God, and the angel of the Lord before them. And it shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem,”—and now, watch this—“and I will pour upon the house of David,”—now, he’s talking about Jews now—“and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications.” Now, watch this point: “And they shall look upon me, whom they have pierced.” Did you read that? That’s not New Testament. How did Jesus die? He died on a cross. They pierced His hands and His feet, and God says, “In that day they are going to see me whom they have pierced.” Now, folks, not only the Jews, but we pierced Him also. But that’s not the point he’s making right now; He’s making the point that they’re going to see Him. Now, who is speaking? Jehovah is speaking. Who is he speaking to? His people. Well, Jehovah is a spirit; God is a spirit. How can you pierce a spirit? Well, the only way I know is that spirit has to take flesh. He has to become incarnate; He has to die upon a cross. “They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son.” Oh, friend, just as the apostle Paul saw the Lord Jesus—the resurrected as glorified Jesus—these Jews in that day are going to see Him.

And then, Paul became a witness to the nations of the world. And these Jews are going to become a witness to the nations of the world. In Revelations chapter 7, John the apostle had a foreglimpse into glory, and he saw a great number of Jews, he said 144,000 of all the tribes of Israel, they are sealed with the seal of God in their foreheads, and then he tells, in Revelation chapter 7, beginning about verse 9, of the witness of these 144,000. And, he said, “And I saw a great multitude of all kindreds, tribes, peoples, nations, a multitude that no man could number, and these are the ones that have come out of the great tribulation, washed their robes white, and made them whiter than the blood of the Lamb.” These are people who have never heard the gospel who will be witnessed to by these 144,000 Jews. Can you imagine what it’d be like now—not one apostle Paul, but 144,000 apostle Pauls preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ who had been miraculously converted. So, what’s he saying? He’s saying, Listen, God’s not finished. I am an example; I am a pattern of what God is going to do with the Jew. So, the very first thing that I want you to put down of these five proofs is this: the converting power of God. Now, if you don’t think that Israel can come to Christ, you don’t understand the power of God. The same power that convicted the apostle Paul is the power that will bring them to Jesus.

## **II. Proof #2: The Careful Preservation of God**

Now, here’s the second reason—not only the convicting power of God, but here’s

the second reason: the careful preservation of God. Now, God is carefully preserving His people. Look in verses 2 and following: “Has God cast away his people which he foreknew? Wast ye not what the scripture saith to Elijah?”—don’t you know what the Scripture said to Elijah—“how he maketh intercession to God against Israel, saying, Lord, they killed thy prophets, dig down thine altars, and I am left alone, and they seek my life. But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have reserved myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to the image of Baal.” Now, here’s the therefore: “Even so then, at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.”

Now, what does that mean? That means—a remnant means—that which is left, that which is saved, that which is not destroyed. Old Elijah was there, having a contest with 450 prophets of Baal. He said, Lord, I’m the only one, there’s nobody left, and now they’re trying to kill me! And God says, Son, look up here; let me tell you something. You’re not the only one left. And when you die, Israel will not die. Why, right over here I’ve got seven thousand. He had more than seven thousand, but there were seven thousand right there who had not bowed the knee to Baal. God always has a remnant; God always has a faithful people. And Israel, there has always been a remnant of believing Jews, and there always will be, because God is the one who preserves Israel.

Go back to chapter 9 and verse 27: “Isaiah also cried concerning Israel, though the number of the children of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved.” Now, friend, listen to me. The Jews were not the chosen people because of their faithfulness, and they’re not going to be rejected because of their unfaithfulness. Now, God here is talking nationally; He’s talking personally. He’s saying there will always be a nation Israel. The Jewish nation, the Jewish faith, are indestructible.

I want to give you a great passage to put in your margin. This is one of the greatest passages in the Bible, in my estimation. It’s found in Psalm 89, and it’s talking about God’s irrevocable covenant and promise to David. Now, this is what He says to King David, beginning in verse 27: “Also I will make him...”—it’s talking now about David—“also I will make him, my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth.” And, this is a prophecy for David’s greater son, the Lord Jesus—when every knee shall bow. “My mercy will I keep with him for evermore”—just underscore evermore. “My covenant shall stand fast with him. His seed”—that is, His descendants—“also will I make to endure forever”—underscore that: endure forever. “And his throne, as the days of heaven.” Now, He talks about David’s descendants, his seed, and He says this: “if his children forsake my law and walk not in my judgments,”—and, by the way, they did forsake God’s law—“and if they break my statutes,”—and they have broken his statutes—“and keep not my commandments,”—and they have not kept them, God says—“then will I visit their transgression with the rod and their iniquity with stripes.” God said, I’ll take

them to the woodshed, and boy, He's done that. But notice the nevertheless in verse 33, and friend, just underscore that in your Bible: "Nevertheless, my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break nor alter the thing that has gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, and I will not lie to David: his seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before me. It shall be established forever as the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven." Then, he says, "Selah." What does that mean? It means, just think about that. Selah means, just ponder that.

God is saying, Look, I have made a promise to David. If his descendants, if they break my laws, if they won't keep my statutes, then they're going to be punished, but I am going to keep my word. God has always had a remnant, and this nation is God-elected, God-decreed and God-preserved. God prophesied that they would be disobedient, they would be disbursed, they would be discredited, but they would not be destroyed. And the king of Egypt could not diminish them, the Red Sea could not drown them, Jonah's whale could not digest them, the fiery furnace could not devour them, the gallows of Haman could not hang them, and the nations of the world cannot assimilate them, and the dictators of this world cannot annihilate God's ancient people the Jews. They have known all kinds of persecution, but, you see, what God is talking about here is His preserving power. He has a remnant according to grace.

Now, you think about the Jews today. Did you know that they are less than four-tenths of one percent of the world's population? Let that sink in. Four-tenths of one percent, not even one half of one percent, the Jews. And yet the Jewish people have captured almost twelve percent—almost twelve percent—of all of the honors in science, in health, in medicine, in music, and public life. Of the Nobel Prize winners for the last twenty-five years, of them one-third to one-fourth have been Jews. Now, four-tenths of one percent, and yet one-third to one-fourth of the Nobel Prizes have gone to Jews. You don't realize how God has touched your life through the Jewish nation. If you've ever taken an aspirin, Bayer, who developed aspirin, was a Jew. If you have been vaccinated against polio, Sabin and Salk were Jews. If you've gone to the dentist, and he deadened your gums, why, Stricker, who developed Novocain, was a Jew. If you've ever had an infection and used streptomycin, Waxman was a Jew. If you've ever had psychoanalysis, Freud was a Jew. If you've been giving to the Salvation Army, or have been ministered to by the Salvation Army, the mother of William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was a Jew. If in college you studied philosophy, Spinoza and other philosophers, many of them have been Jews. As a matter of fact, all history really revolves around six Jews: Moses, Paul, Marx, Freud, Albert Einstein, and then, in the category all by himself, Jesus. All Jews; they're all Jews, whether for good or bad. I'm not saying that Marx was good; I'm just simply saying that they were Jews, that God has

preserved these people. And then, out of these, this nation, God has a remnant of believers; as He told Elijah, I've got seven thousand who've not bowed the knee to Baal.

### **III. Proof #3: The Controlling Plan of God**

And so, what you see is the convicting power of God; what you see is the continuing preservation of God; and then, I want you to see what I'm going to call the controlling plan of God. Because, see, God has a plan. Now, watch this. Begin in verse 11, and see what he says here in verse 11 of chapter 11: "I say, then, have they stumbled that they should fall?"—talking about the Jews—"God forbid. But rather, through their fall, salvation has come unto the Gentiles. For to provoke them to jealousy." God let the Gentiles get saved so that we could live godly lives and cause Jews to want what we have, which, by the way, brings me to a point. If there's an unconverted Jew here today—and maybe there is—I certainly would hope that he would see by the joy, the love, the faith, the victory that you have, that he'd say, I want some of that—I want some of that. That's what he's saying here: that he would see in us the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, notice what he says in verse 12: "Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness."

Now, what's he saying? He's saying, Look, in my plan I had a Jewish Messiah. The Jews rejected Him, but that gave me the platform to go to the Gentiles. And Paul became the apostle to the Gentiles, and you and I are reading from a Jew who wrote to us the book of Romans, and we're listening to it today, and we're being blessed by the mysterious plan of God. But God says, Listen—that came about in a strange way when the Jews turned from the gospel, and we Gentiles are blessed. But now, notice what he's saying; I want you to listen to his inference here. He's saying, listen—If God kept His word to the Gentiles, and He did keep His word to the Gentiles—remember that Israel was not to be just simply a reservoir into which God poured His blessings, but it was His pipeline through which God would disburse His blessings. And God said to Abraham, Abraham, through you all the nations of the world shall be blessed. What God is saying is this: If I have prophesied that the Gentiles would be saved, and they have been saved, how much more then will I keep my word to Israel and bring them back to me? Notice in verse 12: there is a fullness coming for Israel, do you see that? He says, "God forbid. Now, if the fall of them be the riches of the world and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness."

Now, folks, listen to what he's saying. In verse 15, he speaks of their receiving: "For if the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be?" What is the point—what is the point? Listen to the point—you have to follow Paul's logic. Paul is saying that God is doing all of this according to a magnificent plan,

and they were diminished, they fell away. But he's saying they will come back. They're diminished now, but they will be full. They went away, but they will be received. And what God is saying, If I kept my word to the Gentiles, I'm going to keep my word to the Jews. And if I could take unsaved pagan Gentiles and bring them to Israel's Messiah, how much more can I take Israel and bring Israel to her own Messiah.

#### **IV. Proof #4: The Continuing Promise of God**

Now, here's the next thing. Not only the power of God, the preservation of God, the plan of God, but the continuing promise of God. That's the next thing. Notice, if you will, in verse 16 of this same chapter. And folks, think with me real fast. Now, look here in verse 16: "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy, and if the root be holy, so are the branches." Now, what he's talking here is the covenant he made with Abraham and with Isaac and Jacob. He's in the Old Testament. When a woman would be baking bread, according to Old Testament law, she had to take a pinch of that dough and offer it up to God. Numbers tells us about that. She'd take part of that dough and offer it to God. It belonged to God. Now, that meant that the whole lump was holy because that pinch of dough had been offered to God. All of the bread belonged to God, who gives us our daily bread. And then, he says also the same thing: "If the root be holy, so are the branches." That is, the tree is going to be like the roots of the tree. Now, what he's saying is this: that God made promises to Abraham, God made a covenant, an unbreakable covenant with Abraham, and so, if that little lump of dough, Abraham, was holy, all the loaf belongs to me, God is saying. And if Abraham, the root, is mine, the tree is mine. Now, what God is simply saying is this: I am going to keep my covenant promise to Abraham. And God has not broken His promise, and God cannot break His promise to Abraham, Isaac, and to Jacob.

Now, Abraham is the tree, and we who are Gentiles have simply been grafted in. Look in 17 and 18 of this: "And if some of the branches be broken off,"—that's unbelieving Jews—"and thou being a wild olive tree"—that's you, mister—"were grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree, boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, remember, thou bearest not the root but the root tree." We have entered into Israel's blessings. We're just grafted in; that's all we are. We're the wild olive. The Jews are the true thing. And so, what he is saying is this: that if I can take people like Bob Sorrell and Adrian and Jamie Fish and Jim Whitmire and graft them in to the true olive tree, if I can bring them in, after those unbelievers were broken off, how much more can I bring my own people back in to their own tree, in my time, and bring them back in. If I can take unbelieving pagans, and make believers out of them, how much more can I bring Jews to their true Messiah. I was speaking to some Jewish rabbis—and, by the way, I love Jewish rabbis; they are witty, charming,

delightful, and very intelligent—and they were saying, You know, we don't think you ought to proselytize us. I said, Look, folks—you proselytized me, you proselytized me. I belong in that olive tree only by the grace of God. I'm rooted in Abraham, just as every Jew is rooted in Abraham. Is this getting too deep for you? I hope not.

## **V. Proof #5: The Culminating Purpose of God**

Let's move on to the third thing here. I'm trying to simplify it, but you have to see these things. Now, here's the next thing that he has, and that is the culminating purpose of God. What is the culminating purpose of God? What is God aiming at? Well, begin in verse 25, and we'll be finished here in just a moment. But look, if you will, in verse 25. And he says, "For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so, all Israel shall be saved. As it is written, it shall come out of Zion, the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Now, he's not talking here about spiritual Israel; he's talking about natural Israel. God never called spiritual Israel Jacob. He's talking about literal fleshly Jews here.

Now, let me tell you how God is going to consummate His purpose and His plan with the Jews. Now, be very alert right now. How's God going to do it?

### **A. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel in His Time**

Number one, He's going to do it in His time. Say that: in His time. Say it again: in His time. Now, look in verse 25—look at it now, so your eyes can see it: "I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits, that blindness in part...—not all, the blindness is not total and it is not final—blindness in part has happened to Israel until—until—the fullness of the Gentiles be come in." If you want to get a blessing sometime, just study the untills in the Bible—just study the untills. God does things in His time, whether you like it or not. God has a purpose. God is visiting the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name—that's what the book of Acts says—and afterwards He's going to return and build again the tabernacle of David. He does it until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in. What is the fullness of the Gentiles? That's the church. One of these days, the Church is going to be complete. When will the Church be complete? When will the last soul be saved? I don't know when the last soul will be saved, but when the last soul is saved, that will be the fullness of the Gentiles.

Now, today, we're going to give an invitation in just a moment—not quite yet—but I'm going to ask a minister to stand right here, and I'm going to ask those who will give their hearts to Jesus to leave their seats and come. And suppose there's a minister standing right here, and suppose a 12-year-old girl comes right down here, and says to that minister, I'm giving my heart to Jesus Christ. And suppose in heaven God says,

That's it; that's it, that's the last one, that's the last one. Gabriel, get ready; that's the last one. The fullness of the Gentiles has come in. There's a number known to God alone. I don't know, you don't know, nobody knows when that last soul is going to be saved, but the Bible tells us God is going to do it in His time, and blindness in part is happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles comes in.

### **B. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel Through His Son**

So, number one: it is in His time. Number two: it is through His Son. Look, if you will, in verse 26: "And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the deliverer and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." Who is the deliverer? His name is Jesus. Just in the darkest hour for Israel, this is when they're going to look upon Him whom they have pierced, and this is what the Bible says in Zechariah chapter 12, verse 9: "It shall come to pass in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem, 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." That's what he's talking about right here—the deliverer shall come out of Zion. And then, he says, in Zechariah chapter 13 and verse 1: "In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness." What is that fountain? There's a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

### **C. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel According to His Word**

So number one—listen: it is in His time. Number two: through His Son. Say that: through His Son—that's verse 26. Now, next: according to His Word. Say that: according to His Word. Look, if you will, in verse 27 now: "This is my covenant unto them,"—that means an unbreakable promise—"when I shall take away their sins. As concerning the gospel, their enemies for your sakes, but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes',"—that is, the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—"for the gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Now, what does that mean? God keeps His word. God is not a liar. If God says He's going to do it, He's going to do it. You say, I don't understand it. You don't change it. You say, I don't believe it. That doesn't make any difference. God will keep His word.

### **D. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel by His Grace**

It is in God's time. It is through God's Son. It is according to God's Word. Now, next of all, I want you to notice it is by God's grace. Begin in verse 30, and look at this: "For as ye in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief, even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have

mercy upon..."—how many?—"upon all." Again, don't get the idea that God only wants some people saved. God says all are unbelievers, and God says, I want mercy upon all. But the point is that God is going to do this just out of sheer grace, and remember that over there in chapter 11, verse 6, "It is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace, and if by works it's no more grace, otherwise work is no more work." What does He mean by that? I'm just going to do it by my grace. I mean, this is the sovereign God who is going to do this.

#### **E. God Will Consummate His Purpose with Israel for His Glory**

It is through His Son, friend; it is by His grace; and, finally, it is for His glory. Look at this in verses 33 through 36. Paul just gets through writing. I can just see him as he wipes his tears, and just throws up his hands, and he says, "Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord or who hath been his counselor, or who hath first given to him and it should be recompense unto him again? For of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen."

### **Conclusion**

Now, you say, Pastor Rogers, I don't understand predestination; I don't understand election; I don't understand foreknowledge; I don't understand all of this. Well, help yourself; neither do I. And there's not a person in this room who does, and not anybody out there who does. And you know how I know? The apostle Paul didn't know. He says, Who can understand this? Who has been God's counselor? His ways are past finding out, so why don't you quit trying and begin to live by the Word of God, what God has revealed to you. You say, I don't understand how there can be an election, and God can know ahead of time, and yet man has a free will. Just believe it. It's not up to you to synthesize these things; it's not up to you to put these things together. No, you just simply believe. When the Bible says "whosoever will may come," believe it. And when the Bible says that God wants to have mercy upon all, believe it. And when the Bible says Christ died for the whole world, believe it, and just say, Who can understand the ways of God, the mind of God?

And right here in this passage of Scripture, I want to tell you something, folks: theology turns to doxology. Paul just says, What a mighty God—what a mighty God! But what he is showing is this: that God is not finished with the Jew. He shows the power of God that convicted him, that's going to happen to the Jew one time. He shows the preservation of the God that kept that remnant in Elijah's day, and how God is preserving the Jews today. He shows the plan of God, incredible—the Jews turn from Him, but Paul turned to the Gentiles, and the Gentiles get saved, and then, the Jews are

going to come back, and a great number of them are going to get saved. And then, he talks about the promises of God, that God has made a covenant with Abraham. Abraham is the root. The root is holy; so is the tree. Got that? That first lump belongs to God; so does the whole loaf of bread belong to God. Now, that's the promise of God, God will not break His promise.

And then, finally, the purpose of God. "So all Israel shall be saved." Doesn't mean every Jew will be saved; it means those who trust in Him are the true Israel. They're going to be saved; whether they're Jew or Gentile, they're going to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. I brought my notes down here to the lower floor to read something. I didn't get a chance to read in the first go-round today, but I want to read this to you. I was so impressed with this. I copied this out of a news magazine I get from a Jewish organization—not Christian at all, not Christian at all, Brother Bob. They're so orthodox, they won't even spell the name God; they say G-dash-D. They would not even spell God, lest they be accused of using God's name irreverently. By the way, these people are planning to rebuild the temple, the people who wrote this article.

Here's what this Jew said, and I want you to listen to this: Israel is celebrating the jubilee of redemption. Did you know that right this year is the Jubilee Year? Fifty years after Israel was formed, when I was in high school playing high school football, Israel became a nation. Israel is celebrating the Jubilee of redemption. This is the first Jubilee in the modern history of Israel. The unique significance of this Jubilee is that it is celebrated at the time of the End Time Redemption. Even though the people of Israel have passed through exciting times in their biblical history, we are now living in the most exciting time in the history of the chosen people of God. All of the prophecies of the God of Israel are being fulfilled since the creation of the state of Israel. Over the past 50 years, God has again dramatically appeared in the life of His beloved nation and land. All His prophetic promises are becoming a reality. According to the Word of God, three major events will occur in the end times prior to the coming of Mashiac, ben David, that is, Messiah, son of David.

First is the re-establishment of the state of Israel and the land of Israel. We saw that May 14 to 15, 1948. Many of you were alive when that happened. The second is the re-gathering of the Jewish people to the Promised Land from all over the world. We've seen that, as they've come, even out of Soviet Russia, as they've come on the wings of eagles. The third is the rebuilding of the temple on the temple mount in Jerusalem, on the same place as the first and second temples. And this man and others are gathering money, gathering materials, to rebuild the temple right there on the Mount of Olives. And what he's saying is this: Everything is at hand; we're ready, this is the most exciting time. This is the year of Jubilee—redemption. He just doesn't know how much he knows—he just does not know how much he knows.

And my heart almost explodes when I think of people like this who will see Him, and say, What are those wounds in your hands? And you say, These are they where I was wounded in the house of my friends. And in that day there will be a fountain open for the inhabitants of Jerusalem for cleansing and for sin. Is God through with the Jew? God forbid, and He's not through with you, either.

Let's bow your heads in prayer. If you want Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, let me help you to pray right now so you can be saved. Would you pray like this? Dear God, I am a sinner. Now, folks, you'll never get saved until you get that far. I am a sinner, and my sin deserves judgment, but I need and I want mercy. Jesus, I believe that you are the Messiah of Israel, the Savior of the world. Thank you, Lord, that I can be grafted into that olive tree. Thank you, Lord, that through faith I can become a child of God. Lord Jesus, now, right now, right now, this moment, I open my heart. I receive you, Jesus, as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Did you pray that? Then, by faith, pray this way: Thank you for saving me. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand upon your Word. You said, if I would trust you, you would save me. Thank you for saving me. And now, Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. Help me never to be ashamed of you. In your name I pray. Amen.

# The Power of Effectual Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: January 26, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 11:36**

*“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”*

ROMANS 11:36

## Outline

Introduction

- A. Jesus Is the Producer of Creation
- B. Jesus Is the Preserver of Creation
- C. Jesus Is the Purpose of Creation
- I. The Origin of Prayer
- II. The Operation of Prayer
- III. The Objective of Prayer

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn, if you will, please, to the book of Romans—the Constitution of Christianity, Romans chapter 11. And we are going to look primarily at one verse tonight.

And, before we look at that verse, I want to tell you there is a place in the Atlantic Ocean called the Bermuda Triangle. Sometimes, it is called the Devil’s Triangle. It is said that in that body of water, a vast body of water, sometimes airplanes have been known to mysteriously disappear. Sometimes ocean liners and boats and fishing craft have just disappeared. People have vanished in this so-called Bermuda Triangle, or Devil’s Triangle. Now, I think that is more myth than mystery. And I don’t put any stock in that, but there is another triangle, not the Devil’s Triangle, but a Divine Triangle, and it is not myth; it is miracle. And we are going to read about it right here in Romans chapter 11 and verse 36. Listen to it: “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever.” Now, that is a divine triangle.

Can we have a triangle on the screen here? I want you to see how that works. We are going to be talking about prayer tonight. We are going to be talking about the power of effectual prayer. And you are going to find out that in God’s economy there is a cycle, that things come, first of all, of Him, and then they go through Him, and then they return back to Him. And that is the cycle of victory that we have. Really, that is the theme of

the entire Bible. Everything starts with God. Everything operates through God. Everything returns back to God.

#### **A. Jesus Is the Producer of Creation**

For example, the first verse in the Bible says, everything is of God. Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” It all begins with God. And then, in Revelation chapter 1 and verse 8, Jesus said, “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, which was, and which is to come.” Do you see the way that this divine triangle begins, and it continues, and it ends? “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him.”

Think for example in the material world. How did the material world come to place? How did it all come to be? Put in your margin Colossians 1, verses 16 and 17: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” In that one verse, you see the same truth, that first of all, the physical world, He, our God, is the power of creation. It is impossible to believe that everything came from nothing. Listen. We believe in God by faith, but the atheist has a whole lot more faith than we have. He, by faith, believes that it all just happened.

The scientists totally reject that; some scientists totally reject that. Sir Fred Hoyle at the British Academy of Science, who is a leading mathematician and astronomer, shook up a lot of people in the scientific community when he said this—and let me quote him: “We must now admit to ourselves that the probability of life arising by chance, by evolution, is the same probability of throwing six on dice 5 million consecutive times.” And then he goes on to say, “Let’s be scientifically honest with ourselves. The probability of having life arise to greater and greater complexity in organization by chance is the same probability of having a tornado tear through a junkyard and form out the other end a Boeing 747.” And this is a scientist talking, Sir Fred Hoyle of the British Academy of Science. He said, “Random and impersonal chance does not create complexity and design.” No, all things are by Him.

#### **B. Jesus Is the Preserver of Creation**

But not only is He the producer of creation; He is the preserver of creation. That same verse that I just read to you said, “By him all things consist.” Jesus is the glue of the galaxies. He is the one who feeds the sun with fuel. He is the one who veils the moon with beauty. He is the one who guides the planet on their courses. Take His hand away and everything would disintegrate. It is God who just does all of this.

I was studying some about astronomy. I am not an astronomer, but I love astronomy. And I got to thinking again about the speed of light, because I am preparing

a message to speak at a convention about light. And you know that light travels at 182,282 miles per second—186, 282 per second. Well, how fast is that? Close your eyes. Now open them. Light just went around the world seven times. That's how fast light travels. Now, the sun is 93 million miles away, and it takes light approximately 8 1/2 minutes to travel from earth to the sun at 186,000 miles per second. Now, to reach the nearest star, however, you would have to travel 4 1/2 years at that speed, that is 27 trillion miles. That's the nearest star. They tell us that there are stars out there in our galaxy that are billions of light years away. As a matter of fact, the thing that we can see furthest in the distance with the giant telescopes are things called quasars. And they are 15 billion light years away—15 billion light years away. That's 90 billion trillion miles away. And, who knows what is behind that?

### **C. Jesus Is the Purpose of Creation**

Well, who keeps all of that in order? God. He calls all the stars by name. You see, Jesus is the producer of creation. He is the preserver of creation. And He is the purpose of Creation. The verse I just read to you from Colossians says all things were created for Him. What's the world coming to? What is the universe coming to? It is coming to Jesus. It is true in the physical world. It is true in the spiritual world.

How did we get saved—because we sought God? No. I read a verse to you this morning: “there is none that seeketh after God, no not one.” The only reason you know Him is because He sought you. We love Him because He first loved us. By nature, we are all running from God. If God couldn't run faster than we could run, none of us would be saved. Friend, I want to tell you He takes the initiative. He first loved us. Then He takes our salvation and brings us to Himself. We have nothing to boast of. We live the Christian life through the power He gives, and one day we are going back to Him. For it is of Him, by Him, through Him, and to Him are all things.

It is the same thing in sanctification. It all begins with Him. I used to think, as a young Christian, if I could just be good enough, if I could live clean enough, pure enough, then maybe God would fill me with the Holy Spirit. That was so foolish. Because there is no way that I could live the Christian life apart from the fullness of the Holy Spirit. That doesn't mean I can cling to sin and have God fill me. But it does mean this: that, friend, holiness is not the way to God. God is the way to holiness. That is so important that you learn this.

You know, some people want to get some money. They want to borrow some money. And they have the idea that if they can go to the banker and prove to the banker they don't need any money, maybe he will loan them some. Well, friend, we used to think that about God. You know, if we could just say to God, “Now, God, I'm perfectly clean and pure and holy; now fill me with the Spirit.” No. You see it is of Him, and through Him, and to Him. We come to Him empty-handed, and say, “Lord, I am in a

mess.” And God says, all right, I am the one that put that desire in your heart, and I am going to fill you with the Holy Spirit.

It is the same thing in stewardship. What do we give to the Lord when we bring our money here? What He has given to us. Now, what do you have that you have not received? In the truest sense, how can you give anything to God? What do you have that you have not received? It is of Him, and through Him, and to Him. When our children were little, they would go out and buy me a Father’s Day present. Do you know what they bought me a Father’s Day present with? Money I gave them. Sure, but I enjoyed it. The whole thing is of Him, through Him, and to Him. That is the divine triangle.

Now, having that in mind, I want to talk to you about effectual prayer. And I want to tell you three wonderful truths about prayer. Now, listen to me now. Don’t check me out. This is transformational, and this is truth. I want to apply it to your heart.

## **I. The Origin of Prayer**

Let’s think first of all of the origin—the origin of prayer. It roots in the purposes of God. That is so important. The origin of all effectual prayer roots in the purposes of God. For of Him are all things. Now, I have told you before, the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven. Of Him are all things. Prayer is not some way to get earth’s will done in heaven; it is God’s way to get Heaven’s will done on earth. You see, God is sovereign, and we are sinful. There is no way that prayer would work if it did not begin with God. But though God is sovereign, His sovereign throne is a throne of grace. And we can come to a sovereign God by grace. And grace means that God loves us before we loved Him. Hebrews 4:16: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.”

Now, have you ever thought about the fact of why we pray? Prayer is a great mystery. Why do we pray? Why do we tell God what He already knows? Why do we ask God to do what He already wants to do? If it already starts in His heart and mind, why do we pray? Why does God lay that burden upon our heart? Let me give you three reasons why we pray like this.

First of all, God gives us the privilege—listen to me—the privilege of working together with Him. Second Corinthians chapter 6, verse 1: “For we then are workers together with him.” Now, Mark Dougharty and I, we work together. We meet, we pray, we talk, we laugh, we plan. And it is a privilege for me to work with Mark. I know Mark better because I work with him. He knows me better because we work together. What a glorious privilege to work with God. I mean to think of it, Paul said we are laborers together with him.

I have often used the illustration, but I’ll dare use it one more time of sometimes I will

fly with a person in a private airplane and sit up in the cockpit side by side. And that person will let me fly the plane. Well, friend, if he weren't there, I'd be a pilot, all right; I'd pile it in the field. But he is there to override my mistakes. And yet I am flying that aircraft. Now, he could do it without me. I could not do it without him. But together we are having fellowship. That's the way prayer is. God could do it without us. We could not do it without Him. But God has given us the privilege to pray. Prayer bonds your heart to God.

And prayer is also the way that God disciplines us. Have you ever asked God for something and didn't get the answer? Let me see your hand. Come on. Sure, of course you did. And you say, "Well, why did God not answer my prayer?" A boy may ask a girl for date, and she says no, and he says, "I wonder why. I wonder if I have bad breath." And so he gargles. And then, later on, he says, "I wonder if my fingernails are messy." So he cleans his fingernails. And then he says, "I wonder if my dress is not appropriate." And he begins to clean up and dress up. And then, after a while, she may say yes.

Now, that is the way God is. God is working on us. And God disciplines us through prayer. Prayer is God's way of, when we have prayers that are not answered, to cause us to examine our hearts.

And prayer binds us and bonds us to God. God does not want us to be independent of Him. Now, all prayer begins in heaven. If you want your prayers answered, you are going to have to hear from heaven. John 15, verse 16—Jesus said, "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; that whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you."

Now, Jesus said, I have chosen you. You didn't choose me. I chose you. I ordained you, that you would bring forth fruit. And whatever you ask the Father in my name, I will do. That means, I am the origin of the prayer. In my name means, I have signed the purchase order.

Now, the disciples went out fishing one night and didn't catch anything. And Jesus said, well, cast your net on the other side of the boat. And the disciples said, look, we have toiled all night and have taken nothing. It begins with we; it ends with nothing. Nevertheless, at thy word, we will. And then, listening to Him, they cast out their net and caught a boatload. The whole point is this that prayer begins with God.

So many times, we are trying to bend God's will to our will. Prayer is not bending God's will to our will; prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it. Don't be like the little boy who was heard praying, "Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo." Somebody said, "What are you doing?" He said, "I have just had a geography test and I am praying to make Tokyo the capital of England." You are not going to change God by prayer. God's will is what prayer lays hold of. Prayer is not bending God's will to our will. Now, that is

the origin of all prayer. It roots in the purposes of God. That's the reason I said this morning, "It is not, name it and claim it."

## II. The Operation of Prayer

Now, here is the second thing I want you to notice: not only the origin of prayer, but the operation of prayer. It relies on the power of God. Now, even if you have the right origination, if you knew the will of God, you still need the anointing to pray. Did you know that you need God in order to pray? God is the one who gives you the desire to pray. Remember Romans 3, verse 10 and 11. I have told you, "There is none that seeketh after God; no, not one." Your old nature does not want to pray. Romans 8, verses 5 through 7: "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal man"—that means the fleshly man—"is enmity against God"—that means warfare against God—"for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."

You will never train the old man to love prayer. You may as well try to train your dog to love opera. Your old nature does not want to pray. It is God that gives you the desire to pray. He has put His Spirit in your heart crying "Abba Father." If you have no desire to pray, it is because you are not walking in the Spirit. Now, God gives not only the desire to pray; God gives the direction to pray. He teaches us what to pray for. Matthew 6, verse 8: "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before you ask him." God knows what you need to pray. God knows what you need. Is that a comfort to you? It ought to be.

Sometimes we might want things that we don't need. Sometimes we ask God for things we don't need. Mrs. Billy Graham said, "If God had answered my prayer, I would have married the wrong man on four different occasions." We ask God for things. I remember one time there was a car that I thought I needed when I was in high school. A buddy of mine had an old rattletrap car, and I think he was going to sell it for \$75. I thought, man, if I could get \$75, I could have that car. I asked God for it, and God didn't give me \$75, and I didn't get the car. Somebody else got it, and the motor fell out of it. I mean, literally fell out of it. I don't see how a motor can fall out of a car. But I had to thank God. "Lord, thank you for not letting me get that automobile." Sometimes we think we need things that we don't need. And sometimes we need things that we don't want. My dad used to say, you need a spanking. He was right. I didn't want one, but sometimes we need things we don't want. God knows what we need. And sometimes we think we need things we already have.

I am amazed at churches in building programs that are asking God to give them the money to build a building when they have the money in their pockets. The people have

the money in their pockets. They are asking God to send somebody else to give them money, rather than asking God. Listen, friend. God gives you what you need. He knows what you have need before you ask Him. And God gives you the desire to pray. And God gives you the direction for praying, what to ask for.

Well, you say, “Pastor Rogers, why doesn’t God therefore direct me more?” I was thinking about this, this afternoon. I will tell you one thing. There is so much in this Bible that we do know about that we ought to pray about and we don’t pray about. Why do we whine about the things we don’t know about? There are so many things that are revealed to us clearly—clearly.

Now, listen to what Jesus said—Jesus in His humanity. I want you to notice how Jesus did not originate His prayers, but He listened to the Father. Put this down—John 5, verse 19: “Then answered Jesus and said unto them, verily, verily I say unto you, the Son”—speaking of Himself, the s-o-n—“can do nothing of himself,”—did you hear that? I mean God incarnate, God in human flesh, He said I can’t do anything of myself—“but what he seeth the Father do, for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.” Jesus said, I stay tuned to heaven, and whatever I see, whatever I hear, that’s what I say; that’s what I do. Friend, when you come to God, and abide in God, God is going to speak to your heart. We need more loving, lingering, listening prayer. Because the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven. All things are of Him and through Him.

I have had experiences in my life that are so phenomenal—so phenomenal—where God has spoken to me, and I have obeyed. I’ve asked God for something that God laid on my heart. And it just happened in such a way that I cannot believe it’s coincidence. There was a man named Johnny—Johnny Sowell. I had Johnny on my heart, praying for Johnny, wanting Johnny to be saved. I was down in Florida when this happened. And I had prayed for Johnny. I tried to witness to Johnny. Every time I would go to the house where Johnny was boarding there would be so many people around, and they would crowd around me, and I couldn’t get Johnny alone to talk to him. But I knew that if I could just get Johnny alone—Johnny was about nineteen years of age—if I could get him alone, I could lead him to Christ. I had borrowed a deacon’s home for prayer. I was just there in his living room on my knees praying for Johnny. And I felt this strange thing come into my heart. I felt God saying, ask Me for this. Ask Me that you can go downtown and there in the middle of town you will see Johnny. Ask Johnny to ride to Vero Beach with you, and tell Johnny about Jesus, and Johnny will get saved. Now, there is no reason for this. I had no idea where he was, what his work schedule was, where he would be in town, or anything else. No apparent reason. I am there, actually on my knees; I believe, if I remember, I was on my face. I said, “Lord, I am going to ask You. Therefore, I am going to go downtown, and I am going to ask you that You let me

meet Johnny. I am going to ask Johnny to go to Vero Beach with me, and I want to talk to him about You, and I want him to get saved.” I got in my Ford automobile, went down to the main street, the crossroads there, and there is Johnny standing on the corner. I said, “Johnny, I am going to go to Vero Beach. Will you ride with me?” He said, “Sure thing,” and jumped in the car. Why should he go with me to Vero Beach? On the way there, I talked to him about Jesus. On the way back, we stopped, parked the car, he prayed and asked God to come into his heart.

Well, how do you want to explain that? I mean, I am not clairvoyant, but I felt God telling me to pray this. I have had—I could name, not a lot, but enough—experiences like that, that make me wonder why I don’t stay more in tune with the Lord. I am not holding myself up here as a paragon of excellence in this matter. And I believe that God many times just speaks to us clearly and plainly in plain English about His will, and we know it is of Him. And sometimes it is not always that dramatic. But I am telling you, it is God who originates the prayer. He is the origin of this prayer. And He is the operation of this prayer.

### **III. The Objective of Prayer**

Now, here is the third and final thing, as we think about prayer. And that’s the objective of effective prayer. It results in the praise of God. It roots in the purpose of God. It continues in the power of God. And it always results in the praise of God.

Now, God does not hear selfish prayers. God is in the business of getting glory to Himself. There is one verse that most adequately defines prayer to me, and it is John 14, verse 13—listen to it: “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” That’s it. “When you ask in my name,” Jesus said, “I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.” For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.

Now, praise and thanksgiving complete the triangle of prayer. First of all, there is a petition. And then, there is praise. You see, thanksgiving enjoys the gift, but praise enjoys the giver. Don’t just merely thank God for what He has done for you, but praise Him. Look at the verse again—verse 36: “For of him, and through him, and to him are all things, to whom be glory forever.” The purpose of prayer is to glorify God. When you learn that secret of wanting to glorify God, you see, prayer goes into God’s presence to carry something away, and that’s wonderful. But praise goes into God’s presence to remain there forever. Now, that’s the reason we are to pray in the name of Jesus. Listen to this verse again, in John 14, verse 13: “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son.”

What does it mean to ask in His name? Does that mean to say whenever we pray for whatever we want, we just say, in the name of Jesus, and that somehow sanctifies

it? No. When you are asking in His Name, it means, first of all, with His approval. Could He sign His name to it? Secondly, with His authority. Is it something that He Himself approves and therefore gives His authority to? And thirdly, is it for His acclaim or for His glory? Don't just rattle off, in the name of Jesus, if you are not really praying for His acclaim, with His approval, and in His authority.

Now, when you pray, pray in the name of Jesus. And when you pray in the name of Jesus, and ask Him for whatever you ask Him for, ask yourself this question: "Am I praying this prayer because God the Holy Spirit put this thing in my heart either through the written Word or through His Spirit—the *rhema* that I spoke about this morning? Am I now praying in the energy of the Spirit rather than the energy of the flesh? And is the desire of my heart that God would be glorified?"

## Conclusion

Let's put the triangle back up there again and look at it again. Look at it now. See at the point up there. There is God in heaven. For of Him—it all starts with God. He knows what things we have need of before we ask Him. And then, it is through Him. We pray in the Spirit, not in the energy of the flesh, as He gives us the desire and the direction to pray. And then, the prayer goes right back to Him, and He is the One who receives the glory. And, when we begin to pray this way, then God begins to work in a very supernatural way. Now, let me give you a definition of prayer, and then we are going to have an invitation. Here is the best definition of prayer that I have ever learned. Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire into our hearts, and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross. Would you like to hear it again? Nod your heads. All right now, listen. Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire into our hearts, and then, sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross. For of him, and through him, and to Him are all things. And this is very simple, but very wonderful. He, Almighty God, is the purpose of prayer. He is the power of prayer. He is the origin. He is the operation. He is the object of all true prayer.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, let me say this: that you cannot, you never will, pray in power outside the will of God, and you will never know the will of God, until you abide in Him. And you can never abide in Him, if you are not saved. And so, if for no other reason, not even to escape hell and go to heaven, if for no other reason than to be on praying ground, you ought to be saved. But you cannot pray in the name of Jesus, God cannot speak to you in sweet communion, until you get saved. So, if you would like to be saved, give your heart to Jesus. Now, the Bible says, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. And that word believe does not mean intellectual belief alone; it means trust. You can believe an

airplane can fly, but you don't trust it till you get on it. Are you ready to trust Jesus? Would you like to invite Him into your heart? Then pray a prayer like this: "Dear God, I am a sinner and I am lost." And, friend, don't be ashamed or afraid to admit that you are a sinner. You know you are. And the wages of sin is death. The soul that sinneth, it shall surely die. The wrath of God burns against sin. You dare not face God with unconfessed, unforgiven sin. "I am a sinner, Lord." Confess it. "I need to be saved." You do need to be saved, if you have never been saved. And then, make a confession of faith like this: "Jesus, You are the Son of God. You paid for my sin debt with Your shed blood on the cross. God raised You from the dead. You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, right now, with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus." Don't just utter the words. Pray it from your heart. "Save me, Lord Jesus." Did you ask Him? Then, by an act of faith, don't look for a feeling; don't look for a sign, but just by an act of faith stand on the Word, and say, "Thank you for doing it. Just thank you for doing it. I receive it by faith. If you give a feeling, emotion, that's fine, but I am not depending upon that. Emotions are fickle. By faith, I thank you for saving me. You are now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. Begin now, Lord Jesus, to make me the person you want me to be, and help me never ever to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Now, look up here. We are going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to stand here at the head of every aisle all the way across the front to receive those...

# The Secret of Effectual Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 31, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 11:36**

*“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”*

ROMANS 11:36

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Origin of Effectual Prayer: The Purpose of God
  - II. The Operation of Effectual Prayer: The Power of God
  - III. The Objective of Effectual Prayer: The Praise of God
- Conclusion

## Introduction

You're not going to lay down your sword and shield by the riverside unless you've taken up the Lord Jesus as your Lord and Savior. There's another spiritual that says, everybody talking about heaven ain't going there. So I hope that you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

Be finding please Romans chapter 11 and we're going to spend most of our time this morning in one verse—verse 36. We're talking today about the secret of effectual prayer. Now, I don't know why we like to put the word secret in our sermon titles, but it's no secret. It's right here in the Word of God how to pray and pray effectually. Down in the Atlantic Ocean there is a great mass of water bounded on three sides that is called the Bermuda Triangle, and some call it the Devil's Triangle, because in that great, massive part of the earth, the ocean's surface, it is said that airplanes fly into that Bermuda Triangle and disappear. Ships sail into that vast place of water and they disappear—the Bermuda Triangle. Many people say it's a great mystery. I think it's a myth. I don't think there's anything really to it.

I don't want to talk to you today about the Devil's Triangle. I want to talk to you about the Divine Triangle. The Divine Triangle is not a myth—it's a miracle. It doesn't cause things to disappear—it brings things into being. And that Divine Triangle is found right here in the Word of God. Look at it in verse 36: “For of him and through him, and to him, are all things.” Now, friend, that is a wonderful, wonderful thought. If God will write that upon your heart—“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be

glory forever.”

Now, what this verse is doing is talking about the sovereignty of Almighty God. It says everything begins with God. He is the source of all things. Everything is accomplished through God. He is the force of all things, and everything returns back to God. He is the course of all things. All things are from Him and through Him and to Him. Almighty God is sovereign. You see, this is really the theme of the Bible. How does the Bible start? Well, in the beginning, God. All things are from Him, or of Him. And then, how does the Bible end? In the book of the Revelation chapter 1 and verse 8: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and was, and is to come.” It’s the theme of the Bible. All things, friend, come from Him and they go back to Him.

It’s true in the material world. How did this material world get here? Let me give you a verse of Scripture. Just put it in your margin by this verse and you can find it in Colossians 1, verses 16 and 17, if you are fast enough to turn to it, but here’s what it says. It just illustrates this verse. Listen to it: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers—all things were created by him, and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.” That’s just a re-statement of, of Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. You see Jesus—Jesus—is the power of creation.

How did everything get here? Well, Jesus put it all here. Every time I see an atheist I think, friend, don’t palm yourself off as an intellectual. You know, sometimes atheists want to strut a little bit like they’re too intellectual to believe in God. An atheist believes nothing times nobody brought about everything.

Now, you think about it. It’s really kind of ridiculous. Sir Fred Hoyle, Fred Hoyle, of the British Academy of Science, a leading mathematician and astronomer, shook up a lot of people when he said this. And let me give you what Sir Fred Hoyle had to say about this vast universe in which we live. I quote: “We must now admit to ourselves that the probability of life arising by chance, by evolution—now listen to this—is the same probability of throwing six on dice 5 million consecutive times.” And he goes on to say, “Let’s be scientifically honest with ourselves. The probability of having life arise to greater and greater complexity in organization by chance is the same probability of having a tornado tear through a junkyard and form out the other end a Boeing 747.” And then he goes on to say—now this is a scientist, “Random and impersonal chance does not create complexity and design”—“Random and impersonal chance does not create complexity and design.”

Jesus is the reason for and the producer of creation, and He’s also the preserver of creation, because this verse that I just read to you said of the Lord Jesus, “By him all

things consist.” That is, they adhere together. He is what keeps the molecular structure of this universe from flying apart. Every atom, by nature, would want to fly apart, except that God has built into every atom an attraction that holds it together, and He has built the gravitational force into our universe, and what some call the law of nature is but the power of Jesus, who is the one who keeps it all together. He is the glue of the galaxies. It’s the Lord Jesus who fuels the sun with its power. It’s the Lord Jesus who veils the moon with its beauty. It’s the Lord Jesus who guides the planets through the universes. There’s no natural law. It’s the laws of God that nature obeys.

Let me give you another verse. Just put this one down in your margin and meditate on it. I was meditating on it this morning. What a great verse it is—Isaiah 40, verse 26. He tells us to go out now and just look at the skies. Joyce and I love to do that on a starry night. Listen to it: “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things.” Now, when you look at the stars, you say, who did that? Look. “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number; he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for he is strong in power. Not one faileth.”

Joyce and I took a vacation some years ago down on a little island in the Bahamas and there was no television there, no radio, nothing, really no air conditioning, just a little place there on the beach. We loved it. And there was a dock out in front and at nighttime Joyce and I’d just go down and get flat on our backs on the dock, and just look up at the stars, and just lie there and talk and marvel at the stars in the universe. Now, listen. The Bible says in this verse that He calls them all by name. Have you ever thought about that—that God has a name for every star in the universe?

Now, let me just give you a little astronomy here. If you were to hijack a light beam, you know how fast you’d have to travel? 186,282 miles per second. Well, you say, how fast is that? Well, blink your eyes. Just blink them like that. All right, in that time, light would have gone around the equator—all the way around the earth—seven times, in time you blinked your eyes. That’s how fast it travels. Traveling at the speed of light, it takes you eight minutes to get to the sun. Now, the sun is 93 million miles away, so light coming 93 million miles only takes it 8 minutes to get here, but now we are talking about the stars, and He calls all the stars by name.

The closest star to us is Alpha Centauri, which is 4 ½ light years away. Now, what is a light year? Well, that’s the distance it takes light to travel, traveling at 186,000 miles per second—186,000 miles per second—it takes light 4 ½ years—4 ½ years—traveling that fast to get to the nearest star. Now, how far is that in miles? How far is a light year in miles? Well, light will travel in a year 6 trillion miles. Now, so, 4 ½ light years away—that’s 27 trillion miles. That’s the closest star. Now, folks, there are stars, billions of stars in our galaxy. As a matter of fact, our galaxy is the Milky Way, and it is estimated there

are 100 billion stars in the Milky Way. And from one rim of the Milky Way to the other rim of the Milky Way would be 100,000 light years, going just from one rim of our Milky Way to the other. That's our galaxy, and they say they've taken that great 200-inch telescope on Mount Palomar and looked through just the cup of the Big Dipper and there they've seen as many as one million galaxies, just through the cup of the Big Dipper, and these stars go on and on and on and on. The further thing that they believe they've seen in space is what they call a quasar, which is 15 billion—listen—15 billion light years away. That's 90 billion trillion miles away, and who knows what's behind that? And God gives all of these stars names—billions upon billions upon billions upon billions.

We're talking about something that is 90 billion trillion miles away, and who knows what lies beyond all of that? Who made all of that? Jesus did. Jesus made all of that for His glory. Albert Einstein as a young man in 1932 was an atheist, but in 1950 he became a believer in a higher power. Albert Einstein became what we would call today a theist. That is, he said all of this could not have happened. All of the mathematical laws and precision in the universe, the vastness, it could not happen by chance. There has to be a higher intelligence. I wish he had known that higher intelligence is Jesus. You see, Jesus is the producer of creation. Jesus is the preserver of creation. By Him all things consist. And Jesus is the purpose of creation. Our verse I gave you says, "all things were made by him, and for him." And the word for is the Greek preposition *eis* and it has the idea of progress toward an object. It has an idea of motion toward an object. You see, look. The universe came from Him, the universe is sustained by Him, and everything comes back to Him. People ask this question—what's the world coming to? It's coming to Jesus. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things."

It's true in the material universe. Friend, it's true in the spiritual universe. Think about the things that we have in the spiritual universe. How did you get saved? "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things." Your salvation began in the heart and mind of God. The Bible says before He swung this planet into space, you were in His heart and in His mind. And Christ died before the foundation of the world, in the heart and mind of God, and God knew you before you were born, and your salvation did not originate with you—it originated with God. "We love Him because He first loved us." It is of Him. And then, it is through Him. Jesus came to this earth, suffered, bled, and died for us on the cross, and with His rich, red, royal blood paid the price of our salvation. And then, it is to Him. Why did He do all of that? So that we could know Him and love Him and worship Him and honor Him. It is true in salvation. "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things."

Not only is it true in salvation, but it's true in sanctification. Once you get saved, how do you live the Christian life? "For of Him, and through Him, and to Him." You see, it is

God that gives you this ability to live the Christian life. One of the greatest lessons I've ever learned about being a Christian is this: that holiness is not the way to Jesus—Jesus is the way to holiness. “For it is of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.” Not only is it true about salvation, not only is it true about sanctification, it's true about stewardship. You talk about giving something to Jesus. This morning we're going to take an offering. Well, let me tell you something. In the truest sense you won't give Him anything, did you know that? Why? “Of thine own have we given unto thee.” Fathers Day is coming pretty soon, and some little boys will get from their daddies some money to go buy their daddy a present. You see, listen: “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him. Of thine own have we given unto thee.” Anything we give to Him, He gave to us—everything—whether it be salvation, whether it be sanctification, whether it be a stewardship, whether it be service it's “of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.”

Now, we said we're going to talk about prayer. Let's see how this relates to prayer. There are three things I want you to learn about prayer this morning—effectual prayer.

## **I. The Origin of Effectual Prayer: The Purpose of God**

I want you to see the origin of effectual prayer: It is of Him. And then, I want you to see the operation of effectual prayer: It is through Him. And then, I want you to see the objective of spiritual prayer: It is to Him. When you learn that prayer is a cycle, that like everything else in the material world, or the spiritual world, that, “all things are of Him, through Him, and to Him,” it will help you to understand how to pray effectual prayer.

Now, listen to me very carefully. We are going to talk about effectual prayer. What is the origin of effectual prayer? It roots in the purpose of God. Now, that's worth writing down. The origin of effectual prayer, is this: it roots in the purpose of God. Now, here is the great, great secret of effectual prayer. Listen carefully. The prayer that gets to heaven starts in heaven. Now, the prayer that gets to heaven starts in heaven for, “of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things.” You see, prayer is God's way of getting heaven's will done on earth, not man's way of getting man's will done in heaven. What we do when we pray is just close the circuit. “For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things.” God is a sovereign God.

Why has God allowed us to pray? Have you ever thought about that? Prayer is so mysterious. I mean, God knows what we have need of before we ask Him, so why should I ask God for what He already knows I need? And God loves me. Why should I have to persuade a loving God to bless me or give me what I need? What is the purpose of prayer? Could God do it without our praying? He will not do it without our praying, and if we don't pray, we will not have, for the Bible says, “We have not because we ask not.” What is the reason for prayer? Well, let me just give you three of them right

here for just a moment. You see, God has given us the privilege of working with Him. Now, God in His administration of the universe has called us as laborers together with Him. The Bible tells us very clearly in 2 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 1, “We are workers together with him.”

Now, you think about it, that Almighty God said to Adrian, “Adrian, I want you to help me run the universe.” You say, that’s arrogance. Well then, blame the apostle Paul. He said, “We are workers together with him.” We work together with God as we work with one another, and we work with God in administrating the universe. God wants to move through His people.

Well, why would He do it that way? I’ve often used the illustration of flying an airplane. I don’t know how to fly an airplane, but there have been times when I’ve been up with the pilot, and he would say to me, do you want to fly this airplane? I say, sure. So he turns the airplane over to me. He’s sitting there alongside of me, of course, and he’s got his hands on his controls. I have mine on the other controls and I’m flying the airplane. Now, folks, I want to make it very clear he could do it without me, I couldn’t do it without him, but there’s the joy of that fellowship as he says, I’m going to let you help me fly this airplane. God says, I want to let you help me to run the universe, and the way we’re going to do it is through prayer.

And so, there is that cooperation with Almighty God; when we pray we have the privilege of working with God. And then, because of that, we also find there is that bonding—that bonding—that we have. Did you know, if we didn’t pray, many of us would never think about God? Many of us would take just the blessings for granted. But God wants us to be perpetually dependent upon Him, so He teaches us to pray—He teaches us to pray.

And then, prayer is the way of disciplining us. Have you ever prayed and not gotten your prayer answered? Of course. And you say, well, why didn’t God answer my prayer? Is there something wrong in my life? Have I been out of fellowship with God? Is there unconfessed, unrepented of sin in my life? And many times we’ll find that there is. And the Bible says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. And I think one of the things that keeps me closer to God than anything else is the knowledge that if my heart is not clean and pure my prayers will not get through.

So the origin of prayer is the purpose of God—the purpose of God. God has a purpose in His heart and in His life. He wants to work in me through prayer. Now, folks, prayer did not begin with you. As a matter of fact, if you don’t name it and claim it, it has to begin with God. I remember reading about the disciples out fishing after the resurrection of Jesus, and Jesus said, have you caught anything? Don’t you hate it when you’ve been fishing all night and haven’t caught anything, and somebody asks you that question? Have you caught anything? Here’s what they said. Now, listen to it.

They said, “We have toiled all night and have taken nothing.” The sentence begins with we—it ends with nothing. Anything that begins with we ends with nothing spiritually. And then, Jesus said, well, cast your nets out on the other side. And they said, well, at your word we will. And now, friend, we have to get God’s Word. In order for us to be fruitful in anything that we do, we have to get it from God. The origin of prayer: it roots in the purpose of God.

You know, the reason we don’t get our prayers answered, folks, is that we’re not rooted in the purposes of God. We are like that little boy who was heard praying, Tokyo, Tokyo, Tokyo. Somebody said, what are you doing? He said, I’ve just finished my geography lesson, and I’m asking God to make Tokyo the capital of France. You see, prayer does not bend God’s will to fit our will; prayer finds the will of God and gets in on it. We’re going to say more about that later on, but remember this: that the origin of effectual prayer roots in the purposes of God. “For of Him are all things.”

## **II. The Operation of Effectual Prayer: The Power of God**

Now, here’s the second thing. Not only does the origin of effectual prayer root in the purposes of God, but the operation of effectual prayer relies on the power of God, because not only is prayer of Him, but it is through Him.

### **A. God Gives Us the Desire to Pray**

You see, it’s God that gives you the desire to pray. Did you know that you don’t have a natural desire to pray? You have a natural desire not to pray. I’m talking about your flesh. Let me give you some scriptures. Romans 3, verse 11—we’ve already looked at this: “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God, no, not one. That’s what the Bible says. You have a natural inclination not to pray. Let me give you another verse—Romans 8, verses 5 through 7: “For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind is enmity against God.” That is, the fleshly mind is at warfare with God. “For it is not subject to the law of God, neither, indeed, can be.” Your nature does not want to pray. There’s nothing in you by nature that would cause you to seek God. No, not at all. But God, when He puts His Spirit in you, gives you the desire to pray. Romans 8, verse 15: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” God puts His Spirit into our hearts, let’s us know that we’ve been adopted into His family, and then prayer is just as natural as a little child saying, Daddy, Father. But the natural man, the carnal nature, doesn’t want to pray.

## **B. God Gives Us the Direction to Pray**

So, how is prayer through Him? Well, first of all, He gives us the desire to pray. And now, listen very carefully. Not only does He give us the desire to pray, He gives us the direction to pray. I mean, what are we to ask for? We don't know by our own nature what to ask for. You know, the Bible says that, "God will supply all of our need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Sometimes we want things we don't need, isn't that true? Yes, that's definitely true. Have you ever thanked God for unanswered prayer? I have. I've asked God for things I thought I needed and He didn't give them to me, and I argued with Him, but He still didn't give them to me. Do you know what Mrs. Billy Graham said? Mrs. Billy Graham said, "If God had answered every one of my prayers, I would have married three other men other than Billy Graham, and everyone of them been wrong." You know, you're asking God to give you something that's not best for you.

Sometimes we want things we don't need and sometimes we need things we don't want. Isn't that true? My dad used to say, "You need a spanking." I didn't want one, but I needed one. He was right. Well, only the Holy Spirit of God is going to show us how to pray for things that we may not want but that we really need. And then, sometimes we want things that we already have. You take a church like this sometimes, we'll come to a building program and we'll say, "O Lord God, give us the money to build this building." Why should we pray a prayer like that? The money to build the building is sitting right in the congregation, and it's in our bank accounts. We're asking God to give us what we already have, where we just take what we already have, and give it back to God, and say, "Of thine own have we given unto thee." Sometimes we want things we don't need; sometimes we need things we don't want; and sometimes we want things we already have, but the Holy Spirit of God gives us the desire to pray, and the Holy Spirit of God gives us the direction to pray so we can know the will of God.

Now, let me give you a key verse here. It's not found in Romans, but it's found in the Gospel of Matthew. Just jot it in your margin—Matthew 16, verse 19. The Lord is speaking to the church, corporately and as individuals, and here's what He says: "And I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Well, how would you like to have the keys to the kingdom of heaven? I mean, how would you like to have the key that unlocks the treasury of heaven? "I give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Now, listen to this: "and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." Now, what this says in the Greek language is, whatever you bind on earth has already been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth has already been loosed in heaven. That is, it has already begun with God—now you need to ratify on earth that which is done in heaven. You see, what we need to do is to look to heaven, find out what God's plan is in

heaven, and then transfer it to earth, and loose it on earth.

Manley Beasley, who has preached from this platform, who is now in heaven, a dear personal friend of mine, said that the secret of success in the Christian life is, find out what God is up to, and join Him. Just find out what God is doing in heaven, and join Him. So many times we're asking God to rubberstamp our plans, and bless this mess. How did Jesus pray? Jesus prayed by this principle. Put this verse down—John 15, verse 16: "Then answered Jesus, and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son—speaking of Himself—the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what he seeth the Father do, for what things soever he doeth—the Father—these also doeth the Son likewise." What Jesus said is just, I look into heaven, I see what the Father is doing, I see what the Father wants. That's what I ask for, that's what I get. Do you know what worship is? Worship is placing yourself on the altar until you're consumed.

Now, you're in verse 36, just go to chapter 12, verse 1—look at it: "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Now, a sacrifice is to be placed on the altar. And what happened to a sacrifice in the Old Testament when it was placed on the altar? It was consumed by fire. Now, if that sacrifice was not a holy sacrifice, it would not be consumed. It would be repugnant. God would refuse it. But if it was a holy sacrifice, that is, without spot or blemish, pure, clean, that sacrifice would be consumed. Now, you have not really worshiped until you have placed yourself on the altar and God has consumed you with holy fire. Now, when you do that—when you do that—when you place yourself upon the altar, and let God consume you, you are consumed by Him, then you know what happens? Well, look at it. Look in chapter 12, verse 1: "Brethren, by the mercies of God, present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Now, watch this: "And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." When you worship, with loving, lingering prayer, God comes and He consumes you, and then He transforms you, and you now have the mind of Christ. You look into heaven. You see things that are in heaven. You see what is bound in heaven, and you bind it on earth. You see what is loosed in heaven and you loose it on earth.

### **C. God Gives Us the Dynamic to Pray**

And, you see, it is God that gives you the desire to pray, it is God that gives you the direction to pray, it is God that gives you the dynamic to pray, because you must pray in faith.

And where's that faith going to come from? Well, "of Him, and through Him, and to Him." You can't conjure up faith, you can't make yourself believe, but when you hear God, when you've been alone with God, when you are worshiping God, and God

speaks to you, then faith wells up in your heart. Remember not long ago we preached from Romans 10, verse 17, “faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,” and we told you that word hearing is the word *rhema*, which means not just hearing words, but hearing God. When God speaks to you, you have a *rhema* of God. Then you find that faith in your heart. Many of us just run into God’s presence, and we say, listen, Lord, your servant is speaking, rather than, speak, Lord, your servant is listening. And finally, when we find out what’s going on in heaven, whatever is bound in heaven, then we bind it on earth, and whatever is loosed in heaven, then we loose it on earth.

You see, listen. Prayer is of Him. It is through Him. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the desire to pray. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the direction to pray. It is the Holy Spirit who gives us the dynamic to pray. Prayer is of Him and through Him. I don’t know whether you’ve ever prayed this way or not. I don’t pray this way enough. You know, I’ve had just enough sojourns into prayer to realize how powerful prayer is and just how miserable my prayer life is, but I can think of those times when God has spoken to me in worship, and I have had things laid on my heart that I prayed, and God has done them in such miraculous ways.

When I was preparing this sermon, I thought of an experience I had down in Florida in my first little church, Fellsmere, Florida. There was a man in that church whose name was Johnny. I had Johnny on my heart. He was a young man, handsome, tall, and he was staying at a home, he was boarding at a home, and in that home there were a lot of children. And I would go to try to win Johnny to Christ, and the kids in that home, there were so many of them, and they were so happy that the pastor would come they would come sit in my lap, pull at me, talk with me, run around the room, show off, want to sing for me, and there’s Johnny over there, and I could never find time to talk to Johnny. I never could get Johnny by himself. I was in the living room of a deacon. He had gone away and I had borrowed his house to pray. I was down on my knees praying in that deacon’s home, and the deacon, Neil Surer, and I was in Neil Surer’s home, and I said, “Lord, I can’t get a chance to talk to Johnny. Every time I go over there, why, there are so many people, and so many children. Lord, I want to win Johnny to You. I believe he’s ready to be saved.” Now, folks, I cannot explain this, but God spoke to my heart, and God said, you get in your automobile, you go downtown, there on the corner you’ll see Johnny. Ask Johnny to ride to Vero Beach with you, and on the way to Vero Beach you talk to him about me, and you can share Jesus with Johnny.

Now, folks, I had no idea where he was even in town or where he might have been, what time of day, but God said, you go right in the center of town and he’ll be there. Folks, I got up off my knees, got in my Ford automobile, and drove to the center of that city, and there on the street corner was Johnny. I said, “Johnny, I’m going to Vero Beach. Do you want a ride with me?” I didn’t tell him what for. He said, “Sure,” and

jumped in the car. On the way over there, I talked to him about Jesus. When we got there, we turned around and came back, didn't do a thing in Vero, stopped the car, bowed our heads, and Johnny prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into his heart. He was wonderfully saved. I thought, man, I wish I could do this all the time. I mean, I wish I could get that kind of an insight into heaven where God would just speak to me.

Now, I don't know that God's always going to do it that sensationally, but I know, friend, that we don't get enough prayers answered because we don't really worship God. We don't really see what God wants to do in heaven. But prayer—listen—prayer is of Him. It is through Him. Now, watch this. And it is to Him.

### **III. The Objective of Effectual Prayer: The Praise of God**

Now, the origin of prayer is the purpose of God; the operation of prayer is the power of God. But now, listen carefully, and here's where many of us miss it. The objective of prayer is the praise of God. Now, if you don't get that, you're going to miss the whole thing. The objective of prayer is the praise of God.

Now, listen to it. "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever." You see, God is in the business of getting glory to Himself, and the reason so many times that our prayers are not answered is that we are not interested in the glory of God. We are interested in our own personal aggrandizement. When you get interested in the glory of God, you're going to see prayers start being answered. James said, "You have not because you ask not, and you ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you might consume it upon your lust." But we are to ask God for the glory of God.

Now, listen. It is prayer and thanksgiving that complete the triangle—of Him, through Him, and to Him. Thanksgiving just simply says, Lord, thank you. Prayer asks. Thanksgiving says, thank you. Thanksgiving enjoys the gift. Praise enjoys the giver, when we just simply praise the Lord. You know, prayer goes into God's presence to carry something away. Thanksgiving goes into God's presence. Praise goes into God's presence just to stay there forever and ever and ever. And, by the way, folks, this is why we pray in the name of Jesus—this is why we pray in the name of Jesus.

You know, He says that we are to ask in His name. Now listen to it—now, listen: we are to ask in His name, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. Now, think about that. Why do we pray in the name of Jesus? That God would be glorified. That's what it means to pray in the name of Jesus. Over in Israel there's a grove of trees planted in my name. Some of my Jewish friends said, "We are going to plant a grove of trees in your name in Israel." That's an honor. Do you know what they were saying they were doing that for? For my honor. In your name—the Adrian Rogers Grove of Trees is for your honor. If you want to say it—for your glory. Now, prayer in Jesus' name is for the

glory of God. Ask in my name, Jesus says, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, to whom be glory forever and ever. That's how you pray in the name of Jesus.

And oh, it's so sweet to pray in the name of Jesus. Have you ever woken up in the morning and knew it was time to pray, and just didn't feel like praying? By the way, that was yesterday morning for me. I mean, yesterday morning I could not get my motor started, and I just, at breakfast, my knees were molasses, my brain was cobwebs. I just couldn't get started yesterday morning. I told Joyce, I feel like I need to go back to bed. You know when you wake up sometimes like that you just don't feel like praying, isn't that true? You just don't feel like praying. Have you ever done that? You just don't feel like praying, and so you don't pray. Then, now, I did pray, but sometimes you don't feel like praying. And you say, well, you know, it would be just mockery if I were to pray today, or right now, so I'll wait till I feel better. Then later on, you get to feeling better. Maybe you take a couple of Alka Seltzer or something like that, you know. Maybe last night you had sauerkraut and ice cream, and so you take an Alka Seltzer. And then, after a while, you get to feeling better, and you say, now I can pray.

Well, I want to ask you a question. Do you think God was in that plop, plop, fizz, fizz? I mean, did that make you more spiritual? No, you just felt better, you just felt better. Now, folks, when you pray, don't come offering to God the brass of your emotions. Come with both hands filled with the incense of Jesus' name. Ask in His name. It really doesn't matter how you feel. Pray in the name of Jesus. I tell you, I've done this before. I've come sometimes, and it's time to preach on Sunday, and I say, "O God, O God, I've been so busy. I'm here, this, that, I've been running around doing a lot of things good, but none of them as good as prayer. Lord, I just don't deserve your blessings this morning. O God, I'm so sorry." And the Lord says to me, "Now, wait a minute. If you had been really doing what you ought to do, then do you think that your prayer would be rewarded because you've been such a good boy? Don't you realize that it's my grace that gets your prayers answered?"

You see, folks, it's not my sweat—it's His blood. You pray in the name of Jesus. I'm not saying that we ought not to do right. I'm not saying that we ought not to serve Him, but there comes a time when you say, O God, I'm not offering my emotions, and I'm not offering my performance; I am standing on your promise, I am praying in the name of Jesus. And God answers your prayer, and then, you say, to whom be glory forever, and pray in the name of Jesus.

## Conclusion

Now, I'm finishing this message, but now let me tell you what prayer is—what I've said about prayer. I've talked to you about the origin of prayer. I have talked to you about the operation of prayer. I've talked to you about the object of prayer—a divine

triangle: for of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. Now, here is the bottom line. Let's just wrap it up. Let me give you a definition of prayer. Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire into your heart, and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross, or in the power of Jesus' name. I know you didn't remember all that, so I'm going to give it to you again. Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire into our heart, and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross, for the glory of God. "For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things." And, when we learn to pray that way, we're going to pray as Jesus prayed, and we are going to see God do some wonderful things in prayer. Let's bow our heads together.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you right now begin to intercede for those round about you who may not know the Lord Jesus Christ? And if you don't know the Lord Jesus, I want to help you to pray and receive Him right now. Would you pray a prayer like this? Lord Jesus, I need You. Lord Jesus, help me right now to trust You as my Lord and Savior. In Your name I pray. Amen.

# The Secret of Effectual Prayer

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 31, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 11:36**

*“For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”*

ROMANS 11:36

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Origin of Prayer: The Purpose of God
  - II. The Operation of Prayer: The Power of God
    - A. God Gives Us the Desire to Pray
    - B. God Gives Us the Direction to Pray
    - C. God Gives Us the Dynamic of Prayer
  - III. The Objective of Prayer: The Praise of God
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn, please, to Romans chapter 11, and in just a moment we're going to look at verse 36. Down in the Atlantic, there's a vast body of water, bounded by three sides, that is called the Bermuda Triangle. Some people call it the Devil's Triangle because, it is said, that airplanes fly into that area and disappear. It is said sometimes that ships sail into that area and they're never seen again—the Devil's Triangle. Now, they say it's mystery; I believe it's myth. I don't believe there's anything to it whatsoever. But there's another triangle today that is not mystery. It is miracle. It is not myth; it is true. It does not cause things to disappear; to the contrary, it brings things into being. It is the divine triangle, and you're going to read about it in Romans chapter 11 and verse 36: "For of him,"—that's the Lord—"and through him and to him are all things." Now, see the triangle? "For of him and through him and to him are all things."

Now, really, this is the theme of the Bible. It speaks of the sovereignty of Almighty God, who's brought everything into being, who controls everything, and will consummate everything. "For of him, through him, and to him are all things." How wonderful that is. That's the theme of the Bible. For example, Genesis 1:1 begins how? "In the beginning God." For of him. And then, in the book of the Revelation, Jesus said, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." "For of him and through

him and to him are all things."

Now, this is true in the spiritual realm. It is true in the physical realm. Let's think a little bit about the physical realm. For example, put in your margin there Colossians 1, verses 16 and 17. I love that passage of Scripture; it is such a blessing to me— Colossians 1, verses 16 and 17. It talks about how the Lord Jesus created everything, sustains everything, and how everything is going to culminate in him. Speaking of Jesus, it says, "For by him are all things. For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created by him and for him and he is before all things and by him all things consist." That's just a restatement of what Paul said over here in Romans 11, verse 36.

Now, notice it says by the Lord Jesus Christ everything came into being. That is, Jesus Christ is the power of creation. Where did everything come from? You know, to be an atheist is not a sign of intelligence. If you think that nothing times nobody equates to everything, I think you've got rooms to rent upstairs unfurnished. You think about it.

Sir Fred Hoyle was a leading astronomer, a mathematician, in the British Academy of Science. Here's what he said, and I want to quote: "We must now admit to ourselves that the probability of life arising by chance by evolution is the same probability of throwing six on the dice 5 million consecutive times." Now, you think about that: get a pair of dice and roll, you'd have to roll six 5 million consecutive times. And then, he goes on to challenge his scientific brothers by saying, "Let's be specifically and scientifically honest with ourselves. The probability of having life arise to greater and greater complexity and organization by chance is the same probability as having a tornado tear through a junkyard and form, out the other end, a Boeing 747." And then, this great scientist said, "A random and impersonal chance does not create complexity in design." You couldn't have a human eye by random and chance. No, Jesus is the power of creation.

But I'll tell you something else. Not only is Jesus the power of creation, but Jesus is the preserver of creation, because it is of him and through him. You see, our passage says here that by Jesus all things consist. That is, they hang together. Jesus is the glue of the galaxies. It's Jesus that fuels the sun with energy. It's Jesus who veils the moon with beauty. It's Jesus who guides the planets and the stars in their orbits.

Sometime ago, Joyce and I took a vacation down to a little Bahamian island, and we didn't have television, didn't have a radio, didn't have air conditioning, had a little cabin right there on the beach, a dock with a boat out in front. It was beautiful. For our entertainment at night, we would just go out and lie flat on the dock, and look up at the stars, and that clear Caribbean sky, and watch that candelabra in the heavens. We were doing what Isaiah tells us to do in Isaiah chapter 40 and verse 26. He says, "Lift up

your eyes on high and behold, Who hath created these things that bringeth out their host by number," talking about the stars. "He calleth them all by names, by the greatness of his might, for he is strong in power, not one faileth." That means that it is God who keeps this vast and mighty universe regulated. Jesus is the reason and the regulator. He is the power and He is the preserver of all creation.

I don't know whether you think about the vastness of our universe, but light travels at 186,282 miles per second. That's around the world by the time you blink your eyes seven times. It'll go around the world seven times by the time you can blink your eyes, faster than I can make seven orbits with my finger. Light travels that fast. It takes it 8 1/2 minutes to get from the sun—8 1/2 minutes—that's 93 million miles away, but to the closest star traveling at that speed, it takes it 4 1/2 years. But now, the closest star, 4 1/2 light years away, light traveling at 186,000 miles per second, that's the closest star. But friend, we have stars that are billions of miles away. The furthest thing that you can see is a quasar. It's 15 billion light years away. I'm talking about the closest thing that you can see through the giant telescope on Mt. Palomar. And, there are entities, beings in our universe, or pieces of astronomy that are out there billions and billions and billions and billions of light years away. Fifteen billion light years, that's 90 billion trillion miles away, and who knows what's behind that?

You know, Albert Einstein, the genius, Albert Einstein started out as a young man. He was an atheist in 1932, but in 1950 he was no longer an atheist. Albert Einstein said, this is mathematically impossible that this universe could come into being and be regulated apart from a higher power. I wish that Albert Einstein had known that higher power is Jesus, don't you? I wish he had known that. You see, Jesus is the power of creation, Jesus is the preserver of creation, and Jesus is the purpose of creation. This passage of Scripture in Colossians says, all things were created by Him and for Him, and the word *for* is a preposition which means, motion toward an object. People want to know what the world is coming to; it's coming to Jesus, it's all created for Him. He is the consummator as well as the creator of the universe. It's all for Him. Did you think He made it for you? It is by Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. Now, that's in the physical realm.

The same thing, the same triangle, is true in the spiritual realm. Think of salvation. How does salvation work? Of Him, through Him, and to Him. Who thought up the idea of salvation? God thought it. Who brought it about? God wrought it. And why did He do it? That we might know Him and come to Him. For of Him—"we love him because he first loved us"—He sent His Son. Through him—Jesus suffered, bled, and died. It is to Him—when we trust in Him He draws us to Himself, and we will live with Him forever and give Him the glory.

It's true in salvation. It's also true in sanctification. How are you going to be more like

Him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things. You see, it is God who energizes us to make us more like Him. Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness. For it is of Him and through Him and to Him—it's true in stewardship. Do you think this morning when the offering is given that you will really give anything to God? I mean, really, do you think that you will give anything to God? Last week, we used that scripture where Paul said, "Who hath given to the Lord and it shall be recompense to him again?" That is, you can't give anything to God; it's already His—it's already His. The Bible says, "Of thine own have we given unto thee." Fathers Day is coming soon. Some little boys will go to their daddy and say, Daddy, we need some money; we need to buy you a present. You see, it is of Him, and through Him, and to Him.

It's true in salvation. It's true in sanctification. It's true in stewardship. And, friend, it is especially true in prayer. I want to talk to you today about prayer. I want to talk to you about effectual prayer, and I want to show you how this divine triangle teaches us to pray. You're going to see that in prayer God is the origin of effectual prayer—it is of Him. God is the operation of effectual prayer—it is through Him. And God is the objective of effectual prayer—it is to Him.

Now, if you'll learn this, you'll learn something about prayer that I was a grown man and preaching before I ever learned about prayer. And God is still teaching me, and I don't stand up here as the paragon of excellence when it comes to prayer, because I've never been satisfied with my prayer life, but I am learning some things about prayer.

## **I. The Origin of Prayer: The Purpose of God**

Now, think, first of all, about the origin of prayer. What is the origin of prayer? It is the purpose of God. It is of Him—it is of Him. You see, folks, the prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven. The prayer that gets to heaven is the prayer that starts in heaven. It is of Him. What is the purpose of prayer? What did the Lord Jesus teach us about prayer? "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Now, prayer, therefore, is not man's way of getting man's will done in heaven, it is God's way of getting heaven's will done on earth; it is God's way of getting heaven's will done on earth. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." The origin of effective prayer is the purpose of God.

It is of God. Now, why does God use prayer? Have you ever thought about the mystery of prayer? Prayer is so mysterious, I have pondered about it. Why would God want us to tell Him what He already knows? Why would God want us to ask for what He already knows we need? I mean, He already knows what things you have need of before you ask, and He is a loving God, so why pray? Well, I'll tell you why He wants us to pray: because He has given us the privilege of working with Him in the regulation and

the administration of the universe. That's a great privilege, to work with God. You know, Paul said to the Corinthians, we are laborers together with Him.

I've often used the illustration of sometimes I will fly with people in private airplanes. Sometimes it might just be the pilot and myself, one of those airplanes where they have side-by-side seats. I've done this before, and the pilot would say, Do you want to fly this thing? Now, folks, I'm about as good a pilot as I would be a Russian astronaut, but they say, Do you want to fly? I say, Yes. So I take over the controls, and I'm flying the airplane, he's right there alongside of me—yeah, sure, of course, or I wouldn't be up here preaching—but he's right up there alongside of me. Am I flying the airplane? Well, in a sense, I'm flying the airplane, but I'm flying the airplane in cooperation with him, under his instruction, with his encouragement, with his background, all of this. He's flying that airplane, in a sense, but he's given me the privilege of flying that airplane along with him. Well, when that happens, there's a thrill there. Now, you see, he could do it without me, and God could run this universe without you. You could not do it without Him, I could not fly that airplane without the pilot, but what a joy it is to cooperate and to have that fellowship.

And, you see, when there's that fellowship, there's the second reason: there's that bonding. Prayer is the way to bond you to God. Now, God doesn't want you to live your life independent of Him, and so, if He just gave you everything—you never needed to ask and depend on Him, and trust Him, and look to Him—you wouldn't have that bonding. But God makes us perpetually dependent upon Him, and we come to Him, that we ask of Him; we have that fellowship, there's that bonding, there's that fellowship that comes between believer and the Lord when we pray.

And then, another reason is that prayer disciplines us; I mean it makes us more like the Lord Jesus. Have you ever prayed and asked God for something, and the prayer wasn't answered? Of course. Well, He might have said, no. That was the answer, but you didn't get what you asked, and you said, Well, why? Why didn't I get what I asked? As James says, "Ye ask and receive not because you ask amiss that you might consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that friendship with the world is enmity with God?" And so, you get to thinking, Have I been a friend of the world? Has there been sin in my life? Well, the Bible says, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me, and in prayer, my life is being conformed more and more to the image of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I get my heart clean, and I get in fellowship with God, that I might get my prayer answered. Yes, prayer is God's way of fellowshiping with us, bonding us to Him, disciplining our lives, and whether you understand it or not, the Bible has commanded us to pray, and that prayer begins in the heart and mind of God, it begins with God, for of Him, the purpose of God is the origin of prayer.

Now, friend, prayer is not bending God's will to fit your will; prayer is finding the will of God and getting in on it. For of Him. All right, now, we're talking about the origin of prayer and it is the purpose of God. You got that? The origin of prayer is the purpose of God.

## **II. The Operation of Prayer: The Power of God**

Now, think about the operation of prayer. For not only is it of Him, but it is through Him. Not only does God originate the desire, but God enables us to pray, and it comes through Him, through the Holy Spirit of God.

### **A. God Gives Us the Desire to Pray**

Now, it is God that gives us, first of all, the desire to pray. Did you know that your flesh has absolutely no desire to pray? The Bible tells us in Romans chapter 3, verse 11, "There's none that seeketh after God, no, not one." And the Bible tells us in Romans 8 that the "carnal mind is enmity with God, is not subject unto the law of God, neither indeed can be." What does that mean? It means that your nature, your Adamic nature, has about the same desire to pray as your dog has to see opera. You don't have any desire to pray. That is not a natural instinct. As a matter of fact, your natural instinct is to shy away from God, just like Adam and Eve ran and hid from God in the Garden. We don't seek Him; He sought us. "Adam, where art thou?" You see, it is the Holy Spirit of God that gives us the desire to pray, and in that same eighth chapter of Romans, God says this: that God hath sent forth His Spirit into our hearts crying, Abba, Father. That means, Daddy, Father. It's as natural for a Spirit-filled person to want to pray as it is for a little child to say, Daddy to his daddy. See, Abba, Father, means Daddy, Father.

### **B. God Gives Us the Direction to Pray**

So, what? Prayer is through Him—it is the Lord who gives us the desire to pray. And then, it is the Lord who gives us the direction to pray. How are we going to know what to pray for? I think this is the biggest problem that most of us have—finding the will of God in prayer. Is that not true? Sure. You see, the Bible says that this is the confidence we have in Him, if we ask Him anything according to His will, He heareth us—when it is the Holy Spirit of God in us that gives us that direction so that we will know how to pray. Sure the Bible says that "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus," but friend, that doesn't settle it. I mean, it is true, but the problem many times is that sometimes, we want things that we don't need, isn't that true? We want things that we don't need. Mrs. Billy Graham said, If God had answered every one of my prayers, I would've married the wrong man on three different occasions before I married Billy. You know, O Lord, let this thing happen, let this thing happen, let this thing happen. We thank God for answered pray. Folks, I'm telling you, we ought to thank God

for unanswered prayer a lot of times, isn't that true? We'd be in the soup if God answered every prayer that we ask, because "we know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered," and so sometimes we want things we don't need.

Sometimes we need things we don't want. My Dad used to say, You need a spanking. I didn't want one, but I needed one, and sometimes we need to pray for some things that we need that we don't want. That is, in and of ourselves. How are we going to know how to pray for these things?

And then, sometimes, we want things that we already have, and we're asking God to give us what we already have. You might be asking God to give us authority over the devil. You already have that. You already have that. Sometimes churches will be in a building program. They'll say, O God, O God, send us the money to build this building, send us the money to build this building. They've already got the money. It's in their pockets and in their bank accounts, more than enough, if people would turn loose. They're just saying, Lord, you just float it down from heaven so we won't have to give it, isn't that right? Lord, give us what we already have, and we have it, and what we need to do is release it, rather than asking God to give us what we already have.

So, how are we going to know how to pray? In Matthew 18, Jesus Christ said this: "I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Now, friend, if you have that set of keys, you've got something. "I will give unto you the keys of the kingdom of heaven." Think about that: the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And then, Jesus said, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. And whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, If any two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Now, what He's talking about is prayer, and He's talking about binding and loosing. But the Greek scholars rightly tell us that what that Scripture says is this: that whatever you bind on earth has already been bound in heaven. And whatever you loose on earth has already been loosed in heaven. What that means is this: that we need to go up in heaven and see what is happening in heaven, and bring it down to earth—and bring it down to earth.

You see, Manley Beasley used to say success is this: just find out what God is up to, and join Him. Just find out what God is up to, look into heaven and find out what is in the heart and mind of God in heaven, what God is binding and loosing in heaven, and then, by prayer, you bind and loose here on earth. "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Whatever's bound in heaven is to be bound on earth; whatever's loosed on earth will be loosed in earth. It is not, you name it and claim it. It is, Lord, give me an insight into what is going on there in heaven.

That's exactly what Jesus did. Now, Jesus was the absolute perfect human being. Now, He was God, but He was also man, and He lived here on earth, not as God masquerading as a man, but as a man. He laid aside all of those prerogatives that were His as Deity and walked this earth as perfect man praying and depending on God, and Jesus said—listen to this—Jesus said, “The Son can do nothing of himself. What he seeth the Father do, that's what He does, and what I hear is what I speak.” That is, I'm in tuned to heaven. I don't originate these things. Even though He were perfect man and God in the flesh, Jesus said, I get the report from heaven. What I hear my Father say, I say. What I see my Father do, I do. Whatever is bound in heaven is bound on earth. Whatever is loosed in heaven is loosed on earth. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Now, friend, that's the way that you get your prayers answered: not trying to superimpose your will on the will of God, but knowing what's going on in heaven. Now, do you know why we don't know what's going on in heaven? Because we spend very little time there in worship. We rush into the presence of God, and say, Now, listen, Lord, your servant is speaking, rather than, Speak, Lord, for your servant hears. The secret of knowing the will of God is worship.

Now, you're in Romans 11 and verse 36. Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, follow that. Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, it's almost as if God is on his knees before man, Since all things are of Him and through Him and to Him, Paul says, "I beseech you, therefore, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

Now, let's just pause there for a moment. Do you know what worship is? Worship is seeing the mercies of God and then just coming to God and saying, Lord, I am a living sacrifice. In the Old Testament, the sacrifices were killed, but I'm alive. But I come and I place myself upon the altar. Now, what happened to a sacrifice that was placed upon the altar? It was consumed by fire. Do you know what worship is? Worship is bringing yourself to God, presenting yourself to God, and letting God consume you—letting God consume you. Now, He won't consume an unholy sacrifice. But when you place yourself upon that altar and you say, Lord, none of me, all of you; here I am, Lord; I give myself away; 'tis all that I can do; here, Lord, I am a living sacrifice, then you know what happens? After that consummation, there's a transformation, and He says, When you present yourself, you'll not be conformed to this world, but you will be transformed by the renewing of your mind, and you will prove what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of God, you will know the will of God when you worship. You know, if we worshiped as we ought, if we spent enough time in heaven, we would know what's going on in heaven, and then we would be able to bring to heaven down on earth that which needs to be brought to earth, and we would be able to bind on earth what is

bound in heaven, and loose on earth what is loosed in heaven, and what the Father does we will do, and what the Father says we will say. You see, it is God who gives the desire to pray. It is God who gives the direction to pray.

As I was preparing this sermon, I was trying to think of an illustration for this. I thought of something that happened to me when I was a young preacher pastoring a church down in Florida, a little college church in a little town called Fellsmere. And the young man down in that church that I had a burden for, I was trying to lead that man to Jesus Christ, his name was Johnny and he was staying in sort of a boarding house. And when I would go there to visit him, there was it seemed like hundreds of children there. Of course there weren't, but, when the pastor came, these kids would crowd around me, and I loved them, and I would play games with them, and they would try to show off, and we would laugh and tussle and so forth. But I couldn't get to Johnny to share about Jesus. I wanted to have him by myself and he was a fine, tall young man. I guess 19 or 20 years of age. I was praying in the living room of Deacon Neal Shirrey. He was gone. I was a college student, but I had borrowed his house just to go over there and pray. I was in the living room down on my knees, and I was worshiping and praising God, and I began to pray for Johnny Sewell. And the Lord impressed my spirit and spoke to me this way: Adrian, go to the center of the town. You'll find Johnny there in the center of the town. Ask him to ride with you to Vero Beach, which was about 15 or 20 miles away from where we were. Ask him to ride with you to Vero Beach, and he'll go with you to Vero Beach, and there you can witness to him and tell him about me. I can't tell you how I felt this impressed in my heart because it wasn't an audible voice, but I felt that's exactly what God wanted me to do. And I told the Lord, Lord, I'm going now to meet Johnny, got up and got in my Ford automobile and drove to the center of town and there he was standing on the street corner. I had no idea, in the flesh, whether he was in town or in Timbuktu, but there he was, standing right on the street corner. I drove up, I said, Johnny, How are you? Fine, preacher. Johnny, I'm going to Vero Beach. Would you ride with me? Yes sir. And jumped in the car. Didn't ask, Why are you going, what's it for, why I was going, but I didn't say a word about it. On the way down there, I talked to him about Jesus; on the way back, we stopped the automobile, bowed our heads and prayed, and Johnny gave his heart to Jesus Christ, and was saved.

And I thought, Man, I wish I knew more about prayer and knew how to pray like that all the time, and could just, I think experiences like that would be much more normal to us than they are if we really knew how to worship. Find out what God wants done on this earth, and we might get a report from heaven, that we might look into heaven and that God might speak to us. But so many times we're praying, Lord, bless this mess. Lord, I made up some things that I want to do. Now, here, Lord, I want you to rubberstamp all that I want to do.

### C. God Gives Us the Dynamic of Prayer

No, friend. Prayer is of him, it is through him, He gives the desire, He gives the direction, and He also gives the dynamic. And what is the dynamic of prayer? It is faith. You can't just make yourself believe. What things soever ye desire when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you shall have them. Well, even that faith is the gift of God—even that faith is the gift of God. Did you think that faith came out of your poor carnal heart? No, it is God that puts that faith into you, but you must abide and allow God to put that faith in you. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." And remember we talked about that when—two weeks ago, Romans 10:17? And remember what the word hearing means? Listen: "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; it is the *rhema* of God." That doesn't mean just hearing somebody read the Word; it means hearing God speak to you out of the Word. Having God just take the Word of God and speak to you, and when God speaks to you, and those of us who have prayed, and I know that many here in this congregation that could say, There are times when I've gotten that *rhema* of God, and God has put that faith in my heart, and I can pray that way.

### III. The Objective of Prayer: The Praise of God

Now, watch it. What is the origin of prayer? The purpose of God. What is the operation of prayer? The power of God. It is through him. And then, what is the objective of prayer? The praise of God. Listen. The objective of prayer is the praise of God. Now, listen to that verse: "For of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be the glory." See, God is in the business of giving glory to Himself. The reason that so many of us don't get our prayers answered is we're not interested in the glory of God, we're trying to make God Santa Claus and a bellhop. Lord, I want you to do this for me, and that for me. Our prayers are not interested in the glory of God, but God is interested in giving glory to Himself. He says, "I will not share my glory with another." And that's the reason James says, "Ye ask and ye ask amiss, that you might consume it upon your lusts." God will answer personal prayers, but not selfish prayers. Is the desire of your heart the glory of God? The cycle of prayer is that prayer originates with God, prayer operates through God, and prayer goes back to God to give God glory.

Now, prayer says, Please. Praise says, Thank you. Prayer goes into God's presence to carry something away. Praise goes into God's presence to stay there forever and ever. You see, the end of all things is not things, but God Himself, and when your heart is consumed not with the gifts of God but with God, the glory of God. You know, I think one of the greatest prayer promises is Romans 14:11. Jesus said, "Ask in my name that the Father may be glorified in the Son." Ask in my name—that's the secret of asking in the name of Jesus, that the Father is glorified, to whom be glory. What does it mean to

ask in the name of Jesus? Well, when you ask in the name of Jesus, that doesn't mean that you've got some little magic formula so you can just put Jesus' name on the end of your prayer, and because you put Jesus' name there on the end of your prayer, that's a magic formula. No! Jesus said, You ask in my name, how? That the Father might be glorified in the Son. For of him and through him and to him are all things, to whom be glory. That's why you ask in the name of Jesus. You can't pray anything in the name of Jesus that's not for the glory of God. You can't pray anything in the name of Jesus that is not for the glory of God. Say Amen. Now, listen. That's so important.

You know, we need to understand what it is like to pray in the name of Jesus. Have you ever wakened in the morning and just didn't feel like praying? Don't look so holy. You don't feel like praying. Maybe you have a dull headache. Maybe last night you had sauerkraut and ice cream, or whatever, you didn't sleep well, and you just can't get your motor running, and your mind is fuzzy, and you say, Oh, if I were to pray today, it'd just be a charade. I just don't feel like praying. I just don't feel it. My prayers are not juicy. Just seem like my prayer is getting no higher than the light bulb. Heaven is brass. Well, you say, maybe I've just got an upset stomach, and you go get some Alka Seltzer, drop it in that glass, plop plop, fizz fizz, and you drink that, and after a while you get to feeling pretty good. I believe it's time for my prayer. And you pray, and you have a wonderful time in prayer. I want to ask you a question. Were you anymore on praying ground after you took that medicine than before? Not at all. You think God was in those two tablets? Do you think that made you more spiritual? Of course not! Would God have heard your prayer even if you didn't feel juicy when you prayed? Of course He would, unless you came with your own emotions. But if you came in the name of Jesus, it's not how you feel; it's His name that gets your prayer heard. You need to understand that. It's not your emotions. Don't come in prayer with your hands filled with the brass of your emotions. Come with both hands filled with the worth of Jesus' name, the incense of Jesus' name, and in the name of Jesus, that the Father would be glorified.

Sometimes, when it's time to preach, I get on my knees, and I say, O God, O God, I'm not ready. Lord, I haven't prayed like I ought. O God, have mercy, God. And I feel so unworthy, like I just haven't done enough. Been busy here, been busy there, haven't sought God. And the Lord says, Well, Adrian, if you'd have been doing all these things that you ought to do, then would you think that you deserved an answer to your prayers? Would you have thought you'd earned an answer to your prayers? Don't you understand, Adrian? It's not your sweat; it's His blood—it's His blood. You just come—you just come in the name of Jesus. And when it dawns on you, friend, that's it not your emotion, and it's not your worth, and it's not your sweat, and it's not your performance, it's His promise, His name, then you can't help but saying, To whom be glory forever and ever.

The origin: it is of him. The operation: it is through him. The objective: it is to him. He is the source; He is the strength; He is the subject of your prayers. He, friend, the Lord Jesus, is what it's all about. Of him—the purpose of God; through him—the power of God; to him—the praise of God. You complete the circle when you pray.

## Conclusion

Now, let me just give you—I'll close this—just a definition of prayer. This puts the whole sermon in one sentence. Let me tell you what it is: Effectual prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, then putting that desire into our heart, and then sending it back to heaven in the power of the cross, resulting in the glory of God. Prayer is the Holy Spirit finding a desire in the heart of the Father, putting that desire into our heart, and then sending it back to heaven in the name of Jesus, in the power of the cross, to the glory of God. That's what prayer is. There's a reason why so many of us are just on the shores of effectual prayer. "For of him and through him and to him are all things to whom be glory forever." And God's people said, Amen.

Now, let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you just join your pastor in saying, Lord, teach me to pray. Help me to understand, dear Lord, to learn these wonderful truths. Now, how many would say, Pastor Rogers, if I died today—if I died today—or if Jesus were to come before this service ends, I know that I know, by the grace of God, I know that I have been saved, I'm heaven-born, I'm heaven-bound, I know that I would go straight to heaven? While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you'd give me that testimony, would you just slip up your hand, hold it up, and take it down?

Now, if you could not lift your hand, let me tell you that you can come to the place today, right now, where you can absolutely have that full assurance of your salvation, because salvation is a gift, and you may receive it by faith. The Bible says, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God—the gift of God—is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." And if you will take the gift of salvation in repentance and faith, and pray like this, Lord Jesus, I know that you love me and I know that you want to save me; you died to save me, and you promised to save me if I would trust you; I need to be saved; my sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy; Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, come into my heart right now, right now; save me, Lord Jesus. Pray that from your heart: Save me, Lord Jesus. Now, friend, don't look for some strange feeling, don't look for any vision; just stand on the Word. The Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." So just pray, Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me, Jesus. Save me. Did you ask him? All right now, pray this way. Thank you for doing it. I stand on your Word. You're now my Lord and my Savior. 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. Amen.

# Is Capital Punishment a Sin?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 28, 1995**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 12**

*“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”*

ROMANS 12:19

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Prohibition of Revenge

II. The Promise of Retribution

III. The Principle of Restraint

Conclusion

## Introduction

Now, would you take God’s Word, and be finding Romans, please—chapter 12. This morning we spoke on “Families that Choose Life.” And the Scripture text we used is from the Ten Commandments, and that commandment that says—the sixth commandment—“Thou shalt not kill.” And we spoke on that subject, and then I said, that brings us to another question. What about capital punishment? If the Bible says, “Thou shalt not kill,” then is capital punishment contrary to the Word of God? And I want to say that this question must be settled by Scripture, not by sentiment, and not by politicians, not even by logic—though I believe it is a logically matter. But I want us to see what the Bible clearly says about this subject.

Now, in Romans chapter 12, I want to remind you that we as Christians have a threefold relationship in order to live in this world. First of all, we’re to have a relationship to God. And you see that in 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, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Now, that speaks of our relationship to God. We’re to present ourselves totally, wholly, completely to Him.

But not only are we related to God; we also have to live with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We’re related to one another. And so, beginning in about verse 9, he begins to speak about our relationship with one another. Look, if you will, in verse nine: “Let love

be without dissimulation.” That means without hypocrisy. “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectionate one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.” And so there, he’s speaking on through verse 16 about our relationship with the brothers, the sisters, in Christ.

And then, beginning in verse 17, he talks about our relationship with all other people, to society in general. We’re related to God. We’re related to our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we live in society. And so, the Bible, being the inspired book that it is, tells us how to live in society. And, in verse 17, he says, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance 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.”

Now, we’re going to deal with the third relationship tonight. Not our relationship to God, not our relationship to brothers and sisters in Christ, but this third category of relationships or persons with whom we must live, and with whom we must deal: those outside the sphere of faith, society in general. And we’re going to think tonight primarily about how do we deal with people who are wicked and murderous, people who are violent, people who sin against God, and sin against society.

## **I. The Prohibition of Revenge**

Well, first of all, I want you to notice that the Bible absolutely prohibits our taking personal revenge. The first principle is the prohibition of revenge. Look in verse 19—it’s very clear: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” We as Christians are never ever to take personal revenge. Contrariwise, Jesus told us that we are to turn the other cheek. Now, if you ever try to get even with somebody, that’s exactly what you do: you get even with them. For example, you’re up here on the higher plain. Somebody here is on the lower plain. They do you wrong. Now, when you get even, you just come down to their plain. You do them as they did you—now you’re like them. You are even with them. We are not told to get even. God says that vengeance is His.

Now, when the offering plate is passed soon, I hope you’ll not put you hand in and take something out. Now, if you’d do that, you’d be stealing from God, would you not? Well, when you take vengeance, you’re stealing from God. You’re taking that which belongs to God, and you’re stealing from Him. Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord. So don’t you take vengeance. If you do, you will be stealing from God. You will be

disobeying God. So, the first principle is the prohibition of revenge, verse 19.

## **II. The Promise of Retribution**

The second principle I want you to learn is the promise of retribution, verse 19. God makes a promise. It is an ironclad promise. You can carry it to the bank. God says this: I will repay, saith the Lord—I will repay, saith the Lord. Do you remember a while back when I preached on the subject, “Is Elvis Alive and Will O. J. get a Fair Trial.” Remember that? O. J. will get a fair trial and so will I and so will you. We’ll all stand before God. God has said, where there is retribution needed, I’ll give it. Where there is justice to be meted out, I will mete it out. Now, our sense of justice cries out when we see somebody who has done us wrong, or done someone we love wrong, our sense of justice cries out, and we tend to say, Somebody needs to take care of that. And I will take care of it. That’s what we want to say. But, friend, God will always do a better job than we could have done. God will handle it. God will do what is right. God has said in His Word, Be sure, absolutely sure, that your sin will find you out.

One of my former pastors, my predecessor pastor here, was Dr. Robert G. Lee. He went around the world preaching the same sermon over and over again, more than a thousand times. You know the title to that sermon: “Payday Someday”—“Payday Someday.” And somebody put it this way, the mills of God—the mills of God—grind slowly, but they grind exceedingly fine. God will repay. So there is the prohibition of revenge. There is the promise of retribution.

## **III. The Principle of Restraint**

Now, here’s the third principle, and I’m going to slow down and talk with you a little bit more about that right now. There is the principle of restraint. Now, we’re in chapter 12, and we read through verse 21. But I want us now to begin to read in chapter 13, verse 1. Now, remember that when this manuscript was written by divine inspiration, there were no chapter divisions. The chapter divisions have been added later. The chapter divisions are only the ideas of people who print Bibles for us, as to where one thought ends and another thought ends. The chapter divisions themselves are not a part of the inspired text. I hope you understand that. When this scripture was written, it didn’t have numbers down the side—verse 1, 2, 3, 4, chapter 12 and 13, and so forth. So it would read this way: “Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” That’s chapter 12, verse 21. And then, he goes right in to verse chapter 13, verse 1: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers.” That literally means, the higher authorities. “For there is no power...”—that is, authority—“...but of God: the powers—the authorities—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.”

Now, the word “damnation” may be used as a person who is damned to hell, or damned to any other kind of judgment. It just simply means condemnation. He is condemned. If it’s talking about the afterlife, then he’s condemned to hell, eternal hell. That is one kind of damnation. But the word itself is a generic word, which simply means condemnation. And those who resist human government—established authorities—will receive to themselves damnation or condemnation.

“For rulers...” He’s talking now about kings, magistrates, princes, authorities, governors, sheriffs, whomever there may be as a ruler. “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.” Then Paul asks this question. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?” That is, the authority. “Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he...”—the governmental magistrate, the authority—“... for he is the minister of God to thee for good.” Now, we think of ministers as ordained clergy sometimes. But God calls governmental officials His ministers. “But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he...—the magistrate, the minister of God, the civil authority—...for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger...”—underscore that if it’s not underscored—“...to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake.”

Now, what this tells us is this: that human government is ordained and set up of God. It is ordained by God. It is very clear in verse one: “For there is no power but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God.” And the powers that be are to act for God in the administration of human affairs. Daniel chapter two and verse 21 says this of God—it says, “For he removeth kings and setteth up kings.” You say, Well, Pastor, I thought that revolutions removed kings and set up kings. And I thought that when we go to the polls we elect or dis-elect people. No, behind it all is Almighty God. As a matter of fact, if you will remember, in the Passion Play, the thing that made Pilate so seething with anger is when Jesus said to him, Pilate said to Jesus, don’t you know that I have the power to crucify you or to release you? And do you remember in the Passion Play when Jesus turned around, and He said—and He’s quoting from the Scripture, “You don’t have any power, but what is given you of my Father.” You don’t have any power of your own. It is given you of my Father. And you can read that in John chapter 19 and verse 11. And so sometimes people get the idea that maybe good government is of God, but what about wicked rulers?

Well, I want to remind you that when the apostle Paul wrote Romans 13, verse 1, Nero was on the throne. Now, folks, Nero was a bad dude. And he was the emperor, the Roman emperor. And Jesus Christ led no insurrection against Rome. To the contrary, Jesus said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.” Isn’t that what Jesus said? Nod your head—am I saying that right? Jesus said that. “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s.” And he led no insurrection.

Now, bad government is better than no government. The lawless element in this world would love to have no restraint. The gamblers, the murderers, the rapists, the perverts, the pornographers, and Satan himself would have a holiday, if there were not this principle of restraint. Now, while no individual is allowed to take vengeance for himself, that would be vigilantism; the government is ordained of God to act for God as a minister to take vengeance. It's very clear in this passage of Scripture. For the Bible says, in verse 4, "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."

Now, this is the problem that some people take a text out of context, and they take a part of the truth instead of all of the truth. Now, a part of the truth is that you and I are not to take vengeance. You and I do not have the right, the authority, the wisdom, and the power to act out the vengeance on our behalf. We shouldn't have. We would have a society in absolute chaos, and that is a part of the truth. We are to return good for evil. We are to pray for those that spitefully use us. We're to turn the other cheek. All of that is true; that is truth. But that is only part of the truth. And when you take part of the truth and try to make part of the truth all of the truth, then that part of the truth becomes an untruth.

Now, listen. The same Bible that tells us, in Romans chapter 12, to give place unto wrath is the same Bible that tells us in Romans 13 that the government is the minister of God to execute wrath. That doesn't mean that the murders, and the rapists, and the arsonists, and the insurrectionists are to get off carte blanche, free. Of course not! What that simply means is that God will do it—not in your way. But God will do it in His way. And when God does it in His way, God will do a better job than you will do.

Now, the government is ordained of God, and one thing that the government does is to bear the sword. Look, if you will, in verse four: "he beareth not the sword in vain." Now, the word here is sword, not key. He's not talking about a jail cell. He's talking about an execution. He beareth not the sword in vain. He's talking here about the instrument of death. And he's saying here that the sword as a symbol of destruction is used.

Is capital punishment, therefore, ordained of God? May I say it is. And let me give you some Scripture that will point that out. Now, we're saying, of course, that God has the civil magistrate, who is the minister of God, to execute wrath. How does he do it? Well, turn back, if you will, with me for a moment to Genesis chapter nine, and look in verse six. Let's go back to the threshold of civilization as in the early days in the world. As Noah came out of the ark, to replenish the earth, and to inhabit the earth, and to set up a society, God said, in Genesis chapter 9 and verse 6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of god made he man." When

you willfully take an innocent man's life, you're striking out at God. Man is made in the image and similitude of God. Granted, that image has been marred by Adam's sin, but nonetheless, there remains that vestige of the mark, the stamp, the image of God. And so, God said here way back in the book of Genesis that when a man sheds blood, his blood should be shed. That's Genesis chapter 9 and verse 6.

Now, I remind you that this is not a part of the Mosaic Law; this was far before the Mosaic Law. This is in the dawn of civilization. Under the Mosaic Law, under the theocracy, capital punishment was used for such things as somebody cursing father and mother. He'd be put to death. Sodomites would be put to death. Many, many reasons for capital punishment were given under the theocracy that you and I would not say are applicable to us today because we do not have a theocracy. But I remind you now that we're talking about an eternal principle before the law given by Moses, and after the law as the apostle Paul gave in Romans chapter 12 and 13.

Now, some people have the idea that capital punishment would contradict the Ten Commandments. But it does not. Turn to Exodus chapter 20 with me for just a moment now, and let's look at this commandment we talked about earlier today. In Exodus chapter 20, notice in verse 13: "Thou shalt not kill." Now, that's chapter 20—chapter 20. Now, look in chapter 21 and verse 12: "He that smiteth a man so that he die, shall surely be put to death." Do you think God has lost His mind? Do you think that that whoever wrote the book of Exodus didn't know what he just said in chapter 20, just a few verses later he tells us something? No. When the Bible says, "Thou shalt not kill," it literally is translated, Thou shalt do no murder. It doesn't mean that you can't kill a plant and eat it. Doesn't mean that you can't kill an animal and eat it. It does not mean that you could not or should not execute a murderer. The Bible is quite clear on this point. And so we need to understand that the Bible does not forbid capital punishment. As a matter of fact, as we're going to see, God has ordained capital punishment because He loves us.

Now, every so often, someone will get kind of dewy-eyed. Someone will get overly sentimental, and they'll just say, Well, I don't believe that a God of love would allow capital punishment. The truth of the matter is that you've got it 180 degrees in reverse. It is because God is a God of love that God has ordained capital punishment.

Now, let me give you the reasons. Go back again to Romans 12 where we were, and look, if you will, in verse 9. God says in verse 9, "Let love be without dissimulation." Know what that means? Real love is without hypocrisy. God is a God of love, but not a God of weak sentiment. He is a God of strong love. And because God is a God of love, God realizes there must be a restraint upon sin, or hell would have a holiday. Softness to the criminal is cruelty to the community. God loves people, and because God loves people, God hates sin, and God hates crime. God is not too good to punish crime. God

is too good not to punish crime. If God ceased to punish sin, God would cease to be holy. God would cease to be good. And so, because God is love, and because of the welfare of society, God has ordained capital punishment. Society is sick, grievously sick.

Now, if you go to the doctor, and he tells you that you have a malignancy, you don't try an alcohol rub. If he says you have a malignancy, and surgery is necessary, non-surgery is near suicidal. And when a society refuses to deal with the criminal element, that society is committing suicide.

Now, somebody says that capital punishment is not a deterrent to murder. Well, Henry the VIII one time pardoned a criminal who had committed murder, and that man who was pardoned went out and murdered another man. They came to King Henry, and said, will you pardon him the second time? He said, I will not. He said, he killed the first man. He said, I killed the second man. But he won't kill anymore. What did Henry mean when he said, I killed the second man? He said, I set him loose, and he killed another. Over and over again, we pick up the newspapers and read about these who have become triple murderers or quadruple murders; they continue to murder.

I clipped this from a paper some time ago. It's an article by Paul Harvey. I enjoy listening to Paul Harvey, don't you? And this article is several years old, but the title of it is "Why Kentucky Voted." Kentucky has a new death penalty law. For specific crimes, the criminal pays with his life. Many of that state's legislators say they were convinced by an impassioned speech by one of their own, Larry Hopkins. I will seek to reconstruct what he said. In the United States, we have a murder every 27 minutes, a forcible rape every 10 minutes, a robbery every 82 seconds, an aggravated assault every 76 seconds, and an automobile stolen every 30 seconds. And those are just the reported crimes. And so, it is now the honest people who are locked up in their homes or places of business while the pursuit of happiness in the streets has become the exclusive right of the criminal. And the most damnable part of this situation is that a society which ought to be blaming the criminals is, instead, blaming itself. I don't buy the theory that the underprivileged have the right to steal and kill. And a big majority of the underprivileged don't buy it either. Some of our state representatives have been visiting prisons to study what we're doing to criminals. Should they not also visit the hospitals and convalescent homes and cemeteries to see what criminals have done to us? In no other nation are the rights of wrongdoers, however vicious, so jealously protected while the rights of the victim are so callously trampled. Every wanted poster in the post office includes a long string of previous offenses—a career in which the odds are 1 in 100 that the criminals will get caught, and 1 in 500 that he'll go unpunished. Does the death penalty deter crime? The evidence says it does. Not one of the 162 killers executed in Kentucky has killed anyone since. More evidence, in Manitoba, Canada: a bank robber

killed a teller during a robbery on Tuesday. The bandit was captured immediately. Tried on Thursday, sentenced on Friday, and executed the following Tuesday. They never had another bank robbery for 20 years in the entire providence of Manitoba.

The death penalty is not something we are deciding; it has been decided. Not in any state in the United States has the death penalty been abolished. It is not been abolished for nice old ladies walking home from church, or from the grocery store. It has not been abolished for grocers, druggists, bus drivers, and little boys and girls. It has been abolished only for killers and kidnappers. It's time to even things out. And Kentucky, in response to that plea, evened things out. Pretty good article, isn't it?

Now, what we're talking about is deterrent. Here's something else I clipped. You know, I'm a great news clipper. And, by the way, some of you send me news clippings and things, you think they're interesting, or make good illustrations, or points; I'm always glad to have them. Don't write a long letter—just send me the good stuff. All right, here's an article with an interview with a 21-year-old, Carl Junior Isaacs. Now, listen to this. He was convicted of six murders, and he was in the Georgia state prison. He claims to have killed 15 people, and he has an ambition to kill 1,000. He's eligible for parole in 42 years. Now, here's what he said—this is the killer. Here's what he said—listen: “I believe in the death penalty to prevent people like me from killing. The death penalty always used to deter me, because I knew I could die for murder. I'd walk into a place to stick it up, and I'd think twice about blowing that man away. But, when you know you won't fry, and the worst you can get is life, and maybe parole later, why not get rid of the evidence? That's what I did. There's too much killing, and the only way to stop it is to bring back the death penalty. As long as killers know that all they'll get is life, they'll keep right on killing. And that includes me.” And then he laughed about a time when a judge let him off for an early offense. The judge said, give me your word you'll go straight, and I'll set you free. Imagine that, Isaac sneered. So I said, “I promise, Your Honor.” And he smiled. And I thought, you dumb old “blank.” Promise me you'll be a good boy. Oh, I promise, Judge.

Now, you see, we have a society where the lamb protects the lion's right to eat it. But God says, vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord. And so, there needs to be something that Mr. Isaacs did not have; in society, a sense of terror, if you do wrong. That's the people, the good people, who are terrorized today, but God said, it's to be the other way. Look again, if you will, in verse 13: “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.” Now, the problem is that there is no terror today in the minds of the criminal. A judge, and a wise judge, said this: the death penalty is a warning. It's like a lighthouse throwing its beams out to the sea. We hear about the ships at sea, and we do not tear the lighthouse down.

Well, you say, but Pastor Rogers, you're talking about the welfare of society. What

about the welfare of the criminal? Aren't we to have mercy on him? Absolutely. The finest thing that we can do for the criminal is to keep him from committing the crime if we can. I mean, the finest thing we can do is to let him see that there is even in this world some kind of a law of sin and retribution. You see, life is but a proving ground for eternity. And if a man gets the idea that he can sin and rape and pillage and shed blood with impunity here, what does that say about eternity? If a man is adjudicated guilty, and he is arrested for crime, and he knows he's going to be put to death, don't you think he'd do some serious thinking? Don't you think that that would shock him, or bring him to repentance, if he's ever going to come to repentance? I mean, if a man is ever going to get right with God, if he knows one day, two days, three days, ten days, he's going to die—I say again, if he ever is going to get right with God, I believe he'd get right with God. What if you knew that you only had one day to live, I mean, if you knew it, you absolutely knew, barring a miracle, you're going to be executed the next day, if you were going to make peace with God, would you not make peace with God? You see, what that does, it helps; it keeps a man from committing the crime because of the terror. He sees there's a law of sin and retribution. If he is under judgment, it would bring him to a place of repentance. But suppose it does not bring him to repentance. The death penalty is not meant to bring a man to repentance. I would that it would. That's wonderful. But the death penalty is not a remedy; it is retribution.

Now, this is what has been lost in America today and in the world today. You need to understand that God is a just God. I said, why the death penalty? Number one: because of the love of God, because God loves society. Number two: because of the welfare of society. Number three: for the welfare of the criminal himself, to keep him from crime and bring him to repentance. And next: because God is a just God. If there were nothing else to it, the wages of sin is death. God is a holy God, and there is in the holiness of God: the principle of sin and retribution. Not all punishment is meant to be remedial.

For example, hell is not remedial. Hello? Hell is not remedial. It is retributive. That's what hell is. Hell is punishment. Don't get the idea that these people who do this thing are sick and they need to be made well. They're wicked. And there comes a punishment for taking an innocent person's life: "whoso sheddeth man's blood by man shall his blood be shed"—Genesis 9:6. The magistrate is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath—wrath. God is angry with the wicked. Whether you like that or not is not going to change God. God is a God of love. He is absolute love, fathomless love, infinite love, but He's also a holy God who punishes sin. And again, I want to say, if you just take one part of the nature of God, and try to describe God with one part of the nature of God and leave the other part out, and take part of the truth and try to make it all of the truth, that part of the truth becomes an untruth.

The apostle Paul understood this. He understood that there are certain crimes that

are worthy of death. Go back with me to Acts; just turn left to the book of Acts, chapter 25, if you will, please. Now, they had arrested the apostle Paul. Some wanted to put him to death, and they thought that he had done capital crimes. Now, notice what Paul said in Acts chapter 25, verse 11: “For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die.” That is, Paul said, look, if I have committed a capital crime worthy of death, then I ought to die. Well, you say, what about Jesus? Wasn’t Jesus full of love? Of course He was full of love. And the punishment of sin is not contradictory of love. As a matter of fact, the love that does not punish is not love at all. Sometimes parents say, well, you know, I just love my little child so much I just can’t bear to punish him. The truth of the matter is, it’s not him that you love. It’s you that you love. You don’t want to be upset. You don’t want to go through the unpleasantness of it. The Bible says, “He that loveth his child chasteneth him betimes.”

Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 21: “But ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: but I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause...” Listen to this: if you are angry with your brother without a cause, God says, Oh, I’ll just forget it. Never mind, I’m love. Jesus said, “But I say unto you that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.” That’s the loving Jesus. Don’t get the idea that Jesus because He is a God of love and the teacher of love did not believe in judgment and retribution. To the contrary, He did.

And do you know what Jesus suffered on the cross? Capital punishment. What Jesus was doing on that cross was paying the debt that our crimes against God deserved. And Jesus suffered at the hand of Almighty God—capital punishment. Read Isaiah chapter 53: “It hath pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief.” It was God the Father who said to God the Son, if you, my dear Son, are willing to take their offenses, their crimes, then you will take their punishment. And what happened at the cross was the righteous judgment of God, albeit done by the hands of wicked men, but nonetheless Jesus took my place on that cross. He took my shame. He took my blame. He took my pain. He took my death. He suffered capital punishment for me.

Pastor, the one thing that bothers me, Pastor, about capital punishment, what about the possibility that an innocent person who never really committed a crime could be adjudicated guilty and killed? That would be sad indeed. And we must confess, in this world in which we live, innocent people suffer; innocent people are killed by criminals. Sometimes—and it would be exceeding rare—an innocent person may be adjudicated guilty. But the real danger, the far greater danger, the infinitely greater danger, is in the other direction. We are condemning many innocent people to death as murderers go

unafraid in the rampage. And so, if you are concerned about not condemning an innocent person to death, be reasonable. There are a lot of innocent people who are going to die if this society does not regain its senses.

## **Conclusion**

I don't rejoice in capital punishment. I don't rejoice in the fact of hell. I don't rejoice in these things at all. But I'm telling you, the Bible is a book that makes sense. This republic is built on the Word of God. I would to God that we got back to it.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father God, we pray that you will give us insight and wisdom. Lord, we don't want to have a spirit of revenge in our own hearts. Lord, we want to do just what you told us to do, to love people, to turn the other cheek. God, we cannot become vigilantes. O God, we must look to you to take care of us. And God, if we have a government that is too weak to do it, how we pray, dear God, that you will help us to pray and work for a better government. Because, Lord, we know ultimately that the kind of rulers that we receive are by and large a reflection of the kind of people we are. So Lord, you're the one who sets up kings and brings them down. And we pray, dear God, that you will give us righteous people to rule over us in this city, in this state, and in this nation. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

# Discovering Your Ministry

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** June 7, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 12:1–12

*“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”*

ROMANS 12:2

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Principle of Lordship
    - A. The Request
    - B. The Reasons
    - C. The Requirement
      - 1. It is Personal
    - D. The Result
      - 2. Transformation
      - 3. Revelation
  - II. The Principle of Membership
  - III. The Principle of Stewardship
    - A. Prophecy
    - B. Ministry
    - C. Teaching
    - D. Exhortation
    - E. Giving
    - F. Ruling
    - G. Mercy
  - IV. The Principle of Fellowship
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s precious, holy, inerrant, infallible Word, the Bible, and turn to one of the great, great chapters in that book—Romans chapter 12? And, look up here and let me ask you a question: What is Bellevue Baptist Church all about? Why do we exist? Have you ever wondered? Well, it’s already written on your bulletin this morning: “Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word, moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry, and making Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations.” Now, that’s printed somewhere on

*Bellevue Today* that you have. That is our purpose statement; that's why we exist. And, right in the middle of that purpose statement is a statement that says, "We are to be moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry." Now, that means you, brother—that means you, sister. You—you—are to be being moved toward maturity. That is, you are to grow up, and then you are to find a place of service.

Now, sometimes we think that God divides people in a more artificial way than he does—between laity and clergy. Clergy refers to those of us who are the professionals, and the laity refers to those who are in the pew, who, in the minds of some, don't do much. Somebody asked a little girl, "What is the difference between the laity and the clergy?" And, the little girl said, "Well, the clergy are paid for being good; the laity are good for nothing." Now, the problem is... The problem is, I think, a professional clergy and a good-for-nothing laity—both of them are an abomination to God. We're in the business of serving the Lord, and God has given to every one of us a ministry. As a matter of fact, we're going to read in Romans chapter 12, the first couple of verses, about what he calls your *reasonable service*. Do you know what that literally means in the Greek language? A literal interpretation is "your logical ministry"—"your logical ministry." That's literally what it refers to. God has... It's logical that God would put you into the ministry.

Now, so many Christians are just floundering in their Christian life. I mean, they don't have any true fulfillment. And, they're wanting to know, "What does God want me to do? If God has a ministry for me, what is my ministry? I don't want to just sit, soak, and sour; I want to serve. But frankly, Pastor, I don't have a ministry. I wouldn't know what I'm equipped to do; and if I found that out, I wouldn't know how to do it or what to do it." And, I tell you, it's time we discovered our ministry—not only as a church, but as individuals. The hour, friend, in which we're living, is desperate. This is a desperate day. Militant atheism is on the march. We need something. We need a revival that cannot be explained by philosophy, or psychology, or promotion, or propaganda. And, I'll tell you something else: moral standards have toppled. I've never seen anything like it. Today we have movie stars who have faces like angels and morals like alley cats. They're the ones setting the standard for our children. We have glamorized adultery; we have liquorized society and humanized God. And yet, in the churches, there are so many people who sit unconcerned and apathetic. I'm telling you, the hour is desperate and the hour is ripe.

Did you know what I'm seeing? I'm seeing, today, in spite of all of the debauchery and sin, an awakening hunger. There is a turning to spiritual things. People have tried sin and found out that they've been feeding on husks and sawdust and that it's all just a mouthful of ashes. And, they're asking one more time, "Is Jesus Christ the answer? Is this book true? Is there hope in the Lord Jesus Christ?" And, there's a strange new

hunger in the land. The hour is desperate, the hour is ripe, and the hour is late. We're living in the last days of this dispensation, I truly believe. And, the sands of time are running low, and we're in a race against sin, against Satan, against self. And, we need to find out what is the ministry that our Lord has for us.

Now, I want to give you four principles, and these are four principles for discovering your ministry. I'm not talking about going to pastor a church somewhere, but your ministry in your neighborhood, in your business, in your club, in your family, whatever the ministry is. There are four principles we're going to find right here in Romans chapter 12, and they're very easy to remember. I may give you a test at the close of the service here to see if you got these four simple things down. There are four principles.

## I. The Principle of Lordship

Principle number one is the principle of Lordship. All right, did you get that? Write it down—the principle of Lordship. Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that [you] present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service”*—remember, that literally means “your logical ministry”—*“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that [you] may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God”* (Romans 12:1–2). Now, that's what you want to know: you want to know the will of God for your life. Now, look at this; let's break it down.

### A. The Request

First of all, the request—notice how it begins: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren”* (Romans 12:1). Now, it's almost as if Jesus Christ is on His knees, through the Apostle Paul, praying to us. So many times we pray to Him, but here's God's request to us: *“I beseech you”* (Romans 12:1). Now, we're beseeching God to do something, but God is also beseeching us to do something. Have you ever wondered why God may not answer your prayer? I wonder if you've answered His request. Have you presented yourself? You see, if we don't hear God's Word, why should God hear our word? And so, first of all, I want you to notice the request.

### B. The Reasons

And then, I want you to notice the reasons: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by”*—“because of”—*“the mercies of God”* (Romans 12:1). Now, if you think that it's something unusual or something difficult for you to bow the knee to Jesus Christ, you've never seen the mercies of God. Listen to me, friend, when we were rebels, sin-cursed and darkened, on our way to Hell, God in mercy sought us. He has saved us; He has secured us. That's what we've been talking about in the first 11 chapters, of God's

saving ministry. But, He calls that, here, *“the mercies of God”* (Romans 12:1). Listen folks, He came to save us. He died to save us. He rose to save us. He lives to save us. And, as Lori sang, soon He’s coming to take us home. All of this is the mercy of God. We are His; we are not our own. We are bought with a price.

Let me tell you what consecration is. Listen carefully—if you don’t hear anything else, I want you to hear this: consecration is not giving God anything; it is taking your hands off of that which already belongs to Him. Did you hear that? You are not your own. The Bible tells us in 1 Corinthians chapter 6: *“[you] are bought with a price”* (1 Corinthians 6:20).

### C. **The Requirement**

Now, the request: *“I beseech you”* (Romans 12:1). The reason: *“the mercies of God”* (Romans 12:1). The requirement: *“that ye present your bodies”* (Romans 12:1)—that is, you present yourself. He’s not going to make you do it. There are no draftees in our Lord’s army. Every one of them is a volunteer. You are to present yourself a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1)—that’s your requirement.

#### 1. **It is Personal**

Now, notice—notice—this sacrifice. First of all, it is personal. You present yourself. I can’t do it for you; you can’t do it for me. You don’t need to ask, “Lord, what would You have Adrian to do?” I don’t need to ask, “Adrian, what would you have these to do out there?” But, each one of us must say, “Lord, today, I present myself.” It is personal. And, let me say this: you present yourself a sacrifice. Do you know what a sacrifice was? That was an animal that was slain and put on an altar. Are you willing to present yourself a sacrifice, today? The reason many of you don’t have a ministry and the reason that many don’t know the will of God, and you don’t know the power of God, and you don’t know the anointing of God—you’re not willing to die; you’re not willing to be a living sacrifice.

An altar is a place to die on. Do you know what that means? That means that when you die, you have no more rights of yourself. Your wife, your husband, your children, your car, your home, your ambitions, your education, your business—it all belongs to Him. God doesn’t want you take Him into your business as your partner. He’s your boss. He owns it. I mean, it is His. And, you’re to do it. Holy—H-O-L-Y—is related to the word W-H-O-L-L-Y, which means “completely, totally, completely.” You can’t just have half a sacrifice. God will not accept half a sacrifice. You are to present yourself *“a living sacrifice, holy”*—and that means *“acceptable unto [Him]”* (Romans 12:1).

There was an evangelist of yesteryear whose name was Wilbur Chapman, who was talking to William Booth, who founded the Salvation Army. William Booth was mightily used of God, and Chapman asked William Booth—he said, “General Booth, God has

used you in a great way. What is the secret of God's use of you? And, Old General Booth moved the hair out of his face and looked through those piercing eyes," and here's what he said: "God has had all there was of me—God has had all there was of me. There have been men of greater brains, greater opportunities than I, but from the day that I had a vision of what God could do with poor old London, I made up my mind that God would have all there was of William Booth." Boy, when I read that, I had to ask, "God, do You have all there is of Adrian Rogers?" Now, don't you ask, "God, do You have all there is of Adrian Rogers?" I'll take care of that. You ask, "Does God have all there is of me?" Ask it. Are you just playing church? You come as a Sunday-morning benchwarmer and think you've done God a wild service.

*"I beseech you...brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice"* (Romans 12:1). Personal, slain, whole, and bound. Did you know that this freshly slain animal would be covered with blood and would be very slippery so when they would put the animal on the sacrifice, they had two flesh hooks that would bind it to the altar, into that flesh, to keep it from sliding off the altar? Do you find that when you come to a service like this and somebody will preach, you'll say, "Yes Lord, I want to present my body a living sacrifice," and that lasts until you get home, and after Sunday dinner you've forgotten all about it? I'll tell you why: there are two flesh hooks. You know what they are? Devotion and discipline—devotion and discipline. That will keep you on the altar.

You know what's wrong with most American Christians today? The reason they don't have a ministry, the reason they don't know the will of God, the reason that they're not used of God—I'll tell you one reason: self—self. They don't want to get bound down. They don't want to be a sacrifice. Now, they want the blessings; they come to the church and say, "Lord, bless me. Lord, entertain me. Lord, use me. Lord, inform me." But, they don't want to be on that altar, bound down. There are some of you here today who ought to be members of this church or some church, but you're not. You know what you are? You're a drop-in, drop-out type of person. You say, "You know, if I come down there, and go down there, and put my name on the membership role, and get involved, man, I might want to be away for a few Sundays. I might want to do this. I don't want to be bound down—I don't want to be bound down." That's the reason you don't join a church. That's the reason you won't make a commitment to the Love Offering: you don't want to be bound. That's the reason some of you won't take a Sunday School class, because if you want to go to the lake on Sunday, you want to go to the lake on Sunday—you don't want to be bound. I'll tell you one thing about a sacrifice, friend: it's bound to the altar—it's bound to the altar. We have a take-it-or-leave-it type of Christianity, and we wonder why we do not know the will of God in our lives.

And, I'll tell you something else: when that altar—when that sacrifice is presented

willingly, when it is a whole sacrifice, when it is put on the altar, when it is bound to the altar, do you know what happens? It's consumed—consumed. Do you know what worship is? *Worship is putting yourself on the altar and letting God consume you.* Has He ever consumed you—I mean, 'till there's none of you and there's all of Him, that He has consumed you? That is worship: letting Him consume the sacrifice. And, there is an incense, a savor, that goes up as we're presented upon that altar.

Now, you want to find a ministry? You want to know God's will for your life? You want to know what is God's logical ministry, reasonable service? I can sum everything up I've said by one word: it is Lordship.

Now, here's the second principle. Are you ready for the second one? Got the first one? Let's say it together: Lordship—Lordship. All right, here's the second one: membership—membership. Well, before I get to the membership, let me just pause here for just a moment and tell you what's going to happen. I'm getting ahead of myself.

#### D. **The Result**

Let me tell you what's going to happen when you present yourself this way. What is going to be the result? I've talked to you about the reason and the requirement. What is the result? Well, look at it here: *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed”*—the first result will be transformation—*“by the renewing of your mind”* (Romans 12:2)—the second will be information or revelation. Those two things are going to take place; there's going to be a change in you.

#### **2. Transformation**

*“Be...transformed”* (Romans 12:2). This word *transformed* is the word we get our English word *metamorphosis* from. It comes from two words: *meta*, which means “a change,” and *morphis*, which means “a form.” It is a change of form. You will be transformed—you will be metamorphosed—when you do this. When you present yourself upon that altar and the fire consumes you, then you are transformed—you're transformed. You're not conformed, squeezed into the mold of this world; but you are transformed.

Now, what is a metamorphosis? Well, when you took biology in junior high school, you learned that word. One of the biggest words you ever learned was *metamorphosis*. I can remember almost like it was yesterday—learning about that word, *metamorphosis*. It just intrigued me. You take a caterpillar who crawls up into a cocoon, and he goes through a what? A metamorphosis. And, he comes out a beautiful Monarch butterfly. Now, what is the nature of that caterpillar? It is a Monarch butterfly. The inner nature comes to the surface. That's what the metamorphosis is.

The same word about... This same word *metamorphosis*, or *transformed*, was used when Jesus was transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration. Remember reading there

that Jesus took His disciples apart up to the exceeding high mountain, Peter, James, and John (Matthew 17:1). And then, the Bible says, “And there He was transfigured” (Matthew 17:2). Friend, that word *transfigured* is the same word that is used, *transformed*, right here.

Now, what does it mean—transfigured? Well, had you seen Jesus walking down the streets, you would not have recognized Him as unusual. I mean, you would have walked right past Him. Judas had to point Him out so they could take Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. The Bible says when we see Him, there’s “*no form nor comeliness...[nor] beauty that we should desire him*” (Isaiah 53:2). As I’ve said before, don’t let these people who paint pictures of Jesus fool you. They’re just using imagination—especially to have one of these big round things behind His head like a dinner plate. No, that’s not the way He was. No, I’m telling you, folks, He was a common, ordinary person. And, if you saw Him, you would not have picked Him out of a crowd. That’s very clear. There was nothing that distinct about Him. But, on that Mount of Transfiguration, the Bible says that He began to glow like the sun, and His garments—His clothes—became white as snow, and there was a radiance about Him (Matthew 28:3; Mark 9:3). Now, what was the inner nature of Jesus? Deity. And, there He was metamorphosed; the inner nature came to the surface.

What is the inner nature of a Christian? Jesus. Now, what the devil is trying to do is stuff Jesus in. He doesn’t want Jesus to come out, so he’s trying to conform you so you won’t be transformed, metamorphosed—so your inner nature will not come to the surface. The inner nature of a Christian is Jesus—Jesus. And, when you present yourself a living sacrifice, then you are transformed, metamorphosed—the inner nature, which is Jesus, comes to the surface, and people see Jesus. I want people to see Jesus in me. Don’t you want people to see Jesus in you? Don’t you want Jesus... The little boy says to his daddy—says, “Dad, is Jesus bigger than I am?” Dad said, “Well, yeah, Son, I guess He is.” He said, “Then, if Jesus is in me, He’ll stick out, won’t He?” He sure will, if you’ll let Him. He will stick out. People will see the Lord Jesus. The inner nature of a Christian is Jesus.

### **3. Revelation**

Now, when there comes that transformation, then there comes that revelation. “*Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind*”—now, watch this—“*that ye may prove*”—that is, “that you may know”—“*what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will, of God*”—and then, look, if you will, as he continues to talk in this same train in verse 3—“*For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man [who] is among you, not to think of himself more highly*”—underscore the word think—“*more highly than he ought to think*”—underscore the word think again—“*but to think soberly*”—underscore the word think for the third time—“*according as God hath dealt to*

*every man the measure of faith*” (Romans 12:2–3).

Now listen, when you’re metamorphosed, you have the mind of Christ. No longer your mind—it is the mind of Jesus. That’s your inner nature. Now, why did God renew your mind? So you could think with it—so you could think with it. So, after he talks about renewing of your mind, he says, “Think, think, think.” Don’t be afraid to use your mind. Be afraid not to use your mind. You have the mind of Christ. The will of God is found between your ears when you get right with God. You can think not in sinful exaggeration, more highly than you ought to think—not in false humility, saying, “I don’t have a gift,” because he says, “I say, by the grace given unto me, to every man that the grace given to every man that is among you” (Romans 12:3)—not in sinful exaggeration, false humility, but in sober estimation.

What are my gifts? We’re going to talk more about that later on. But, your ministry is going to be related to your gifts. “*God [has] dealt to every man [a] measure of faith*” (Romans 12:3).

Now folks, are you following me? Listen, the first thing, therefore, is Lordship. When you present yourself to Him a living sacrifice, you’re transformed, you get the mind of Christ, you are able to use the mind of Christ, and you are able to make assessments that you could never make before. And, you think, you think, and you think—not with human rationality, not with human intellect, not with human intuition, but with divine guidance. You are transformed; you have now the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **II. The Principle of Membership**

Second principle—now, now, we get to it—second principle... First one: Lordship. Second one is membership. Look, if you will now, in verse 4: “*For as we have many members in one body*”—that is, your body sitting there has many members—eyes, ears, nose, feet, hands, lung, liver, and what else. All right?—“*as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office*”—that is, my hand doesn’t do what my eye does; my eye doesn’t do what my ears do; my ears don’t do what my feet do, and so forth—“*[they] have not the same office: So we, being many*”—all of us here—“*we, being many*”—listen—“*are one body*” (Romans 12:4–5). The Church is not an organization with Jesus Christ as the president; the Church is an organism with Jesus Christ as the head. He is the head. “*We...are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*” (Romans 12:5). I belong to you, and you belong to me, because we both belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, listen to me, folks—you want to know why many of you don’t know your ministry? Because you’ve tried to find it apart from the Body of Christ. What arrogance! What conceit! What pride! Don’t you understand? His Lordship and our membership—we need one another. To say that you don’t need other Christians is sheer pride,

consummate arrogance.

Now, God made us different. Like our bodies, we don't all have the same office. Why did God make us different? God made us different, that He might make us one. God made it where I'm not supposed to be able to get along without you; you're not supposed to be able to get along without me, any more than my eyes could get along without the rest of my body, or my ears could get along without the rest of my body, or my hands could get along without the rest of my body, or my feet could get along without the rest of my body, or all of this could get along without my liver or my lungs. And, sometimes parts of our body that seem more obvious and more needful are not the most valuable. Your right hand—I hear people say, “I'd give my right arm for this. I'd give my right arm for that.” Well, that'd be a big sacrifice. But friend I'll tell you what—I'd rather give up my right arm than my liver—I'd rather give up my right arm than my liver. Now, how many times have you woke up in the morning and said, “Thank You, Lord, for my liver”? I mean, you know, think about it. You think about if it weren't there.

This morning, a young man, Keith Whiting, came into my office, as he comes every Sunday morning. And, I love this young man. He's behind the scenes up there somewhere. You don't even know where he is; you can't see him right now. Keith Whiting's one of the most godly, dedicated, gifted young men in sound and electronics in the whole wide world. He serves Jesus by serving you. Now, you hear me, but you wouldn't hear me without Keith. You wouldn't hear me. But, you don't think of Keith; you think of Adrian. I'll tell you, we've got in this church thousands of people who are serving Jesus behind the scenes to make this the wonderful church that it is. And folks, we don't all have the same office. We're different, but God made us different, that God might make us one. And, God made us where we could not be independent one of another.

And, you want to find your ministry? Listen to me very carefully: you're never going to find your ministry outside the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. “Well, I don't believe in the organized Church.” Friend, they ought to will your brain to the Smithsonian. What do you believe in—the disorganized Church? The Church is a body. Whoever heard of a body that didn't have organs. Whoever heard of a body that wasn't organized? Of course, there's an organized Church. Thank God for it. God made us different, that He might make us one. And, God made us an organization and an organism, and He's the head, the Lord Jesus. And, that's where you're going to find your ministry.

### **III. The Principle of Stewardship**

Now, here's the third principle. Are you tracking with me? First one was what? Lordship. Second one was what? Membership. Hey, *amen and FM*—that's wonderful. Now, here's the third one: the third one is stewardship—Lordship, membership, stewardship. Look, if you will, in verses 6 and following: *“Having then gifts differing according to the*

*grace that is given to us*”—and that word *grace* is *charisma*, the *charisma*, the *charis* that is given unto us—“*whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: [or] he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness*” (Romans 12:6–8). Let’s just stop right there.

Now, right here, he mentions seven basic Christian gifts. Now, every Christian is charismatic. That is, every Christian has grace gifts. That doesn’t mean that he’s going to do miracles or speak in tongues; that’s not what the word *charismatic* means. It means simply that you have received a grace gift. Here are seven areas of stewardship right here. Let’s see where you fit in, because, you see, God gives you a gift. Listen to me—don’t you, don’t you dare, don’t you dare insult God by saying God can’t use you. What an insult! What an insult to the God who crafted you, formed you, saved you, and gave you a spiritual gift! God has given you a spiritual gift. Now, if God has given you a gift, then you’re a steward over it. You’ve got to use that gift.

### **A. Prophecy**

Well, let’s see where you might fit in. For example, he mentions, in verse 6, prophecy (Romans 12:6). Well, what is prophecy? That’s the ability to speak for God. “He that speaketh unto men unto prophecy speaketh unto edification, exhortation, and comfort” (1 Corinthians 14:3). Very frankly I believe that’s the gift that God has given me. And, it could be used in preaching; it could be used in jail services. It could be used in mission work; it could be used in Vacation Bible School. Maybe that is your gift. If it is, have at it. “Well,” you say, “it’s not mine.”

### **B. Ministry**

Then, he mentions ministry. Look in verse 7 (Romans 12:7): the word *ministry* means “service.” It’s the word we get our word *deacon* from; it means “to be a servant.” You could work in general church work; you could work in the activities program here; you could do typing; you could do ushering; you could do coaching. And, thank God for those in the nursery this morning. Say “amen.” These are those who are serving. You say, “Well, that’s not glamorous like performing miracles.” Thank God they’re there doing it.

### **C. Teaching**

And then, there’s the ministry of teaching. Now, you say, “Well, can I teach?” Yes, you can teach, perhaps, in Sunday School, if that’s your gift, in training and missionary organizations, neighborhood Bible studies, Vacation Bible School, backyard Bible studies. There are so many ways you could use the gift of teaching. You say, “That’s

not my gift.”

#### **D. Exhortation**

All right, then he mentions another gift—exhortation. What is exhortation—in verse 8 (Romans 12:8)? That is to encourage people in the Lord. Let me tell you about the little gal who just sang right here just a little moment ago, Lori. Now, that girl is beautiful; she has a beautiful voice, and she’s a great musician. But, I want to tell you something: there’s something—there’s another dimension, and that is she has the gift of exhortation. Now, you take all those other things, Brother Jim, but some people don’t have that final gift; that’s the gift of exhortation. That’s the thing that makes you say, “Hallelujah!” for Jesus. Thank God. That’s getting people fired up. You can use that in the music ministry, and many of you ought to be up here in this choir. You could use that in visitation. You could use that in soul winning. You could use that in counseling. Most counselors have the gift of exhortation. You could use that in hospital ministry to encourage people.

#### **E. Giving**

Then, in verse 8, there’s the gift of giving (Romans 12:8). Now, all of us have the obligation to give, just as we all have the obligation to exhort people. But, some of us have the gift of giving—that is, the ability to make money, to see needs and to give over and above and to give sacrificially. And, this church is a testimony to those, thank God, who have the gift of giving, because we have many folks who don’t even take the obligation of giving. “He put a dollar in the plate and sang with might and maim when we ascend a part he gives us inward pain.” There are so many who are just like that—they think that they just come and tip God. And, it’s these people who have the gift of giving that make up for the lack of so many others who don’t even do what they’re supposed to do.

#### **F. Ruling**

And then, there’s the gift of ruling. That doesn’t mean bossing; it has the idea of organization. Brother Bob Sorrell has this gift, among other gifts. It deals with leadership. It deals with church staff; it deals with committees. You could be a coach and have this gift. It deals with organizing.

#### **G. Mercy**

And then, there’s the gift of mercy, in verse 8 (Romans 12:8). Look at it. Thank God for those who have the gift of mercy. While you’re in here right now, we have some in a First Aid station in case any of you get sick. They’re ready to minister to you and to help you. Hospital visitation, benevolence—this church gives hundreds of thousands of dollars helping people who are hurting. Counseling—we’ve just begin a new ministry, or at least we’ve taken a new level of ministry, called *Ministry to Widows*. All of these

people who are in this probably have the gift of mercy.

Bill Gothard illustrated all these gifts, I think, wonderfully. He just imagined a dinner party. And, the dessert is being served, and the dessert slips off the tray. Let me show you how all these different gifts would work together. The person who has the gift of prophecy might say, “You know, that’s what happens when you’re not careful.” A person who has the gift of mercy says, “Hey, hey, don’t feel bad. That could’ve happened to anybody.” The person who has the gift of service says, “Here, let me help you to clean it up.” The person who has the gift of teaching says, “Well, you know, it fell because it was too heavy on one side.” The person who has the gift of exhortation says, “Hey, let’s serve the dessert next time with the meal.” The person who has the gift of giving says, “I’ll buy a new dessert.” The person who has the gift of administration says, “Jim, you get a mop. Sue, please help to pick it up. Mary, you go fix some more dessert.” Now look—all of that just happens in the church. You see, all of those are needful; all of those are necessary; all of those are valid.

So, you’re going to find your ministry. Look—first of all, Lordship; secondly, membership; thirdly, stewardship. Find out what your gift is. “Well,” you say, “how am I going to find out what your gift is?” Go back—think, think, think. But, that won’t work unless everything’s on the altar and you have the mind of Christ—that won’t work unless everything’s on the altar and you have the mind of Christ.

#### **IV. The Principle of Fellowship**

All right, now, here’s the last thing. All right, are you tracking with me? Got just two minutes for this last one, all right, and that’s the principle of fellowship. Look, if you will now, in verses 9 through 13—look at it right here: *“Let love be without dissimulation”*—that means “without hypocrisy”—*“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord”*—all right—*“Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer”* (Romans 12:9–12). Notice that phrase *“serving the Lord”* (Romans 12:11). Well, I had a lot to say about fellowship, but I think we said the most needful thing already.

If you’ll put those four things together—now, listen to me very carefully—if you’ll put those four things together—Lordship, membership, stewardship. “Lord, help me to find my gift and use it”—and fellowship, in a spirit of love, friend, I’ll tell you what—not only will God use you; God will wear you out—God will wear you out. You have been called into the ministry. There is something that God wants you to do.

Now, the problem with many of us is we’re in a rut. We gave our hearts to Jesus—some of us when we were boys and girls, like these precious boys and girls that got baptized this morning, Travis, and Lee, and these others up there this morning—and

then we've just kind of taken things for granted.

I went to England, one time—went to London. And, like some of you, I went to the Tower of London. I wanted to see the Crown Jewels. And, there was one jewel that I especially wanted to see. I asked the guide about it, and I made it my point to see that one jewel, because I'd read about it. It was the Kohinoor diamond. When the Kohinoor diamond was found, it was 186 carats—incredible. As a matter of fact, they said the value of the Kohinoor diamond was worth one-half of the daily expenses of the whole world—the Kohinoor diamond. This diamond was passed round about; finally, it ended up in India under the aegis of a Punjab prince who was ten years old. He gave this diamond to Queen Victoria, the Queen of England, as a ten-year-old boy.

Later on, this Punjab prince grew to be a man. He went to the Tower of London, or where the jewels were kept at that time, and asked to see the Kohinoor diamond. They brought it out. He said, "Would you place it in my hand?" They thought, "Uh-oh, he now realizes as a grown man what that diamond was worth," but they could do nothing else. They took it and placed it in his hand. Then, he turned to the queen, and this is what he said: "When I was a lad, a boy, I gave you this diamond. I did not know what it was worth. Now, as a man, fully realizing what it is worth, I want to give it to you, my queen, one more time." I read that. I thought, "Oh, that's what I've been trying to say so often." Many of us—many of us—gave our hearts to Jesus; but friend, when we grow in the grace and knowledge, when we see all that Jesus did, when we think of the mercies of God, I think some of us want to say, "Lord Jesus, I gave you my life as a child—I meant it. But now, my Lord, realizing more about You and more about me, here, Lord, I give You my life anew and afresh." That's what I want to do. In these desperate days, we need to present our bodies a living sacrifice, then we'll "*prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*" (Romans 12:2).

## Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Would you say,

*But drops of grief can ne'er repay*

*The debt of love I owe:*

*Here, Lord, I give my self away*

*'Tis all that I can do (Isaac Watts)?*

Father, I pray that there will be, in this church today and in this building today, O Lord, another level of commitment to You in my own heart and in my own life, Lord, in these desperate but opportunistic days in which we live.

Now, while heads are bowed, if you've never asked Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Savior, would you like to be saved? Would you pray, "Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for me. I'm a sinner, and my sin deserves judgment. But now, I receive You—I receive

You—this holy moment, as my Lord and Savior. I give my life to You. Forgive my sin; save me, Lord Jesus”?

And, if you prayed that prayer, pray this prayer: “Now, Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I’ll live for You. And, because You hung naked on a cross for me in public, I will make this public, I will not be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

# Five Principles for Discovering Your Ministry

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 5, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 12:1–8**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Make a Sacrificial Presentation
- II. Experience a Spiritual Transformation
- III. Render a Sober Evaluation
- IV. Enter Into a Shared Participation
- V. Begin a Specific Activation

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, we're going to be talking today about finding your ministry. When Mary of Bethany anointed the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ with that alabaster box of ointment—you may or may not remember the story; there's a point, however, I think will be easy for you to understand, even if you don't know the story—there were some who criticized her. And Jesus said to this woman, "Let her alone. She has done what she could." Now, think about that. "She has done what she could." Now, Jesus didn't say she's done what somebody else has done, or could do. "She has done what she could."

Now, I want to ask you a question, and it may seem like a silly question at first, but think about it. Is there anybody in this great building today who cannot do what you can do? Okay now, you say, "Pastor, that's obvious. If I can do it, I can do it." And that's what Jesus commended this woman for, "She hath done what she could." Now, the question is not what you cannot do, or what somebody else can do: is there anybody here who cannot do what they can do? Okay now, let me ask you a second question. Do you believe that God can use you? If you do, lift your hand. There you go. That's all of us. "She hath done what she could."

Now, God wants you to have a ministry. And I'm going to be talking to you today about five principles for discovering your ministry. Be finding Romans chapter 12, will you, please—five principles for discovering your ministry.

I was reading a news magazine and it talked about the Guinness Book of World

Records. One thing that was in the Guinness Book of World Records was a man who had a record for eating things that are not necessarily food. There are people who grind up things and eat them. For example, one man had eaten a bicycle. Another man had eaten a chandelier. They grind these things up and eat them. The man in the Guinness Book of World Records from Caracas, Venezuela had eaten a light aircraft, an airplane. I mean, he had eaten the whole airplane. Now, not at one time. A Cessna light aircraft, grinding it up, mixing it in his food over a long period of time, this man had succeeded in his lifetime to eat an entire airplane. The Book of World Records. Now, can you imagine this man going to heaven and standing before the Lord, and the Lord said, "What did you do when you were down there on earth?" "Lord, I ate an airplane." You're going to report to God one of these days, and He's going to ask you this question: "What did you do besides taking up space and consuming food?"

Why do you exist? What is your purpose? Did you have a ministry, and did you fulfill that ministry? Again, I want to ask you this question: Is there anybody here who cannot do what you can do? Not what somebody else can do; what you can do.

Let's look here, as we begin these principles here; let's begin here, if we might, in Romans chapter 12: "I beseech you therefore, brethren..."—you've already read the scripture this morning—"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God—now, what this—which is your reasonable service..."—now, God's not going to ask anything unreasonable of any of us—"your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." God has a will for you. It is good. It is acceptable. It is perfect. What a tragedy if you were to miss God's will for your life.

Now, God has equipped you to serve Him. Now, you may think that you were behind the door when the gifts of service were given out, and you didn't get yours. God sent me here to tell you something this morning. You are a gifted child. You are a gifted child. You have a gift to serve Him, and that gift comes in quite a package. Now, in the Purpose Driven Life, we found out that we can describe these gifts under the acronym S-H-A-P-E. You have a shape. A man was told he needed to get into shape. He said, "I'm in shape." He said, "Well, you don't look like it." He said, "Well, round is a shape, isn't it?" We have a shape, and according to the Purpose Driven Life, that shape—and I like this—stands for—let's spell it out.

S stands for your spiritual gift. When you were born again, God gave you a spiritual gift; that is, a special God-given ability that goes beyond natural talent. We all have a spiritual gift. The Greeks used the word *charismata* to describe it. It was sometimes described as a birthday gift was called a *charismata*. You have a spiritual gift. That's not

a natural talent; it is supernatural talent that you got when you were born. You may have a spiritual gift and have never discovered it. But you need to discover your spiritual gift. So, S stands for spiritual gift.

H, in the word SHAPE, stands for your heart. What do you like to do? What dreams, aspirations, visions, desires that you have? What is your heart telling you? Everybody has something that you dream about, that you fantasize about, things that really are meaningful to you as a child of God.

S, H, A—abilities. What abilities do you have, natural abilities? Do you have an ability to teach, to coach, to fix things, to build things, to write things, to cook things, to make friends, to sell, to persuade? Abilities. All of us have abilities, everybody here. S, H, A,

P—what about your personality? We have different personalities. Some of us are extraverts. They just chatter all the time, and have no difficulty in meeting people. Some are introverts. They don't like to mix in crowds, necessarily, but they think deeply, and they feel deeply, and they work diligently. Some are very melancholy. These are the people that we get our poetry from, and our great songs from. And some are choleric. These are the business leaders, and so forth. But what about our personalities? We all have a particular personality. It's the sum total of all those little idiosyncrasies and proclivities that make you the wonderful person that you are.

And the E, that stands for experiences—experiences. We all have different experiences. You've seen things, and known things, and met people, and been places, and had things happen to you that have built into your life a mosaic of experience that can be used for God. Some of you, for example, as an experience, have gone through great sorrow. Maybe you've lost a child. Joyce and I have a little baby in heaven. That's an experience that's been in our life that has colored our ministry—an experience. Maybe you've gone through a broken home, maybe a divorce. You've had an experience, and your heart has been broken.

I spoke to a man, a very important businessman, so far as the world calls importance. He lost, through a sudden death, a very fine, handsome son. I called him, and I said, "Sir, bring your wounds to Jesus, and use your scars for Jesus." Bring your wounds to Jesus; use your scars for Jesus. Be a good steward over the sorrow that God has trusted you with. Did you know that you can use your sorrow, your heartache, and your tears to bless other people, when you say, "Yes, I've been there. I know. And God was with me, and God helped me; and God will be with you, and God will help you."

We all have a shape. We all have a spiritual gift. You have one that I don't have. We all have a heart. We all have dreams and ambitions that other people don't have. We all

have different abilities.

Now, Brother Jim Whitmire has abilities that I don't have. I marvel at the ability that this man has to lead choirs, and in music, and I think, how does he do that? Well, just God wired him differently. If I tried to lead the music program here, folks, the church would go down the tube. Seriously. I don't have that gift. But I have gifts, different gifts. I have different abilities. You have different abilities. That's the reason that God gave us all of these different abilities.

Now, God is not asking you to do what somebody can do. God is asking you to do what you can do. Do you understand that? "She hath done what she could." And that's the reason the Lord Jesus said, "Let her alone."

## **I. Make a Sacrificial Presentation**

Now, let me give you five principles to help you to discover your ministry, because God wants you to serve Him. Principle number one: Make a sacrificial presentation. Look, if you will now, in verse 1 again, a sacrificial presentation. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Now, notice how it begins, "I beseech you." This is God's Word. Now, many times, we beseech God. We are praying to God, and we're saying, "God, I need this; I need that. God, do this. God, do that." That's our prayer to God. This is like God's prayer to you. God is saying to you, "I beseech you." Now, dear friend, if you're not interested in God's prayer to you, why should God be interested in your prayer to Him? It's a thought, isn't it? Here is God requesting of you. God is beseeching you. He's not forcing you. God is not going to force anything upon you. God gives you the ability to choose. But, He gives you a good reason for doing it. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the...—what?—the mercies of God." You think of what God has done for you. When we were rebels, cursed in darkness, undone, lost, God, in mercy, sought us. God has saved us. God has secured us by the precious, precious, precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Incredible mercies. All of us are recipients of the mercies of God. Now, therefore, is it too much to ask that we would serve Him? "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God." You're not your own. Now, let me tell you something. Consecration—listen—is not giving God anything. It is taking your hands off of that which is already His. You're bought with a price. You are not your own. It's not that you're going to give God anything. It's God's. You belong to Him. Do you agree to that? Do you understand that you are bought with a price? Therefore, the mercies of God cause us to present ourselves.

Why do we present ourselves to God for service? Not out of guilt, nor out of fear, but

out of love. “Oh, to grace how great a debtor, daily I’m constrained to be.” And how do you do it? You do it voluntarily—“that ye present yourself.” Nobody is going to force you to do it. It’s voluntary.

A farmer went out to milk the cow. He came back. His wife said, “How much did she give?” He said, “She didn’t give anything; I had to take it from her.” No, friend, you need to give. You need to present. You need to voluntarily, gladly, willingly, joyfully serve the Lord. I tell people in our Love Offering, “What you do not joyfully give, God neither needs nor wants.” But when you give, it is voluntary, and it is to be irrevocable. It is a living sacrifice. Have you ever done that? Have you ever just said, “Lord, here I am”? Not a dead sacrifice; a living sacrifice. We preached about this last week. A man crucified has no more plans of his own. “Lord, I’m crucified with You. I belong to You. My wife, my children, my car, my home, my ambitions, my education, my business—Lord, it belongs to You.”

How many of you have ever heard of the Salvation Army? Let me see your hand. Of course, you have. Wilbur Chapman was a great evangelist. He asked the founder of the Salvation Army, General Booth, this question. He said, “General Booth, you have blessed the world. What is the secret?” General Booth brushed back the white hair on his brow, and here’s what he said: “God has had all there is of me. There have been men of greater brains, greater opportunities than I, but from the day I had a vision of what God could do with poor, old London, I made up my mind that God would have all there is of William Booth.” You know what? I want God to have all there is of Adrian. Do you want God to have all there is of you? I mean, really, it’s His already. You just take your hands off of that which is already His. It, friend, is irrevocable, and it is expendable.

Now, you know what a sacrifice is? A sacrifice is something on the altar. Is your life on the altar? Have you ever put your life on the altar, and then kind of slipped away, later on? All of us have done that, haven’t we? I mean, we’ve come to the place where we say, “Lord, I want You to have it all.” And then, about a year or two later, we wake up, and we realize we’re just back in the same old thing we were in before. Did you know in the Old Testament when they made an offering, they would take that slippery, bloody meat, and they would put it on the altar; and, to keep it from sliding off the altar, you know what they did? They had two things called flesh hooks, kept it right on the altar—flesh hooks. You know what those two flesh hooks are in your life? Devotion and discipline—devotion and discipline—to keep you there on the altar a living sacrifice so you don’t just sort of slide off the altar. We present ourselves a living sacrifice to the Lord.

There are some of you in this building who could be serving the Lord, but for one reason you don’t serve Him. You know what it is? You say, “You know, I could teach a

class, but I don't want to get tied down." "We could join Bellevue, but we're always welcome as guests. We don't want to get tied down." "You know, I could make a commitment to tithe, but who knows what might come up. I don't want to get tied down." Do you know what you need in your life? You need some discipline, and you need some devotion. You present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto the Lord. Now, point number one: you make a sacrificial presentation. You say, "Here I am, Lord. I present myself."

## **II. Experience a Spiritual Transformation**

All right, number two: Not only make a sacrificial presentation, but you experience a spiritual transformation. Now, look, if you will, in verse 2 here. When you do this, what happens? "And be not conformed—that is, squeezed in by—to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." That's what we're talking about: how to find the will of God for yourself. You're going to have a transformation. Be not conformed, but be transformed. Now, that word transformed is a very interesting word. I know you didn't come here for a lesson in Greek, and I'm certainly no great Greek scholar, but it's the word we get our English word metamorphosis from. You remember that word when you were in school, metamorphosis? It's what happens when a caterpillar goes into a cocoon and it comes out a butterfly. That caterpillar has gone through a what? A metamorphosis. Meta means change; morphosis means form—a change of form. And what is the change of form? Well, it's when the inner nature comes to the surface. That's what a metamorphosis is. What is the inner nature of that worm? It's a butterfly. Now, the same word transformed is used in the Bible when Jesus was transfigured. In Romans 12, it's called transformed; in the Gospels, it's called transfigured, but it's the same word. Jesus went up on a mountaintop with His disciples. Do you remember the story? And the Bible says that His clothing became white as snow. His face began to radiate like the sun. The glory of God was so great there. And the Bible says that, in front of Peter, James, and John, Jesus was transfigured. Literally, He was transformed. What is the inner nature of Jesus? Glory—glory. And so, the inner nature, the glory that was His, came to the surface. Now, when you're transformed, if you're a child of God, what is your inner nature? Jesus. Isn't that your inner nature? I mean, you've been saved. So, when you get transformed, what happens? Your inner nature comes to the surface—Jesus. When you present your bodies a living sacrifice voluntarily, totally, sacrificially, then Jesus is going to come out of you. People are going to see the Lord Jesus Christ in you. You're going to be not squeezed in by this world.

Do you know what this world wants to do? It wants to squeeze you in, to camouflage

you so people can't tell that you're a child of God. You're conformed, squeezed in, camouflaged by this world. But what God wants to do is to liberate you, let your inner nature come out and be transformed. And how are you transformed? By the renewing of your mind. That's what it says, doesn't it? Be transformed by the renewing of your mind. You get a new mind to think with, not a new brain. Your IQ doesn't increase—sorry about that. Your mind is what your brain thinks with. Your mind is what a piano player is to a piano. Now, some of us only have a spinet to play on. Some of you guys have a grand piano, a Steinway. But most of us just have a little spinet to play on. But, you see, our mind is to our brain what a pianist is to a piano. We get a new mind. We get the mind of Christ. Our IQ may not change, but our value system changes. We are transformed. The Spirit of Christ transforms us. How? By the renewing of our mind. And we now have what the Bible calls the mind of Christ. How wonderful it is when you now have the mind of Jesus Christ. You are transformed by the mind of Christ. And, friend, I want to tell you, it would be very difficult for you to find your reasonable service, apart from a transformed mind. Now, if you're just fishing around, bumping around, figuring, and so forth, and you've never presented yourself to the Lord, a sacrificial presentation, you're not going to have a spiritual transformation. But once you have that sacrificial presentation, then you're going to have that spiritual transformation. You're not going to be conformed; you're going to be transformed.

### **III. Render a Sober Evaluation**

Now, here's the third thing. Once you do that, then you're ready to render a sober evaluation. You're able to evaluate yourself soberly. Now, look, if you will, here, as we continue to read here. He says, in verse 2, we'll be transformed; and then, notice verses 3 and 4: "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you—now, watch this—not to think—underscore the word think—not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think—underscore the word think—but to think—underscore the word think—soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? He says our minds are transformed, and then what does he say? Think, think, think. Why would God give you a transformed mind, if He didn't expect you to think with it? You know, sometimes we're afraid to use our minds to know the will of God. Don't be afraid to use your mind. Why would God renew your mind and not want you to think with it? "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind," and then, "not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

So you can begin to analyze yourself, and look at yourself spiritually. You can find out what your shape is. What is my spiritual gift? What is my heart for? What abilities do

I have? What is my personality? What experiences has God built into my life? Not somebody else's life; my life. Jesus said, "She hath done what she could." The question is not what somebody else can do, not gifts that somebody else has. Has it ever dawned on you that God loves you, that you are God's workmanship, that God has made you? You are unique. God has you to serve Him.

You know, Ben Franklin—Ben Franklin—I read somewhere, looked up in the sky, and he saw the flashing lightning across the bosom of the sky, and old Ben Franklin thought, boy, that's some kind of power; if I could only harness that. You remember the story of him flying a kite with a key on it, trying to track that lightning? On Sunday morning, I look out at this congregation, and I think, Oh, God, if we could only harness that—if we could only harness that. If people could understand the incredible abilities that God has built into them, that they might serve Him. Now, how do you do this? Well, he says, "let every man that's among you think of himself not more highly than he ought to think." Not in sinful exaggeration, and not in false humiliation. Not saying, "Well, I'm nothing; I can't do anything." Well, number one: that's a lie. Number two: it's an insult to God. Number three: it's unbelief. Number four: it's rebellion—sheer rebellion. Don't call it humility. It's rebellion to say, "God, I can't do anything." Again, is there anybody who can't do what you can do? Say it, and think about it. That's a puny excuse to say I don't have any gifts. You do. You do. You do. You do. Sober, not in false exaggeration. I mean, if you're a basketball player, you're not going to be Michael Jordan. You're just not. And not in false humiliation, saying, "I can't do anything." But in sober estimation, "I am what I am by the grace of God." God made us all different. You know why God made us all different? So we would need one another. That's why God made us the way He made us.

The animals decided they wanted all the animals to be alike, so they had a school. They were going to teach the animals all how to be alike. And in the school there was running, and swimming, and flying. All of these things were a part of the animals' school. And also climbing. Four things in the animal school. Well, they got the duck first. They put the duck in the animal school, and the duck was very good at swimming, but the duck was terrible at running. So they put the animal in the animal school. They said to the duck, "Now, look, you're going to have to stay after school and work on your running." All day long, they forgot the duck's ability to swim at all. And the duck was made to run, run, run, run, run. Ducks are not built for running. This poor duck was getting worn out. And they made him run so much that he pretty near forgot how to swim, but his ability to swim was dampened down. The other animals liked it because the duck had been out-swimming them. The duck didn't care very much for it. And then, they got the eagle, and they were going to have the climbing school. And so they told

the eagle, “You’ve got to get to the top of the tree.” The eagle said, “No problem.” “Whoop”—he’s up in the top of the tree. They said, “No, no, you’re not doing it right. You’re just flying to the top of the tree. That’s not fair. You’ve got to climb to the top of the tree.” Well, the eagle didn’t like that at all. Besides that, he didn’t care one bit about the swimming school. You know what they did? They expelled the eagle. He was kicked out of school because he was a rebel. And so, then they said, “Well, who’s next?” And they got the rabbit. Oh, boy, the rabbit could run. And he started out running as hard as he could, but they said, “No, rabbit, we’re not going to put you in the running. You’re going to be in flying. You’re going to be in climbing.” And the poor rabbit, he tried and tried, and failed and failed. Do you know what happened to the rabbit? He had a nervous breakdown, had a neurosis. Poor rabbit! And then they finally came to the turtle. The turtle, he’s supposed to climb, he’s supposed to fly, he’s supposed to run, he’s supposed to swim. Poor turtle. When they examined the turtle, do you know what they said to the turtle? “We think his problem is his shell.” And they took the shell off, and he could run a little faster, but then a horse stepped on him. He’s gone.

Don’t you realize that God made us different? God made us different. We need to stop trying to teach rabbits to climb, and we need to let people use the gifts that they have. Friend, God made you. God made you special. And what you do is you render a sober evaluation of what you are, and say, “Lord, thank You that You made me this way.”

#### **IV. Enter Into a Shared Participation**

Now, number four of these five things: Enter into a shared participation. Very important. Look, if you will now, in verses 5 and 6: “For we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Well, look around. We belong to one another. We’re not many. We’re one. This is one body. We’re all parts of one body. We are members one of another. Now, look, if you will, in verse 4: “For we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Now, we belong to Jesus, but we belong to one another. The church is His body. The analogy of the church is like a human body. The Bible calls the church a body. Now, don’t think of the church as a business, as a corporation, with Jesus Christ as the president. The church is not a corporation with Jesus Christ as the president; the church is a body with Jesus Christ as the head, see, and we’re members one of another.

Now, if you would take my hand, and sever it from my body, and send it out on a job, it wouldn’t do a very good job. As a matter of fact, that doesn’t particularly bother you, does it, to me to hold up my hand like that? I hope not. But, friend, if you were to open a

dresser drawer, and find my hand in it, you said, “Ooooooh.” It’s fine right there, but severed from the body, there’s something weird and grotesque and different about it. The hand belongs to the body. You belong to the church of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, friend, in the shared participation, you’re going to learn what it is that God wants us to do. You see, listen to me. God made us different, that He might make us one.

I need Mark Dougherty. Thank God for the job that he does. I couldn’t do what Mark does. I’m going to tell you something: Mark Dougherty needs me. And I need you. And you need him. She needs this other lady. You see, God made us different, that He might make us one. There is no Lone Ranger Christianity. We have different gifts. And what is always the most obvious is not always the most needful.

Now, I talked about my hand being in your dresser drawer. If my hand were in your dresser drawer, I could still preach. But if my liver were in your dresser drawer, I wouldn’t be preaching at all. You might see a one-handed preacher, but you’re never going to see a liverless preacher. Now, folks, I didn’t wake up this morning and say, “Oh, I’m so grateful for my liver.” Well, the liver is inside. It’s doing its work quietly beneath the surface. Did you know you may be sitting here right now, you may not even be aware of the nursery workers right now, but they’re there. You may not be aware of these people who are running the sound system, but they’re there. You may not be aware of these people doing this televising, but they are there. You may not be aware of those people out there parking the cars, but they are there. Everybody is important. Maybe you’re a hand, maybe you’re a mouth, maybe you’re a liver, but you’re there. And, friend, there’s a shared participation where we discover our gift. And I’m going to tell you something else. If my hand is absent, I might function, but I’m hampered. And when the members of this church don’t do their job, not only do you miss a blessing; I miss a blessing. Wouldn’t it be great to be a member of a church where everybody does his or her part, and everybody pulls his or her own weight? You need to stop talking about those folks down there at that church.

## **V. Begin a Specific Activation**

Now, number five: Begin a specific activation. You want to learn what your place of service is? Well, begin now in verse 6: “Having then gifts differing, according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith.” That means, have at it, if you think you can do it. “Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; or he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.” What’s he talking about? Friend, you want to know your

spiritual gift? Get busy. Have at it. Don't just sit there and wait to be zapped. Try it. In experimentation, you're going to learn your gift, whatever it is, and you're going to learn it in the ministry of the body, as there is that specific activation where you are busy serving the Lord.

I'm a preacher. I hope you recognize that. I'm a preacher. God called me to preach when I was a kid. I never fought the call to preach. I am so honored that God lets me do what I do. And I can tell you, I love it—I love it. I live for it. It is my life. I love it—that God would allow me the joy that I have to share Him. But I didn't know that I could preach. The first time I was asked to speak in public was in a Sunday school class. About five boys were there, and Mr. Rogin, a dear man of God, a businessman, was our teacher. And he said, "We're going to ask Adrian to dismiss in prayer." I said, "What?" "Adrian, you pray." Just five boys. I said, "Mr. Rogin, I can't do that; I can't speak in public." Five boys. I could not even dismiss in prayer. I said, "Please get somebody else to do it." But you know, for some reason in our school, they asked me to be the Youth Week pastor, and I preached a message, scared. Joyce typed the message for me. The title of the message was, "I Dare You—I Dare You: Dare to be a Daniel." I thought it was going to last an hour and a half; it lasted about 15 minutes. But you know what? People came up and said, "I was blessed by that—I was blessed by that." And people encouraged me, and people helped me, and encouraged me to serve the Lord. You know, it's hard to steer a ship that's not moving. You just jump in. Find something. Try something. Do something. And, before long, you'll say, "Hey, you know, this is what God wants me to do."

## Conclusion

If I could leave you with this, friend: accept yourself, be yourself, and give yourself. Accept yourself. Ethel Waters said, "God doesn't make any junk." Accept yourself. Be yourself. Stop trying to be somebody else. And then, give yourself, and say, "Here I am, Lord Jesus, for You. I want to find my reasonable service. I'm going to take my hands off of that which already belongs to You." Again, I wonder what would our congregation be, if we began to do that.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed.

Now, to begin with, you need to give your heart to Jesus Christ. You need to be saved. Remember, we sang that song, "Saved by His Power Divine." Remember, we told you that means that all of our sins are forgiven. It means that Jesus Christ lives in our heart, that we've received a new nature, and heaven becomes our home. Now, today, if you'll trust Him, He'll save you. And I want to guide you in a prayer. And, in this prayer, I want you to pray and ask Christ to come into your heart. You may already be a

church member. You may already be religious. You may be outwardly moral. There's no one so good they don't need to be saved, and no one so bad they can't be saved. So I want you to pray this prayer: Dear God—just speak to Him—I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me. You paid my sin debt with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for doing that. Lord Jesus, You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You. Come into my heart. Ask Him, friend. Come into my heart right now. Tell Him this: I yield my life to You. I turn my life over to You. I receive You as my Savior, and I take You as my Lord. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord, give me the courage to make it public this morning. In Your name I pray. Amen.

“Pastor Rogers, why did you pray, give me the courage to make it public?” Because you're not going to be able to sneak a blessing. Jesus said, “If you're ashamed of me, I'll be ashamed of you.” Jesus hung naked on a cross before a crowd bigger than this one. Surely you can acknowledge Him as your Lord and Savior.

I'm going to ask you to do what most of these people have already done and are praying that you'll do. I'm going to ask you when we stand and sing, you leave your seat and come forward in this service. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front of this auditorium will be a minister to welcome you. Now, if you're in the balcony, there'll be someone to welcome you over here under the banner that says Redeemer; someone to welcome you under this one over here that says Messiah. Make your way there. And, if you sincerely prayed, and said, “Lord Jesus, today I want You as my Lord and Master and Savior,” as soon as we begin to sing, you leave your seat and come. Maybe you've done that some other time, prior to this service, but you've never made it public. You join these who'll be coming. “Well, Pastor Rogers, when I go down there, and that minister is there to welcome me, what would I say?” Say this: “I'm trusting Jesus,” or say something like that—“I'm trusting Jesus.” “What will happen, Pastor?” Well, number one: we'll rejoice; we surely will. Number two: we'll give you some Scripture to stand on. Number three: we'll answer any questions we can. Number four: we'll seal it in prayer. It'll take just a few moments. It'll be one of the greatest things you've ever done, and I want you to do it. You know you ought to. Now, don't think of foolish excuses. The devil will give you a thousand and one excuses for not doing it. He can't give you any reason for not doing it. Whosoever will may come. You come. Others of you, you know that you're saved, and you say, “It's about time I made an open, public commitment to the Lord. I need a church home, and I don't want to just kind of be on the sidelines. I want to be an active part. I want to find my reasonable service, and I'll find it in the body of Christ.” So I'm going to ask you to leave your seat, and come, and say, “I want to place my membership here.” If you're already

saved, and you've not had believer's baptism, as we understand it, we'd want the joy of baptizing you as a believer in Jesus Christ. We'll talk to you about that. But, as we stand and sing, those of you who say, "I'm going to acknowledge Christ as my Savior and Lord," you come. Those of you who need a church home, and you're already saved, and you know it, and you need a church home, you come.

Let's pray. Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus that You'll help us to obey You in this invitation. In Your name we pray.

Let's stand together. You step out and come as we sing.

# Five Principles for Discovering Your Ministry

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: October 5, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 12:1–8**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Make a Sacrificial Presentation
- II. Experience a Spiritual Transformation
- III. Render a Sober Evaluation
- IV. Enter Into a Shared Participation
- V. Begin a Specific Activation

Conclusion

## Introduction

If You can use anything, Lord, You can use me.

Mary of Bethany anointed the feet of Jesus with some perfume. She had an alabaster box, and she broke it, and anointed the feet of Jesus. Now, I don't know whether you remember that story in the Word of God or not, but there were some who criticized her, and Jesus defended her, and here's what He said. Now, listen. He said, "You let her alone. She has done what she could."

Now, I want to ask you a question. Is there anybody here who cannot do what you can do? You say, "Pastor, that's a silly question." No, I want you to think about it. Is there anybody here who cannot do what you can do? If you can do it, you can do it, right? Now, so therefore, what does Jesus expect out of you? The same thing He expected out of Mary. He didn't say, "She has done what she couldn't do," or He didn't say, "She's done what somebody else can do." He said, "She has done what she can do." God's not going to ask any more; He's not going to ask any less.

May I ask you a question? What is ministry to you? We're in Forty Days of Purpose, and today we're discovering that God has a purpose for us, for every individual. You know, one of these days, we're going to meet the Lord, and the Lord is going to ask us about our service. All of us, the Bible says, are going to come to the judgment seat of Christ. Those of us who are saved are going to stand before the Lord.

I was reading in a magazine about the Guinness Book of World Records, and people

who do various things to get their name in the Guinness Book of World Records. Do you know what some people do? They grind up things that are not meant to be food, and ingest them, and eat them in order to see what they can eat to get in the Book of World Records. I mean, grind metal and glass, and mix it with their food, and eat it. For example, one man ate a bicycle, seriously. Another ate a chandelier. But the guy who won the prize, he was from Caracas, Venezuela, he ate an airplane—ate an airplane, a Cessna light aircraft. He ground it up, and over a long period of time—now he didn't have just one meal; over a long period of time—he ingested an entire airplane. Now, can you imagine that man dying and coming before the Lord, and the Lord says, "Hey, what did you do with your life?" "Lord, I ate an airplane." Well, let me ask you a question. When God asks you what you did with your life, what are you going to say, besides taking up space and consuming food? What on earth are you to do for heaven's sake? What kind of a ministry do you have?

Now, everybody—everybody—is motivated by something. Everybody is giving his life to something. You may be giving your life to making money, or you may be giving your life to a hobby. You may be giving your life to a family, to sports. But everybody is giving his or her life to something. One of these days, you're going to report in.

Now, I've got some wonderful news for you. You have a God-given ability to serve God. And, if you say that you don't have a God-given ability—listen carefully to your pastor—you're not telling the truth. I could put it in a way not so nice. But, if you say you don't have a God-given ability to serve God, number one: that's not humility. It is rebellion. Number two: It is not true, and it is an insult to Almighty God who made you. God has saved you, and you are gifted. God has given you an ability to serve the Lord.

Now, look up here, and it says here that you were shaped for serving God. The book that we've been studying speaks of that shape. All of us are shaped. A man was told, "You need to get in shape." He said, "I'm in shape." He said, "You?" He said, "Yes, round is a shape." You're shaped for serving God. Let's make an acrostic out of that. And, by the way, I want you to be finding Romans chapter 12, if I've not told you to do so. And let's make an acrostic of the word shape.

S—that stands for spiritual gift. All of us have a spiritual gift. It's called a *charismata*, a spiritual gift. That is not a natural talent. It is a supernatural ability that you got when you were saved. Now, you may not even know what your spiritual gift is, but you have one, and it's your joy to discover the gift. The word *charismata* was used by the Greek people to speak of a birthday gift back in ancient times. Well, your spiritual gift is a birthday gift. You got it when you were born again. Now, you may not even know that you have it. A little baby has to discover his hands. But you have a spiritual gift. If you have not yet discovered your spiritual gift, what a wonderful thing when you discover

what God gave you as a spiritual gift. And everybody has at least one spiritual gift. So the S stands for spiritual gift.

The H stands for your heart, your desires, your passions. What moves you? What motivates you? What melts your butter? What sweetens your tea? What thickens your gravy? What just kind of excites you? What do you have a heart for? Okay, all of us have different things that we desire, we dream that we think about.

S, H, A—your abilities. What abilities do you have? We don't have all the same abilities. Some have abilities in mathematics. Some have abilities in business. Some have abilities, like Mr. Whitmire, in music. Some have abilities in speaking. Some have abilities in crafting things and building things. Some have abilities in understanding people, and counseling, and so forth. But we all have different abilities. Every mother's child in this building has an ability, something you can do. Don't deny it. You do. It doesn't have to be earth-shaking. It doesn't have to be earth-shattering. It doesn't have to be astounding. But you have ability. You have a spiritual gift. You have a heart that motivates you to different things. You have abilities.

S, H, A, P—you have a personality. Now, we have different personalities. Some are extraverts. They are always talking, always backslapping, always hugging, always giggling. They walk in a room, and just kind of take it over. And others are introverts. Nothing wrong with being an introvert. You just like being quiet. You like to be alone. You're pensive. You think. The introverts, many times, are the people who really get things done, while the extraverts are just gadding about. And you may be an introvert. You may be a sanguine person, a warm personality. You may be a choleric person, sort of a businessperson. You may be a melancholy person, deep and pensive, or you may be a phlegmatic. You just move slowly through life. But we all have our personalities. We all have those little idiosyncrasies, our proclivities, our individual things that make us the people that we are made by God. You have a personality. Okay.

And then, your experience. That's the E—your experience. You have different experiences in life. And all of us have had different experiences. We've been different places. We've seen different things. We've endured different things. We have achieved different things. We've read different things. We've learned different things. We've met different people. And all of those make a mosaic of our individual, unique experience. Some, for example, have experienced deep sorrow. You've known the loss of a husband, or wife, a child. You've had maybe a broken home, maybe deserted by a mate, and your heart has been wrung and twisted, and you've known deep, deep sorrow. That's an experience. That can be used for God. As a matter of fact, the Bible says those of us who have been comforted can comfort one another with the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. I have a dear friend, a very

prominent businessman, who lost a son in young manhood. And I called him up, and I spoke to him. I said, “Let me tell you something. Bring your wounds to Jesus, and use your scars for Jesus.” Be a good steward over this sorrow. Don’t waste this experience. Use it for God, because there are others who are going to need the same comfort that God is going to give you. But what I’m saying is that we all have our unique shape. You are a very special individual, and God has a ministry for you, and God wants to use you. And I want to give you five principles today from Romans chapter 12 that will help you to discover who you are, and to discover the God-given ministry that God has for you—five principles for discovering your ministry.

## **I. Make a Sacrificial Presentation**

Principle number one: Make a sacrificial presentation. Now, look in Romans 12, verse 1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Now, what I said there is you must present yourself today and make a sacrificial presentation. You just present yourself to God. Now, notice how this scripture begins. Listen to it: “I beseech you therefore, brethren. God is beseeching you. Now, many times, we beseech God. What does the word beseech mean? It means to make a request, a strong request. Have you ever prayed that way, and you say, “Oh, God, please, I beseech You, Lord, do this; do that,” and we pray and ask God to answer our prayers to Him? May I ask you a question? Are you willing to answer God’s prayer to you? You want God to do something for you? It’s almost as if God is down on His knees in front of you, saying, “My friend, I beseech you; I request you.” Hey, let me ask you a question. If you’re not interested in hearing God’s Word, why should God be interested in hearing your word to Him? Good question? “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God.” It is that you make a reasonable service. It’s not unreasonable for you to serve the Lord. Why? Friend, He’s the one who sought us. He’s the one who bought us. He’s the one who saved us. He’s the one who secured us. In the first part of the Book of Romans, He’s telling us all of the incredible mercies of God, what God has done for us. And now he comes to chapter 12, and He says, “I beseech you therefore”—therefore what? Because of what God has done for you, because of the mercies of God—“that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice.” You do it. You present yourself to Him. You do it voluntarily. God is not going to force you. He is the Lord of the church; He is not the boss. He has never made me do anything. And if you don’t present yourself, it is your fault, but He’s not going to force you. And, if you’re waiting on God to force you to do something, forget it. He says, “I beseech you that you present your body a living sacrifice.” Have you ever done that? It’s voluntary.

A farmer went out to milk the cow. He came in, and his wife said, “How much did she give?” He said, “She didn’t give anything. I had to take it all.”

You have to volunteer. You have to say, “Here, Lord, I present myself to You.” Have you done that? I pray that you will. It has to be completely voluntarily.

Now, let me tell you something. Listen very carefully. Consecration really is not giving God anything. Listen carefully. It is taking your hands off of that which is already His. You are not your own. You are bought with a price. You were redeemed at Calvary. And what God is saying: “Now, look what I’ve done for you. It’s not unreasonable that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service.” And a living sacrifice, not a dead sacrifice. You say, “Oh, I hope I love Jesus enough that I would die for Him.” May I ask you a question? Do you love Him enough to live for Him? I mean, if you’re not living for Him, you’re not going to die for Him. Present yourself a living sacrifice. Now, what is a sacrifice? A sacrifice is something that is slain. Are you willing to be crucified with Christ, to say, “It’s not my life, not my wife, not my car, not my business, not my ambition? Lord, I belong to You. No longer I, but Christ that lives in me.”

Do you know there are people who ought to teach a class, but they won’t teach a class. You know why they won’t teach a class? They don’t want to get bound down. There are people who ought to be a member of the church. Some of you are guests, and you are always welcome as a guest—always welcome. But you say, “Well, you know, I don’t think I’m going to join. I don’t want to get tied down. I don’t want to get bound down.” There are people who feel like, “You know, maybe I ought to make a commitment to tithe, but I might need the money for something else sometime. I’ll just tithe as it’s convenient, but I’m not going to make that commitment, or I’m not going to commit myself to the church Love Offering because I don’t want to get tied down.” In the Old Testament, they would take those sacrifices, those animal sacrifices, and put them on that brazen altar, a piece of meat. And you know how slippery meat is, bloody meat. It would be put on the altar, and sometimes it would have a tendency to slide off the altar. Do you know how they kept it on the altar? They had two things called flesh hooks. It held it right there on the altar. Do you know what the two flesh hooks are that will keep you on the altar? Discipline and devotion—discipline and devotion. When you keep your discipline there, that quiet time, that walk with the Lord, and you keep your heart aflame with love for the Lord Jesus Christ, you will see that you are there as a voluntary, sacrificial, irrevocable offering unto the Lord. Now, there must be that sacrificial presentation. Now, if you don’t do that, in my opinion, you’re not going to know your ministry that God has for you. All right, that’s the first principle: make a sacrificial presentation. Got it? Got it.

## II. Experience a Spiritual Transformation

Okay now, number two: Experience then, experience a spiritual transformation. After the presentation, there will come a transformation. Look, if you will, in verse 2 of this same chapter. He says here, “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” You want to know God’s will, don’t you? Well, he says here, if you’ll present yourself, you’ll be transformed. Now, look at that word transformation. You will experience a spiritual transformation. The word transformation here is the key word. It’s the word we get our modern word metamorphosis from. It’s made up of two Greek words: *meta*, which means a change; and *morphosis*, which means a form. It means a change of form—metamorphosis. So, what is a metamorphosis? Well, you know from studying biology when you were in high school that that caterpillar goes into the cocoon and comes out a butterfly. It has gone through a metamorphosis. And what a metamorphosis is, is where the inner nature comes to the surface. The inner nature of a caterpillar is the butterfly. This same word is used in the Gospels of Jesus Christ when He was transfigured. You remember reading in the Bible where Jesus went up an exceeding high mountain with Peter, James, and John, and the Bible says He was transfigured there before them, and His face shone like the sun, His clothing became dazzling white, and He was there in His radiant glory. And the Bible says He was transfigured. Now, listen. The word transfigured that is used there, and the word transformed that is used over here in Romans 12, is the same word—the same word, just translated differently; exactly the same word—and it means metamorphosed. Jesus went through a metamorphosis. He was changed. There was a transformation. And what was the transformation? The inner nature came to the surface. What is the inner nature of Jesus? It’s glory—glory. And there, for a moment, that inner nature, that glory, shone out, and His face dazzling like the sun, and the disciples saw it, and heard it. Jesus was transformed before their eyes.

Now, the Bible says that, if you will present yourself a living sacrifice, you’ll be transformed; your inner nature will come to the surface. “Well, what is my inner nature, Pastor?” Are you saved? Then it’s Jesus. Your inner nature is Jesus. You have become a partaker of the divine nature, which is wrapped up in Jesus Christ. And when you, therefore, present yourself to Him, you will not be squeezed in by this world. “Be not conformed to this world.” Don’t let the world take you and squeeze you into its mold, and camouflage and hide your inner nature, and dampen it down. That’s what worldliness does. But when you present yourself to the Lord, therefore, you are transformed, and Jesus is made manifest. Wouldn’t you like for Jesus to be made manifest? Wouldn’t you like for your inner nature to come to the surface, and people

could see and know and understand your inner nature, which is Jesus Christ? Well, that won't happen unless you present yourself a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God. And then, you'll not be conformed by this world, but you'll be transformed by the renewing of your mind. And that's how He transforms you. He gives you a new mind. He renews your mind. And when your mind is renewed, then you are transformed. And when you're transformed, the mind is renewed. Now, it doesn't say He gives you a new brain. Some of us would like it, if He would. But He doesn't give us a new brain. I've got news for you. Getting saved is not going to increase your IQ. You have the equipment you were born with.

What's the difference between your mind and your brain? It's analogous to the difference between a piano and a piano player. Your brain is what you think with; your mind does the thinking. Just like a piano is what the pianist plays with. Now, that's a beautiful piano over there. Is that a Steinway? That's a Steinway, one of the best made, right there. Now, a lot of us just have a spinet. I mean, that's our mind, a little upright, you know. A few people, like Mark Dougharty, he's a Steinway, see? Now, let me tell you something. Some of us have a better piano to play on than others do. But, friend, we have the mind of Christ when we present ourselves to Him. And, therefore, we come at life from a completely different viewpoint. We have a different motivation. We have a different value system. We think differently because we have been transformed. We've gone through a metamorphosis, and the inner glory, or the inner nature, which is Jesus, has come to the surface, and now we have the mind of Christ. We will experience a transformation. Would you like that? I hope you would. I hope you would. I hope that's your desire, to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **III. Render a Sober Evaluation**

Now, here's the third step. First of all, there's the presentation. Then, there's the transformation. And then, thirdly, there is the evaluation. Render a sober evaluation. You want to know what your ministry is? Well, continue to read. Look at it here, in verse 3: "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." Now, look at that verse very carefully. What happened in verse 2? Our minds are renewed, right? Right? Our minds are renewed, right? Now, look in verse 3, following verse 2. Isn't this amazing? "For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think—underscore the word think—of himself more highly than he ought to think—underscore the word think—but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Did you see it? A renewed mind—and then what does he say? Think,

think, think. Why would God renew your mind, if He doesn't expect you to think with it? You need a renewed mind. And with your renewed mind, you think with your renewed mind. How are you going to know the will of God? Think, think. Use your renewed mind. Now, God's not going to zap you. It's not that all of a sudden you're going to get liver shivers and goose bumps, and all of a sudden see visions and lights and a voice from heaven. No! What Paul says is, "So I say to every man among you, according to the grace that is given to him, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." Now, don't strut and pretend that you have gifts or a different shape than you have. Not to think more highly than you ought to think; not in sinful exaggeration, but not in false humiliation. Don't say, "I don't have any gifts," because he said, "I say by the grace given to me"—grace given to every man—"not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think." Don't say that God can't use you. Remember the question I asked you: is there anybody who can't do what he can do? Everybody has a spiritual gift. Everybody has a heart motivation. Everybody has some abilities. Every person has a personality, and everybody has had an experience in life. And so you say, "Lord, who am I? Where am I? What am I? Why am I?" And you begin to think, think; think not more highly than you ought to think, but to think soberly, "according as God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith." God has blessed you. You were not behind the door. God has made you. You are special to God. God has a special shape for you, and God has a special service for you to go with that shape. And God wants you to serve Him, and you need to discover your gift.

Now, how are you going to discover your gift? Now, how are you going to think? Well, first of all, there's spiritual enlightenment. The Holy Spirit of God is going to speak to your inner nature. But not only is there going to be the principle of enlightenment; there's going to be the principle of enjoyment. Now, you know, you're going to enjoy serving the Lord. Do you know what I'm doing right now? I enjoy, I love, what I do. That's not rhetoric. I mean, I love what I do. I am the most blessed man to be able to do what I do, because I have a sense that I'm doing what God crafted me to do, what God shaped me to do, what God called me to do, what God appointed me to do, and what God anointed me to do. Now, you don't have to be in the ministry, however, to do that. If you know that you're doing what God has appointed you to do, there is great fulfillment and great joy in doing that. You know, so many times we try to force people into a mold, into a shape, that they're not shaped for.

The animals were going to have a school because they wanted all the animals to be just alike. So they were going to teach all the animals to run, and all the animals to swim, all the animals to climb, and all the animals to fly, so they could all just be alike. And so, they took the duck, first of all, and duck was very good at swimming, but he was

terrible at running. So, they wouldn't let the duck swim any more, because he made everybody else look bad. And they put the duck in school, and they made him run and run and run and run. Poor duck! He almost forgot how to swim. But that didn't bother the other animals, because the duck intimidated them by his swimming anyway, and they all felt a little better, because he wasn't swimming as well as he used to. I say everybody felt better, but the duck. And then, the eagle—they were going to have a climbing contest, and they said, "Everybody go to the top of the tree." The eagle, he just went to the top of the tree. They said, "No, that's not the way you get to the top of the tree. You're supposed to climb up the tree." The eagle said, "No, this is the best way to go to the top of the tree." They said, "Hey, you're a bad eagle. You're getting up there the wrong way. Now, it's time for your swimming lessons." The eagle said, "I don't want to swim." You know what they did? They expelled him, kicked him out of school, because he was a rebel. And then, it came time for the running, and, of course, the rabbit, he loved to run, but they said to the rabbit, "No, listen, rabbit. You've got to swim." He said, "What?" "You've got to swim, and you've got to climb."

He said, "I can't do it." "Yeah, you can. Now, you've got to do it—you've got to do it." The poor rabbit. He worked and worked. They kept him after school in swimming lessons and climbing lessons. They never even got to flying. You know what happened to the poor rabbit? He had a nervous breakdown, had a neurosis, had to quit school. And then, the turtle—oh, good night. The turtle running, climbing, swimming, flying. They said, "There's something wrong with this turtle. We've got to fix him. It must be his shell." And they took the shell off the turtle. He ran just a might faster, but then a horse stepped on him. It's sad. That was the end of the turtle.

Why is it that we can't let people be what God made them to be? You can't do what I can do. I can't do what you can do. I can't lead the music. You can't preach, either, that good. He tries every now and then. He'd do a whole lot better job preaching than I would leading the music. I mean, this thing would go down the tube, if I tried to lead the music. God has given us different gifts. Now, God made us different, that He might make us one. And so, there's the principle, friend, of enlightenment. There's a principle of enjoyment. There's a principle of encouragement. When we have a gift, other people need to encourage us in our gift, and say, "You know, I see God working in your life." And there's the principle of enablement. Anything God wants you to do, He enables you to do. I love this verse. It's a good one to me—1 Timothy 1:12: "And I thank Jesus Christ, our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." The God who called me to preach has enabled me to preach.

#### **IV. Enter Into a Shared Participation**

Now, number four—number four: Enter into a shared participation. Now, friend, after you do this evaluation, then look in verse 4: “For as we have many members in one body, and all the members have not the same office. So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Now, he’s talking about your service, and he says, “Where are you going to find your service in a shared participation? God put us in the church, and we need one another. We are all members of one body. We’re not individual individuals, as such, but we’re part of the body of Christ. The church is not a business with Jesus Christ as the corporate president. The church is a body with Jesus Christ as the head, and we’re members one of another. And my gift, my ability, has significance only in the body.

My hand—does that bother you when I hold it up like that? Anybody bothered by that? I hope not. Not so bad. But suppose you open your dresser drawer and there it was. Good night! Ooooh! Why? Because of its significance in the body; it’s not meant to be in a dresser drawer by itself. We’re in the body. Your gift becomes significant in the body of Christ. We are members one of another. The Bible does not teach a Lone Ranger Christianity. And God made us different, that He might make us one. I need you, and you need me, and God made us to serve, and God made us to serve together. And sometimes, those who do the most service are not the most obvious. My hands are obvious this morning; my liver is not. Now, folks, I want to tell you something. I could preach without a hand; I can’t preach without a liver. Most of us don’t wake up in the morning, and say, “Thank God for my liver.” You know, you take that for granted. You take it for granted. I suppose there are people over there taking care of the babies while we’re here. You take it for granted that a sound system is working. You take it for granted that the image magnification is working. You take it for granted that the choir has prepared all of this music. You take it for granted that there are people out there parking the cars. You take it for granted that this building is heated. You take it for granted that somebody has done all this. But I want to tell you, dear friend, somebody has done it. Somebody has done it. And it may not be very obvious. You may just say, “Well, there’s Adrian up there preaching.” That’s obvious, but it takes a lot of us to be a part of the body of Christ, doesn’t it? And there is a shared participation. And you’re going to discover your gift in this shared participation, as we work together. We need to be a part of the body of Christ. Nobody has all of the gifts; everybody has some. Again, don’t insult God by saying He can’t use you.

#### **V. Begin a Specific Activation**

Now, here’s the final and the fifth thing: Begin a specific activation. Now, you want to

know your gift? You get busy. Now, notice in verse 6: “Having, then, gifts differing, according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith. Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; or he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; and he that ruleth, with diligence; and he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.” Now, these are all gifts, different kinds of gifts, and different kinds of abilities. Prophecy—what is that? That’s speaking for God. Ministry—that’s serving, and practical needs like church work, activities program, typing, ushering, coaching, nursery, buses, the church grounds, maintenance. Teaching—what is that? That’s our Bible Fellowship classes, people who care and share with the Word of God. Exhortation—what is that? That’s the ministry of encouragement, and counseling, and the music ministry, and visitation, and soul winning. Giving—what is that? That’s the ability to make and give monies specially. Ruling—what is that? The ability to coordinate activities here at the church, and outside; to preside, to lead, to stand before others. Mercy—that’s a gift. That’s hospital visitation. That’s weeping. That’s caring. That’s crying. That’s consoling. That’s loving. All of these things are needed in the church. Well, you say, “Pastor, how am I going to know my gift?” Well, experiment; have at it.

Now, God called me to be a preacher. And I want to tell you again, I’m infinitely glad that God called me to preach. I hear people talk about what they could have been, had God not called them into the ministry. I could have been in prison. I don’t know where I would have been. But I am so grateful to God that God called me to preach. I am honored that God called me to preach. But I didn’t know that I had the gift and the ability to be a preacher. When I got saved as a teen, I started going to Sunday school. I was in a class of five boys. Mr. Rogin was the teacher. And, at the close of the class, he said, “We’re going to ask Adrian to dismiss us in prayer.” I said, “Mr. Rogin, I can’t do that.” I mean, just five boys. I said, “I can’t do that. In front of these guys, pray? Mr. Rogin, ask somebody else,” and he did. I couldn’t even pray a little prayer to close a Sunday school class in front of five guys. If you’d told me I’d be doing what I’m doing here, I would have said, “Yeah, and you’ll be a Russian astronaut.” Had no idea. But somehow we had a Youth Week. They asked me to be Youth Week pastor. And I preached. Joyce typed the sermon for me. She said, “I’ll never type another one for you, because I knew what you were supposed to say, and you weren’t saying it.” I thought it would last about an hour; it lasted 15 minutes. And I preached all the way from Genesis to Revelation. But I’ll tell you what—I’ll tell you what. There were people who said, “Adrian, I was blessed; God spoke to me.” You know, how do you know? Well, you get started—you get started. It’s hard to steer a ship that’s not moving. Try. Experiment. Try that gift. Try this or that, and, before long, you’ll be saying, “You know, God made me to climb trees,” or,

“God made me to swim,” or, “God made me to run,” or, “God made me to fly,” but I’m going to do it for Jesus Christ.

## Conclusion

If I could close this message this morning with this—listen to me, friend; every person, look here and listen to me. Number one: Accept yourself. I am what I am by the grace of God. Accept yourself. Number two: Be yourself. You don’t have to be somebody else. The question is not what will God have someone else to do; the question is what will God have me to do. And the question is not what will somebody else have me to do. “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” Accept yourself. Be yourself. And give yourself. Give yourself. You want joy? You want fulfillment? Find a meaningful ministry.

We’re going to close all of this thing with a Ministry Fair. It’s going to be wonderful. You’re going to find all kinds of incredible opportunities that you can experiment with, and say, “Lord, this is what You want me to be.”

Ben Franklin, one of the fathers of our country, it is said he looked up at that forked lightning flashing across the bosom of the sky, incredible power. He thought, Man, if I could harness that. And, according to the story, he flew a kite with a key on it, trying to get the lightning to strike the key. “If I could only harness that.” You know what I do on Sunday morning? I sit up there very frequently, and I look out at our congregation, and this is the second one today, and I think, Dear God, dear God, if God can harness that. Can you think of the potentialities in this place? I mean, friend, we’d revolutionize this very city, if all of us could find our place of service, big or great. Don’t you insult God by saying God can’t use you, okay? Don’t you insult God. You have a shape. You were shaped to serve. And may God help you in these Forty Days of Purpose to find your purpose, whatever it is, to serve the Lord.

Now, bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And I want you to begin to pray for those round about you, and pray for your own heart. And, if you’re not certain that you’re saved, let’s get that settled right now, because you can’t even think about serving the Lord till, first of all, you get saved. And, as we sang, you’re saved by His power divine. He will save you. Pray this way, if you’re not certain that you’re saved, or if you’re certain that you’re not saved: Dear God—just speak to Him—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, Lord Jesus, right now. Come into my life, and take control of my life. I yield my life to You, and I receive You into my life by faith, as my Lord and Savior. I know I can’t save myself, but I trust You to do for me what I cannot do. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me.

Come into my heart, and begin now to make me to person You want me to be. And help me, Lord Jesus, never, ever to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make this public. In Your name I pray. Amen.

“Pastor, why did you pray ‘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.” Jesus clearly, plainly said, “If you’re ashamed of me and of my word before this adulterous and sinful 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 will confess me before men, I will confess you before my Father.” Now, the invitation is a very sacred time. Don’t disturb it by leaving, but be in a spirit of prayer. I’m praying that many today will step out and let it be known that they’re trusting Jesus. So, here’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to have what we call an invitation hymn. And a minister of our church will be standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front for you, to welcome you when you come forward. And, if you’re in the balcony, there’ll be a minister standing under the banner over there to my right that says Redeemer, or the one to my left that says Messiah, for those on that side. You, in the balcony, just make your way that way. And what we’re saying is this: that, if you have never acknowledged Christ as your personal Savior and Lord openly and publicly, we want you to do it today by coming forward. “Well, Pastor, what would I say when I go down there?” You just say to the minister something like this: “I’m trusting Jesus,” or, “I’m trusting the Lord.” “Well, 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 we can answer. Number four: we’ll seal it with you in prayer. It’ll take just a few moments. You’ll be so glad you did. From all over the building, you come. You say, “Pastor, there are so many people here today.” Precious friend, Jesus hung naked on a cross for you before a crowd bigger than this. And these people here are people who are praying that you’ll do this. They love you. They’ve done the same thing. That’s what they want you to do, because they’ve done it, so don’t feel embarrassed to do what God wants you to do, and what we pray for you to do. You just step out and come. You’ll be so glad you did.

Now, there are others of you, and maybe you made your decision for Jesus in your automobile, in your office, but you need to come and make it public. The faith that doesn’t lead to confession won’t lead to heaven; I mean, if you’re unwilling to confess it, because Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of me, I’ll be ashamed of you.” Now, if you’re unable, that’s one thing, but if you’re unwilling, friend, that’s something else. So you come today and say, “I’m trusting Jesus.”

Others of you need a church home. Remember those flesh hooks—remember that? Now, you’re always welcome as a guest, but you need to make a commitment. You

need to belong. Your service will be made manifest in the body. You've been a hand in the dresser too long. It's time for you to be a part of the body. And I want to invite you to come. You say, "Well, Pastor, if I'm coming to place my membership here, I'm already a Christian, what should I say when I go there?" You just say, "I want to place my membership here." They'll tell you how you may become a member. Now, if you've not had believer's baptism, as we understand it, we'd want the joy and the privilege of baptizing you. We'll talk with you about that. But you come, and let us share with you about it. Let's pray.

Father God, I pray now that You'll bless in the invitation. And, Lord, may there be a great harvest, as people say yes to You. Work, Lord, in hearts, we pray. In Jesus' name.

Now, let's stand together, and on the first stanza you step out and come.

# Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** January 17, 1993

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 12:1–13

*“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us,  
whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith...”*

ROMANS 12:6

## Outline

Introduction

I. Lordship

II. Stewardship

III. Membership

IV. Partnership

V. Fellowship

Conclusion

## Introduction

Turn please to Romans chapter twelve. Tonight, the subject: Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift. You are a gifted child. When God put you in His family, God gave to you a spiritual gift. That is, you have a spiritual gift—a proclivity, a spiritual talent—that is different from a natural ability. Now, this young lady has a natural ability to sing. That's not a spiritual gift, that's a natural gift, but she sang in such a way as to bless you, and that was a spiritual gift. You see, God many times combines our natural talents with our spiritual gift. And, He takes the talent of music and the gift for exhortation. That's the reason some musicians have the ability to bless and others have the ability to entertain, but thank God for talents and there's much talent in this church, but thank God for spiritual gifts and don't you dare insult God by saying that you don't have a spiritual gift because that's not true. You do have a spiritual gift. It is your duty and your privilege to discover your gift, to develop your gift, and to put your gift to work; for you are a gifted child.

God has a ministry for you and the highest place on earth is the will of God. It doesn't matter whether you're the President of the United States, whether you are a plumber, whether you might be a business man, whether you are a medical doctor, it makes no difference whether you're a minister, it makes no difference. You cannot be higher than the will of God and if you're out of the will of God, you can't be more miserable than out of the will of God no matter what thing you might be doing. It is the

highest place and it is the holiest place, the will of God. And, not only is it the highest place and the holiest place. It is the happiest place. You're happy when you're doing what God has called you to do, what God has equipped you to do spiritually.

Now, this transcends the place where you may work, because God has for you a very special ministry regardless of where you work, and the key to all of it is understanding your spiritual gift. Now, I want to give you about four principles that will help you know your spiritual gift and they're right here in Romans twelve which is the classic passage.

## **I. Lordship**

The first principle is lordship—lordship. Look in verses one and two: "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service and be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

I've told you before that Romans chapter twelve verses one and two is a formula. Here's the formula. Presentation plus transformation equals realization. Do you have it? Presentation plus transformation equals realization. I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God. This is God's prayer to you, the apostle Paul was saying, listen I'm asking you to do something, "I beseech you" according to what God has done for you, now here is your quid pro quo; here's the way you respond, "I beseech you therefore by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies."

Now, God is not going to conscript you into His army. He has no draftees. They're all volunteers. You have to present yourself. You present yourself to God. It is personal that you present yourself. You can't do it for me. I can't do it for you. You present yourself totally. You present yourself wholly, totally, unto God. That's presentation.

Now, when you do that is that, that you are transformed. He says, "and be not transformed to this world, but be transformed." The word that's translated transformed is the word that we get our word metamorphosis from. "Be ye metamorphosized". What does it mean to be metamorphosized? What is a metamorphosis? Well, when an insect crawls into a cocoon and comes out, a larva comes into a cocoon and comes out a beautiful butterfly. We say that that has gone through a metamorphosis.

Metamorphosis. Change of form. And, the exact definition of a metamorphosis is when the inner nature comes to the surface. What is the inner nature of a caterpillar? It is a butterfly, but it has to go through a metamorphosis as it comes out of that cocoon or chrysalis. Then, it becomes a butterfly. It's the same word that was used of the Lord Jesus when He was transfigured. The Bible says He was taken up to an exceedingly high mountain and He was transfigured. The Greek word is "he went through a

metamorphosis." And remember the Bible says that His countenance glistened as the sun, His clothes became whiter than snow—that is, there was the effulgence of the glory of the Lord Jesus. He went through a metamorphosis. What is the inner nature of Jesus? Glory. And so He was metamorphosized, and so the inner nature came to the surface. He was transformed. He went through a metamorphosis.

What is the inner nature of a Christian? Jesus—Jesus. You see, the world wants to conform you. You're saved. You're born again, but the world wants to squeeze you into its mold and Paul says, don't be conformed by this world but be transformed. And, so when you present yourself, presentation plus transformation equals realization. "I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service. That is, there's nothing amazing when you think of Calvary, and be not conformed squeezed in by this world but be transformed, metamorphosized by the renewing of your mind that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Do you see it? Presentation. Transformation. Realization. You renew your mind. Now, if you have a renewed mind, what do you do with a renewed mind? May I suggest that you think with it. That be a good thing to do with it wouldn't it. I mean why would God renew your mind if He didn't want you to use it.

So, you now have the mind of Christ. The inner nature of a Christian is Christ. You are transformed. You are metamorphosized. You have the mind of Christ. You have a new mind. Then you think with that mind and God will reveal to you His will, you will prove what is that good, perfect and acceptable will of God.

## **II. Stewardship**

So, step number one is lordship. Step number two is stewardship. Look in verse three. 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 a measure of faith.

God has something invested in you. God has given you a measure of faith and a measure of grace. Now, that's the reason I said, don't you dare insult God by saying God cannot use you. God has something He wants you to do. God gave you a spiritual gift. Remember what the great gospel singer Ethel Waters said? She said, "God don't make no junk." And, friend if you could see a designer label on you, it would say, made by God. God made you and so you need to look at yourself and realize that God has an investment in you and you are in steward over what God has put into you. Now, how do you look at yourself? Well, not in sinful exaggeration. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think. Don't get your arm out of joint, padding yourself on the back. An extrovert has a wrong opinion of himself. He has an exalted of himself. So you don't

think of yourself in sinful exaggeration. Somebody wrote these words: Sometimes when you're feeling important, sometimes when your ego is up, sometimes when you're taking for granted that you are the prize-winning pup, sometimes when you think that your absence would leave an unfillable whole, just follow these simple instructions and see how it humbles your soul.

Take a bucket and fill it with water, put your hand in it up to the wrist, now pull it out fast and the hole that remains is the measure of how you will be missed. You may splash all you please as you enter and stir up the water galore. Stop and you'll find in a minute, it's right back where it was before.

There's nobody irreplaceable. Don't think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, not in sinful exaggeration, not in false humiliation. Notice again he says that you are to think soberly, to think soberly. Humility, we preached on this a week or two ago is not thinking lowly of yourself. That is not humility. My friend, you are what you are by the grace of God. God has dealt to you a measure of faith. Do you see it there in verse three? Self-condemnation is just as bad as self-admiration. How do you think of yourself? Not in sinful exaggeration, not in false humiliation, but in sober estimation. Look in verse three, to think soberly.

Now, the word sober here comes from two Greek words. It means to save. One of the Greek words is to save and the other is mind. Actually, it means to save your mind. We hear that a mind is a terrible thing to waste. Well, that's especially true if you have the mind of Christ, if you have a renewed mind. You see, God has an investment in you and because God has an investment in you then you need to be a good steward over what God has put into you. It's poor stewardship if you don't have a place of service in this church.

Now, Jesus taught self-denial, but He never taught self-denigration. We are to deny ourselves, but we are not to deny that God has an investment in us. Think soberly, as God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith. What is pride? Pride is not saying that I have ability. Humility is not saying I have no ability. Either one of those could be lies in any particular area. What is pride? My friend, pride is an attitude of independence from God. Pride is a spirit of ungratefulness for what God has done. Pride is thinking that you're better than somebody else. That's what pride is.

### **III. Membership**

But how do you know your spiritual gift. First of all, there's lordship. Secondly, there's stewardship. You say, God has an investment in me. The third thing is membership. Begin to look now in verse four. For as we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office, so we being many are one body in Christ and everyone members one of another. That's the reason the New Testament church is so

important. We're one body in Christ. The apostle Paul expands this in 1 Corinthians 12; he gets humorous. He said, if the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing. Can you imagine if I'm preaching up here, trying to preach and I was on big great two hundred pound eyeball? I couldn't say anything. I couldn't hear anything. But boy could I see you. I mean just one great big eyeball. If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were a hearing, where were the smelling? I could hear you but I couldn't smell you. So, don't tell me Paul didn't have a sense of humor. He says we are members one of another.

How do you know your spiritual gift in the context of the body? Does that hand bother you? Not particularly. Does it does it bother you? Not particularly. Well, if I were to cut it off and throw it out there on the floor, it would probably bother you a lot. I mean if you just walked in a room and see a hand out there on the floor. A hand. What's so bad about a hand? It's terrible if it's just lying on the floor. It's pretty good when it's connected to the body.

How'd you look to open a dresser drawer and find it full of eyeballs? That's gross. That's exactly right. My dear friend, listen, God put us in a body and you are significant when you are part of the body, but out of the body you are gross and useless. What good is a hand severed from the body? How do you find your spiritual gift? In the context of the body. We are members one of another. You see, we affirm one another and we help surface the gift of one another. Sometimes a man says, well, I have the gift of preaching, but then he discovers nobody else has the gift of listening. See? So, do you discover your gift? You discover your gift in the body. It is a matter of lordship. You present yourself a living sacrifice. It is a matter of stewardship. You say, God has dealt to me a measure of faith. It is a matter of membership. We are members one of another and God made us where we cannot function apart. I need you, and you need me, and God made us different, that God might make us one.

#### **IV. Partnership**

Now, that moves us to the next point. It is a matter of partnership. Begin now in verses six through eight. "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us." That's where I get the fact that you're a gifted child. God has given you faith. God has given you grace and therefore God has given you a grace gift, "having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according the proportion of faith, or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation. He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

Now here he's talking about the partnership. We are workers together with God. I'm

talking with some people right now who do not have a ministry. You say, well pastor you are a ministry. You are the ministry, not me. No friend that's one of the worst things we ever did was to get some sort of an artificial distinction between clergy and layette. God called me to preach, but He called all of us to serve—all of us to serve. There's a difference between the clergy and the laity. I get paid for this. You're good for nothing.

God put me in the ministry. That's my fulltime job. But God has called every one of us into service. It's a matter of partnership. It's a matter of koinonia. I look at some people and I say, well, how are you doing in your Christian life? Well, I'm frustrated. Well, what are you doing for Jesus? Well, I'm attending Bellevue Baptist Church. I come every Sunday. I listen to Brother Rogers preach. I go to Sunday School, and I listen to the Sunday School lesson. Is that all you do? That's not serving the Lord. No wonder you're frustrated. Listen. The word gift, the word grace, is the Greek word charis. It's the word we get charismatic from. It also means joy. If you're frustrated, if you're not growing, it's probably because you're not putting your spiritual gift to use. Now, what is this partnership? What are some areas? Did you go—how many of you went through the expo already? Let me see your hand. That's half of us, three quarters of us. After the service, the expo will be open again, and you'll go through the expo, and you'll find areas just like I'm going to mention right here, where something will begin to resonate in you, and you'll say, hey, maybe that's what God wants me to do; maybe that's my part of the partnership in Bellevue Baptist Church. For example, look in verse six—he says, "having then gifts differing according to the grace, the charis, that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy." Whether your gift is prophecy—what is prophecy? Well, if you had the gift of prophecy, you probably would be interested in preaching, in jail services, in mission work, or somehow sharing or declaring the truth. Maybe you'd want to be a part of some civic responsibility, something like FLARE or something else. And, then look in verse seven, ministry—let us wait on our ministering. Now, what is ministry? Well, that means service. Maybe general church work; maybe you could work in the activities program, if your gift is ministry. Maybe typing. By the way, thank God for the ushers. Would you give them a hand? Boy, these guys take a lot of grief. God bless you, ushers. We'll double your salary. Ministry. Ushers. Coaching. Maybe working in the nursery. That's the gift of service: ministry. Look in verse seven: teaching. That might be one of your gifts. Sunday School. Missionary organizations. Neighborhood Bible studies. Backyard Vacation Bible School. So many ways that you can put the gift of teaching to service. Look, if you will, in verse eight: exhortation. Maybe that's your gift. The music ministry—one of the great ministries of exhortation. Visitation. Soul winning. Counseling. Encouragement. All of those are ministries of exhortation. Giving, verse eight. You see that? Now, all of us have the general responsibility to give, but some people have the gift of giving—that is, the ability to make money and to give money—to

live and to give sacrificially. Thank God. I know some dear people in this church who have the gift of giving, and they're not rich. I know some rich people who may not. But there are some in this church that God has touched. Some who are wealthy who have the gift of giving, and I thank God for giving, and I thank God for them. Some who don't let others know; they're wealthy and they give. But some are impoverished who have the gift of giving. It is a wonderful spiritual gift. Maybe that's your gift. And then, there's the gift of ruling. Look, if you will, in verse eight. Again he says here, He that ruleth. What does that mean—you're going to be a king? No, that means you're a leader. Maybe you could serve on the church staff. Maybe you could serve on a committee. Maybe you could coach a team. Maybe you could help organize. How do you think, for example, the Ministry Expo got done? Do you think that that just happened—while we went home and got our lunch that we came back and all that was set up? No, somebody had to figure that out, didn't they?

You ought to be grateful for those in this church; and friend, we have some wonderful people who have the gift of administration, the gift of leadership, the gift of ruling. Look, if you will, in verse eight: "Mercy." That's a wonderful gift. That would include such things as hospital visitation, working in the benevolence committee, counseling, the extension. I'm just mentioning these things, and we could extrapolate that out there some two hundred ministries in this church, and thousands of places of service. Now, when you come to the place, first of all, of lordship, and then realize you have a stewardship, and then realize there's a membership—we're members one of another—that brings us into a partnership. You're going to see that God has called you and put you in this body to serve Him. Somebody has given this illustration of how all of the gifts might work together at a dinner party. For example, you're at a dinner party and the dessert falls on the floor. Now, here's the way you might act, if you had the gift of prophecy and the dessert fell on the floor—you might say, hey, that's what happens when you're not careful. If you had the gift of mercy, you'd say, hey, don't feel so bad; that could happen to anybody. If you have the gift of service, you'd say, hey, let me help clean it up. If you had the gift of teaching, you'd say, the reason it fell was it was too heavy on one side. If you had the gift of exhortation, you'd say, you know, I think it would be a wonderful idea if next time we just serve the dessert with the meal.

If you had the gift of giving, you'd say, I'll buy another dessert. If you have the gift of ruling, you'd say, Jim, get a mop; Sue, pick it up; Mary, go fix some more dessert. So, which of these is right, and which of these is wrong? Well, they're all good—they're all good. Just the way different people look at a problem. And so, God puts us together. What a wonderful partnership is a church. All of this cannot happen without partners.

## V. Fellowship

Now, not only is there lordship, that's one. All right, and not only is there a matter of stewardship, that's two. And not only is there a matter of membership, that's three; a matter of partnership, that's four. Here's the fifth one: it's a matter of fellowship. Begin now to read in verse nine: "Let love be without dissimulation." Oh, listen, friend. He's talking now about how when we work together we become one. "Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil. Cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affection one with another with brotherly love and honor, preferring one another, not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord, rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer, distributing to the necessity of saints, given to hospitality."

Wouldn't you like to be a member of a church like that? I think we are to some degree. It's a matter of fellowship. He's talking about this love. The key here is love. And, this love is pure love. Verse nine it says, "it's without hypocrisy." It hates that which is evil. Real love doesn't overlook sin. It's pure. It's personal. Look if you will in verse ten, "be kindly affection one to another with brotherly love." Not just say, well I love Bellevue. We love one another. There's somebody in this church that needs your love. It's pure. It's personal. It's passionate. Look in verse eleven: "not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

Look what's here tonight. Could you imagine what would happen if we in this fellowship, with a heart ablaze for the Lord Jesus, were to find our place of service? Fervent in spirit, and it's also patient. It's not easy. Listen to verse twelve: "rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation." It's patient. It's not easy. The patience here means endurance. It takes hard work. And then, not only is it patient; it's prayerful. Look in verse twelve again. He says, continuing instant in prayer. In prayer, you'll find your ministry. In prayer, you'll do your ministry. In prayer, you'll bless others that minister. And then, it's practical. Verse thirteen: "distributing to the necessity of saints, giving hospitality." That's the kind of love we need. Folks, that's it—that's it: lordship, stewardship, membership, partnership, fellowship. That's the reason we had the ministry expo: to help you to find a place of service. Do you want to be just a drone? Do you want to just be a part of this church, just like a sponge, soaking up, and never giving out, unless you're squeezed? Is that where you want to be? Do you think that Jesus Christ bathed this world with His blood and His tears to have you do nothing? Well, you say, I believe He wants me to serve Him. Well, He does, and He wants you to serve Him through His church. Well, you say, I have a ministry out to the side. It's not a part of the church ministry. Well, that's fine. But, friend, the Bible says, to Him be glory in the church. You need a church-centered ministry.

## Conclusion

Let me just tell you what to do. You ready? Present yourself. Accept yourself. Be yourself. Give yourself. Present yourself. Accept yourself—not more highly than you ought to think, but to think soberly. Be yourself. You will find in service that you'll discover your gift.

Let me just show you here. Prophecy. Verse six: "prophecy. Let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith." I didn't know I could preach. I really didn't. I was in a Sunday School class as a lad. I hadn't been saved long. Mr. Roggie said to me, Adrian, will you dismiss the class in prayer? As I remember, there were five of us in that room. Mr. Roggie said, Adrian, dismiss us in prayer. Do you know what Adrian said? I was a football player, and I don't think that I was completely dumb; but do you know what I said? I said, I can't do that; I'm sorry, I can't do that. I couldn't even utter a prayer before the boys present. I can't do that. I really thought I couldn't. I could have. I didn't know I could. I could speak. I didn't know I could. But you know, in the context of people who loved me and cared for me, I found that God had given me the gift of prophecy. You prophesy according to the proportion of faith. A ministry, whatever it is. Look: present yourself, accept yourself, be yourself, and give yourself, and you'll find that your gift will just bubble to the surface.

Now, look at me. Are you a gifted child? Nod your head. I'm watching. Are you a gifted child? All right. Up in the balcony, are you a gifted child? Don't insult God by saying you're not. God has given to every man a spiritual gift. Now, are you a steward of that gift? Are you? From now on, I want you to be.

Father, thank you for this Bible study tonight. And, help us, Lord, that we might discover and put to work our spiritual gift in this fellowship. In Jesus' holy name. Amen.

# Does a Loving God Believe in Capital Punishment?

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: November 7, 1999**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 12:1–2, 9, 7–21; 13:1–4**

*“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.”*

ROMANS 13:4

## Outline

Introduction

I. God Prohibits Revenge

II. God Promises Retribution

III. God Provides Restraint

A. We Should Believe in Capital Punishment to Obey God

B. We Should Believe in Capital Punishment to Protect Society

C. We Should Believe in Capital Punishment for the Good of the Criminal

D. We Should Believe in Capital Punishment Because of the Justice of God

Conclusion

## Introduction

Be finding Romans Chapter 13. Title of the message: “Does a Loving God Believe in Capital Punishment?”

There has been much discussion today. The radio has been talking. The newspapers have been publishing information. Preachers have been going to Nashville making proclamation. I’m hearing very little about what the Bible has to say. It seems to me that more heat than light is being generated, and I want us to see what the Bible has to say. And the answer, of course, is not going to be from sentiment; the answer is not really going to come from logic. The answer is not going to come from do-gooders or hate either way. The answer must come from the Word of God.

So now notice in Romans chapter 13, beginning in verse 1: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God...” Now, the word power here you may substitute to word “authority,” because that is literally what the translation means. There are no authorities but of God. And the powers that be are

ordained of God. Now, he's not talking here about ordaining a minister to the Gospel ministry, but ordaining a public servant to the ministry of God. And he goes on to say in verse 2: "Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: for they that resist, shall receive to themselves damnation..."—the word damnation here does not necessarily mean consignment to hell. It's a generic word, which means you are going to receive judgment in whatever realm the word demands—"...for rulers—that is civil magistrates, whether they be judges, or police, or governors, or presidents—...rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Will thou then not be afraid of the power—that is, of the governmental authority? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For He—that is the governor, the magistrate, judge, the jailor, the warden, whomever he may be—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:—that is, he is not wearing the sword just for decoration—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 for, also for conscience sake. And for this cause pay ye tribute also:—hate to tell you that, but that means taxes—for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Now, Romans chapter 12 and Romans chapter 13 are conjoined together. And I remind you that when the Bible was written there were no chapters with verses, with numbers going down the side. All of that has been added by the translators so that you and I can find our place in the Bible more easily, and sometimes I think it is divided into chapters to keep preachers from preaching too long. But, the divisions there, the numbers and all of that, were not given by divine inspiration, though they are most helpful. In this particular instance, though, chapter 12 and chapter 13 are one continuous thought. Now, we have to look at it.

Beginning in chapter 12, you're going to see that a Christian has a three-fold relationship. First of all, we have a relationship with God—that's verses 1 and 2, where he talks about "presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." That is, I am to say to the Lord: "Lord, I don't belong to me; I belong to you. I present myself to you." I don't want to say anymore about that. Our time will go from us. But then, beginning with chapters 9 through chapter 12, verses 9 through 16, we find about our relationship to other brothers and sisters in Christ. And he says: "Let love be without dissimulation—that means without hypocrisy—abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;" and so forth, talking now about our relationship to our fellows in Christ.

And then, the third relationship that he talks about—first of all our relationship to

God; secondly, our relationship to our brothers and sisters; and then, thirdly, he talks about our relationship to those who are not in Christ, those who are in the world. And that's, beginning with verse 17 and going down through verse 21, Romans 12. Now, I am going to read that: "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger...—not talking about those in the church, he is talking about our enemies—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." Now, he is talking here about how we are to act toward those who are not saved. Now, keep that in mind, and we're going to endeavor to answer this question from the Word of God: "Should a person, who has taken the life of another person, forfeit his own life? Does the government have the right, indeed the duty and the responsibility, to put murderers to death? Is capital punishment a heinous thing? Is it barbaric? Is it cruel? Or, is it ordained from a loving God?" Again, I want to tell you that the answer is not going to come from sociology. It is not going to come from bleeding hearts. It's not going to come from vengeful people. It must come from the Word of God. Three great principles I lay upon your heart.

## **I. God Prohibits Revenge**

First of all, number one, God prohibits revenge—God prohibits revenge. When you're dealing with those who are not a part of the church, you have no right to take revenge. Look again—chapter 12, verse 19: "Beloved, avenge not yourself." We are never to take revenge upon those who do us wrong. We rather are to give place to wrath. We are told not to seek revenge. Now, the Bible does not say we cannot protect ourselves. Now, I'm not going to talk about that right now, but the Bible does give the right of protection, but the Bible does not give the right for a child of God to seek vengeance or revenge. When you try to get even with another person, that is exactly what you do: you get even with him. He's down here, and he does you wrong, and you say "he has done me wrong—I will get even." You see what happens? That brings you down to his level; it doesn't lift him to your level. Vengeance belongs to God; it doesn't belong to you.

Now, later on, we are going to receive an offering in this building, and I hope that none of you will put your hand in the offering plate and take something rather than putting something in. Well, you say, "Pastor, I wouldn't do that—that's God's money." That's exactly right. You wouldn't steal from God. I hope you wouldn't steal from anybody, but certainly you would not steal from God. When you take vengeance, you are taking that which belongs to God. You are laying your hands upon something that

doesn't not belong to you. Now, don't worry about somebody getting off the hook. God says that He will repay. "Vengeance is mine. I will repay, saith the Lord." Don't ever think that any sin ever goes unpunished. Get that in your heart and mind: no sin goes unpunished. Even when you as a child of God go to heaven, you go to heaven because your sin was punished. Your sin wasn't overlooked. Jesus took your punishment. He became your substitute. Your sin will be pardoned in Christ, punished in hell, but it will never be overlooked. God never, ever overlooks sin. "Vengeance is mine," God says, "I will repay." If we were to try to take vengeance, we would botch things up; we might do a bad job, or might not do a good enough job. God will take care of it; leave it with God, in spite of what your sense of justice says. So that's the first thing: God prohibits revenge. Have you got it? Say, got it.

## **II. God Promises Retribution**

Okay, now, number two: God promises retribution. Look again now, in verse 19: "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay." Now, God promises retribution. God does not want us to live in a society where sin is not punished. There is an element in society that would like for there to be no retribution. The criminals want no retribution, no restraint. The rapists, the murders, the pornographers, the drug dealers, and Satan himself, want no restraint. If there were no restraint, no retribution, hell would have a holiday. Now, the reason I said that Romans chapter 12 and chapter 13 are linked together is in Romans chapter 12 God forbids us to take personal vengeance. God tells us not to take vengeance. As a matter of fact, we are to do good to our enemies. But God is talking there on a personal, not a governmental, level. So you read Romans chapter 12, verses 20 and 21: "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." Now, that's the way we personally respond to those who are our enemies. Somebody says, "Well, that settles everything. Therefore the criminal is not to be punished." No, that is not what it says. It just says you are not to do it. You are not to become a vigilante. You are not to take personal vengeance. Continue to read it all, and you will see the balance in the Word of God. In chapter 12, He tells us we are not to take vengeance. He says, "I will repay." And then, in chapter 13, He tells us how He will do it.

## **III. God Provides Restraint**

So, number one: God prohibits revenge. Number two: God promises retribution. Number three: God provides restraint. And that's what I really want us to think about now—look in chapter 13, verse 1: "Let every soul—that is every one of us—be subject

unto the higher powers”—the governmental authorities. “For there is no power—there is no authority—but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power—that is the governmental authority—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—the authority? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he—that is the minister of God—For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid—underscore that—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.” We personally are not to take vengeance. But take chapter 12 and marry it to chapter 13, and you are going to understand the power of government, the purpose of government, and the prerogatives of government.

You and I are never to be a part of a personal vendetta. We are not to become vigilantes. We should never be part of a lynch mob. We are to leave that with God, and God has given the government the right and the responsibility to practice capital punishment.

When He talks about the sword now, He’s not talking about a jail. He’s not talking about a whip. He’s not talking about some civil tribunal that will assess a fine; He is talking about an instrument of death. And He says here that the governmental authority is not wearing that sword for decoration: “He bears not the sword in vain.”

Let me give you four reasons why the Bible teaches capital punishment, or why society should believe in capital punishment.

#### **A. We Should Believe in Capital Punishment to Obey God**

Number one: to obey God—to obey God. God has commanded it. God commanded it. In the dawn of civilization, God instituted the death penalty. In Genesis chapter 9 and verse 6, black print on white paper, the Bible says this, “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.” There is something so terrible, so horrible, so heinous, so hurtful, in taking another’s life, that God says if a man willingly, premeditatively takes another’s life, he is to forfeit his own life. Somebody says, “Pastor Rogers, doesn’t the Bible also say in the Ten Commandments ‘Thou shalt not kill?’” Yes, it does, but the word there for “kill” is the word that means “murder.” You do not murder somebody else. It has nothing to do with capital punishment; it deals with murder. And, when the Bible says, “Thou shalt not kill,” in Exodus chapter 20, it does not prohibit capital punishment. If you have your Bibles, just turn over to the next chapter, Exodus 20.

In Exodus chapter 20, when God says, “Thou shalt not kill,” He is not prohibiting capital punishment. That’s Exodus chapter 20. Then, look in Exodus chapter 21 and verse 12. The Bible says, in the very next chapter, “He that smiteth a man, so that he

die, shall surely be put to death.” Now, do you think Moses was insane when he wrote the book of Exodus, that in one chapter he said, no capital punishment, and the next chapter he says, the man that kills another man shall surely be put to death? Be reasonable. God wants you to see that you and I should not murder someone—“thou shall not kill”? If we do murder someone, in the next chapter, he says, “the murderer shall be put to death.” I cannot recall the number of times that I have seen people demonstrating against the death penalty, holding up a placard that says, “Thou shalt not kill.” What that says clearly and plainly is, “don’t do any murder.” And the next chapter says, “If you do, you are going to be put to death.”

Now, you say, “Pastor Rogers, that was in the Old Testament.” Indeed, it was, but both the Old Testament and the New Testament teach the death penalty, as we shall see later on. The first reason—the first reason—therefore, is obedience to the Word of God. The Bible is clear: no stutter, no stammer, no apology in this matter.

### **B. We Should Believe in Capital Punishment to Protect Society**

The second reason is to protect society. Now, I asked the question in the title of this message, would a God of love favor the death penalty? Yes. Why? Because He is a God of love. You see, God is against hate. God is against violence. God is against murder. God is against the taking of innocent life, and a loving God has ordained to do something about it. Some people have the idea that God is too good to punish murder. You’re wrong. God is too good not to punish murder. God is a loving God.

Now, there is a kind of love that is not love at all; it is a synthetic love. In Romans chapter 12 and verse 9, the Bible says, “Let love be without dissimulation.” Well, that’s a big word we don’t use often. What does it mean? Don’t let love be hypocritical. Don’t let love be feigned. Don’t let love be synthetic; let it be real love. A God of love doesn’t want your wife raped. He doesn’t want your child murdered. He doesn’t want you to be abused and robbed and killed in cold blood, because he is a God of love. Now, listen to me. Softness to the criminal is cruelty to the community. If you love people, you will hate sin.

Punishment, according to the Bible, should be swift, and it should be sure, in order to preserve the very fabric of society. Now, society is grievously sick. If you go to the doctor, and he tells you, you have cancer, and you need surgery—or at least he knows that you have cancer and you need surgery—and he prescribes an alcohol rub, that, to me, is not kindness. And any person who refuses to have surgery for a malignancy that will kill him in the course of non-surgery is suicidal. And, when a society refuses to deal with the criminal element, that society is suicidal. Now, people ask this question—and you will hear it argued all the time: “Is the death penalty a deterrent?” You’ve heard that. They say: “Well, it’s not a deterrent.” Well, the math is simple to Once a man that kills is put to death, he won’t kill anymore. He won’t kill anymore.

Henry the VIII, King of England, once pardoned a man who had committed murder. The man who was pardoned got out, and committed a murder again. They came back to Henry the VIII the second time and asked him to pardon the man again. Henry the VIII said, "I will not do it. He killed the first man; I killed the second man. But I will kill no more. He will be put to death."

Sometime ago, and I kept in my files an article from the National Enquirer in which it interviewed a 21-year-old man named Carl Junior Isaac who was convicted of six murders. He claimed to have murdered fifteen people, boasted about it, but he was convicted for murdering six people. He said his goal was to murder 1,000 people. In the interview, they asked him what he thought of capital punishment. I want you to hear what this murderer said—and I quote: "The death penalty should be in place to prevent people, like me, from killing again. The death penalty always used to deter me, because I knew I would die for murder. I would walk into a place to stick it up, and would think twice about blowing that man away. But when you know you won't fry, and the worst you can get is life, and maybe parole later, why not get rid of the evidence? As long as killers know all they will get is life, they will keep right on killing—and that includes me." And then, Isaac laughed about the time a judge let him off. The judge said, "Give me your word that you will go straight, and I will set you free." "Imagine that," Isaac sneered. And I said, "I promise, Your Honor." Isaac said the judge was a dumb old blankety-blank. "I promise, Your Honor, if you will let me go, I won't do it anymore."

Recently, in our Commercial Appeal, just last month, I read this article—you read it also, many of you. It was last month, in October 1999. The heading was "Restroom Slayer Asks Death Penalty." This is from Vista, California:

A drifter, who murdered a third grade boy in a beach restroom, told jurors that he would kill again if given the chance, and recommended they sentence him to death. Here's what he said—and I quote: "My whole purpose in life is to help destroy your society." Brandon H. Wilson told the juror—this was in the paper just last month. The twenty-year-old man spoke against the advice of his lawyer, as jurors decide between life in prison and an execution. Matthew Cecchi was killed on November the 14th at a family reunion at Oceanside Harbor. Wilson admitted that he crept up behind the nine-year-old boy in the restroom, slashed his throat, and stabbed him five times in the back. In a calm deliberate voice, Wilson told jurors that he felt no remorse. "I would do it again in a second, if I had the chance," he said, as the boy's mother, Sharon Cecchi, gasped from her front row courtroom seat, and said: "Execute me!" "Execute me!" that man said, "If I had the chance, I would do it again in a second."

Now, we believe that capital punishment is a deterrent. Now, let me read something here that came out of the newspaper last month also. Of course I've been clipping the newspaper, because this has all been going on. This happened right over here in

Arkansas. The Commercial Appeal, October the 5th, 1999: “Escaped Killer May Have Killed Again Before Capture.” Varner, Arkansas:

A murderer, who taunted his victim’s family after being spared the death penalty, broke out of an Arkansas prison, and may have killed again before he was captured Monday in Missouri, police said...—skipping part of the article—...Williams was convicted September 14th of killing a college cheerleader. He chuckled when his life prison sentence was announced the next day. Turning to the woman’s family, and saying, “You thought I was going to die, didn’t you?” The cheerleader’s father remembered Williams’ behavior on Monday. ‘He was cold. He had no remorse. He had no feelings for anything,’ Rick Heard said. ‘He turned around and cursed at us several times. Then one time, he just totally turned around and smiled, as if to say, ‘I’m going to get away.’” And that’s exactly what he did: he got away.

By the time the escape was noticed, Cecil Barron, age 57, had been found dead on his farm about 4 miles northwest from the prison, shot in the head and back. His truck was stolen, and several guns were missing from his home...

It’s a long article; those are just a few parts of it.

I tell you one thing folks—again the math is simple: the people who do that killing will do no more killing, if they are put to death. If they’re not, what have they got to lose, except a life sentence, and an opportunity to escape?

### C. **We Should Believe in Capital Punishment for the Good of the Criminal**

So, number one: For obedience to the Word of God. Number two: As a deterrent to crime. Number three: For the good of the criminal. Now, notice, look in Romans 13 and verse 3—he says here, “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.” Did you know that the best thing that could happen to murderers is to be afraid to commit murder? “Rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?—that is, authority. 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.”

Now, the idea is plain that there is to be terror in the heart of evildoers. The problem today is that the terror is not in the heart of evildoers. The problem today is that terror is in the heart of citizens. Little ladies who go to the grocery store in the evening are afraid to go to the grocery store at night, afraid they may be mugged, raped, robbed, or killed. It’s the wife who has to stay home at night alone while her husband is on a business trip. It’s boys and girls who are walking alone to school, who are in terror. Now, the death penalty should be practiced for the welfare of the criminal, to keep him from committing more times. When the principle of restraint has been taken away, you have not been kind to the criminal; you have been cruel to the criminal. You have tantalized

and enticed him into more crime. He does not realize that judgment is coming upon him, and it is swift and sure. And you say, what about the man who has been sentenced to death? Is it kind to him? In a sense, it is. Number one: he can say, at least I am paying for my crime. Number two: he knows the time of his death. He knows that thus-and-such a time, I am going to die. I submit to you, if there ever were a time when a man was going to get right with God, that would be the time. Many people don't know when they are going to die. At least there is a strange benefit to the death sentence that a man knows that he is going to meet his Maker, a God of justice, and he is going to do it very soon. And time and time and time again, have we seen those on death row repent of their sin and give their heart to Jesus Christ.

Now, the government is there to cause terror in the hearts of evildoers. Now, some say statistics don't show that the death penalty is a deterrent. I beg to differ. As a matter of fact, there were ten years when the death penalty was put in limbo, more or less, outlawed. And during that ten-year period, the number of murders in the United States almost doubled. There were 10,000 murders in 1967, that increased to 19,000 by 1978. During the time that executions were in decline, murders were rising exponentially. In 1955, there were 76 executions and 7,000 murders. In 1972, there were no executions and 18,000 murders; in 1978, no executions, 19,555 murders.

As a matter of fact, a professor, Gordon Tullock of Virginia Polytechnic Institute, concluded this; he did research. He said, "Eighty percent of people who seriously think about crime think about punishment as a deterrent, except for the sociologists, and they wrote all the books." (And then, Professor Isaac Ehrlich of the University of Chicago, who, incidentally, is himself not a proponent of capital punishment, nevertheless stated this: that his studies indicate that if the death penalty were really enforced, eight murders would be prevented for every one execution. Execute one murderer, you save eight innocent people. Others looked at Dr. Ehrlich's research, and decided that he was wrong by a factor of five, and they said that for each execution at least fifty murders would be deterred.

#### **D. We Should Believe in Capital Punishment Because of the Justice of God**

Reason number four that I believe in the death penalty is the justice of God. Now, we have talked about the love of God, and God loves society—but the justice of God. God is a holy God. And "He is a minister of God to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil," verse 4. Verse 5: "Therefore you must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. " God is a God of wrath. Now, some people have tried to get that out of the Bible, but you cannot get that out of the Bible. God is a God of love; He's also a God of wrath. Now, when you take part of the truth that God is a God of love, and try to make that part of the truth all of the truth, that part of the truth becomes an untruth. God is also a God of wrath.

We have the idea today that people are not wicked, but they are weak. They are not sinful, but they are sick. They are not evil, but they are ill. And, therefore, what they need to have is they need to somehow to be trained not to be bad. They need to be rehabilitated. That's what behavioral psychology is all about. And I grant you, some people are sick. And a person who has no concept of what he is doing should never be put to death. A person who is beyond his own control should never suffer capital punishment. But not all people are sick; some people are sinful and wicked. Some people are cold-blooded, premeditated murders. And for these people, the principle is not one of restoration. The principle is one of retribution. God is a God of retribution.

Do you believe that people without Christ die and go to hell? If we had more hell in the pulpit, we'd have less hell in the community. God is a God of retribution. Do you think that if God let somebody go to hell for a while, God says, Well, are you sorry now? I'm going to let you out. Have you learned your lesson? No. No. The purpose of hell is not restoration. The purpose of hell is sheer punishment. You know, I believe if the Supreme Court, if they could vote on it, they would outlaw hell as cruel and unusual punishment. They would say, God, that's un-American. You don't have any right to do that. But you cannot take the doctrine of hell out of the Bible.

Not all judgment is meant to be remedial. Some are the pure law of sin and judgment. Now, indeed, there are times when mercy should be given. But mercy can never be given until justice is established. There needs to be a law. And against that law then sometimes mercy can be extended.

Let me give you one of the great proofs in the New Testament besides the passage that we are looking at right now. Paul the apostle, a brilliant man, was arrested by the governmental authorities. He was charged with the crime of insurrection. That is, it was a capital crime in that day, worthy of death. Paul was taken before Festus, who was the Roman authority. And, of course, Paul had been falsely accused, and here is what Paul said, in Acts chapter 25, verses 10 and 11: "Then said Paul, I stand at Caesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged:—underscore that—"where I ought to be judged, for to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed any thing worthy of death, I refuse not to die..."—now, that's very clear. Paul said, Look, I am standing here in the courtroom. If I am guilty of a capital crime, I refuse not to die—"...but if there be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Caesar." Wonderful balance. In Bible times, as in this time, a criminal should have the right to appeal the adjudication of the court, and no stone should be left unturned, so that an innocent person would not be accused, adjudicated, and executed in a capital case. Now, Paul said, I have not been properly accused. I appeal to Caesar.

In the Bible, the Bible made it very clear, in capital cases, that a person is to be tried

extremely carefully—in the mouth of two or more witnesses shall a thing be established. In the Bible, if a man bore false testimony in a capital case, the man himself would be put to death. That might be a good idea today, don't you think also? The man himself would be put to death. In the Bible, there were cities of refuge where a person who felt that he was being falsely accused could flee to a city of refuge, until the judges would come, and judge carefully.

Remember this, that Jesus never diminished the law of God. Jesus never diluted God's law. Matthew chapter 5, verse 17—Jesus said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.” Jesus never watered down justice. Have you ever thought about the fact that God Himself practiced capital punishment? God put one whole society in the gas chamber—the flood. Two gases—hydrogen and oxygen: put them together and make water. He put a whole society in a gas chamber. God is a God of wrath, and a God of justice. Somebody says, But, Pastor, what about the possibility that an innocent person who never really committed a capital crime may be judged guilty, sentenced to death? Look up here, and let me tell you something: in this imperfect world in which we live, innocent people suffer. But I want to remind you, innocent people are often killed by criminals also. The greater damage is always in the other direction. We are already condemning many innocent to death, as murderers, with no fear, are left free on the streets, or free to escape from prison and commit that crime again.

Now, be reasonable: many innocent people are going to die. The Bible is a book that makes sense. If we are going to err on any side, it would be far better to err on the side that protects the many than to protect the few. And it would be very rare. Sometimes it does happen that an innocent person is put to death. But, again, I remind you, that many innocent people in this land will die tonight, because this society has been slack on enforcing the law of God. The Bible says that there is no fear of God before their eyes. The government is meant to have terror to the evildoer.

Paul Harvey said this, concerning the death penalty in Kentucky, and I want you to listen to it. Here's Paul Harvey, who said what he says in his own inimitable way: “It is now the honest people who are locked up in their homes or places of business, while the pursuit of happiness has become the exclusive right of the criminal. Today's society should be blaming the criminals, but instead it is blaming itself. Just because someone is underprivileged, they do not have a right to steal and to kill. And a big majority of the underprivileged don't buy it either. Some legislators have visited prisons to see what we're doing to criminals. Shouldn't they also visit hospitals and convalescent homes and cemeteries to see what criminals have done to us? In no other nation are the rights of wrongdoers, however vicious, so jealously protected, while the rights of the victims are so callously trampled. Every wanted poster—every wanted poster—in the post office

includes a long string of previous offenses; a career in which the odds are 1 in 100 that the criminal will get caught, and 1 in 500 that he will go unpunished. Does the death penalty serve as a deterrent? Evidence shows that it does. Not one of the 162 killers executed in Kentucky has killed anyone since.” So said Paul Harvey.

Now, what must we do? Well, first of all, we need to pray for a national revival. Government can't make us good. All government can do is to restrain evil. When people say you can't legislate morals, they're 100 percent correct. There's not a law on earth that can make you love me; so I have to have a law to keep you from killing me. We don't legislate morals; we legislate against immorality. And it is wrong to kill; it is wrong to take another's life. You and I don't need to spirit of revenge. We don't need to rejoice when anybody is put to death. When people harm us personally, we are to show them love. We are to return good for evil—that's what the Bible teaches; that is what Jesus taught us to do. We cannot become vigilantes. We must look to God. If we have a government in this state, or in this nation, that is too weak to punish a crime, then we must work for a better government. Because ultimately, we get the kind of government we deserve.

Would a God of love allow capital punishment? Yes, He will. As a matter of fact, He has commanded it, because He is love. It is not that God is too good to punish the criminal; God is too good not to punish the criminal. And, listen to me: for the criminal's sake, there needs to be a law to keep him from committing these kinds of crimes—to strike terror in his heart, to know that if he does this, there will be justice and judgment; it will be sure, and it will be swift.

## **Conclusion**

One last word about capital punishment: did you know that Jesus suffered capital punishment? Did you know that Jesus, on the cross, suffered capital punishment, and he was innocent, but God allowed it? Do you know why God allowed it? Jesus was taking my place, and Jesus was taking your place. Do you know who really—the bottom line—put Jesus to death? Almighty God. The Bible says, in Romans chapter 8, that God spared not His own Son. The Bible says, in Isaiah chapter 53, that it pleased the Lord to bruise him; Jehovah has put him to death. Why? Because you and I deserve the death penalty. You say, Well, what? We've never killed anyone. No, we've been guilty of a sin greater than that. And that's the sin of treason against Heaven's King. We are sinners by birth, sinners by nature, sinners by choice, and sinners by practice. But, thank God, the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, took our place, died on the cross, suffered capital punishment, that we might have eternal life.

That's what it's all about. I don't rejoice when anybody's put to death. I am pro-life, not pro-death. That's the reason I believe in capital punishment. My heart breaks to

think that anybody would have to be put to death. I took a course in criminology when I was in college. I visited Rayford Prison. I went in to that chamber where they put people to death. I sat down in the electric chair. I put my hands up to the electrodes. I put my feet down by the electrodes. And I tried to imagine what it would be like for a man to sit in that chair. And a chill went over me when I thought about it. It is a terrible and a horrible thing, but I cannot get around the fact that a God of love, who loves us so much, believes that we must—we must—deal this way with a criminal element.

Let's bow our heads in prayers. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Friend, do you know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? I am not asking, are you religious? Not asking, are you a Baptist? I'm not asking, are you a good person? In the first place, you're not. For the Bible says, "There is none that doeth good, no not one." I'm asking, do you know Jesus Christ as your personal Savior? Has he come in to your heart? Do you have a vital relationship with Him? Are you twice-born? You can be tonight. May I lead you in a prayer? But, first of all, may I tell you that God loves you tonight, and He wants to save you. And He will save you, no matter what you've done, or who you are. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses from all sin. I promise you, on the authority of His Word, that He will cleanse you, and make you His child, if you'll pray and receive Him as your personal Savior. He died for you. He paid your sin debt with His blood, and now you must receive what He did, by faith.

Pray this prayer: Dear God—that's right; just speak to Him—I am a sinner. I'm lost. I need to be saved. And I want to be saved. My sin deserves judgment, but I beg for mercy. Jesus, you told me that you would save me, if I trust you. I do trust you now, like a child, with all of my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Would you pray that? Save me, Jesus. Pray it from your heart. Pray it and mean it. Save me, Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then thank Him. Just by sheer faith, just take the gift now, and thank Him. Say, "Thank you, Jesus, for saving me. I receive it by faith. I stand on Your Word. I don't look for a sign; I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. I claim You now as my Lord and Savior. And now, Lord Jesus, because You have saved me, I will live for You. I turn from all I know to be wrong, and I choose to follow You. I'm weak, so You will have to help me, Lord. But I will live for You, not in order to be saved—that's a sheer gift—but because You've saved me. Begin now 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 I pray. Amen."

# Humility

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 25, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 12:3**

**Sponsored by: Sponsor**

*“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

## Outline

Introduction

I. True Humility Looks Upward to Present Yourself to God

II. True Humility Looks Inward to Examine Yourself

A. Not with Sinful Exaggeration

B. Not in False Humiliation

C. In Sober Estimation

III. True Humility Looks Outward to Serve Others

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God’s precious Word and open, please, to Romans chapter 12. Tonight, I want to talk to you about humility.

Are you a humble person? Well, be careful how you answer because if you say you are, you may not be. Strange, isn’t it, humility? So illusive. Just about the time a person thinks he may be humble, ah, he may be the most proud.

I heard about a man, that they gave him a badge for humility; such an award. He was so humble. And so they gave him this badge. But, ah, they took it away from him when he wore it. Ah, frustrating!

Sometimes humility is feigned humility. There’s a joke among preachers. One preacher says to another, “I have prepared a great sermon on humility, but I haven’t found a group big enough to preach it to yet.”

Well, I have a message tonight, and it’s a message to me and through me; I trust from God and to each one of us.

Twelfth chapter of Romans is a great, great chapter, and it deals with the subject of humility. As a matter of fact, I think, perhaps, we might say that a key verse, if not the key verse, is verse 3: “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.”

Now, what is humility? Well, we’re going to see, really, that humility is the mind of Christ. And so, look, if we will, here in 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, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”

## **I. True Humility Looks Upward to Present Yourself to God**

Now this is a verse we’re very familiar with. Since Jesus Christ suffered, bled, and died for us, we’re bought with a price. We’re not our own. Our bodies belong to Him. We’re to present our bodies to Him. The word *present* here is a word very much akin to what a person would do who would volunteer for service in the army. That is, we’re not draftees. We present ourselves. We lay down our ourselves, our lives, willingly, deliberately. We say, “Here I am, Lord God, every inch, every ounce, every nerve, every fiber, every possession, every hope, every dream, every aspiration – all of it I give to You.” I wonder, have you done that?

I had a session in my study on my knees a while back where I did that anew and afresh, took inventory, to ask myself, “Lord, have I done that?” And, you know, when I do that, and every so often I have to do that, when I do that, I can tell when I have really done it because the Scripture is fulfilled. When your eye is single, your body is full of light. Now I don’t know what being full of light means to you, but I can tell when there’s no shadow in my spirit. I can tell when I’m clear. And I want to tell you this is not an easy thing to do. I had to, I had to wrestle over some things that might seem small things to you, but they were not easy for me to say to the Lord, “Lord, I take hands off completely.” I mean, it dealt with this church. It dealt with my ministry. It dealt with my preaching. It dealt with my wife. It dealt with my children. It dealt with my grandchildren. It dealt with my possessions. It dealt with my health. It dealt with everything. And I had to say, “Lord God, totally, I present myself to You.” Now I even tell you about that with fear and trembling because that’s a sacred and a private thing. And I’m not standing up here to boast, but to testify that, friend, I know, and I trust you know, when you come to that place where you have presented your body a living sacrifice, wholly. It doesn’t say holy, although that’s implied, but wholly, which means completely, totally. Ha, ha. Have you done that? I trust you have. True humility does that. True humility does that. True humility reaches upward and presents itself to God. And so there is the upward reach and the upward surrender of true humility; to say, “God, I bow, I bow before Your Lordship. I totally, completely surrender 100% to You.” That’s the first mark of true

humility as it relates to God as it reaches upward. I don't want to say too much about that tonight because I have a lot more I want to say. I'm not saying less about that because it's of lesser importance, but, perhaps, because we know more about that, Romans 12, verses 1 and 2. We've heard very much. But the Bible says when we do that, then we will have the mind of Christ.

Now, if you had the mind of Christ, what would you do with it? May I suggest that you may think with it, ha, ha? That's why He gave you the mind of Christ – to think with it! You don't put your brain in neutral when you become a Christian or when you're surrendered, ah, you don't move just merely into the realm of the emotional and the psychic and the, ah, ah, ephemeral, and you, you actually move into a realm where you use your mind. Wisdom is not being warm around the heart and wet around the lashes. Wisdom is the mind of Christ, God thinking His thoughts through you. The Bible says you will have the mind of Christ.

## **II. True Humility Looks Inward to Examine Yourself**

Now once you make that surrender to the Lord, which is the first step in true humility, then, as you have looked upward, now you look inward. But now you have a mind to think with. You can examine yourself and see yourself as you really are.

Look now, if you will, in verse 3: "For I say, through the grace given unto me..." And the word *grace* is the word "charis." It's the word we get charismatic from. It's the word we get joy from. "I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think (there's the first time he uses the word *think*), not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think (there he uses the word again); but to think..." There he uses it the third time – think, think, think! See, what do you do with the mind of Christ? You think with it. "...to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith."

Now, if I have true humility, not only am I going to make an absolute, total surrender to God, but I'm going to have a proper estimation of myself. And how am I going to think about me? Well, the same way you need to think about you.

### **A. Not with Sinful Exaggeration**

First of all, not with sinful exaggeration. He says, "...not to think more highly than we ought to think..." Ha, ha. Some of us have too grand of an opinion of ourselves. We strut in the presence in God. I think we need to learn that not a one of us is irreplaceable. I read these words and wrote them down: "Sometimes, when you're feeling important, ha, sometimes, when your ego is up, sometimes, when you're taken for granted that you are the prize-winning pup, sometimes, when you feel that your absence would leave an unfillable hole, just follow these simple instructions and see how it humbles your soul. Take a bucket and fill it with water. Put your hand in it up to

the wrist. Now pull it out fast. And the hole that remains is the measure of how you will be missed. Ha. You may splash all you please as you enter and stir up the water galore. But stop and you will find in a minute it's right back where it was before." So we're not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think. True humility does not strut in the presence of God. I think we would all agree with that.

### **B. Not in False Humiliation**

But now, wait a minute. Not in sinful exaggeration, but also not in false humiliation. Look again at this. "...not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but..." Do you see that? "...but to think soberly..." You see, it begins, "I say, through the grace given unto me.....to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Friend, God has done something in your life, and you are somebody. Ethel Waters said, "God doesn't make any junk." There's a brand label on you, "Made by God." And God has a lot of grace invested in you. And you need to think soberly.

Now, self-condemnation is just as evil as self-admiration. A lot of people going around all hung over condemning themselves. Do you know what self-condemnation is? It is an inverted form of pride. Ha. A lot of these people are always saying, ah, "Oh, I'm no good. I'm weak. I'm sinful. I am not talented. I'm this and I'm....." They just want you to say, "Oh no, that's not true. You really are." I mean, they, they're just, they've fishing for compliments. It's an inverted form of pride.

One man was saying, "Well, you know, I'm no good. One thing about me, I'm certainly not proud." And a friend said, "Well, no wonder. You've, you've nothing to be proud of." He said, "I've got as much to be proud of as you do."

Now that pride is just there right under the surface, right under the surface. You see, the Bible warns against, ah, sinful exaggeration, and it warns against self-false humiliation. But what the Bible says we're to do and what true humility does, and this is very important. True humility has sober estimation.

Now look at it. He says, "You are to think soberly about yourself." True humility says, "I am what I am by the grace of God." Notice what Paul says in verse 3: "For I say, through the grace given unto me...don't think more highly than you ought to think, but think soberly..." Now the word *sober* comes from two words, one meaning to save and other means your mind. Ah, as we've heard, a, a mind is a terrible thing to waste. So God gives you the mind of Christ. And, therefore, you are to use this mind in a saving way. You're to see, really, what you are by the grace of God.

Now don't say that you can't do something and call it humility. That's ridiculous. Do you know what a lot of people think humility is? A lot of people think that humility is thinking lowly of yourself. It is not! If you don't hear anything else I say tonight, don't you go around here thinking that humility is thinking lowly of yourself.

Who is the most humble person that ever walked the face of this earth? He lived

2,000 years ago, was born in Bethlehem. I'll give you a hint. All right. Now, listen. His name is Jesus! Do you think that Jesus thought lowly of Himself? Well, if you do, just keep Romans, ah, 12 there and turn with me, please, ah, to John chapter 13 here. I want to show you something here. John chapter 13, and it's worth turning to.

Now I'm going to begin reading in verse 3: "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God." Now, friend, according to this verse of Scripture, do you think that Jesus thought lowly of Himself? He knew, He knew that God had given all things into His hands. I mean, everything! That He had come from God, that He was going to God. He knew all of this. And knowing this, then I want you to see what He did. "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, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded."

Jesus, do you want, you want me to show you what humility is? Humility is the Son of God, knowing that everything is in His hands, and yet He's washing the smelly feet of fishermen. That's humility. Not thinking lowly of Himself, but taking a lowly place, knowing just who He is, knowing who He is. He made Himself of no reputation. He took a lowly place, but He never thought lowly of Himself. He did that willingly, voluntarily.

You see, what is real humility? It's rare to find a person who knows and accepts himself for what he is. Jesus Christ taught self-denial, but He never taught self-rejection. There are so many people going around berating themselves when they are saved by the grace of God and made in the image of God. You see, you are somebody, but you are somebody by the grace of God. That's what the apostle Paul says. "I say, through the grace of God given unto me..."

### **C. In Sober Estimation**

Go back to Romans chapter 12 again. Look at it. Verse 3: "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 sinful exaggeration), but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith." Not false humiliation. God has given every man a measure of faith, but in sober estimation.

So Jesus taught that you're valuable, more valuable than the birds of the air. Jesus taught that you're to love your neighbor as you love yourself. If you don't love yourself, how are you going to love your neighbor? And yet, the Bible teaches that God hates pride.

What is pride? May I tell you what pride is? Maybe when we understand what pride is we can understand what real humility is. Pride is an attitude of independence from God. Pride doesn't rely upon the grace of God. Pride is a, a spirit of ungratefulness for what God has done. And pride is esteeming yourself better than other people. That's

what pride is. You see, you are what you are by the grace of God. But you can't take credit for that. You need to give God praise for it. God teaches self-denial. Jesus denied Himself. Jesus took the place of a slave, but He knew that He came from God, that He was going to God, that the Father had committed all things into His hands. And that's what made His humility the true humility that it was.

Now, real humility sees itself before God (Romans 12:1 and 2) and it makes that total, complete surrender to His Lordship. And then, once having done that, once it has looked upward, it looks inward. And real humility says, "I say, by the grace of God, not to think of myself more highly than I ought to think, but I will think soberly, according as God has dealt to me the measure of faith." I am what I am by the grace of God. It's not pride for you to say that. It is genuine humility. It gives God glory.

### **III. True Humility Looks Outward to Serve Others**

But now, thirdly, not only does that humility have to be rightly related as you look upward before God, and as you look inward, but then, as you look outward toward others. Let's see how this continues.

Now begin to read here in verses 4 and 5: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another." You see, in order for me to understand what real humility is and to be truly humble, there's a relationship upward before God, inward as I examine my own heart and look in and make an estimation of who I am, and then outward as I look to others, my relationship to others. You see, a humble person realizes that he belongs to other people.

Do you know what divides churches? The same thing that divides nations and divides families – it's pride. Did you know that it is only pride that divide people? Hm.

Joyce and I were going on a walk this morning. I said something, and she said something different, and for about four blocks I was on a huff. I was just walking around, striding along, and not saying a word. The Lord said to me, "You're so full of rotten pride." I said, "No." He said, "Yes." And I realized my pride had brought a rift in a relationship. Did you know what the Bible says in Proverbs 13, verse 10? "Only by pride comes contention; only by pride." Never ever has there been any contention except pride is in there. If you can't get along, if there's contention in your home, in your church, in your family, in your business, if there is contention (I didn't say disagreement), contention, it's because of pride. "Only by pride cometh contention." That's the reason that, ah, that real humility sees itself, first of all, Romans 12, 1 and 2, as "before God." it looks upward. Then it looks inward. And then it looks outward. You see, he moves from the relationship to God, the relationship to self to relationship with others. That's the way it ought to be.

Now look at it. Look at it. We belong to one another. Do you know what the proud person says? “I don’t need anybody else. I don’t need other people.” My dear friend, you do! The Bible says, “So then, we being many, are one body in Christ (verse 6, should be verse 5), and every one members one of another.” It’s the arrogant, the proud person says, “Well, I don’t have to go to church to be a good Christian.” It’s the arrogant, the proud person who says, proud person who says, “I don’t need those folks down there. I don’t need this. I don’t need that.” You are so full of pride. God made you, dear friend, where we are members one of another and we need one another. And so, listen, my dear friend. Mark it down. We belong to other people.

Number two: We must serve other people. Real humility will. Look in verses 6 and 7: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us....” Now why do you think God gave you that grace that we’re talking about in verse 3? Well, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy...” And what is prophecy? It’s not telling the future, not, not in the New Testament. What I’m doing tonight is prophecy. The Bible says when a man speaks in prophecy, he speaks unto edification, exhortation, and comfort. And that’s what I’m trying to do – edify, exhort, and comfort you tonight. I believe God has given me a gift of prophecy.

Now, if I said that I don’t believe that God enabled me to preach, that’s not humility. I ought to just get out of the pulpit. If I don’t think God has called me to preach and gifted me to preach, what am I doing up here? Ah, you say, “Is, is it pride?” No, it’s not pride. That’s the grace of God given to me. That’s the charisma given to me. That’s the gift that God has given to me. And I have to think of myself soberly. I don’t think I’m the greatest preacher in the world.

A preacher asked his wife one time at breakfast, “How many great preachers do you think there are in the world?” She said, “I don’t know, but, but I think there’s probably one less than you think there is.”

A lot of people can preach the gospel better than I can, but nobody can preach a better gospel than I can. And I know that God has called me to preach, and I know that God has gifted me to preach, so I can’t take credit for it. The apostle Paul said, “What do you have that you’ve not received?” Okay.

So, you see, what Paul is saying here about real humility is this: Real humility relates itself to God in surrender. It relates itself to self in an acceptance of what God has done in your heart and in your life. You don’t take credit for it. You recognize it. And then, it relates itself to others, realizing, dear friend, that we belong to other people. And, therefore, we must serve other people.

And so, he goes on to say here, look, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us...” God gave that man one gift. God gave that man one gift.

God gave that man one gift. Now God gave Jim Whitmire gifts he didn't give me, obviously. I have some he hasn't got. But if I were to take over the music program, we'd close the church in two weeks. Ah, obviously he's gifted in areas I'm not, and so forth. God made us different. Why? That He might make us one! God doesn't give us all the same gifts. He gives us different gifts to make us dependent upon one another. And, therefore, as an exercise in humility, where we have to confess, "Bob Sorrell, I need you." A proud person says, "I don't need anybody." I need Bob. I really do need him. Take care of yourself, Bob. Ah, don't fall down. Ah, I need Bob Sorrell. So, you see, every believer has a gift. But no Christian has all of the gifts. It's God's wonderful plan.

Now, you know, there are a lot of folks out here who are not happy; I mean, sitting out here, you're not happy. A lot of folks out here, well, some of you may be happy, but you haven't told your face about it. Now do you know what your problem is? Your problem is this: You attend church, and you listen to sermons, and you take notes, but you don't have a ministry. You need a ministry. You see, we belong to one another. And you must find a place of service. Now, if you want joy, the word *charis*, I just told you there, ah, "Having then gifts, ah, differing according to the grace, the *charis*, that is given to us..." That, that word also means joy. The way to have joy is to exercise your grace gift.

Now let's just look at some of these gifts here that the humble person is going to find a place to look at. Now he, he mentions here prophecy. Look at it. Ah, prophecy. What is prophecy? Well, I've already said that preaching can be prophecy. But teaching can be prophecy. Jail services could be prophecy. Mission work could be prophecy. A backyard Bible study for the kids in your neighborhood could be prophecy. Or look here. "...or ministry..." You see that in verse 7? You're looking for a place. What does the word *ministry* mean? Well, it's acts of service. It could be general church work down here. You could be working in our activities program. You could be doing some typing. You could be doing some ushering. You could be doing some coaching. Are you listening closely? You could be working in the nursery. Say amen. Nur....that, that's ministry, that's ministry. Just hand...somebody's got to do it, folks. You think all this just happens? You just come in here and sit down on Sunday morning and say, "Well, it's, ah, look here. Everything's happening." Someone is working. Someone is doing a whole lot for you to come in and plop down on Sunday morning and take notes.

Now, my dear friend, maybe that's what God wants you to do. And maybe, if you were really a humble person, you would come to one of these people and say, "Put me to WORK, work!"

Or there's teaching. Look. That's another one of the gifts. Look at it. "...he that teacheth..." On teaching. You can teach in Sunday school. You can teach in, ah, training class. You could teach in a missionary organization, a neighborhood Bible

study. You could teach children. You could teach somebody on the job. Friend, real humility serves other people.

Look. There's exhortation. Do you see it? "...or he that exhorteth...." On exhortation. What is exhortation? That's, that's encouraging. These are God's cheerleaders. How many of you have ever, at one time, sung in a choir, let me see your hands? Come on, be honest! Take them down. How many of you are not in the choir right now, lift your hand? Isn't that pitiful? Pitiful! Well, I know some of you can't because you have other things. But, my dear friend, there are a lot of you, if you got good and humble, you'd report to duty and be up here as one of God's cheerleaders and praise leaders, and especially in the 11:00 hour. We need more people in the choir. We just flat out do.

Now, my dear friend, you want joy? Then, then be humble enough to come and present yourself. The music ministry is exhortation. Visitation is exhortation. Soul winning is the gift of exhortation. Encouragement is the gift of exhortation, which could be the hospital ministry and anything else.

Here's another one. Look at it. "...or he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity..." (verse 8). Giving. That's one of the places of service. Now that's a gift that God gives generally to all, but specifically to some He gives the ability to make money and to give money sacrificially and liberally. If God keeps on blessing you financially, if you think it's just because He wants you to have a bigger and bigger and bigger house and a softer and softer and softer bed, and richer and richer and richer food, or do you think maybe God's blessing you financially because He's got a special place of service for you and your money?

And then, look. "...ruling..." Maybe that's something that you could do. "...he that ruleth...." (verse 8). What is ruling? That doesn't mean you're the grand Poobah, but it means that God has given you a gift of administration. Maybe you could serve on a church staff. Maybe you could serve on a committee. Maybe you could give leadership in some area. Maybe you could coach. Maybe you could help organize.

And then, here he mentions mercy in verse 8: "...he that showeth mercy..." That's hospital visitation. That's working on the Benevolence Committee. That's counseling. That's the extension department.

Now what am I saying? What is humility? What is real humility? Real humility is coming to God in total, absolute surrender where you present yourself a living sacrifice. Then, it is seeing who you are and what you are; not strutting your stuff and saying, "I'm better than other people. I don't need God." But saying, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." And you think soberly according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith. It is not self-abnegation or excoriation, but self-denial.

And then, realizing, thirdly, as that grace looks upward and then looks inward, then it looks outward, that we belong to one another. None of us can live haughtily,

independently, selfishly, not if we're humble. We belong to one another. And, therefore, we must serve one another. And, finally, we must love one another. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and following. "Let love be without dissimulation...." Do you know what that means? Just a double-jointed work for hypocrisy. "Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor (hate) that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another." Now, friend, there's the humility. "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord. Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality." And I'm going to stop there.

But, my dear friend, what is humility? In relation to God, it is total surrender. In relation to self, it says, "I am somebody, but I am what I am by the grace of God. And I am willing to take a lowly place, not because I am lowly, but because I am willing to humble myself, that God would be glorified." And then, in relationship to others as I look outward. I must say, "I belong to other people. Therefore, I must serve other people. And I must love other people."

The proud person won't serve. The proud person is independent. And there's nothing that takes love out of your heart quicker than pride. Well, you say, "I love everybody." Do you? It's easy to love generally, but to love specifically, that's what hard. A man says, "I love humanity; it's just people I hate."

Now, we can love in the abstract. But, you see, listen, friend. God doesn't just love all of us. God loves each of us. Aren't you glad? He loves each of us. I love all my children, but I love each of my children. And I, there's not a one of them that I love more than the other one, and yet I love each one of them with all of my love. Isn't that great? Not great because I'm doing it. Just great cause we can do it. That's the way God loves you, and that's the way we are to love one another.

Before I got saved, I used to go down and look at that church, and some of the funniest looking people I ever saw were members of that church. But after I got saved, I, I just loved them all.

## **Conclusion**

Are you a humble person? Let's pray.

Father, thank You for Your Word tonight. And I pray, dear God, that You would just bring it to our hearts and, Lord, help us that we might find here in this church that place of humble service, because, Lord, we've seen ourselves as we are and because, dear God, we have committed ourselves totally to You. In Jesus' name, amen.

# How to Discover Your Spiritual Gift

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: January 30, 2000**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 12:6**

*“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith...”*

ROMANS 12:6

## Outline

Introduction

- I. A Sacrificial Presentation
- II. A Spiritual Transformation
- III. A Sober Consideration
  - A. Don't Think of Yourself in Sinful Exaggeration
  - B. Don't Think of Yourself in False Humiliation
  - C. Think of Yourself in Sober Estimation
    - 1. The Principle of Enlightenment
    - 2. The Principle of Enjoyment
    - 3. The Principle of Encouragement
    - 4. The Principle of Enablement
- IV. A Shared Participation
- V. A Specific Activation
  - A. The Gift of Prophecy
  - B. The Gift of Ministry
  - C. The Gift of Teaching
  - D. The Gift of Exhortation
  - E. The Gift of Giving
  - F. The Gift of Ruling
  - G. The Gift of Mercy
- VI. A Settled Confirmation

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word, find Romans chapter 12, and when you've found it, look up here. Last Friday was Joyce's birthday. I went out and bought her a gift, and you'll never believe what I did, but I wrapped it. I did that. I mean, I got the paper, and I got the

ribbon, and I folded and stuffed and wrapped it, and searched and found a bow, and put it on top of it, and it really looked good. She didn't even believe I wrapped it; she really didn't. But I wrapped it, and I took great joy in putting that gift, beautifully wrapped, on our kitchen table, so she could come and see it. And I had joy watching her as she unwrapped her gift.

Now, we're thinking today about spiritual gifts. Romans 12—look, if you will, in verse 6 of this chapter. “Having then gifts differing...” That's all I want to read—verse 6: “Having then gifts differing...” He's talking about different gifts. You have one gift; I have another gift. We have different gifts. No one has all of the gifts. Everybody has, at least, one of the gifts. You are a gifted child. God has wrapped it up in you. And what we want to do is to help you to unwrap your spiritual gift. Now, a spiritual gift is not a natural talent. It's obvious this young man has natural talent. God put a great voice box into this young man, this young doctor. That's a natural talent. But a gift is a supernatural ability. It may be married to a natural talent, but it goes beyond natural talents. It is not natural; it is supernatural. It is a grace gift. The Greek word for grace is *charis*, so we would call it a charismatic gift. Now, you are a gifted child, and you may feel unworthy. You may say, “I'm not gifted, Pastor; I'm just a lowly servant. Why, I'm not even worthy to lead in silent prayer in the children's department.”

You are a gifted child. Alexander the Great, the great conquering general, one time, gave a beautiful and priceless golden cup to a lowly servant. When the servant saw the gift, he said, “Oh, no, that's too much for me to receive.” And Alexander drew himself up, and said, “It is not too much for me to give.” God is the one who gives the gift, and don't come around with some false humility, and say that you do not have a particular gift. Now, what would you think if I had put that gift on the table for Joyce with a card—and it was a good card, too, on that table—and she didn't even bother to unwrap it—just left it there, but would not even unwrap the gift? Well, I would have been disappointed, and she would not have had the joy of receiving what I gave to her. Now, folks, at the judgment seat of Christ—and by the way, I'm going to speak on the Judgment Seat of Christ tonight—at the Judgment Seat of Christ, you will give an account of what you did with your spiritual gift, your stewardship of that spiritual gift. So you need to discover your spiritual gift, and today we're going to be talking about how to unwrap your gift. And it's all going to come right out of this 12th chapter of the Book of Romans. And I want to give you some principles, and we're going to put them on the screen so you can see them.

## **I. A Sacrificial Presentation**

Principle number one is: A sacrificial presentation. It all begins with a sacrificial presentation. Look, if you will—chapter 12, verse 1: “I beseech you therefore, brethren,

by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” Underscore the word present. Underscore the word sacrifice. And then you’ll understand why I’m talking about a sacrificial presentation. Now, Paul is writing by divine inspiration, and he begins by saying, “I beseech you...” Do you know what it means to beseech someone? It means to plead with them. And since Paul is writing for God Himself, it is almost as if God is on His knees in front of us, begging us, beseeching us. This is God’s prayer to us. Now, we pray to God, and we say, “Lord, I beseech You; I beseech You, I beseech You; Lord, please, Lord, please.” Well, if we won’t hear God’s prayer to us, why should God hear our prayer to Him? Our Lord is saying, “I beseech you that you present your bodies a living sacrifice...” Now, why? On the basis of the mercies of God. God is good all the time, is He not? Oh, thank God for His mercies. When we were rebels, when we were cursed and bound for hell, when we were in dark and could not understand, He, by His mercy, He sought us, He saved us, He secured us, He keeps us, He satisfies us. We are His. We are bought with His blood. Now, listen to me very carefully. Consecration, therefore, is not giving to God anything. Consecration is taking your hands off of that which already belongs to God. You are not your own. You just take your hands off of it. You can’t say, “It’s my life.” It is not. You are not your own. You are bought with a price, and we are to be a living sacrifice. What does that mean—we’re to be a living sacrifice? Well, let me tell you what it means. First of all, it’s going to be different than any animal sacrifice in the Old Testament, because no animal sacrifice ever volunteered. You volunteer. You present yourself. Have you ever done that? Just say, “Here I am, Lord. I present myself to You. I am a volunteer. All that I have belongs to You.”

Wilbur Chapman was a great evangelist. And he asked General Booth, who was the founder of the Salvation Army, he said, “General Booth, what is the secret of your life?” Why is it that God has so used you?” And General Booth just took his hand, and drew back that lock of white hair. He thought for a while, and then, this is what General Booth said—he said, “God has had all there is of me. There have been men of greater brains, greater opportunities, but I, from the day I had a vision of what God would do for poor old London—by the way, that’s where the Salvation Army began—when I had a vision of what God would, could, do for poor old London, I made up my mind that God would have all there is of William Booth.”

Let me ask you a question: Have you ever really said that to God? “God, I am here. You can have all there is of me. I present myself, and I present myself as a sacrifice. That means I am expendable. All of my plans, all of my goals, all of my so-called possessions, I sacrifice them, Lord, to Your blood.” Does that seem strange to you? It does to the modern American. We want to take our Christianity and tack it on to our regular life. We want to hold on to our lives, our rights.

But you know, a sacrifice in the Old Testament, let me tell you what happened to a sacrifice. It was slain; therefore, no more plans of its own. It was put on the altar, and since it was a bloody sacrifice, it had a tendency to want to slip off the altar. So, in the Old Testament, they had two hooks. They called them flesh hooks. And those hooks would be put into that sacrifice that was to be burned—a hook here and a hook here—to hold it on the altar. They called them flesh hooks. Do you know what will hold you on the altar? Have you ever tended to slide off the altar? I have. There are two hooks that will keep you on the altar: discipline and devotion—discipline and devotion, discipline and devotion—to hold you there, a living sacrifice. To belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, this is what you are to do.

And most of us don't want those flesh hooks. Do you know what the average Baptist will say? "I don't want to get bound; I don't want to get bound down. I would teach a class, but I don't want to get bound down. I would join a church, but I don't want to get bound down. I would make a pledge to the Love Offering, but I don't want to get bound down. I want to be free." No. This is a sacrifice. And what happened to the sacrifice was this: It was consumed. It was burnt up. Did you know that you have never truly worshiped God until you are consumed? Have you been consumed with the holy fire of God? This is what Paul is saying.

You say, "Well, well, Adrian, wait a minute; good night, I don't want to do all that. I just want you to tell me about my wonderful gift." Well, Paul's going to tell you about your gift. But you see, first of all, there must be a sacrificial presentation—you present yourself. You say, "Well, Adrian, if I did that, no telling what God would make me do." Suppose you had a son. How many of you have teenage sons? Let me see your hand—teenage sons. All right now, suppose your teenage son came to you, and said, "Dad, I've been thinking. You're so wise, and you're so loving, and you're so kind, and you have so much experience. Dad, I was thinking in my bedroom the other day, and it seemed to me that the wisest, best thing I could do would be to come to you for advice, and whatever you tell me to do, Dad, I just want to do it with all of my heart. You just tell me, Dad, what you want me to do, where you want me to go, how you want me to study, what you want me to do, who you want my friends to be. Dad, just tell me, and I'll do it." You say, "Yeah, fat chance." Well, suppose he did that. Suppose your son did that, and he said, "Here I am, Dad. I really, from my heart, want to do your will," what would you do? Would you say, "Oh, boy, he'll be sorry he ever said that?" You go to your wife, and say, "Boy, have we got him now. Now, what can we make him do? He'll be sorry he ever said that he'll do what we want him to do." No. Chances are, if you've been thinking about getting him a new car, that might just tip the scales, right? You see, that's his way of saying, "Dad, I know you love me." You see, what does he say? You present yourself to him a living sacrifice, and you will prove what is that good, perfect,

acceptable will of God. Don't be afraid to turn yourself over to Him. Don't be afraid to say, "Here I am, Lord; I give myself to you." Now, that's the first thing—that's the first thing: a sacrificial presentation.

## **II. A Spiritual Transformation**

Now, here's the second thing: there will be a Spiritual Transformation. After the presentation, a transformation. Look, if you will now, in verse 2: "And be not conformed—that is, squeezed in—to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"—a transformation. The word transformation there is a translation of a Greek word *metamorpho*. What word does that remind you of? Metamorphosis. And this is the transformation. You will go through a metamorphosis, like a caterpillar goes into a cocoon, and goes through a metamorphosis, and that ugly, worm-like creature that goes into that cocoon comes out a beautiful, glorious butterfly. Why? It has gone through a metamorphosis, which literally means a change of form.

And when you present yourself this way to God, friend, you're going to have a metamorphosis. The word literally describes that which happens when the inner nature comes to the surface. What is the inner nature of that caterpillar? It's a butterfly. Did you know this word was used of Jesus when He was transfigured on the Mount of Transfiguration? Remember the story? He went up in that high mountain with Peter, James, and John. And there, the Bible says He was transformed. He was transfigured. It's exactly the same word that's used here, exactly the same word. In one place, they call it transfiguration. Jesus went through a metamorphosis.

Now, remember what I said a metamorphosis is? That's when the inner nature comes to the surface. What was the inner nature of Jesus? Glory. When He was metamorphized, the glory came to the surface. His face was like the noonday sun, his raiment white as the snow. The radiance of the Lord Jesus Christ was there. It had been there all the time, but that which was the inner nature went through a metamorphosis, and the inner nature came to the surface, like the inner nature of a caterpillar. Here's a butterfly. The inner nature of Jesus is glory.

Now, question: What is your inner nature, if you're saved? Jesus—Jesus. He is your inner nature. And when you present yourself to Him a living sacrifice, then there's a spiritual transformation. The Jesus that is resident in you becomes the Jesus president in you. The Jesus hidden in you is the Jesus revealed in you. And there is a divine change, and you are not squeezed in by this world. And this world, which would camouflage and obliterate and hide your inner nature, those shackles are broken, and Jesus Christ comes out of you, and you have a divine change, which gives you the mind of Christ. You are renewed in the spirit of your mind. You will never really understand

your spiritual gift without the mind of Christ, without a renewed mind. And if you're trying to discover your spiritual gift without making that presentation, that voluntary presentation, that sacrificial presentation, no wonder you don't know your spiritual gift. Do you know why you don't know your spiritual gift? Because your mind is not renewed.

### **III. A Sober Consideration**

But when you present yourself to Him a sacrificial presentation, then there will be a spiritual transformation, and you will “prove what is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God.” That's the second step. Have you got it? Nod your head. Okay, okay, good. Now, don't be afraid of the will of God. That's the highest, happiest, and holiest place for you. Now, number three. There will be, then, time for a sober consideration. Now, look, if you will, in verse 3 of this same chapter. Now, “For I say, through the grace given unto me,”—do you know what that word grace is? *Charis*, the charisma given unto me—“to every man that is among you, not to think of himself—underscore the word think—not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think—underscore the word think—but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

Underscore the word think again. Three times in one verse he says, what? Think, think, think. Now, didn't we just say that he's going to renew your mind? Well, what would you do with a renewed mind? May I suggest that you think with it. Is that all right? Do you think that it's wrong to think? Do you think that when you become a Christian you just put your mind in neutral and then you just live by goose bumps and liver shivers? No. God renews your mind so you can think with that renewed mind. We're talking about discovering your spiritual gift, and you're to think. Three times he says, think, think, think.

Now, how do you think about yourself? I want you, now, to just do an inventory on you. Forget about Adrian now, and just think about you. How are you to think?

#### **A. Don't Think of Yourself in Sinful Exaggeration**

Well, look in this verse, and he's going to tell you “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” Now, don't assume that you have some gift that you don't have, to think more highly than you ought to think. We hear people today say, “Oh, you can just do anything you can think of you can achieve.” There's a Greek word for that, and it's baloney. That's silly. You can just do anything you want to do.

They tell kids, anything you want to do. All right, let's see you take Michael Jordan's place. Let's see you become an NBA basketball star, the greatest that ever lived, just because you think you can. No, you can't do it, because you don't have the gift; you don't have the physical equipment. That man was born to play basketball. I mean, he's just got it, right? Sure. Now, just as he has natural talents, you have supernatural talents and abilities, but what you need to do is not to think in sinful exaggeration.

## **B. Don't Think of Yourself in False Humiliation**

Now, secondly, not in false humiliation. Look at this verse again—look at it: “...not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly...” Now, that word soberly is an interesting word. It comes from two Greek words which mean to save and the mind. Just think soberly. Just say, “I am what I am by the grace of God.” But don't go around saying you don't have a gift. That's just as bad. False humility is just as bad as sinful exaggeration. Saying that you have a gift is not pride. Saying that you don't have a gift is rebellion. You think honestly about what you have. To deny your grace gift is not humility; it is unbelief and rebellion.

## **C. Think of Yourself in Sober Estimation**

So, not in sinful exaggeration, false humiliation, but in sober estimation. You just look at yourself, take inventory. “Well, Pastor, that's so nebulous. Would you help me a little bit? Give me some guidance here as to how to think.” All right, let me give you some principles beginning with the letter E, just for remembrance.

### **1. The Principle of Enlightenment**

First of all, is the principle of enlightenment. You see, the Holy Spirit of God that's in you will just enlighten your mind. This is the mystical part of it, and there is a mystical part of it. I mean, it's not a mathematical formula. The Holy Spirit of God will begin to speak to your heart. He did when He called me into the ministry. That's the ministry of enlightenment.

### **2. The Principle of Enjoyment**

Now, secondly, the principle of enjoyment—enjoyment. When you feel the Holy Spirit of God kind of moving you to do something, enlightenment, and you do it, and you enjoy it. By the way, I don't know whether it shows or not, but I enjoy what I'm doing right now—I really do. I mean, I can hardly wait to come and preach. I enjoy what I do. And you have to ask yourself, you know, what melts my butter? What do I really enjoy doing?

Did you hear about the animal school? Well, the animals had a school, and they were going to be taught running and climbing and flying and swimming. And when the duck enrolled in school, man, he was great in swimming. He was fair in flying. Climbing and running—boy, he was bad in climbing and running. So, since he was so good in swimming, they just didn't give him any more courses in swimming, and they made him work out on the track all day long, running and running and running. After a while, he got worse in his swimming, not much better in his running, but everybody else in the school were no longer threatened by the duck. The duck, they just toned him down. Everybody felt a little more comfortable. Now, the eagle. They put the eagle in school. Boy, he was great in climbing. He always got to the top of the tree, but he wouldn't do it the right way. The eagle just had another way of getting to the top of the tree. Well, they

scolded the eagle for that, and they put the eagle in the swimming classes. The eagle did not like the swimming classes. After a while, the eagle got so rebellious about the whole thing that they expelled the eagle from school. And then, the rabbit. Boy, the rabbit, he got it; he was great in running. Boy, he loved running, but he wasn't so good in the rest of the things. He was bad in swimming. He hated his swimming classes. He was not a tree climber at all, and so, he, after a while, the poor rabbit had a nervous breakdown. And the turtle, hey, you've to feel sorry for the turtle. The turtle, he couldn't run, he couldn't swim, he couldn't fly, he couldn't climb. They said, he's no good. What's this turtle good for? So, they said, the problem is his shell, so they took the shell out of him. It helped him just a little bit in the running until the horse stepped on him. Poor turtle. He's gone. I mean, listen. They messed up the whole school.

You say, "That's ridiculous." Friend, that's exactly what we're trying to do in churches today. Rather than letting people do what God has equipped them to do and gifted them to do, why we just try to tone them down in some area where they're strong, and beef them up in some area they're not gifted at all to do.

### **3. The Principle of Encouragement**

God has given you a particular gift, and you're going to find out that there will be enlightenment. There will be enjoyment in this gift. And then, let me give you another thing that there will be in this gift. There will be the principle of Encouragement. You'll find other people encouraging you in your own gift. Why? Because they're blessed by it. That was the amazement to me when I was a youngster in our church, and I surrendered my life to do whatever, Lord Jesus, you want me to do. I just filled in a blank piece of paper, and said, "Here I am, Lord, whatever you want me to do." And they asked me to be the youth week pastor. Can you imagine that? Yeah, listen. I was not a good student in school. I was bright, but I wasn't a good student. I can't even remember ever bringing a book home. Really, seriously—never. If I didn't get it in class, I just didn't get it. I could get it by listening and by faking it. And, you know, just going through with average grades, and the last thing I ever thought of myself was doing was preaching. So they asked me to be the youth week pastor, and I got up there petrified. Wasn't afraid of anything that moved on the football field, but I was petrified, and I spoke, and people came by, and said, "I was blessed by that. That was good. Do it again—do it again." At first, I thought, you know, they were just nice to me. I must have done real bad. But they kept saying that, and they kept saying that, and you know, I liked it. If a preacher tells you, "Oh, I don't like you for you to tell me I did good," he's lying—he's lying. I mean, when you're encouraged, that helps.

### **4. The Principle of Enablement**

There's that enlightenment. There's that enjoyment. There is that encouragement. And

then, there is that enablement. God will enable you to do this. Listen to this verse—put it down: 1 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 12: “I thank Jesus Christ, our Lord, who hath enabled me, in that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry.” Paul knew he could not do what he did in the ministry without the enablement. There are two things I can go back to my high school days, two things that I really enjoyed the least. Do you know what they were? Speaking and writing. Guess what I do? How do I do that? Well, God knew that somehow there was a latent gift there that He had put into me. And He has enabled me. And so, when God gives you this mind, what do you do with it? Think with it, “not more highly than you ought to think, but soberly, according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith.”

#### **IV. A Shared Participation**

Now, here’s the next thing. There is to be a shared participation. Look, if you will now, in verses 4 and 5: “For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office—that is, the same work. It doesn’t mean a place where you do your work—so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.” Now, we need to learn that we, when we present ourselves to Jesus, we’re also presenting ourselves to one another. There’s to be a shared participation. When you belong to Jesus, you belong to me. And when I belong to Jesus, I belong to you. Remember that the church is His body. It’s not an organization with Jesus Christ as the president. It is a body with Jesus Christ as the head, and we’re all members in that body. And it is arrogance and conceit and pride that divides us; it is the Holy Spirit of God that unites us. And so, when we find our gift, there’s to be this shared participation.

Everyone’s gift is not as obvious. I mean, you’re seeing more my mind and my voice than you are my liver right now, right? You think, boy, his liver is really functioning good this morning. No. But if my liver weren’t functioning, I wouldn’t be up here preaching. You see, look. There are people who are doing things in this church right now that you’re not aware of, but there is a shared participation, and each gift is given to perfect the Body of Christ. And, if you’re not fulfilling, I don’t care who you are. If you are a member of this church, and you’re not fulfilling the purpose for which God put you in this body, you are harmful and hurtful to the body.

Sometimes people ask me, How many active members do you have, Pastor? Friend, they’re all active; some are tearing down, and some are building up. They’re all active. God put you in this body as it pleased Him, and there’s to be a shared participation. Nobody has all of the gifts. Everybody has, at least, one of the gifts, and we are dependent upon one another. God made us different, that He might make us one.

## **V. A Specific Activation**

I've got to move from that point to the next. Not only a shared participation, but now watch this: a specific activation. Now, begin to read here in verse 6, and you'll find out how He comes to sort of a therefore. Now, he's talking of all of these things that go before this. You know, we present ourselves to Him, and He renews our mind. And then, we find ourselves operating in the body. Now, He says, "Therefore, having then gifts differing according to the charisma that is given to us,—the grace that is given to us—whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; or ministry, let us wait on our ministering; or he that teacheth, on teaching; or he that exhorteth, on exhortation; he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness." Now, he mentions here seven gifts, and he says, "Get with it; get activated." You see, you want to know your gift? Well, just pick out something that you think may be your gift, and get busy. It's hard to steer a ship that's not moving. Don't just sit there. God's not going to zap you. You're going to find your gift, as you get busy. He says, "prophecy, according to the proportion of faith." That is, you may not have a lot of faith, but He's dealt to every man a measure of faith. Take what you've got, and put it into business.

Now, let's look, one more time, quickly, at these seven gifts. See if you can spot yours. Seven right here. There are some more over there in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, but right here.

### **A. The Gift of Prophecy**

First of all, he talks about prophecy, in verse 6. Do you see it? Look at it. Now, what is prophecy? Prophecy is declaring truth. If you have the gift of prophecy, you're going to find yourself, for example, being used in jail services, mission work. You're going to find yourself, perhaps, teaching a class. But you're going to find, in your teaching, you're going to have a desire to be persuasive, and you will be persuasive. You will be moving people to action.

### **B. The Gift of Ministry**

And then, he mentions, in verse 7, ministry. Well, that's another word for service. And you're going to find yourself, if that is your gift, doing what so many people do here at Bellevue Baptist Church, and that is meeting spiritual needs in a practical way. That's church work, activities program. I was in the activities program yesterday. Two of my grandchildren were in basketball games. There goes a Saturday. But I was going to these basketball games, and I'm so blessed to see these coaches over there, and these people working for these kids, to build character. The Sunday School is the classroom; the activities program is the laboratory where you kind of work it out. And what a wonderful thing that is. People who work in these offices around here, these wonderful

ushers. Give the ushers a hand this morning. God bless you, ushers. Thank God for you. The nursery workers, those who drive the buses, those who keep the church grounds. Our church grounds are beautiful. Thank God for that. Those who work in maintenance, those who are working the sound system right now. These wonderful, glorious people. That's the gift of ministry.

### **C. The Gift of Teaching**

And then, He mentions the gift of teaching. Look in verse 7. If you have this gift, you want to clarify truth. I mean, you'll have a desire to search out things, and validate truth that's been presented. And you'll have a questioning mind, and you'll be used in Sunday School, and you'll be used in missionary organizations, neighborhood Bible Study, Backyard Bible Schools, and so forth. You may use that gift as a mother. I've told you before, I believe my precious daughter, Janice, has that gift that she uses with her own children.

### **D. The Gift of Exhortation**

And then, He mentions exhortation. What is exhortation? That's the desire, in verse 8, that's the desire to stimulate people in their faith, to exhort them to love Jesus better. And, if you have that gift, you're going to enjoy personal counseling. You're going to be, perhaps, in the music ministry. That's what our music ministry does this morning. When I heard that song, I just want to know you better, Lord, I said to myself, "Yes, and I do, too." And maybe in visitation, going after those who are lost, strayed, or stolen—soul winning. Just the ministry of encouragement—that's exhortation.

### **E. The Gift of Giving**

And then, He mentions giving. Now, we're all commanded to give, but some people have the gift of giving. And what is that? That you're motivated to entrust personal assets to others, that the work of God may be carried on. And you make good decisions to meet immediate needs. And you're careful in your giving, but you're willing to give, and you have the ability to accumulate and disperse assets. And there are people in our church who have the gift of giving, and I thank God for that.

### **F. The Gift of Ruling**

And then, He mentions ruling in verse 8. Maybe that's your gift. It's the motivation not to be the big shot, but to coordinate things, and to help people to see the big vision, and to move them toward that vision. To coordinate the activities of others for a common goal for the glory of God, and that's the gift to preside, to lead, to stand before others. A person who has this gift also has the gift of vision. He sees where we ought to go, and he begins to lead and motivate people to that.

### **G. The Gift of Mercy**

And then, there's the gift of mercy. Maybe that's your gift. Oh, how needed that is. Look in verse 8. What is the gift of mercy? You identify with people and comfort people who are in distress. One of the things I know that my wife has is the gift of mercy, and she keeps me from being so hard-hearted. She's always reminding me of the needs of other people. And, if you feel empathy and sympathy for the misfortune and heartaches of others, you will mentally, emotionally, and practically relate to those needs, and you'll find yourself in hospital visitation, benevolence, counseling—all of these things. Now, all of these gifts are there.

### **VI. A Settled Confirmation**

Now, let's come to the final thing. Now, after there is this activity where you actually get busy, you're going to find that it will begin to gel. Now, go back up to verse 2. Look at it again—verse 2: “And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” There will be a Settled Confirmation. You will prove—you will prove, you will prove—what is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God. You will prove it in your own heart. You will have this confirmation, and you'll say, “That is my spiritual gift.” And once you see that, number one, you accept yourself; number two, you begin to be yourself; number three, you begin to give yourself. And when you accept yourself, be yourself, and give yourself, friend, then you are blessed, God is glorified, and the church is strengthened. Just look around. What would happen, folks? Look: what would happen if the people in this church, in Bellevue Baptist Church—I mean all of us—would quit being peeled potatoes? A lot of you are. If I've hurt your feelings, you come and apologize to me and I'll forgive you. Peeled potatoes. What would happen—what would happen—if you presented yourself a sacrificial presentation, and had a spiritual transformation, and then made a sober consideration? “Lord, what do you want me to do?” You know the problem with many of us? The flesh hooks. We just don't want to get tied down. You say, “Well, yeah, let somebody else do it.”

### **Conclusion**

I went to London. I went to see the crown jewels. I told the guard there, I said, “The one thing I want to see is the Curano Diamond,” because I'd read about it. So I saw the Curano Diamond. This diamond was 186 carats. Ladies, that's a rock. At that time, they said it was worth half the daily expense of the whole world. This is before it was cut and shaped. It's in the crown jewels. It was given to Queen Victoria by a Punjab prince, a youngster, who had it in his possession. He gave it to the Queen of England. Later, this Punjab prince became a grown man. He went to the Tower there where the jewels are

kept, and said, "I want to see the diamond." He's a grown man now. He had given it just as a child. They wondered, what does he want? Does he want it back? Is he going to ask to have it back? And they brought it out, though, because he had been the one that had given it. He said, "Would you place it in my hands?" They said, "Uh oh," and they placed it in his hands. And then, he turned, and said to the Queen, who was there, he said, "When I was a child, I gave you this, but I had a child's mind. I did not fully understand all that I was doing. And now, as a man, more fully understanding the worth of this diamond, one more time, I want to give it to you." When I heard that, I said, "Lord, you know, when I was a little boy, I gave my heart to Jesus. And now, I'm a man. I didn't know all I was doing. I meant it. But one more time, I just want to give my life to You." Don't you feel that way sometimes? "That, Lord, because of Your mercies, I present myself a living sacrifice." And, when you do that, that's the first step in discovering the spiritual gift.

I want you to do it. You'll be so glad you did. There are others of you who've never been saved at all. You can't present yourself anything until you present yourself a sinner needing to be saved. And you say, "Lord Jesus, You died to save me; You promised to save me. I trust You to save me. And I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, if you will trust Him with a childlike faith, today He will save you. He will forgive every sin. He'll come into your life. He'll make you a new creature, and He'll take you, one day, home to heaven.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. And, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would you begin to pray that many here today will say an everlasting yes to Jesus Christ. And, if you want to be saved today, may I guide you in this prayer. Pray it like this: "Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. I am a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, and will receive judgment, unless I get saved. But, Lord, 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." Tell Him that: "I do right now. Lord Jesus, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me. I believe You are the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood. I believe that You were raised from the dead. I believe it, and I receive it. And now, begin to make me the person You want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

# Freedom Is Not Free

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: May 25, 1997**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 12:9, 17–18; 13:1–4**

*“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.”*

ROMANS 13:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. Is It Ever Right for a Nation to Go to War?
  - A. Human Government Is Ordained of God
  - B. Sometimes the Government Must Act for God in the Taking of Human Life
    1. Capital Punishment Is a Part of God’s Plan Because of the Love of God
    2. Capital Punishment Is a Part of God’s Plan for the Welfare of the Criminal
    3. Capital Punishment Is a Part of God’s Plan Because of the Holiness and Justice of God
  - C. The Principles of Just War
    1. The Cause Must Be Just
    2. The Intention of the War Must Be Noble
    3. War Must Be a Last Resort
    4. War Is to Be Limited
- II. Should We Always Obey the Government and Go to War?
- III. What Is Our Duty as God-Fearing Americans?
  - A. We Should Pray and Work for Peace
  - B. We Should Refuse to Trust in the Power of War
  - C. We Should Keep America Strong
  - D. We Should Pray for a Moral and Spiritual Revival
  - E. We Should Pray for the Kingdom of Heaven to Come

Conclusion

## Introduction

And I want us to think about those who, with their sacred honor and their red blood, died for me, and died for you, that we might be here. We enjoy freedom tonight that is not known in many places in the world. To stand up in a free society, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ, to assemble without fear of reprisal, without intimidation, without interrogation, and that is a blessing.

I want you to turn to the book of Romans, which has been called the “Constitution of

Christianity,” and I would like for you to turn to Romans chapter 13. And, actually, we’re going to look at a lot of scriptures tonight, and so, I want you to keep your Bibles there. And, if you don’t have a Bible in your hand, I will assume you have it memorized—and that will be all right; but, other than that, get a Bible. And, if you don’t have one with you, and don’t have it memorized, you might look on with a neighbor. And, sometimes, there will be a Bible there in the pew rack in front of you.

Now, war is a perplexing thing. It is a devastating thing. And what is the Bible answer to the problem of war? And what should our relationship be to those who have fought for us and those who are in the military now who will defend us, and those in times past have died for us? How are we going to get the answer? Well, you’re not going to get the answer from the doves, who refuse war. You’re not going to get the answer from the hawks, who desire war. Not from the owls, who philosophize about war. And not from the sparrows, who are afraid of war. We’re going to get the answer from the Word of God.

Now, think with me just a little bit—well, let’s just read, first of all, Romans chapter 13, verse 1: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers...”—now, when he’s talking about higher powers, the word is literally the constituted authorities. He’s talking about governmental authorities—“...for there is no power—that is, authority—but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God.” That is, it is God’s will, it is God’s purpose, that they be where they are. Therefore, “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” Now, the word damnation here means, “a judgment.” It does not imply that they’re going to hell—though they may be—but the inference here is that, if you stand against constituted governmental authority, which God has ordained, you will be judged for it. And he tells why in verse 3: “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—now he’s talking about the magistrate, the governor, the president, the mayor, or the policeman, or the judge, or whomever he may be—for he is the minister of God—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—underscore that—he beareth not the sword in vain: for he—that is, the governmental authority—he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Therefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath—that is, because you’ll get in trouble if you don’t—but for conscience sake—that is, the Lord on the inside is telling you to do it. And for this cause pay ye tribute also...—and the word tribute here means, alas and alack, “taxes”—for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, continuing continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.”

Now, war is a terrible plague. As a matter of fact, the Bible speaks here, in verse 3, of “evil doers.” And, we must disabuse ourselves of the idea that somehow we can just all smile and forget about war.

I can remember when the flower children and the hippies were saying, “What if we gave a war, and nobody showed up?” That just sounds so wonderful, but I want to guarantee you somebody will show up. And you may not like the one who shows up.

Now, a Christian—a Christian—by nature, is a peacemaker. And the Bible exhorts us to pray for peace. The Bible exhorts us to seek peace. The Bible exhorts us to pursue peace. The Bible exhorts us to hope for peace. And the Lord Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers...” However, in the light of this, we must say that a person is absolutely, totally wrong, if he says that war is always wrong. It is not always wrong.

Now, there are those in the world who would like to bring us to what they call unilateral disarmament. That is, no matter what everybody else does, let’s just Americans lay down our arms, disarm ourselves, and then everybody else will see how kind and good we are, and they’ll lay down their arms. Well, the problem with that is it, it does not take into account human nature.

I traveled to Moscow and preached in Red Square on Easter some years ago. And God poured out His grace and His blessings. We saw great numbers saved, and we were able to speak on nationwide television in Russia. Shortly after that, I met with Dr. Bill Bright and some other Christian leaders, with some Russian leaders. We met with a Russian, a university professor, we met with a Russian naval captain, and we met with a Russian general. We met in a fine hotel there, and had a time of sharing. And this general had come to faith in Christ, and he was a new Christian. And Communism had imploded. It had been devastated. It fell in upon itself. And this man was talking very freely there. I could not believe my ears of the freedom that he had, as we were there in Moscow. One in our group asked the general this question: “General Curshing, tell us what affect the strategic defense initiative had on the failure of Communism—SDI, known as “Star Wars”? What effect did that have?” This general said, “It devastated us! It ruined us!” He said, “We were putting almost all of our GNP, our gross national product, into defense, into the military, into getting ready for war.” And, he said, “We told you that all of our missiles were defensive missiles.” And then, here’s what he said. He said, “Of course, we were lying. Of course, we were lying.” He’s saying, “When we said that we were not aggressive, that we did not have missiles that were aggressive missiles,” he said, “we were simply telling a lie.” And those who think that you can have unilateral disarmament—and, by the way, thank God for Ronald Reagan keeping America strong. And we enjoy what we’re enjoying today, the implosion of that Soviet thing that he called “an evil empire,” because he understood the nature of human

nature.

James chapter 4, verses 1 and 2: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?” War originates in the evil and depraved hearts of wicked men. Men, by nature, as we preached this morning, are wicked. Men, by nature, are rebellious. Men, by nature, are proud. Men, by nature, are selfish. Men, by nature, are violent. Men, by nature, are cruel. And, therefore, we have war. And the Lord Jesus said, “Till the end of time there will wars and rumors of war.”

War is spoken of as one of God’s judgment. In Ezekiel chapter 14, verse 21: “For thus saith the Lord GOD; How much more when I send my four sore judgments upon Jerusalem, the sword, and the famine, and the noisome beast, and the pestilence to cut it, to cut off from it man and beast?”

Now, it is foolish, it is wicked, to glorify war. It’s also foolish to ignore the wickedness in the hearts of men. The Bible teaches that there will be war right until the end of time. Jesus said in Matthew—by the way, the Lord Jesus Christ is our prophet, our King, and He is, as we’ve learned tonight singing about the Word of God, He is inerrant and infallible. And He said, in Matthew chapter 24, verses 6 and 7: “And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom...” The Lord said that it’s not going to, it’s not that society is going to get better and better. We’ll never come to the place where we can make the world safe from war. And a so-called New World Order is really a farce. Don’t get the idea that men somehow are going to get mellow and kinder. Second Timothy 3, verse 13, says this: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” The late, great Dr. Vance Havner said: “Society is like a chimpanzee with a blow torch in a room full of dynamite.” That’s where we are.

Now, that brings some real questions, some honest questions that thinking, good, godly, loving people have about war.

## **I. Is It Ever Right for a Nation to Go to War?**

Question number one: Is it ever right for a nation to go to war? Yes! Let me tell you why.

### **A. Human Government Is Ordained of God**

Human government is ordained of God.

Now, I just read that to you from Romans chapter 13. And he says, beginning in verse 1: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God.” Almighty God formed human government.

And the Bible tells us, in Daniel chapter 2, verse 21, that God “...removeth kings and

God setteth up kings...” Now, sometimes, these kings are not godly kings. For example, Nebuchadnezzar who rules over Babylon, the Bible teaches clearly that God made him king. Daniel chapter 2, verses 37 and 38: “Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.” And even wicked kings are raised up. Sometimes God will raise up a wicked ruler and let him go higher and higher and higher and higher and higher, and we say, “Why doesn’t God do something?” He will! He will!

Romans chapter 9, verse 17: “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” God brought Pharaoh up, that God might bring Pharaoh down. And, today, we’re still talking about what God did to Pharaoh and the Red Sea, do you remember? So don’t get all bent out of shape if you see a wicked ruler who seems to prosper in his way, and say, “Where is God?” God is on His throne. God is a God who sets up kings. God is a God who brings down kings. God is the God who ordains human government.

Even Pilate, who ordered Jesus crucified, was there by the will and the purpose of Almighty God. Pilate said to Jesus, “Don’t you know that I have power to crucify you or to release you?” And Jesus said to Pilate, in John chapter 19 and verse 11: “Thou couldest have no power against me, except it was given thee from above. Even you, Pilate—while it seems that I’m in your hands, you’re in God’s hands.”

#### **B. Sometimes the Government Must Act for God in the Taking of Human Life**

Now, God ordains government. And, sometimes, that government must act for God in the taking of human life. Now, notice verses 3 and 4 of our text: “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—now listen to this next phrase—for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

Now, you say, “Adrian, doesn’t the Bible say, ‘Thou shalt not kill?’” That is true. But it literally says, “Thou shalt do no murder.” All killing is not murder. All murder is killing, but all killing is not murder. God does not allow personal vengeance. God does not allow personal retaliation. But God does, for example, allow you to defend your family tonight, if you go home and somebody is breaking into your home.

Notice in Exodus chapter 22. You might want to put this down. Exodus chapter 22, verses 2 and 3: “If a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him.” That is, you’re not going to be killed because you killed somebody who is breaking into your house. But notice how balanced the Bible is. This is Exodus 22. Now, that’s verse 2, but now listen to verse 3: “But if the sun be risen

upon him, there shall no blood be shed for, there shall be blood shed for him; for he should make full restitution; if he have nothing, then shall he be sold for his theft.” What does that mean? It means that, if in the nighttime you hear somebody coming through a window—you don’t know who they are or what they have in mind, they might come in to kill you or rape your wife—if necessary, you may do him in. But if you go out in the daytime, and he’s out there hauling your lawnmower out of your garage, you have no right to take his life. The Bible says, “If the sun is up—you know what’s going on—it doesn’t mention the word lawnmower here, but—“If the sun be risen upon him, there shall blood be shed for him; for he should make full restitution...” And, by the way, one of the finest things we could do in modern criminology is to see that the criminal makes restitution. The government is God’s ordained ministry to bear the sword for him. God has delegated that to human government. And the Bible makes it very clear that capital punishment is of God. And, the bleeding hearts need to listen to this.

Genesis chapter 9 and verse 6 says it clearly. “That whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man.” Now, who is going to do that? Well, again, Romans 13, verse 4: “For he—the government—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 a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.”

Now, you say, “But, Pastor Rogers, I thought we were not supposed to take vengeance?” You got it right! We’re not supposed to. You’re in Romans chapter 13. Let me tell you something provocative and profound that follows Romans 12. Now, look in Romans 12, if you will, and see what God says in Romans 12, verse 17: “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” That is, if somebody does you evil, don’t do them evil back. “Recompense to no man evil for evil.” But you always be honest, and don’t be evil to someone else. “Provide things honest in the sight of all men.” Verse 18: “If it be possible—now notice that—if it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Now, sometimes you cannot. But, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance 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 upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Well, you say, “Pastor, what place, then, is there for war? What place is there for capital punishment?” He is talking here about an individual. He’s talking about you and your relationship to other people. He is saying that you are not to get even. If you take revenge into your own hands, you’re taking that which belongs to God. It would be the same as stealing money from the offering plate. “Revenge is mine; I will replay.” You

have no right to say that revenge is yours when revenge belongs to God. Now, God says, “I will repay.” Well, how does God repay? Just move on to chapter 13, and you’re going to find how God pays, in verse 4: “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...” God says, “Vengeance is mine.” How does God execute His vengeance? Through human government. It is very clear, very plain, that we, as individuals, are not to take retaliation. We’re not to become vigilantes, but we are to understand that God has ordained human government.

Now, capital punishment is in the plan of God. Why is capital punishment in the plan of God? And you say, “What does this have to do with war?” It’s all links together, and you need to understand this.

### **1. Capital Punishment Is a Part of God’s Plan Because of the Love of God**

Capital punishment is a part of the plan of God, because God so loves people. Capital punishment is rooted in the love and the mercy of Almighty God. You see—look, if you will, in Romans chapter 12 and verse 9—God says, “Let love be without dissimulation...” Do you know what the word dissimulation means? It means “hypocrisy.” It means, make sure that it is real love. “Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.” Not because God is love. Softness to the criminal is cruelty to the community. If you love sheep, you hate wolves. If you love people, you hate crime. As I said this morning, God is too good not to punish crime. You see, society is sick. And you cannot cure cancer by rubbing on salve. A course of non-surgery is suicidal. There are those who say that capital punishment is not a deterrent to murder. Frankly, if you’ll pardon me for saying this to you, that’s dumb! That is dumb! Henry the VIII once pardoned a murderer. Then the pardoned murderer murdered another person. Then he came back to Henry VIII and again asked for mercy. And here’s what King Henry said: “No, he killed the first man; I killed the second man. Friend, I will kill no more. He must be executed.” You see, there has to be an element of terror in the minds of criminals. Do you know what is wrong today? We have lost the element of terror in the minds of people. Look again in verse 3: “For rulers are not a terror to good works; they are a terror to evil works...”

I have a clipping. This is talking about an interview with a man named Junior Isaacs. He killed six people. This interview was taken while he was a prisoner in the Georgia State Prison. They convicted him of six murders. He claims to have killed fifteen, and said he had an ambition to kill one thousand. When this interview was taken, he was eligible for parole in forty-two years. Here’s what he said about the death penalty. This is a murderer himself. He said, “I believe in the death penalty to prevent people like me from killing. The death penalty always used to deter me because I knew I could die for murder. I’d walk into a place to stick it up, and I’d think twice about blowing that man

away. But when you know that you won't fry, and the worse you can get is life, and maybe parole later, why not get rid of the evidence? That's what I did. There's too much killing. And the only way to stop it is to bring back the death penalty. As long as killers know all they'll get is life, they'll keep on killing. And that includes me!" And then, he went on this interview, and he laughed about a time when he stood before a judge for an early offense, and the judge said, "Give me your word you'll go straight, and I'll set you free." "Imagine that," Isaacs sneered, "So I said, 'I promise, your honor,' and he smiled, and I thought, 'You dumb old \_\_\_\_\_,' and I can't give you the next word. "Promise me you'll be a good boy, and I'll set you free." "I promise, Your Honor." And this was a man who claims he's killed fifteen people. You see, there is no fear of God. A death penalty is a warning.

## **2. Capital Punishment Is a Part of God's Plan for the Welfare of the Criminal**

Now, I say that the Bible teaches capital punishment, because God is love. God teaches, the Bible teaches, capital punishment for the welfare of society, and also for the welfare of the criminal. Did you know the worse thing that could happen to criminals is to live in a society where's there's no restraint, where there's no fear to keep him from his crime? You see, this world is not the only place we're going to live. This world is a proving ground for eternity. And the idea that God punishes sin ought to help a man to get ready, you know, to shock him to get ready for eternity. Notice in verse 4: "For he is the minister of God, of God to thee for good..." Be afraid! What does that mean? It means that the worse thing that could happen would be to live without the fear of God. Now, you say, "But once you take his life, then the chance for him to repent is forever gone." That is true. But did you know that the man who is going to executed has a benefit that some of you may not have. He knows exactly when he's going to die. He knows when he's going to die.

What if you knew—what if you knew—that tomorrow night at this same time you'd be put to death? If you were ever going to get right with God, would you not get right with God? There are a lot of people who go out eternity in an automobile wreck who have the idea that, "One of these days, I'm going to get right with God." No. If a man, knowing that he has killed another individual, or a woman, knowing that she has killed another individual, if that individual, knowing that they're going to die, knowing that they're guilty, does not get right with God, then tell me, when on earth would they get right with God?

## **3. Capital Punishment Is a Part of God's Plan Because of the Holiness and Justice of God**

But here's the crowning thing—and we're going to get to the matter of war—because it's just an extrapolation of all of this. We've given you reasons: because God is love; for the welfare of society; for the welfare of the criminal. But here's the great reason:

because of the holiness and the justice of Almighty God. God is holy! God takes vengeance on sin, and God has retribution. Now, people say, “Well, what we need to do is to have punishment that is remedial.” All punishment is not meant to be remedial. Some of it is retributive. It is simply punishment because a person has done evil. Even the apostle Paul, when they arrested him, said, “If I have done something worthy of death, I refuse not to die.” In Acts chapter 25 and verse 11 he said that. He understood this principle. You say, “But what about Jesus? Did not Jesus loosen the law?” No. Jesus intensified it. I have an idea that if the Supreme Court could outlaw the concept of hell, they would. They would say that’s cruel and unusual punishment. Now, what I’m trying to say is that there is a government, and this government acts for God.

Now, let’s tighten the focus a little bit. Sometimes governments must go to war. Sometimes governments must use the sword in war. Pacifism is not more noble than war. You see, it’s wrong to refuse to oppose cruelty and tyranny and aggression and inhumanity. It wasn’t wrong to stand up against Adolph Hitler. Before he was finally stopped, he slaughtered millions of defenseless victims. It was not wrong to stand up against Saddam Hussein, who was gouging out the eyes of his victims, whose soldiers were raping and looting—the pillage, the poison gas. They were doing this, and many times, to their own people. He was endeavoring not only to create poisonous gas to use in warfare, but also to create an atomic weapon. If it is immoral to stop an enemy like Hitler, if it is immoral to stand against the Stalin, if it is immoral to stand against Saddam Hussein, then it would be wrong at any level.

Let me ask you this question: If I were to take a little child up here on the platform and begin to dismember that little child up here on this platform, would you just sit there or would you stop me? You’d stop me. Would you say, “No, I am kind. I am loving. I don’t believe in using force,” and you would allow me just up here with a cleaver or a baseball bat or whatever to brutalize a little child? If somebody were coming in the window to mutilate and rape your wife, would you stop her, if you could? You see, what I’m trying to say is that’s the reason we have a police force here in our city. Who would want to live in a city without a police force? As a matter of fact, you can see what happened recently in Albania when the military and the police force fell apart. You see, a local police force is but a small army. Did you know that the police force in New York City is bigger than the armies of some nations in the world? It’s a small army. And a drug bust, for example, is a war. There are evil people out there. And so, that is a war. So sometimes we have a little war. Somebody may be breaking into our house. Sometimes we have a bigger war. A police force moves in to break up the criminal activity. Sometimes we have a great big war where nation goes to war against nation.

### **C. The Principles of Just War**

What are the principles of a just war? And, by the way, the Bible calls Almighty God, “a

man of war.” In Exodus chapter 15, verse 3, when they came, when Pharaoh was drowned in the waters of the Red Sea, they sang the song of Moses and the Lamb, and they said, “Our God is a man of war.” And David said, in Psalm 144 and verse 1, “He teaches my hands to war, my fingers to fight, and my hands to war.” He was God’s warrior king. What are the principles of a just war?

### **1. The Cause Must Be Just**

Number one: The cause must be just. It is defensive. It is protective. It is not for selfish reasons. It’s not a war of aggrandizement. It’s not a war of aggression.

### **2. The Intention of the War Must Be Noble**

Number two: The intention of that war must be noble. It must be for peace, for freedom, for safety. The intention cannot be that we would be selfish or greedy.

### **3. War Must Be a Last Resort**

Number three: War must be a last resort. We never resort to war unless all other methods of redress have been reasonably exhausted. There must be a just cause. There must be a noble intention. There must be a spirit of reluctance to enter into war. That’s the reason that we read there in Romans 12, verse 18: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men...”

### **4. War Is to Be Limited**

And then, friend, the war is to be limited. It does no more than is necessary to carry out the purpose of that war and to re-establish peace.

## **II. Should We Always Obey the Government and Go to War?**

Now, that brings up another question: Shall we always go to war? If our government calls us to go to war, can we dodge the draft? Can we refuse to go to war? Should we always obey the government? No, we should not always obey the government. There may be a time when we would refuse to obey the government. “Well, when would that be?” That would be when the government itself directly commands us to do something that is in opposition to a command of God. Acts chapter 5 and verse 29: “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than man.”

I said that the powers that be are ordained of God. And the state has a divine authority that can only be resisted by divine authority. The law of God, therefore, takes precedent over the law of the state. But to oppose the state without the authority of God is a sin in itself. But if the state ever forbids what God commands, or commands what God forbids, then we must obey God rather than man. An example of this is Daniel, who served in the Babylonian government, a foreign government, and an ungodly pagan, heathen government. And he still served until they said to him, “Daniel, you may not pray.” And Daniel said, “I will pray, and I will not bow down to an idol.”

### **III. What Is Our Duty as God-Fearing Americans?**

Now, let me just wrap all of this up. What should be our duty as God-fearing Americans?

#### **A. We Should Pray and Work for Peace**

Number one: We should pray for and we should work for peace. The Bible tells us, in 2 Timothy 2, “We’re to pray for kings and for all that are in authority, that we might live quiet and peaceably lives.”

#### **B. We Should Refuse to Trust in the Power of War**

Number two: We should refuse—absolutely, totally refuse—to trust in our armament or in the power of war. Psalm 20, verse 7: “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” Proverbs 21, verse 31: “The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.” And one of the things that concerns me greatly is that God may have taken down the hedge around America because of the ungodliness of this nation.

#### **C. We Should Keep America Strong**

Next: we should keep America strong. Keep America strong. The Bible teaches that we are to prepare ourselves and to keep our nation strong. Is it an act of godliness to have strength? Absolutely! The longest era of peace that the world has ever known was called the Pax Romana, “The peace of Rome.” And the reason for that is that Rome was so strong. When Rome finally became decadent, and the young men were sitting in the sports stadiums, and the vandals were coming down from Germany in the north down into Italy, there went out a call for war. And do you know what the young men said? They said, “No, we will not go.” And Gibbons, who wrote “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,” said, in effect, “that Rome was not conquered from without; she decayed from within. And because of the internal weakness of her men, who would no longer fight, she fell.”

Years ago in Vietnam, a helicopter pilot went down. He was from New Hampshire. He gave his life for his country. He was buried. His parents had these words from John Stuart Mill put on his grave marker; on his tombstone these words written in the last century. I want you to listen to them. “War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded immoral unpatriotic feeling, which thinks nothing is worth a war, is worse. A man who has nothing which he cares more about than his own personal safety is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless he is made free and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself.” That’s one of the reasons that we’re here tonight—to thank God for some people who kept us free. And I rejoice that we can stand here. Now, we should never, ever rejoice in the downfall of a foe. Proverbs 24, verses 17 and 18: “Rejoice not when thy enemy falleth, and let not

thine heart be glad when he stumbleth; lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.”

#### **D. We Should Pray for a Moral and Spiritual Revival**

What else should we do? We must pray that this nation will have a moral and spiritual revival, because righteousness and peace are linked together. The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 14, verse 34: “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” Deuteronomy 32, verse 31: “For their rock is not as our own rock, or our rock; even our enemies themselves being judges.” What does that mean? It means that these people don’t have a rock to stand on like we have when we’re right with God.

#### **E. We Should Pray for the Kingdom of Heaven to Come**

What else should we do? We should pray for the kingdom of heaven to come. We’re not going to have war, the end of war, until Jesus, the Prince of Peace, comes. One day, “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as waters that cover the sea.” One day, “the meek will inherit the earth.” One day, “men will beat their swords into plowshares.” One day, “the lamb and the lion will lie down together.” One day, and very soon, our Lord is going to sound the trumpet. He’s going to call His own people home. The nationals will be called home. And then, our God will prepare for the war that will end all wars. First Timothy 6, verse 16: “Which in his times he shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords.”

### **Conclusion**

Now, I’ve said all that to say this: war is a terrible, a horrible thing. The sword cuts. People bleed and die. And in a war, good people on both sides are hurt. I pray God—I pray God—we’ll never know on American soil what the Japanese and those who lived in Europe and other places have known, as the bombs are falling. God has protected America, has He not? I thank God for those—many of you have loved ones who’ve died in war. In the last world war, some 22 million human beings gave up their lives. They died for us. We dare not—we will not—forget them.

Would you stand and bow your head. I want you, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, to thank God for America. I want you, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, to pray for a national revival. I want you, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, to remember and to give thanks for those who died for you.

# Knowing the Time

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** February 24, 1991

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 13

*“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”*

ROMANS 13:11

## Outline

Introduction

I. It Is Time to Wake Up

II. It Is Time to Get Up

A. It Is Later Than You Think

1. It Is Later in This Age Than You Think

2. It Is Later in Your Life Than You Think

3. It Is Later in the Day of Opportunity Than You Think

B. How Should We Then Live?

1. Our Partners Cannot Come First

2. Our Problems Cannot Come First

3. Our Pleasure Cannot Come First

4. Our Possessions Cannot Come First

5. This Present World Cannot Come First

III. It Is Time to Dress Up

Conclusion

## Introduction

Romans chapter 13. Say what time is it? I don't mean your time, I mean God's time.

What time is it on God's clock? The Bible says, *“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof”* (Romans 13:11–14). Many of us need to understand what time it is on God's clock. Now, let me tell you what time it is.

## I. It Is Time to Wake Up

First of all it is time, dear friend, to wake up. It is time to wake up. Look again in verse 11, the Bible says, "...it is high time to awake out of sleep..." I would to God that this church could wake up. I look out at the congregations that I get a chance to preach to every Sunday. Three times I get to stand up here and preach to a multitude of people. And, I think, "Oh my God, what would happen if Bellevue Baptist Church were to ever truly wake up?" We just have a handful of people who are really awake for the Lord Jesus Christ. The other folks just attend, and they think they do God a wild favor because they come on Sunday. They really do.

Do you know what Napoleon said when he looked at China? Napoleon saw the vast teeming millions in China, and Napoleon said, "There lies a sleeping giant, and let him sleep, because if he awakens, he will shake the world." I really believe the devil says that about the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. There lies a sleeping giant. And, I believe that this church is just that, a sleeping giant. We're asleep, and the reason that we're asleep is that so many of us have been chloroformed by the spirit of this age. We're bombarded on every side by all kinds of amusement, and you know what "amuse" means. "Muse" means "to think," the alpha prefix in front of it, "amuse," means "not to think". We're a generation that is amusing ourselves into oblivion.

We live in a day in which a "hero" is a sandwich, "Life" is a magazine, "Power" is a candy bar, "Joy" is a detergent, "My sin" is a perfume, a "Star" is somebody who is an actress been married three times, and "The real thing" is a soft drink. Those are the things that are in our minds, and we need to wake up.

One deacon thought he would impress his pastor, he said, "Pastor, when I come into church, what would be a good prayer for me to pray?" The pastor, knowing his way, said, "Why don't you try 'Now I lay me down to sleep?'" And, I think sometimes it's the pastor's fault. Too many sermons are like bedtime stories, lullabies.

God's alarm clock is going off around the world. Have you listened to the news lately? I mean, can you see the time in which we're living? If the Apostle Paul said in his day, "It is high time to wake up," how much more for us? My dear friend, you don't have to have eyes to see that we are living in the middle of moral, and spiritual, and social, and political darkness, but we need not to sleep in the night.

The maps of the world are changing overnight, and nations are being shuffled like checkers on a checkerboard, and I believe that the stage is being set. I believe it with all of my heart, for the final act in the drama of the ages. Don't you feel that way? I mean, there's an ominous sense that we're living in the end time. But, the sad thing is that so many of our churches, like ol' Samson, have gone to sleep in the lap of Delilah. And, then because we are so powerless when we do rise up to shake ourselves, nothing happens because the Spirit of the Lord has departed.

## **II. It Is Time to Get Up**

What time is it? Friend, it is time to wake up. Wake up. Don't let these days pass. It is high time to wake up. What time is it? My dear friend, listen, it is not only time to wake up, it is time to get up. Look again at the Scripture, the Bible says, "And, that knowing the time, now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day." That is, "Get up, and go to work." "Walk honestly as in the day."

Do you know another problem that we have? We come to church and listen to these choirs. We come to church and listen to our Sunday school teachers. We come to church and listen to the pastor, and he stirs us, and he wakes us up, but the problem is when we wake up, we don't get up. We just roll over in bed, yawn in the face of God, and go back to sleep until the next message. Now, the Bible says here that, "The night is far spent, and the day is at hand."

### **A. It Is Later Than You Think**

What time is it? Oh, brothers and sisters, listen to this preacher tonight, it is later than you think it is.

#### **1. It Is Later in This Age Than You Think**

It is later in this age than you think. The sands of time are running low. I believe with all of my heart we're living in the closing shadows of this dispensation. The stage is set for Christ to come for His own. I mean, if you were to look at the world situation today, see what is happening in the Middle East, everything that is happening, everything that is happening is fitting right into the sockets of God's Word.

Who would have thought that Russia, Soviet Russia, would show herself as the peacemaker in the Middle East? Who would have dreamed? Who would have dreamed that the United States of America would have a contingency there in the Middle East, of such dramatic conditions and proportions? Who would have dreamed that Israel would be back in the land, after eighteen centuries, back in her land? Who would have dreamed that the United States of Europe is coming together as a coalition? Who would have dreamed that the Euphrates River would one more time be the focal point when the Bible speaks of the Euphrates being dried up, and the way being prepared for the kings of the East and that great battle of Armageddon? Friend, it is later in this age than you think. It may be this week that our Lord Jesus would come for His own. You say, "You're an alarmist." I'm a realist, and I know the Word of God.

#### **2. It Is Later in Your Life Than You Think**

My friend, I want to tell you not only is it later in this age than you may think, but it is later in your life than you may think. Whether Jesus is coming, I'm telling you you're

going. You're going mister. How many in this congregation are over fifty? Let me see your hands. Look around. I have my hand up too. Folks, you ain't got long. You haven't got long. Just a few more days and you're going home. Whether Jesus comes or you die, you're going home. You're not going to beat the system. Oh, some of you may live to be eighty-five, ninety, God bless you, but most of you won't. Most of you won't. Just a few more days and you are going home. God teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. I've been preaching long enough now, I can look and I can see the end out there somewhere. And, I'm beginning to say, "How many years do I have?" How many months do I have? How many weeks do I have? How many hours do I have to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ?

### **3. It Is Later in the Day of Opportunity Than You Think**

My dear friend, it is later in the age than you think. It is later in your life than you think. It is later in the day of opportunity than you may think. God is giving us a window, I don't know how long that window will be open. The Lord Jesus said, "*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). Friend, it's wonderful to be in this spacious auditorium. It's wonderful for me to be able to stand up here tonight without fear of some police state, some Gestapo coming to close me down. May I tell you the noose is tightening? May I tell you, my dear friend, that it will not always be this way? Not even in America. You say, "You're an alarmist." No I'm not. I am telling you from Bible prophecy, the Bible says, "*...the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service*" (John 16:2). We will be the troublemakers in this world. There are doors of opportunity. There are missionary doors that are open now that may never be open again. It is later in the day of opportunity than you may ever dream. Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

My dear friend, let me tell you something, Heaven is going to be wonderful. I'm looking forward to going to Heaven. I really am. As a matter of fact, I'm getting just a little homesick for Heaven. If it weren't for my responsibilities here, and my family here, I just think I'd like to step on over some day. And, it's not that I'm grim, or not that I don't enjoy life, I just want to go to Heaven. I really do. I'm going to tell you one thing. You listen to me. There's one thing you won't do in Heaven, and that's win souls. Have you ever thought about it? You'll praise in Heaven. You'll serve in Heaven. But, as far as I can tell, you won't win any souls in Heaven, because the only people who are going to have are people already saved. There won't need to be won. Have you ever thought about it? For all eternity, forever and ever, and ever, and ever all of the soul winning you are going to do, you're going to do in a few years. It'll be over. Never again. Never again. Will you have an opportunity to win souls?

Must I go in empty-handed? Must I need my Savior so, without one soul with which

to greet Him? Must I empty-handed go? A member of this church lay dying, he said, "Pastor, come to see me." I went to see him. I went in that back bedroom, and we sat, and talked, and prayed. And, then he looked at me, and he was a long time member of this church, a respected member. He said, "Pastor, I am not afraid to die. I know Jesus Christ. I know that I'm saved. I know that I'm going to Heaven. I am not afraid to die." But, he said, "Pastor, I am ashamed to die, ashamed to die. Ashamed to meet my Savior." He said, "Pastor, I am not a soul-winner. I've never won anybody to Jesus Christ." One of the most pathetic things I've ever heard. This man was a knowledgeable man. This man was a personable man. This man was a man with ability, not afraid to die, but a man ashamed to die.

What time is it? You listen to this, Pastor. It's time for you to wake up, and it's time for you to get up, and get at it. The day is spent, the night is spent, the day's at hand. We need to get up and shake ourselves and go about our master's business. My friend, life is too short, eternity is too long, souls are too precious, and the gospel is too wonderful for us to merely take it easy. We need to be living and keeping with the urgency and the emergency of the hour.

With that in mind, I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 7 for just a moment. Look, if you will, in verse 29. The Apostle Paul, who wrote Romans is saying the same thing in 1 Corinthians 7. "*But this I say, brethren, the time is short...*" He's saying the same thing. Do you see it? 1 Corinthians chapter 7 and verse 29: "But this I say, brethren, the time is short."

## **B. How Should We Then Live?**

Now, if that is true, how are we to be living? Well look at it. This passage tells us how we are to be living.

### **1. Our Partners Cannot Come First**

And, he says in verse 29 that our partners cannot come first. He says, "*it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none*" (1 Corinthians 7:29).

Now, what on earth does that mean? Does that mean I can tell Joyce, "Joyce, the time is short, hit the road, I don't want to stay married to you any more." No, that isn't what it means. I'll tell you what it does mean. It means, my dear friend, in keeping with the urgency and the emergency, of these days, even my precious wife, whom I would die for, cannot be first. She cannot be first. Jesus Christ must be first. And, by the way, Joyce knows she's not first in my life, and she's glad she's not. She knows I love her so much more than I could ever love her if I made her first. By loving Jesus Christ most, I love her in a way that I could never love her without Jesus Christ. And, any woman with a modicum of intelligence would always be glad to be second place with Jesus Christ, because she will receive more love from her husband than she could any other way that

way. But, I'm still telling you folks, I'm still telling you that our partners cannot come first. That's what He's saying.

## **2. Our Problems Cannot Come First**

And, He's saying, not only can our partners not come first, our problems can't come first. Look, if you will in verse 30, "*And they that weep, as though they wept not...*" You say, "Brother Rogers, I've got problems, I've got sorrows, I've got heartaches, I've got disappointments." Well, what are you going to do? Sit around and lick your wounds? No. Get busy for Jesus Christ. Time is too short to spend it with your sorrows.

## **3. Our Pleasure Cannot Come First**

Your partner can't come first and your problems can't come first, and your pleasures can't come first. Look, if you will also, in verse 30, "*and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not...*" Now, this is not a time for trivialities, the Bible is not against recreation. The Bible is not against relaxation. Recreation and fun have their place. But, if you were to stand around the average group of Christians, you would not think the world is on fire. You would not believe that the situation is as it really is. We are a pleasure mad society. Our pleasures can't come first.

I heard somewhere of a chaplain who asked some boys about to go into battle, as our boys have gone into battle the last few days. As they were getting ready to go into battle, he said this, "Do you want me to conduct religious services, or do you want me just to tell you a good story." One of the boys said, "If you feel that way about it, you might as well just tell us a good story." He was right.

## **4. Our Possessions Cannot Come First**

Oh my friend, listen, this thing must consume us. Our partners, as precious as they may be, cannot come first. Our problems, as deep as they may be, cannot come first. Our pleasures, as thrilling as they may be, cannot come first. Our possessions cannot come first. Look in verse 30 again he says, "*and they that buy, as though they possessed not*" (1 Corinthians 7:30). Has this world got a hold on you? I mean, are you laying up treasure for the last days, while the world is going to Hell? Did you know that Americans spend as much on chewing gum in a year as they spent on world missions? On chewing gum.

Oh, I'll tell you something even more amazing. Americans spend more in fifty-two days on dog food than they spend in a year for world missions. More in fifty-two days on dog food, I'm not against feeding Rover. But, where, my dear friend, are the priorities of Americans? Do you know what most Americans are trying to do, including your pastor? Lose weight. How many of you here are trying to lose weight? Come on. Look at that. Most of us except for you, hateful skinny. I read a statistic the other day, for every pound overweight that you are, in a month, you have to spend a dollar and a half for

groceries to feed that pound. That's right. That's a crazy statistic, but somebody worked it out. It cost you that much more for groceries to take care of that pound, to nourish that pound of overweight.

But, the sad thing about it is, that dollar and a half that you're spending per pound is over more than ninety percent of people are giving to foreign missions. Our possessions can't come first. I mean, do you really believe that souls are being lost without Christ, without hope, and God has blessed us so much? And, rather than taking what God has given us, and give it back, we say, "I want to hoard it up, I want to store it, I want to can all I get, and save it for a rainy day." My friend, listen, God wants that in circulation.

Sure the Bible teaches retirement, or at least laying up something for your old age. I don't think a Christian ever retires from serving Jesus. And, when he quits his job, that just give him more time to serve Jesus. But, you see, if you're just hoarding all that up, what you're saying is "My security is there." Oh, my dear friend, don't put your security there, put your security in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, get that money, get that stuff working for souls to bring people to Jesus Christ. God knows that you need to set aside some. God knows that a good man leaves an inheritance to his children. Friend, we need to understand that there's a gospel out there that needs to be told. There's a message, our possessions cannot come first.

### **5. This Present World Cannot Come First**

This present world cannot come first. Look, if you will, in verse 31, "*And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away*" (1 Corinthians 7:31). The Bible says, "*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world...*" (1 John 2:15). And, yet the Bible says "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...*" (John 3:16). Is there any contradiction in those things? Not at all. Dear friend, if you love the world as God loves the world, you wouldn't love the world as you ought not to love the world. That's what he's saying. Use this world. You have to eat, you have to sleep, you have to have recreation. You need a house. You need a car. Yes. But, don't let these things get on your shoulders. What is he saying? He is saying, wake up. He's saying, get up.

### **III. It Is Time to Dress Up**

One last thing. He's saying not only wake up, and not only get up, but he's saying dress up. Look, again in verse 14, of this same chapter now, we're in Romans chapter 13, look in verse 14, if you will, of this chapter. And, he says this. He says, "But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ" you are to be dressed in the Lord Jesus. Wake up, get up, dress up. "...put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof."

Now, my dear friend, what are you going to put on, when you put on the Lord Jesus

Christ? Look in verse 12, “let us therefore cast off the works of darkness”—that’s the bed clothes—“and let us put on the armour of light”—And, then in verse 14—“ put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ...” Jesus Christ is your armor. As you go out tomorrow, you are to be wearing armor. And, that armor is Jesus Christ. You go out into this wicked world wearing the Lord Jesus Christ. Wear Christ like a suit of clothes.

Remember there in Ephesians chapter 6, where the Bible says, “*Put on the whole armour of God...*” (Ephesians 6:11)? It says, for example put on “...*girt about with truth...*” put “...*on the breastplate of righteousness...*” (Ephesians 6:14). “...*the helmet of salvation...*” (Ephesians 6:17). Our shoes, “*And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace*” (Ephesians 6:15). All of these are just a picture of Jesus.

Christ is our righteousness, Christ is our salvation, Christ is our peace, Christ is the truth. When you put on the armor, you’re putting on the Lord Jesus Christ, every morning, put on the Lord Jesus. As a matter of fact, I just wake up, I mean, I literally go through the steps. I say, “Now, Lord, I’m putting on the truth.” And, I search my life, “Adrian, is there a lie in your life? Adrian, are you believing a lie? Adrian, are you committed to the truth? Adrian, do you tell the truth? Do you trust the truth? And, I put on the truth.” And, then I go on, I say, “Now, I put on the breastplate of righteousness.” And, I look, Lord Jesus, “Is there any sin in my life? Anything? Big or small, the sin of the flesh a sin of the Spirit? A sin of omission, a sin commission?” I confess every known sin, put on the breastplate of righteousness. Put on the gospel of peace on my feet. “Lord Jesus is there anything I’m worried about. Lord are you my peace? And, Lord Jesus am I resting on you? Do I just put on the shoes of peace because of the stones and briars?” Just wake up, get up, and put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

My dear friend, when are you dressed up in His righteousness? And, above your sorrows is the Lord Jesus Christ. Around your tears, will be the Lord Jesus Christ. Over your aches and pains will be the Lord Jesus Christ. To cover your failure and your shame, will be the Lord Jesus Christ. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Friend, I don’t know what’s going to happen. I can tell you I’ll be up probably past midnight watching the news. I’m so fascinated by what’s happening. I want to know. I’ll tell you one thing, my dear friend, I don’t know what’s ahead, but I know who’s ahead. I know that. And, I’m not worried about it, as to the ultimate. I know the Lord Jesus was born on time, He died on time, and He’s coming on time. I believe that with all of my heart. He may seem slow, but He’s never late. He was here before there was anything to fear, and He’ll be here after everything we feared was gone. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, having said all of that. This is our week for world missions. I spoke to you this morning on *Mission Impossible*, that we are to equal and exceed the work of the Lord Jesus. These days in which we’re living are such vital, vital days. As a young preacher, I went to an evangelism conference in Jacksonville, Florida. I heard a dear old man

preach, his name was Charlie Howard. He made a statement that I have never gotten out of my soul. Oh Charlie Howard, professor at Louis Creek Bible School, said, with deep pathos and emotion, he said, "I had rather be Peter, James, and John asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane than to be a Christian in these pregnant times in which we live."

## **Conclusion**

What time is it? It's high time to wake up. What are you going to do with your life? When I was in seminary, I prayed, "Lord Jesus, what do you want me to do?" Before God ever called me into the ministry, I said, "Lord I'll do whatever you want me to do." I had no idea that God would want me to preach. My dad was not a preacher. My dad and I were saved the same night. I didn't have uncles and brothers in the ministry. I wasn't given to public speaking. I wasn't afraid of much that moved on a football field, but when a man called on me to pray in Sunday school class, I just said, "I'm sorry, I can't do it. Excuse me." It embarrassed him, and it embarrassed me.

I didn't want to speak in public. I had no idea that I could even speak in public. I didn't think that God would call me to be a preacher, pastor, but I said, "Lord, I'll do anything you want me to." And, as it were, I signed my name in the bottom of a page and said, "Lord, you fill it in." And, I don't even know how the germ got into my heart. But, somehow, somewhere, there came inkling in this inner sanctum of my being that God might want me to preach His glorious gospel. I never fought the call to preach, these guys talk about I surrendered to preach. I say, "Boy, boy, hot dog." I'm so glad God called me to preach.

# The Christian and War

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 16, 2003**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 13:1–4**

*“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.”*

ROMANS 13:3

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Terrifying Plague of War
- II. The Timeless Problem of War
- III. The Troubling Perplexities of War
  - A. Human Government Is Ordained of God
  - B. Sometimes Government Must Act for God in Taking Human Life
- IV. The Tested Principles of War
  - A. The Cause Must Be Just
  - B. The Intention Must Be Noble
  - C. War Must Be the Last Resort
  - D. War Must Have Limited Objectives
  - E. A Just War Will Use Limited Means

Conclusion

- A. We Should Pray and Work for Peace
- B. We Should Keep America Strong
- C. We Should Refuse to Trust in Armaments and the Power of War
- D. We Should Never Rejoice at the Downfall of a Foe
- E. We Should Remember That It Is Our Duty to Endeavor to Bring This Nation to Righteousness and Peace Through Jesus Christ
- F. We Should Do All That We Can Do to Bring Souls to Faith in Jesus Christ
- G. We Should Pray for God’s Kingdom to Come
- H. We Should Give Honor to and Pray for Our National Leaders

Conclusion

## Introduction

Well, these are crisis days in which we’re living. The message tonight is entitled, “The Christian and War.”

Would you be finding Romans chapter 13, and, when you’ve found it, look up here. And I want to ask this question: what is the Bible position? What is the Christian position concerning war? Where are we going to get the answers? Are we going to get the

answer from the pacifists, who believe there should be no war whatsoever? Are we going to get the answer from a conscientious objector? Conscientious he may be, but he refuses to go to war. Are we going to get the answers from those whose hearts ache when they think of the pain of sending a son, a daughter, into harm's way? Or are we going to get the answer from those who want war, the warmongers, those who think, in a twisted way, that perhaps they will somehow profit from a war? Where will we get the answer? We're not going to get it from the doves, who refuse war. We're not going to get it from the hawks, who desire war. We're not going to get it from the owls, who philosophize about war. We're not going to get the answer from the sparrows, who are afraid of war. Our answer must come from the Word of God. And so, I've put our thoughts tonight under four categories.

## **I. The Terrifying Plague of War**

Category number one is the terrifying plague of war—the terrifying plague of war. Romans 13:3: “For rulers are not a terror...”—underscore the word terror—“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou, then, not be afraid”—underscore the word afraid—“of the power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.” There is a certain terrifying aspect to war. War is, indeed, a plague. No one should love war. No one should desire war. No one should glorify war. The only person who would do that is either insane or evil. A Christian, by nature, is a peacemaker. The Bible exhorts us to pray for peace, to seek peace, to pursue peace, to hope for peace, and our Savior said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

Having said that, there are those, however, who declare that war is always wrong, and America should never go to war. They would like to bring us to unilateral disarmament, have us destroy all of our arms. I submit to you, that is insanity, and that would increase, rather than decrease, the threat of war. People who believe that America should lay down her arms and unilaterally disarm may have warm hearts, but I can tell you they have soft heads. They don't understand the depravity of human hearts.

Where do wars come from? Well, James tells us in the inspired Word of God. James chapter 4, verses 1 and 2—he asks and answers this question: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain; ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not.” People who know how to fight rather than how to pray, people who have inordinate, unsatisfied desires, who lust after what belongs to other people. These are the reasons for war.

All war originates in the evil hearts of men. Men, by nature, are wicked. Men, by nature, are rebellious. Men, by nature, are proud and selfish. And, therefore, war is an unpleasant task. While it is foolish and wicked to glorify war, it is also foolish to ignore

the wickedness in human hearts. War comes because we live in a world that is plagued with wicked men and women. We might as well admit it.

## **II. The Timeless Problem of War**

Now, I want to move to a second thought. I want us to think, not only of the terrifying plague of war that roots out of the wickedness and evil in human hearts, but I want us to think about the timeless problem of war. War has been with us, and will be with us, till the end of time. Now, our text here in Romans chapter 13 and verse 3 speaks of this timeless problem: “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.” Now, we have evil with us always, and mankind is not getting better; mankind is getting worse. And our Prophet and King, the Lord Jesus Christ, said that wars will be with us to the end of the age. Now, people may prate about a war to end all wars, but there will be no war to end all wars until that last, great battle of Armageddon.

I remind you of what our Lord said in Matthew chapter 24, verses 6 and 7. Jesus, forecasting the course of time before He came, said, “And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that ye be not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.” Among the things that are coming to mankind are wars, and Jesus said, right on through to the end of time. Society is not getting better, and we’re never going to have a war that will make the world safe from war. So-called new world order is only a farce, and time will prove it to be so. Second Timothy clearly tells us—chapter 3, verse 13: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” Now, you’re headed for disappointment, if you think somehow we’re going to bring in, usher in, utopia, and you’re headed for double disappointment if you think the United Nations is going to do it. “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” Education is not the answer. The more we learn, the deeper we sink. Our politicians are not nearly as smart as our bombs. Dr. Vance Havner said that civilization is like a chimpanzee with a blowtorch in a room full of dynamite. That’s the way that we live. And so, we have this timeless problem of war, because men get worse and worse, not better and better, and war comes out of evil hearts.

## **III. The Troubling Perplexities of War**

That brings me to the third category of things I want to talk about tonight—and that is the troubling perplexities of war. Read again in God’s Word in Romans 13, beginning in verse 1: “Let...”—he tells us what to do—“Let every soul be subject—that is, submit to—the higher powers”—now, when he says “higher powers” here, he’s referring to governmental authorities—“for there is no power—that is, no authority—but of God; and

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.” Now, the word damnation, as it is used here, does not infer that they’re going to hell, though they may. The word is simply a generic word that means judgment. You’re going to receive judgment.

Now, I want to narrow the focus a little bit, and ask the question, the perplexing question, the question that America and the nations are facing right now: Is it ever right for a nation to go to war? I want to give you some principles to underlie that, to help answer that question.

### A. **Human Government Is Ordained of God**

Number one: You need to clearly understand that human government is ordained of God. Now, look again: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.” Well, you say, “Pastor Rogers, certainly, if you have a good government, that good government is ordained of God.” Friend, all government is ordained of God. Now, put these scriptures down—Daniel chapter 2, verse 21. Here’s what God said through the prophet Daniel, speaking of Himself, or Daniel speaking of God: “He changeth the times and seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings.” It is God who removed kings. It is God who puts kings in their place.

An ancient ruler of Babylon was King Nebuchadnezzar. How did King Nebuchadnezzar get to be the king? By the divine will. Daniel chapter 2, verses 37 and 38. Daniel, by divine inspiration, said to King Nebuchadnezzar, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all.” Now, God did that. God gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom.

Old Pharaoh was a wicked king, but God made him a king. Put in your margin Romans chapter 9 and verse 17: “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” And he was wicked, but God raised him up to judge him.

What does that say about Saddam Hussein? Has God given him his kingdom? Yes. There’s no power, but of God. Does God approve of it? Absolutely not, no more than He approved of Pharaoh’s wicked kingdom. Pilate, who adjudicated Jesus worthy of crucifixion, at least tried to wash his hands of the crucifixion of Jesus and allowed it to take place, who was a pussyfooting politician, who allowed what buttered his bread to determine his conduct, yet Pilate’s power and authority came from God. You may not be

able to understand it, but Jesus did. John chapter 19 and verse 11—Jesus is speaking to Pilate: “Jesus answered, Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above.” “Pilate, you’re boasting about your power to release me, or crucify me. You don’t have any power, except that which God allowed you to have.” Now, put this in your heart and in your mind: human government, whether it be good or bad, is from God. Whether it comes as a judgment upon people or a blessing to people, God gives us the kind of government that we deserve.

### **B. Sometimes Government Must Act for God in Taking Human Life**

Now, the second thing. We’re talking about perplexities now. All government is from God. Sometimes government must act for God in bearing the sword and taking human life. Now, our Scripture here speaks of a sword. A sword is an instrument of death. Look in Romans 13, verse 4: “For he—the magistrate—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 a minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.” That is, sometimes a government acts for God. The magistrate is a minister of God. The sword is the tool of God.

Now, I want you to understand that all killing is not murder. Every so often, you’ll see the peace demonstrations and people will be holding up a placard. Most of them don’t know the Bible and don’t believe the Bible, but they’ll say, “Thou Shalt Not Kill.” But the Bible says, in Exodus chapter 20, verse 13, “Thou shalt not kill.” That’s one of the Ten Commandments. The word kill there means murder. Thou shalt do no murder. God does not allow personal vengeance or retaliation, even if somebody has done you wrong, but God does allow you to defend yourself and your family and your homes, even if someone’s life is taken while you are defending your property and your loved ones. Exodus chapter 22, verses 2 and 3—and write these scriptures down; here’s what God says: “If a thief be found breaking up—that is, breaking into your house, or forced entry—and be smitten that he die—that if he’s killed while he’s breaking into your house—there shall no blood be shed for him. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him—that is, if it’s nighttime, and you don’t know what’s about to happen, and he’s killed breaking into your house, God holds you innocent. But if it’s in the daylight, and you understand, and his life can be spared, there shall be blood shed for him—for he should make full restitution: if he have nothing, then he shall be sold for his theft”—he’ll be put into debtor’s prison. The point here is very clear, however. That if you’re at home, at night, with your family, your wife, and your babies, and someone comes breaking into your house, you have the right to defend them. Now, all murder is killing, but all killing is not murder. God has ordained human government to bear the sword for Him.

Now, the Bible teaches capital punishment. Now, I know we have some people

today who think that it's unchristian to believe in capital punishment. May I tell you it is both Christian and biblical to believe in capital punishment. Genesis chapter 9 and verse 6: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man." Now, friend, that's black print on white paper. Again, in Romans chapter 13, verse 4, the governmental authority bears the sword. The Bible teaches capital punishment. Put this verse down—Exodus chapter 21, verse 12: "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall surely be put to death." "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall surely be put to death." Now, that's a command of God. And the God who gives life has the right to take life. Well, how does He do it? Through ordained government. The ordained government is the minister of God to execute wrath. Somebody says, "This is cruel." It is not cruel. The coddling of the murderer is cruelty to the community.

Listen, friend. Don't think that you're wiser than God. Don't think that you're more loving than God. Don't think that you're more merciful than God Himself. Henry VIII once pardoned a murderer. The murderer, released, went out and killed another man. They came to Henry VIII and asked him to pardon the man again. Henry VIII said, "I will not do it. He killed the first man; I killed the second man. But neither of us will kill anymore. He'll be put to death." The Bible clearly, plainly says, "He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall surely be put to death." Now, some have the idea that God is too good to punish criminals. They've got it backward. God is too good not to punish criminals. God is a righteous God, and God is a holy God. And, by the way, did you know that the Lord Jesus Christ suffered capital punishment? He died on the cross at the hands of God. It pleased the Lord to bruise him, because He took the sinner's place, and He took the capital punishment that I deserve and that you deserve. Sometimes, therefore, if a government is ordained of God, and the government must bear the sword, then it follows, as night follows day, that the government must sometimes go to war. He must use that sword. Pacifism is not always more noble than war.

May I ask you a question? Is it wrong to oppose cruelty? Is it wrong to oppose tyranny? Is it wrong to oppose aggression? Is it wrong to oppose inhumanity? Was it wrong to stand up against Adolf Hitler? Before he was stopped, he slaughtered millions of defenseless victims. Was it wrong to stand against Hitler? What about Saddam Hussein? What about a man who has gouged out the eyes of thousands, who has allowed the rape and encouraged the rape of innocent women, the looting, the pillage, and the poisoning by gas of his own people? What about a man who has developed biological warfare of horrific proportions? What about a man who is endeavoring, has endeavored, to create an atomic bomb that he might use in his aggrandizement? Now, friend, is it wrong for a nation to stand against national wickedness? Then, if that is wrong for a nation to do it, correspondingly, it would be wrong at any level. If you were

walking down the street and saw some bully boys picking on a 2-year-old child, kicking that child, abusing that child, would you step in, or would you walk on by and let the child be abused? If someone broke into your house to rape your wife or to abuse your children, would you walk away? Would you be a pacifist, or would you rise up to defend your family? Would you want to live in a city without a police force? It's time somebody said a good word for the policemen, by the way, who protect us. Who would want to live in a city, a major city, without a police force? Why are they here? Romans 13, verse 3: "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—the policeman, we could say here—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, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil."

Now, the Bible says, in Exodus 15, verse 3: "The Lord is a man of war; the Lord is his name." The Bible says, in Psalm 144, verse 1: "Blessed be the Lord, my strength, who teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight." If you don't believe in war, you don't believe in a police force, because a police force is but a small army. As a matter of fact, the New York City police force has a bigger army than some nations in the world today. They are there to restrain evil, and you would not want to live in a city without it.

Augustine said this—and I clipped this, recently. Augustine, of course, who was one of the fathers of the church, said, "One thing often forgotten in discussions of just war is why we fight these wars. It is not out of desire for revenge, or even a desire to punish wrongdoers. Rather, the Christian wields in sword in fulfillment of the command to love our neighbors, because we are protecting the innocent from the aggressor." So war is not the antithesis of love. Sometimes, it is an expression of love.

#### **IV. The Tested Principles of War**

Now, there are some perplexities, and all of us say we hate war, and we should. All of us seek peace, and we should. But let me move to the fourth, and final, thing, tonight, and talk for just a moment about the tested principles of war.

What are the tested principles of war? These have been worked out by wise people, good people, good rulers, wise rulers. Again, look, if you will, in Romans chapter 13 and verse 3: "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." Now, how can rulers be a terror to evil? I want to mention some principles of just war. These are not original with me. These have come from theologians and godly people down through the centuries, but let me mention five things, at least.

##### **A. The Cause Must Be Just**

Number one: The cause must be just. It must be for defensive or protective reasons;

never for self-aggrandizement or imperialism. Always, a just war is for defensive and protective reasons.

#### **B. The Intention Must Be Noble**

Number two: The intention must be noble. What is the intention? Peace, freedom, and safety. It cannot be for selfish or greedy reasons, or even for revenge.

#### **C. War Must Be the Last Resort**

Thirdly: War must always be the last resort after all other methods of regress have been reasonably exhausted. There comes a time when war is the last resort.

#### **D. War Must Have Limited Objectives**

Four: War must have limited objectives: deliverance, freedom, specific targets; not total devastation.

#### **E. A Just War Will Use Limited Means**

Fifthly: A just war will use limited means. Now, John MacArthur said this: “Our use of force must be limited to our objectives. It would not be honorable to wipe out a civilian population to put down an evil ruler, or to use weapons that inflict wanton death and devastation, when conventional and tactical weapons would accomplish the needed goal.” That’s just another way of saying we use limited means. Because we have the power to devastate does not mean that we will devastate.

Well, someone says, “But, Pastor, we’re told in the Bible to love our enemies.” Indeed, we are to love our enemies. Joyce and I prayed this morning for the people of Iraq. We prayed for Saddam Hussein, as we prayed for President George Bush. We’re to love our enemies, but doing what is right and coming against an aggressor is not antithetical to love. A judge who sits on the bench to rule over a courtroom to mete our sentences, does that judge have to be unloving to do that? We have some godly judges who are members of our church. Or, a policeman who patrols the streets or apprehends criminals sometimes must draw his weapon and fire. Does that mean that he’s an unloving policeman? A soldier who goes to war, like some of the young men and ladies in this congregation, does that mean that they are filled with hate because they’re doing their job? You say, “But the Bible says we’re not to take personal revenge.” That is right. We are not to take personal revenge.

Now, I want to clear something up here, and I want to slow down here a moment. If you have your Bibles, you’re there in Romans chapter 13, now, go back to Romans chapter 12, and let’s get a running start on Romans 13. Romans chapter 12 gives us a command. Listen to it carefully: “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Do you see that? Your first desire is not war; it is peace. “If it be possible...” What is the inference? It is not always possible. “If it be possible...” Now,

notice in verse 19: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves...”—you are never to go out to take revenge. You are never to appoint yourself as a vigilante—“avenge not yourselves, but rather, give place unto wrath”—that is, don’t take this into your own hands. Step back—“for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” God says, “You leave that to me; I’ll take care of it.” “Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap of coals on his head. Be not overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” Now, that’s as far as some people read. And some people will say, “There it is. There it is. The Bible teaches that we’ve to be pacifists.” Friend, this is talking about individuals. This is talking about one individual dealing with another individual, and God is saying that you are not to take revenge; leave it to God. Well, how is God going to do it? Then just go to the next chapter, and look at it very clearly.

“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God; and 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...—listen—he—the magistrate—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, a revenger to execute wrath.” Now, remember the prior chapter. God said, “Revenge is mine; I will repay.” How is God going to do it? God does it through human government. God has human government to do this.

Now, that brings a question: Should we always obey our government? What if we have a wicked, ungodly government? What if our government commands us to do something contrary to the Word of God? Should we always obey government? The answer is emphatically, no, we should not always obey. When the command of the government contradicts a command of Almighty God, then we must always obey God. We render to Caesar that which is Caesar’s, but we render to God that which is God’s. Acts chapter 5, verse 29, says this: “We ought to obey God rather than men.” Government has divine authority that can only be resisted by divine authority, and the law of God always take precedence over the law of the state. But now, listen carefully. To oppose the state without the authority of God is a sin. Only when the state forbids what God commands, or commands what God forbids, should we say then we’re going to obey God rather than man and take the consequences. Daniel was in Babylon. Daniel obeyed the laws of Babylon until he was told to enter into idolatry and was told to cease to pray. Then Daniel chose to obey God rather than to bow down to idolatry.

## Conclusion

Now, let me see if I can bring this to a conclusion tonight—and thank you for being patient in your listening. I want to tell you some things that I have on my heart for this nation of ours, and with more specificity, for this church of ours. What should we do? May I mention about eight things, and I'm going to tick them off very quickly.

### A. We Should Pray and Work for Peace

Number one: We should pray and work for peace—pray and work for peace. Scripture says—1 Timothy 2, verses 1 through 3: “I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, our Savior.” We're to pray. America needs to be on her knees. America needs to be on her face.

### B. We Should Keep America Strong

Number two: Not only should we pray for peace, but we must keep America strong—keep America strong. The Scripture here speaks of the sword. What good is a magistrate without a sword? A law without penalty is only advice. We need to keep the sword sharp. Ronald Reagan is one of my heroes. And Ronald Reagan said something, a phrase, a good phrase: “Peace through Strength.” Keep America strong.

### C. We Should Refuse to Trust in Armaments and the Power of War

Number three: Refuse to trust in armaments or in the power of war. Psalm 20 and verse 7: “Some trust in chariots, some in horses; but we will remember the name of our God.” I love that. Proverbs 21 and verse 31: “The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.” If you think, friend, by our superior firepower and technology that we're going to prevail, and if we put our trust there, we may be headed for something horrible.

### D. We Should Never Rejoice at the Downfall of a Foe

Number four: Never, never rejoice at the downfall of a foe. Proverbs 24, verses 17 and 18: “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth, lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.” The Iraqi people and Saddam Hussein are not the ultimate enemy. They themselves are victims of a greater enemy. We're wrestling not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places. And God forbid that we should ever rejoice in the death, or the destruction, or even the defeat of anyone.

### **E. We Should Remember That It Is Our Duty to Endeavor to Bring This Nation to Righteousness and Peace Through Jesus Christ**

Number five: Remember that it is our duty to endeavor to bring this nation to righteousness and peace through Jesus Christ. Proverbs 14, verse 34: “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” Deuteronomy 32 and verse 31: “For their rock is not as our Rock; even our enemies themselves being judges.” There is no God like Jehovah God. Our Rock is greater than Iraq. There is no rock like our Rock. Righteousness exalteth a nation. America needs to be on her face before God, because we have no guarantee that we’re God’s little darlings, never to suffer. We sing “God Bless America,” and we put “In God we Trust” on our money, but “me first” is in our hearts.

### **F. We Should Do All That We Can Do to Bring Souls to Faith in Jesus Christ**

Number six: We need to do all that we can do in these desperate days to bring souls—men, women, boys, and girls—to faith in Jesus Christ. Friend, it’s like we’re looking down the barrel of a loaded canon. We exchange one dilemma for another dilemma, and this world is coming to an untimely end. You can call me a pessimist, if you want, but I’m not. I’m a blazing optimist, because I know how it’s going to end ultimately with Jesus Christ. But the wisest thing that we can do in these days is to introduce people to Jesus Christ, and to build faith into our children. Do all that we can do to bring souls to Jesus Christ.

### **G. We Should Pray for God’s Kingdom to Come**

Number seven: We need to pray for God’s kingdom to come, as our Lord taught us to pray: “Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” There is coming a time, a blessed time, when the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as waters that cover the sea. There is coming a time when the meek will inherit the earth. There is coming a time when men will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. There is coming a time when the lion and the lamb will lie down together. That’s when Jesus comes, friends. One of these days, our Lord is going to issue a summons from heaven, and call His nationals home, and then prepare for war, and it will be a great war, the battle of Armageddon. But our Lord is going to bring peace to this earth. Psalm 46, verses 8 through 10: “Come, behold the works of the Lord, what desolations he hath made in the earth. He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire. Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” I long for that time to come. One of my favorite verses in the Bible—it thrills my heart every time I read it, and tears are in my eyes now unbidden—1 Timothy chapter 6, verse 15—it speaks of Jesus, and

it says, "Which in his times he shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords." And I say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus Christ."

#### **H. We Should Give Honor to and Pray for Our National Leaders**

Last of all, we should give honor to, and pray for, our national leaders. The Bible says, in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 17: "Honor the king." Now, we don't have a king; we have a President. And what I say may sound a little political to you right now, but I love the man George W. Bush. I believe he is a great and godly leader. And my prayers are with him, and I lift him to the Heavenly Father, that God would give him stamina, wisdom, and courage in these days in which we live. But, even if I did not love him, and did not trust him, I would still need to pray for him, perhaps all the more. Be very careful about what comes out of your mouth. Be very careful that you don't assay to criticize and to carp about things you may know very little about. This man is our leader, and we're to pray for our leaders and those who surround him. It seems at this hour that we're going to war. If we do, may God have mercy on us. May God deliver us. May God be with us.

### **Conclusion**

Would you go to your knees now, if you can? If you can't, would you get on the knees of your heart? We need to ask God to have mercy on America. America is ripe for judgment. And, if we're trusting in our superior firepower, the Bible says we're fools. We need to trust in the Lord, and ask the Almighty to have mercy on America. Join me as I pray, and I'm going to be kneeling here with you. I want you to pray with your pastor, as we humble our hearts.

Our Father and our God, Ezra said that he blushed to lift his face to heaven. Lord, Daniel said that our sins have gone over our heads. Lord, You have said, "Happy is the man that condemneth not himself in the thing which he allows." Lord, as backslidden, careless Christians, we have allowed this nation to be taken by a spirit of humanism and paganism and heathenism. And, O God, as a little handful here, as a remnant, we confess our personal sins. We confess, O God, our corporate sins. We confess the sins of the church, the churches. God, we've been indolent, we've been careless, we've been self-centered, we've been proud, we have been, Heavenly Father, disobedient, and, O God, we deserve judgment. We need mercy. Please, our God, in the name of Jesus, have mercy on America. Lord, we want to pray for our national leaders.

Heavenly Father, we pray for President George W. Bush, and for his wife, Laura, and for his daughters. We surround them, Lord, with protection, that You would bless him. Lord, we pray for the Dick Cheney Family, Lord God, that you would guard them and keep them, our Vice President. We pray, Heavenly Father, for Condoleeza Rice, who is giving advice to the President. Lord, enlighten her mind. Lord, we pray for Colin Powell, that you would give him strength and wisdom. We pray for your servant, John

Ashcroft. We pray, Lord, for Tom Ridge. We pray, Lord, for General Franks and these others. O God, would you bless and guard and guide these. We pray Lord, especially also for Tony Blair, who is being so beleaguered now by his own people, because he's standing for that which he believes is right and standing with America. Lord, would you bless him, and the leadership of Spain, and these other nations who have joined with us. Lord, we pray for Your protection. Lord, if we're going to war, we pray, Lord, for victory. We pray, Heavenly Father, that You would protect the boys and girls, some of them whose parents are in this building tonight, who are already in the theater of war right now, who are poised to go to battle, others who may be on their way. God, would you guard them. Would you protect them. Please, Almighty God, bring them safely home. And we pray, Heavenly Father, that, if there is war, that there will be, O God, in mercy, a quick resolution. Lord God, if in this ninth hour it can be stopped, then, Lord, we would praise You. Lord, we know sometimes there are things worse than war, and so, Lord God, we just put all of this in Your hands. Guard us, guide us, bless us, keep us, we pray, O our God. In the strong name of Jesus. Amen and amen.

Now, ladies and gentlemen, there's another war, and that's the war that sinful men have with holy God. You know what sin is? Sin is rebellion against heaven's King. Sin is a clenched fist in the face of God. And the sinner is at war with God, and it's a war he can't possibly win, for the Bible says of the Lord Jesus Christ, that Christ made peace through the blood of His cross. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Do you have peace with God? In these days, when life is so fragile and history is so ominous, the best thing, the wisest thing, you could do would be to give your heart to Jesus Christ, and no matter what happens, you will have the peace of God that passeth understanding in your heart.

I'm going to ask you tonight, if you're willing to trust Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, if you're willing to give Him your heart once and for all, now and forever, if you believe He died on the cross and shed His blood for you, that He was raised from the dead, that He's the Son of God, can save you and will save you, if you trust Him, if you will trust Him tonight, I'm going to ask you to do something wonderful. When we stand and sing, I'm going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward. There will be a minister standing at the head of each of these aisles. You say to that minister, "I want to be saved," or, "I'm trusting Jesus," and we'll take a Bible and get it settled with you tonight, and you can go home a child of God. And no matter what happens concerning a war, you'll have peace with God in your heart.

Let's stand together and sing.

# What the Bible Says About War

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 16, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 13:1–4**

*“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.”*

ROMANS 13:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. What Does the Bible Teach about War?
- II. What Makes a War a Righteous War?
  - A. Our Cause Must Be Just
  - B. Our Intentions Must Be Noble
  - C. War Is the Last Resort
  - D. We Must Have Limited Objectives
  - E. We Must Use Limited Means
- III. Aren't We Supposed to Love Our Enemies?
- IV. Shall We Always Obey the Government?
- V. What Is Our Duty in This Day and Age?
  - A. We Must Pray and Work for Peace
  - B. We Need to Keep Our Nation Strong
  - C. We Should Not Place Our Trust in Armaments or in the Power of War
  - D. We Should Never Rejoice in the Downfall of a Foe
  - E. We Need to Bring the Nation to Righteousness and Peace Through Jesus Christ
  - F. We Need to Do All That We Can to Bring Souls to a Saving Knowledge of Jesus Christ
  - G. We Need to Pray for God's Kingdom to Come

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want to talk to you tonight about war. It's not a pleasant subject, but, as the Senator has told us, we're on the verge of something very unpleasant, but something very necessary. The Bible is our guidebook in life, and we're going to think tonight, study together, about what the Bible has to say about war, because that's where we're going to get the answer.

We're not going to get it from the pacifist who hates war; of course, we do too. We're not going to get it from the conscientious objector who just simply doesn't want to fight.

We're not going to get the answer even from those whose hearts are broken, who have sons and daughters that they don't want to go off to war. We're not going to get the answer from the profiteer, who perhaps makes munitions, or whatever, and would profit from war.

Where we going to get the answer? Not from the doves, who refuse war. Not from the hawks, who want war. Not from the owls, who philosophize about war. Not from the sparrows, who are afraid of war. We're going to get the answer from the Word of God.

## **I. What Does the Bible Teach about War?**

I want us to turn to Romans chapter 13 tonight, and I referenced this scripture this morning, but we're going to look at it again tonight. Romans chapter 13—here's what God's Word says: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers."

Now, when the Bible says higher powers, in this particular instance, not talking about heavenly powers, it's talking about governmental authorities: "For there is no power but of God"—that is, no regulated constituted authority that God has not either ordained or allowed—"but 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."

Now, the word damnation does not mean they're going to hell, though they may be. It's a strong word for judgment. "For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil." That verse tells us that rulers are a terror to terrorism. 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,"—that is, of the government, the magistrate, the president, the king, whomever—"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,"—now, listen to this—"a revenger to execute wrath on him that doeth evil."

War is a plague. Any thinking person would not love or glorify war. A child of God is, by his very nature, a peacemaker. He understands that Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be like God." We're to love peace. We're to follow peace. We're to pursue peace. We're to pray for peace.

But there are those who will tell us—and many of them are good people, mistaken—that war is always wrong, and no Christian could countenance war. There are even some who want us to unilaterally disarm. They say the way for us to have peace would be just to lay down our arms, and obliterate our weapons of war, and then we'll have peace.

To the contrary, that would increase the threat of war; it would not reduce the threat of war. People who say this do not understand the depravity of the human heart. What

we saw this past Tuesday was a delineation, an exhibition, of the depravity that rests in the murky recesses of many hearts. James tells us where war comes from. He says, in James 4, verses 1 and 2; he asks this question rhetorically: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence even of your lusts that war in your members?” People who are not at peace with one another, or at peace with themselves, are not going to be at peace with one another.

Now I don’t want you to be carrying around illusions. Men, the best of men, the best of women, are wicked by nature, and war sometimes erupts out of those hearts.

There are some people who feel that wars will be no more. Well, friend, when I was a boy, we had a war that was to end all wars, but it didn’t. And there will be no war that will end all wars till Jesus comes. Pastor, are you sure of that? Well, I’m as sure as I know what Jesus said.

Listen to what He said, in Matthew 24, verses 6 and 7. Jesus is looking down through the corridor of time, and Jesus is prophesying right on to the end of the age, and He says, “And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you be not troubled, for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there shall be famines and pestilences and earthquakes in diverse places.”

Again, some people have the idea that the world is getting better, but I don’t want, again, to disturb you, but the Bible says that evil men shall wax worse and worse. Listen to 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 13: “But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.”

The Senator was right when he said we like the amenities of all of our modern technology and all of the advance that we have, but those things also serve to make the world more dangerous, and the more we know, it seems, and the more we learn, the deeper we sink. Dr. Vance Havner, before he died, said that civilization is like a chimpanzee in a room full of dynamite holding a blowtorch. That’s what we are.

Think with me about the perplexities and the questions of war. Is it ever right for a nation to go to war? Well, let me give you several things you need to think about in answering that question. First of all, as I’ve already told you, human government is ordained of God—human government is ordained of God. Put in your margin Daniel 2, verse 21. It speaks of God, and it says, “And he changeth the times of the seasons; he removeth kings and setteth up kings.” God does that. Well, you say, why do we get wicked rulers, then? Wicked rulers are God’s reward for wicked people. God sets up kings; God removes kings.

God gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom—Daniel chapter 2, verses 37 through 38. Daniel is speaking to Nebuchadnezzar, who was somewhat of an egotist, “And thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and

strength, and glory.” God gave Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom.

What about Pharaoh, wicked Pharaoh who held God’s people in bondage? Would it surprise you to know that God gave Pharaoh his kingdom? Romans 9, verse 17: “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee, that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.” God said, Pharaoh, I brought you up because I’m going to bring you down. I’m going to display my power in you. Many of you haven’t read the book, but you’ve seen the movie, when the children of Israel were going through the Red Sea. And God raised Pharaoh up that God might bring Pharaoh down; but behind it all was Almighty God.

When Jesus Christ was standing before that pussyfooting politician, Pilate, and Pilate queried Jesus, and Jesus stood there, Pilate, in his ego, said, Don’t you know who you’re talking to? Why is it that you don’t answer me? Don’t you know that I have the power to crucify you or to set you free? And Jesus looked into the face of Pilate, and said, “You have no power at all, except that which is given you from above.” That was the man who tried to wash his hands of the crucifixion. Even Pilate received his authority, his power, from God, and the scripture that we read there in Romans 13 says, “The powers that be are ordained of God.” God knows that almost any government is better than no government.

Now, God says that human government is His instrument, these people are His ministers, and sometimes, human government must act for God—listen to me—in the taking of a life. All killing is not murder. The Bible says, in Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13, “Thou shalt not kill.” But that literally means, thou shalt not murder. God does not allow personal vengeance, God does not allow personal retaliation, but God does allow one to defend his family, his home, or his nation. Let me give you the scripture. Now, that’s Exodus 20, verse 13, and many times in demonstrations you’ll hear, you’ll see, some of these liberals who really don’t believe the Bible anyway going around with a placard that says, Thou shalt not kill—thou shalt not kill.

But go on just two chapters later, in Exodus 22, verses 2 and 3. God says, “But if a thief be found breaking up and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him.” That is, if a man is breaking into your home in the middle of the night, and you defend yourself, and that man dies, your blood will not be shed for him. But the Bible goes on to say—and notice how balanced it is—but “if the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him.” That is, if you shoot a man in the daylight, you know that your life is not in danger. Then the Bible says, “If the sun be risen upon them, there shall be blood shed for him, for he should make full restitution.” A man needs not be killed; he needs to make restitution for what he stole. “If he have nothing, then shall he be sold for his theft.”

Now, the Bible doesn’t just teach that we are to warehouse criminals and continue to

pay more and more for them. Somehow they're to make restitution. But no man is to be killed in cold blood, but this verse of Scripture very clearly tells us that we have a right of self-defense. Now, all murder is killing, but all killing is not murder.

Sometimes the government is ordained to bear the sword, to take care of society. Listen to these verses. The Bible says, in Genesis 9, verse 6, "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed, for in the image of God made he man." Now, either that's the inspired Word of God, or it's not. I say it's the inspired Word of God. Romans 13, verse 4—I read it to you, speaking of the magistrate: "For he is 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." The sword is an instrument of death. "For he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil." The Bible clearly teaches capital punishment. Put this verse in your margin, if it's not there. Exodus 21, verse 12: "He that smiteth a man so that he die shall be surely put to death." That's the Word of God.

Now, why? Well, the God that gives life has the right to take life. Somebody says, That's cruel. No, the coddling of the murderer is really cruelty to the community. You're not wiser than God; you're not more loving than God; you're not more merciful than God. King Henry the Eighth once pardoned a man who was a known murderer. That pardoned man got out of prison and murdered another man. They came back to King Henry, and said, Pardon him twice. Henry said, I'll not do it. He killed the first man; I killed the second man. I will kill no more. And he was put to death.

Softness to a terrorist is cruelty to the community. And let me tell you something about the death penalty. Do you know who died with capital punishment? The Lord Jesus Christ. Now, you say, Jesus was murdered on the cross, Jesus was unfairly executed. From man's viewpoint, He was. But you know what was happening behind the scenes? He took my place; He took your place; He took my sin upon Him. And you know who was ultimately behind the crucifixion? Almighty God.

The Bible says, "It hath pleased the Lord to bruise him; He—Yahweh—hath put him to death." You say, Oh, no. Yes, yes. Why? Because He became my substitute, He took my sin. He took the sin of every pervert, every rapist, every murderer, every terrorist, every child abuser; He took that upon himself, and He bore the punishment. And a righteous and a holy God poured out the vials of His wrath upon His own dear Son. And when you understand that, you will appreciate Calvary a little more. Jesus suffered capital punishment because of my sin, your sin, and our sin.

Sometimes governments must go to war. Sometimes they must use the sword. Passivism is not always better than war. Let me read to you what John Stuart Mill wrote—and he said, War is an ugly thing, but it is not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks nothing is worth a war is worse. A man who has nothing which he cares more about than his own personal safety

is a miserable creature, and has no chance of being free, unless he's made free and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself. Is it wrong?

Again, Senator Thompson asked this question: What about Hitler? Was it wrong to stand up against Hitler? Before he was stopped, he slaughtered millions—not thousands, but millions—of helpless, defenseless victims. Is it wrong to stop Saddam Hussein? Would that be wrong? One who has been guilty, according to reports, of gouging out thousands of eyes? Of the rape, the looting, the pillage, the poison gas that has come upon his own people? Is it wrong to stop a madman who's endeavoring to create poison gas and create an atomic weapon? Is that wrong, to stand against him?

Well, let me ask you another question: Is it wrong to stop any kind of assault upon another person? If you were walking down the streets of Memphis and you saw a man abusing a little child, mutilating a child, would you step in? Somebody comes into your house, and begins to rape your wife or daughter, would you come against that person? I'm telling you, you're looking at a man who would—you're looking at a man who would. Or would you just simply stand by, and say, No, I don't believe in violence.

Did you know that a local police force is nothing but an army? Would you want to live in the city of Memphis, Tennessee, without a police force? I'm so grateful that today we're saying a good word for our policemen. The Bible says that rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. What kind of a city would we have? Well, you say, that's not an army; that's a police force. I'm telling you that the police force in New York City is bigger than the armies of some whole nations. It is an army, and there are times when we must defend our loved ones, our country, our way of life.

## **II. What Makes a War a Righteous War?**

Now, what makes a war a righteous war? I didn't say a good war; there are no good wars. What are the principles—what checklist must we go through before we go to war?

### **A. Our Cause Must Be Just**

Number one: our cause must be just. That is, war is for defensive and protective reasons. Not an imperialistic war, like the Japanese waged against us; not a war for self-aggrandizement.

### **B. Our Intentions Must Be Noble**

Number two: our intentions must be for the noblest reasons—for peace, for freedom, for safety.

### **C. War Is the Last Resort**

Number three: we must view war as a last resort. The Bible says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men." But there comes a time when we must go to war reluctantly, only after all methods of redress have been reasonably

exhausted.

#### **D. We Must Have Limited Objectives**

Next, in any war, we must have limited objectives. That is, deliverance, freedom, specific targets—not the total devastation of any people.

#### **E. We Must Use Limited Means**

And, along with that, we use limited means. Now, we must use every bit of force that is necessary, and, if we go to war, we don't need to go to war half-heartedly. But if it's not necessary to wipe out a civilian population to put down an evil ruler, then we don't do it. We don't use weapons that would inflict wanton death and devastation when conventional or tactical weapons would accomplish the same thing. War is ugly.

### **III. Aren't We Supposed to Love Our Enemies?**

Somebody says, But, Pastor, aren't we supposed to love our enemies? Of course we are. The reason that so many people get in difficulty with the Bible is they take a text out of context. Now, they read, for example, Romans chapter 12. Romans chapter 12 says this—verses 18 through 20, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” That is, never want to go to war. And then, he says, “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath, for it is written, Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.” By the way, that is a promise. God says, I will repay. “Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink. For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.” That's what God's Word says, but it doesn't end there. That's the end of chapter 12.

Now, chapter 13 says, “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. There's no power but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God,”—and the Bible says—“for he”—the civil magistrate—“is the minister of God to thee for good, and he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath.” God has just said, You don't do it; the government is to do it. I can't be a vigilante; I'm not to take the law into my own hands. I'm not to be a part of a lynch mob; I'm not to be a part of a vendetta. I'm to call that man before God, to pray for him, for her, to do what I can. But, in the meanwhile, God says, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” And God will do it through human government.

### **IV. Shall We Always Obey the Government?**

Now, that brings up a big question. Shall we always obey the government? Suppose our government tells us to do something that is wrong or ungodly. Shall we always obey human government? The clear answer is, absolutely not. Listen. When a command of

the state contravenes or contradicts a clear command of Almighty God, we must obey God. Acts 5, verse 29: “Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.” The state has a divine authority—listen—that can only be resisted by divine authority, and the law of God takes precedence over the law of the state.

But now, listen. To oppose the state without the authority of God is a sin in itself. When the state forbids what God commands, or commands what God forbids, then there’s a time when we must say, No, I will obey God rather than man. An example of that is Daniel. They told Daniel he could not pray. Daniel was in the government service. He was a man working in the inside. But then, they said to this man of God, You cannot pray to your God. And Daniel said, I will pray. I’ll take the consequences, but I will pray.

The midwives were told to kill the little boy babies in Egypt. They said, No, we’re not going to do that. We’re going to spare the lives of these little babies. There is a higher law than man’s law, but be very careful before you contravene or contradict the law of the state; if you have a mandate from God that is ringing clear, you understand what the whole issue is about.

## **V. What Is Our Duty in This Day and Age?**

Well, in conclusion, what is our duty in this day and this age? Here’s what we must do.

### **A. We Must Pray and Work for Peace**

Number one: we must pray for and we must work for peace—for peace. Listen to what God’s Word says—and, Senator, this is why Joyce and I pray for you—1 Timothy 2: “I exhort therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, then giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior.” We need to pray for and we need to work for peace.

### **B. We Need to Keep Our Nation Strong**

Number two: we need to keep our nation strong. One of the finest ways that we can ensure some modicum of peace is peace through strength.

### **C. We Should Not Place Our Trust in Armaments or in the Power of War**

But, number three: we need to be very, very careful that we do not place our trust in armaments or in the power of war. Listen to this scripture—Psalm 20, verse 7: “Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.” It’s a key verse. Proverbs 21, verse 31: “The horse is prepared against the day of battle, but safety is of the Lord.” Now, God may use the horse in battle, but safety comes from the Lord.

#### **D. We Should Never Rejoice in the Downfall of a Foe**

Number four, very important: we should never ever rejoice in the downfall of a foe. God loves them even in their error. Proverbs 24, verses 17 and 18: “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth, lest the Lord see it and it displease him and he turn away his wrath from him.” There is no person on the face of this earth that you have the luxury of hating, and no person that you can rejoice when he falls into misery. The Scripture teaches that. You can never rejoice in the downfall of a foe.

#### **E. We Need to Bring the Nation to Righteousness and Peace Through Jesus Christ**

Number five: you need to keep this nation, to bring this nation, to righteousness and peace through the Lord Jesus Christ. What is our strength? I told you this morning, our strength is not in the Pentagon, it's not in the White House, it's not in the halls of Congress, it's not in the schoolhouse, it's not in Wall Street. Proverbs 14, verse 34: “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people.” Deuteronomy 32, verse 31: “For their rock is not our rock. Even our enemies themselves being judges.” There was a time when our enemies would look at this nation, and say, There's something different. Their rock is not our rock. And you know that our rock is the Lord Jesus Christ.

#### **F. We Need to Do All That We Can to Bring Souls to a Saving Knowledge of Jesus Christ**

Next, we need to do all that we can do to bring souls to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Now, if all you're doing is trying to make America a better place to go to hell from, you're missing the whole point. As I've told you before, it's like trying to rearrange the deck chairs on the Titanic. We need, with all of our heart and soul, to preach the glorious gospel of Jesus. I remind you again that these people are deceived, they believe a lie, they have a distorted idea, and you cannot kill an idea with a bomb or a bullet. The only thing that will kill that is a better idea, and we'd better preach the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

#### **G. We Need to Pray for God's Kingdom to Come**

Next, we need to pray for God's kingdom to come. Stop living for this earth only. I believe the Bible, and I believe Bible prophecy. I believe that one day this earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as waters that cover the sea. I believe that one day God's will will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Otherwise, Jesus Christ would never have taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.” I believe that one day the meek will inherit the earth. Jesus said, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” I believe that one day men will beat their

swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. I believe that one day the lamb and the lion will lie down together, and the lamb won't be inside the lion, either. One of these days, when Jesus comes, He's going to call His nationals home, and then He's going to issue a summons for us to rise up higher, and prepare for war, and then there will be a war that will end all wars. It will be the battle of Armageddon.

When Jesus was being crucified, there were women along the Via Dolorosa, and they were weeping at His pain and at His anguish, and He said, Don't weep for me; weep for yourselves. This is your hour. My hour has not yet come. Friend, I'm telling you, His hour is coming. One of my favorite verses in all of the Bible is 1 Timothy 6, verse 15, which speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it says, "Which in his time, he shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords."

## Conclusion

All of these things, I believe, are telling us it's time to seek the Lord. God's alarm clock has gone off. If we go to war, our sons and daughters go. If we go to war, and our factories suffer; if we go to war; and we go without this thing or that thing; if we go to war; and seas of sweat, oceans of blood, and rivers of tears—rivers of tears—are our lot, I will weep, and I pray God it will not happen. But I'm telling you one thing, friend—now, listen to me very carefully: we have seen that life as we've known it is extremely fragile.

You'd better get your boys and girls around you, your sons and your daughters, your children, and your grandchildren, and get them lashed to the cross. Help them to understand what it means to have a personal and a vital relationship with God. Help them to understand that many of the things that we Americans have worshiped as idols—you say we don't have idols; yes we do, they're made of glass and chrome and silver; we have idols—better help them to understand that there's a God in the glory who rules over it all, and come what may, "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."

War is hellish—not hell, hellish. Hell is hell. War is hellish, but there is a God who loves us, and I, for one, am going to trust Him, come what may. My faith is in our rock, the Lord Jesus Christ.

I want you to bow your heads in prayer. I want you to pray for Senator Fred Thompson. As a matter of fact, Senator, I don't want to embarrass you, but I want you to know that we're honored to have you here tonight, and I'm going to walk over to this man and put my hand on him and pray for him, and I want you to pray for him while I

pray for him. And, as I pray for him, I'm going to be praying for all of those his colleagues in the Senate, and those on the other side in the House, and for our President, and our Vice President. Lord, I thank you for Senator Fred Thompson, and Lord, we as a congregation, through this pastor, lay our hands upon this man. Lord, I pray that you will guard him and keep him safe. Lord, I pray that you would give him wisdom beyond his own and courage that is extraordinary. Lord, again, I do pray for all of his colleagues. Lord, we pray for your servant, George W. Bush. We pray, Lord God, for Vice President Dick Cheney. Heavenly Father, we pray for Mr. Rumsfeld, for John Ashcroft. We pray, heavenly Father, for others who hold in their hands, in many ways, the fate of our nation, so far as human leadership is concerned. God bless this dear man who has come tonight to open his heart to us, and to share with us. Bless those that he loves, and Lord, draw him ever closer to you. And Lord God, we pray now tonight also for any in this building who may not know the Lord Jesus Christ, that tonight, Lord, they might say an everlasting yes to Jesus, and be saved. Amen and Amen.

# Christian Citizenship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: July 5, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 13:1–7**

*“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.”*

ROMANS 13:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Reasons for Human Government
  - A. To Restrain Evil
  - B. To Reward Good
- II. The Requirements for Human Government
  - A. We Are to Pay for Our Government
  - B. We Are to Pray for Our Government
  - C. We Are to Praise Our Government
  - D. We Are to Preach to Our Government
  - E. We Are to Participate in Our Government
  - F. We Are to Persuade Our Government

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you be finding Romans chapter 13, the Word of God. The Book of Romans is the constitution of Christianity, and I want to tell you, it is a solid word for an unsure age. And our age, without the Word of God, is an unsure age. And I'm speaking to many people. You're looking for something solid, you're looking for a place to stand, and yet you feel like you're walking around on eggshells and Jell-O. Thank God for the solid rock of God's Word. And today we're dealing with something, a question that is asked, as a matter of fact, before I came in here. I just read an editorial in the newspaper today on this very subject of Christians and patriotism, and, very frankly, that editorial goes against the title of what I have to say today. I want you to read it when you get home, but I want you to read the Bible today, and I want you to see what the Bible has to say about Christian citizenship. What are our responsibilities, our duties, our rights? Is the

Bible oblivious to this? Or did God ordain human government and tell His people to stay out of it? What are Christians to do, to think, and how are we going to behave?

Now, I'm the first to confess that many Christians have simply dropped out, and let me tell you the reasons that many have dropped out. We're going to read the Scripture now in just a moment, but let me tell you why many have dropped out. They see involvement somehow as the social gospel. And, I'm against the social gospel as much as anybody else, because there's only one gospel, and that's the saving gospel of Jesus Christ, the blood gospel where Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures, but there are some who have substituted culture for Calvary, and others think that, if we get all involved in government, all we're trying to do is make the world a better place to go to hell from. And so, they just simply drop out, because they think, Well, we're not to get involved in the social gospel.

Now, there are other people who have just simply dropped out because they have given up hope. They say that America has crossed the point of no return, and so, what they've done, they've just hunkered down, and they've begun to sing the song, Hold the Fort, and they're just waiting for Jesus to get here and to rescue them, and so they've just given up hope.

Now, there are others who have dropped out, because not that they equate activity with the social gospel, or not because they are hopeless, but because they see politics as dirty, something that would defile them, that we as Christians are to be other-worldly, our kingdom is not of this world, and so therefore, we don't want to get contaminated, so we will just stay away from all of that, and some folks really believe that.

And then, there are others, and a great number like this, who have dropped out, and don't participate, very frankly, because they are intimidated. They are intimidated. The ACLU and others have prated so much about this thing called church and state, and the separation of church and state, that they think that because we are Christians, somehow we have no rights, no privileges, no prerogatives, that we have been disenfranchised, and they just tell us, Why don't you shut up and go back inside your little stained-glass prisons, and leave it to us to take care of it! Now, very frankly, a lot of people who are believers have more or less dropped out.

Now, where are we going to get the answers? I mean, how are we going to know the answers to these questions? Are we going to get the answers from self-serving politicians? Not all politicians are self-serving, but are we going to let some self-serving politician try to co-opt the church and use the church for his or her purposes? Or perhaps intimidate the church so that he can or she can have his or her way? Are the politicians going to tell us what is right or what is wrong? Do they know the answer? Where are we going to get the answers? Are we going to get the answers from the humanists and the secularists who don't believe in Christ—don't believe in God, don't

believe in the church? Are we going to get the answers from some egg-headed philosopher who's going to sit back and bump his fingers and tell us what he thinks? I'm going to tell you where we're going to get the answers. Right here—right here. The Word of God and the book of Romans is going to speak very clearly and very plainly about this matter of Christian citizenship.

Begin now in chapter 13, verse 1: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." Now, the word powers there is the word that is a translation of the word that means authorities, and when he's saying higher powers, what he is literally talking about is the civil magistrate, the governmental leader. Let every soul be subject unto the civil magistrate, "for there is no power," that is no authority, "but of God, and the powers that be," that is the rulers, the leaders, the magistrates that be, "are ordained of God." Now, you might think of your minister as an ordained minister, but have you ever thought of your government as an ordained government? "Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power," that is the authorities, "resisteth the ordinance of God and they that resist," that is rebellers, "shall receive unto themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power of the civil magistrate? Do that which is good and thou shalt have praise of the same," that is, of your governor, your ruler, your king, your president, your mayor, your council, "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," who is he talking about now, the civil magistrate, "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, for this cause pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers attending continually upon this very thing. Render, therefore, to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor."

## **I. The Reasons for Human Government**

Now, that's the scripture we're going to look at today, and we're going to look at it basically under three headings, and the very first heading we're going to look at today is from the Word of God is the reasons for human government. And you're going to find, when we get to the bottom line, the big question is not, Can you be a Christian and be involved in government? The big question is, Can you be a Christian and not be involved—and not be involved? Can you obey this Word of God and not be involved?

Now, what are the reasons for human government? The Bible tells us that human government is ordained of God. Did you know that God sets up kings and God brings kings down, that God ordains rulers and sometimes God sets up wicked rulers? God does that. Let me give you some examples, and I want you to jot this down now, and I want you to get these scriptures so you can take them home and study them. You may

not be able to turn to them as fast as I give them to you, so you might want to jot them down. For example, in Daniel chapter 2 and verse 21, Daniel said, concerning the Lord, “He removeth kings and setteth up kings.” God takes them down and God puts them up. That’s what the Word of God says. He removeth kings and setteth up kings.

Now, I’ll give you a prime example of that. One of the mightiest potentates of the Old Testament was a king named Nebuchadnezzar. Nebuchadnezzar ruled over ancient Babylon, and Daniel was in the court of Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel had a chance to testify and prophesy to Nebuchadnezzar, and Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar where his power came from. In Daniel chapter 2 and verse 23, God said through Daniel to Nebuchadnezzar, “Thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom.” That’s Nebuchadnezzar, and he was not a godly king. As a matter of fact, he got so rotten full of himself, he got so full of pride, that God judged him, and he ended up crawling around on all fours eating grass like an ox with long fingernails. This man was so stuffed full of himself. God set him up and God brought him down. That’s Nebuchadnezzar—Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

Let me give you another king. Who do we think of as the arch-villain so much in the Old Testament? Old Pharaoh. Remember how God drowned Pharaoh in the Red Sea? Well, how did Pharaoh get his kingdom? Well, God raised Pharaoh up. Pharaoh was wicked, malevolent, anti-God, a murderer of little babies, but now listen to this—Romans 9, verse 17: “For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee.” God said, I brought you up, and I’m going to bring you down. I’m going to show my power in you, old Pharaoh.

Remember the man who that pussyfooting politician, Pilate, who didn’t have the moral rectitude and courage to release Jesus? He washed his lily-white politician’s hands and said, I’m innocent of the blood of this just man, but it was Pilate that had Jesus Christ in front of him, and Pilate said to Jesus, Don’t you know who I am? Don’t you know that I have the power to crucify you or release you? Now, let me give you the answer that Jesus gave to Pilate. In John chapter 19 and verse 11, “Jesus said to him, Thou couldest have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above.” Even Pilate—even Pilate—who allowed Jesus to be crucified. Jesus said, You don’t have any authority, you don’t have any power, except it was given to you from above.

Now, that’s a very interesting thing, because of the three illustrations I’ve given you now, all three of these were wicked men, and yet God allowed them to have power—the authorities that be are ordained of God. Who was the authority when Paul wrote this? Old Caesar. The Roman government was in power. That was not a democracy—the Christians were disenfranchised. They had no political power. As a matter of fact, what they believed was illegal because they would not say, Caesar is Lord, and yet, under that aegis, the apostle wrote the powers that be are ordained of God.

And so, what the Bible says, if you resist these authorities, in verse 2, you're resisting God, because it is God that set them up. Oh, I know what you're thinking right now; you're saying, Now, wait a minute, do you mean that some king, some potentate, some fat toad sitting upon the throne may tell me to do this or that, and I am to do it, contrary to the Word and the will of God? Well, hold on to that thought, and we'll get to that thought later on, the third point of this message, if you're still awake. But now listen to me—listen to me. I want you to get this point down in your heart and in your mind, that God ordains human government for two reasons, he tells us right here.

### **A. To Restrain Evil**

Number one, to restrain evil. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4 of this chapter. Look at it—he says there, “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 the 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.” Reason number one that God has given us human government is for restraint—to restrain evil.

Let me ask you a question. Have you ever heard this: You can't legislate morality? How many of you have ever heard that? Let me see your hands. If you haven't heard it, you've been asleep for fifty years. You can't legislate morality. That is absolutely true. You can't legislate morality. There is not a law on earth that can make you moral. That's the reason we have to have laws that legislate against immorality. Now, listen. You can't legislate morality. Law can't make you good; only God can make you good. Government is not here to make you good; it can't make you good. Only God can make you good. Government is here to restrain evil. There's not a law on earth can make you love me, so I have to have one to keep you from killing me, see? You don't legislate morality; you legislate against immorality. There's not a law on earth that can make you honest, so we have to have laws that keep you from stealing. There's not a law on earth that can keep you from lying, so we have to have laws against perjury. You see, you don't legislate morality, but you do legislate against immorality, and thank God for those who are here to restrain evil.

It's about time we said a good word for the policemen. I'm sick and tired of policemen being put upon. I took this out of my files this past week and I want you to listen to it. A policeman is many things—he is a son, a brother, a father, an uncle, and sometimes even a grandfather. He is a protector in time of need and a comforter in time of sorrow. His job calls for him to be a diplomat, a psychologist, a lawyer, a friend, and an inspiration. He suffers from an overdose of publicity about brutality and dishonest. He suffers far more from the notoriety produced by unfounded charges. Too often, acts of heroism go unnoticed, and the truth is buried under all the criticism. The fact is—listen to this—less than one half of one percent of policemen ever discredit their

uniform. That's a better average than you'll find among clergymen. A policeman is an ordinary guy who's called upon for extraordinary bravery for us. His job may sometime seem routine, but the interruptions can be moments of stark terror. He is the man who faces a half-crazed gunman, who rescues a lost child, who challenges a mob, and risks his neck more than we realize. He deserves our respect and profound thanks. A policeman stands between the law abider and the lawbreaker. He is the prime reason your home hasn't been burned, your family abused, and your business looted. Try to imagine what would happen if there were no policemen around, and then try to think of ways to make their job more rewarding. Show them the respect you really have. Offer them a smile and a kind word. See that they don't have to be magicians to raise their families on less than adequate salaries. We think policemen are great. We thank God for all the little boys who said they would be policemen and who kept their promise. We hope you feel the same way, and we hope you will show it, so there will always be enough good policemen to go around.

He is the minister of God to thee for good. He is there to restrain evil. And the Bible says that he bears the sword. A sword is an instrument of death. Sometimes the government, in order to restrain evil, must take life. Now, I want you to listen to me, friend. The editorial today quoted the scripture that said, "Thou shalt not kill"—Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13. Now, this scripture in the Ten Commandments means, and the Hebrew translation bears it out, that thou shalt do no murder, thou shalt take no personal vengeance. But friend, the same person who wrote Exodus chapter 20 and verse 13 wrote Exodus chapter 21 and verse 12. Whoever else he was, he wasn't insane, a madman—and what did He say in Exodus 21, verse 12? "He that smiteth a man so that he die shall surely be put to death." The same Bible—the same Bible—chapter next to chapter. One chapter says thou shalt not kill—that is, don't do murder—and the next chapter says, if you do, you ought to be put to death. That's what it says. Look in verse 4; look at it: "He beareth not the sword in vain." The sword is an instrument of death.

Now, why is this? Well, the Bible said way back in Genesis chapter 9 and verse 6—listen to it: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." All murder is killing, but all killing is not murder. All murder is killing, but all killing is not murder. Again, listen to it. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed. For he," that is man, in the image of God, "made he man." The God that gives life is the God that has the right to take it, and God has His ordained ministers to do His work for him, and that is the civil magistrate. Somebody says, That is cruel, Pastor Rogers. I thought you were a man of love. Friend, you may not believe what I'm saying is based on love, but I don't want to be any more loving than Almighty God, and God is infinite love. And I'm giving you the Word of God, and if you don't believe Genesis 9:6, when you get to

heaven, if you get to heaven, take it up with God, okay? God is love. You see, the coddling of the murderer is really cruelty to the community. Don't think that you're more wise or loving than God himself.

There are people that say, Well, capital punishment, that's not an inhibition to murder. Well, in some cases it is. I want to tell you that Henry the Eighth pardoned a murderer one time, and that murderer, after having been pardoned, killed another man. They came back to Henry the Eighth, and they said to King Henry, Pardon him again. He said, Oh no, he killed the first man; I killed the second man. He won't kill anymore. And the man died for his crime. You see, it does inhibit some from killing again. Some say, Well, God is too good to punish sin. No, God is too good not to punish sin. Now, if you don't believe that God believes in capital punishment, I want to ask you this question. Who crucified Jesus? Well, you say, the Romans soldiers. Well, they were the instruments who nailed Him to the cross. Well, you say, the Jewish council. Well, yes, they were the ones that hounded Him to the cross. But if you'll study your Bible carefully, you'll understand that God the Son died at the hands of God the Father. "He hath put him to death." That's what the Bible says: that God the Father poured out His wrath upon His only Son. Why? Because God's Son was standing in our place. God was our substitute; Jesus was our substitute. He took my place, and therefore He took the death that I should die, and the Bible says that the "wages of sin are death," and the cross was capital punishment—that's what it was, at the hands, really, of Almighty God.

No, none of us should rejoice when anybody dies, but, you know, there are people who are pacifists. They don't believe, for example, that a nation ought to ever go to war. Well, I suppose that these people don't believe, therefore, that we should defend our loved ones. Put this scripture down. We're talking about bearing the sword now. Exodus chapter 22. Now, remember, in Exodus 20, He says don't kill. In Exodus chapter 21, He says now, if a man kill a man, that man should be put to death. In Exodus chapter 22, here's what He says—if you're in the middle of your home and somebody's coming in, it's pitch black, you don't know what he has in mind, whether it's rape, murder, pillage, you don't know. Exodus chapter 22, verses 2 and 3: "If a thief be found breaking up," that is, if he's breaking in, that's what it literally means, "and he be smitten that he die," that is, he's coming in the window, you hit him, and he dies, "there shall no blood be shed for him," that is, you're not going to be put to death for that. "If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him," now what does that mean? Well, if it's daylight and you see what's happening and you kill him unnecessarily, you have become a murderer yourself. "For he should make full restitution. If he had nothing, then shall he be sold for his theft." That is, if a man just comes in, it's daylight, you see him hauling off your television, he ought to make restitution. And, by the way, that ought to be in the law today, too, that he ought to make restitution. But what God is saying is

this: that you have a right to protect your loved ones; you have a right to protect your children.

Let me ask you a question. Would you not protect, if you were walking down the street, and you saw a man abusing a little child, would you step in, or would you walk on by? Let me ask you another question. If somebody comes to rape your daughter or your wife, I want to ask the man in this congregation this question, would you just stand around? Would you say, Well, peace, brother. I'm a godly man; I have been called to love. I am a godly man. No, no, no, no, no! Listen, friend. The Bible teaches that there are times even when nations have to stand up as we do as individuals. For example, was it wrong to stand against Hitler, who murdered his millions? Was it wrong to stand against Stalin? Is it wrong, was it wrong, to stand against Saddam Hussein, who gouged out thousands of eyes, whose armies were raping and looting, and who was, and perhaps still is, concocting poisoned gas to put on his missiles? Is it wrong to oppose people like that? Is it wrong to stand against this kind of wickedness? You see, if you believe in a police force, you certainly believe in an army. Did you know that New York City has a bigger police force than some countries have armies? A police force is just simply an army. Did you know that when a police force goes in on a drug raid, that's just a small war? We're just talking, not about a crime now; we're talking about degree.

What am I saying? What am I saying is this: that one reason that God has given government is to restrain evil. That's the whole thing. "He beareth not the sword in vain, for wrath." That's one reason we have government. Number one, to restrain evil.

### **B. To Reward Good**

Number two, to reward good—to reward good. Look at this scripture again; go back at it again. It says here, verse 3, "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." And, by the way, the framers of the American Constitution were soaked in the Word of God. They wrote in there that we are to promote the general welfare—didn't say, provide the general welfare—promote the general welfare, provide the common defense. You see how wise they were? Where did they get that? Right out of that scripture we're dealing with today. I'm telling you, they were soaked with the Word of God. Thank God for our constitution and the way that God has given it.

## **II. The Requirements for Human Government**

Now, that is the reason for human government. Now, let's talk secondly about the requirements for human government, Christian citizenship. What are our rights and what are our responsibilities? Notice verses 5 and 6, "Therefore, ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake. For this cause pay you tribute also, for they are God's ministers cont, contending continually upon this very thing."

Now, we have rights and we have responsibilities. We have responsibilities to God that override any other responsibility, but we do have a responsibility to human government. In Matthew chapter 22, they came to Jesus and they tried to catch Jesus in a catch-22, and they said, Jesus, tell us, we know you're not respecter of persons. Is it right to pay tribute to Caesar? And he said, Bring me a coin, and he held it up, and he said, Whose picture is that? Whose inscription is that? They said, That's Caesar's! And Jesus said, "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God." That's a very, very key passage, as we understand our responsibility as Christian citizens, and as Christian brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the framers of our Constitution knew this also. Now, some people think that the phrase separation of church and state is found in the Constitution. I'll give you a trip to Hawaii and a week in any hotel you want if you find that in the Constitution and come show me. It's not in the Constitution. It is a good principle, rightly understood. It is not in the Constitution. It is based in the first amendment to the Constitution. Rightly interpreted, this is what it says: Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion—now, listen. That's one side of the coin—or prohibiting the free exercise thereof. That's exactly what Jesus was saying: render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God's the things that are God's. Now, this does not mean the separation of God and government. Our founding fathers did not believe that. As a matter of fact, when they wrote that Declaration of Independence, they said, We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. The rights did not come from the government, but from God, and so therefore, in America we put, In God We Trust, on our money. Our Congress begins with prayer. Little boys and girls in school can't do it, but the big Congressman can. Congress convenes in prayer. We salute the flag, and we say, One nation under God, indivisible. Why? Because historically we've known, as our Constitution was written, soaked in the Word of God, that you don't separate God and government. Abraham Lincoln said, I believe it is the duty of nations as well as men—the duty of nations as well as men—to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God.

Now, what the Constitution says when it says that Congress shall make no laws establishing a religion, that meant that we don't want a state-mandated, a state-supported church. When this was written, the British were Anglicans, the Germans were Lutherans, and the French were Catholics, and we don't want a state church. Friend, I'd be as much afraid of a Baptist Pope as any other kind. We don't want a state church. What we want is a free church in a free state. We want the government to be free to do what it can do, so the church can do what it is free alone to do. And what can the government do? It's here to restrain evil. What is the church here to do? It is to preach the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And listen, my dear friend: the state is not the

master of the church, and the church is not the servant of the state, or the master of the state; it is the conscience of the state. That's what we're here to do. We're to here to hold up a standard, which is a standard of truth.

Now, ungodly people have always wanted to separate God and government. Let me tell you five duties that you have as a Christian—five duties that you have as a Christian. What are you to do concerning your government?

#### **A. We Are to Pay for Our Government**

Number one—I hate to tell you this, but I'm going to put it first: You've got to pay for your government—you've got to pay for your government. Look, if you will, in verses 6 and 7 of this chapter: "For this cause—for this cause—pay ye tribute also, for they are God's ministers." And then, he goes down in verse 7, he says, "Tribute to whom tribute is due," that would be like income tax, "custom to whom custom," just like the receipt of customs; that's like a sales tax, you've got to pay it. Jesus paid His taxes. You ought to pay your taxes. As a matter of fact, there's a wonderful story we all remember when Jesus, when it was time to pay His taxes, He told Peter, You go cast a hook in the sea, and you take the first fish that comes up and look in his mouth, you'll find a coin in your mouth, and Jesus said this, said, I'm doing this—I'm a citizen of another world—but He said, I'm doing this lest I should offend. Now, ever-increasing taxes are a burden, and a government is on its last legs, in my estimation, when half the people get the idea they don't have to work because the other half will take care of them, and the other half gets the idea it does no good to work because somebody else gets what they work for. And excessive taxes are sinful and dangerous. A Frenchman said that France fell when people got the idea that the government was a cow to be milked rather than a watchdog to be fed. But we are to pay for our government.

#### **B. We Are to Pray for Our Government**

Number two: not only are we to pay for our government; we are to pray for our government. Put this scripture down—1 Timothy 2, verses 1 through 3: "I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men for kings and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." You say, Well, should I pray for my leader, if he's wicked? You ought to pray all the more for him. You ought to pray all the more for him. Why? Because, God can change a ruler, God can remove a ruler, and God can overrule a ruler. Listen. The Bible says, in Proverbs 21, verse 1, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water he turneth it whithersoever he will." The greatest responsibility in America is not in the White House but in the church house. We're to pray for our government. Pray for those who are in authority. One Christian was praying

for government and a crooked politician said to him, Well, I'm glad you're praying for those who are in authority. And he said, Well, that's not the verse I'm using. I'm using the verse that says, "Pray for those who persecute you." But whatever it is, we are to pray for them.

### **C. We Are to Praise Our Government**

Now, number three: we are to praise our government. Patriotism is not bad. When our government is good, praise our government. This Scripture says, give honor to whom honor is due. First Peter 2, verse 17, says, "Honor the king." There's nothing wrong with patriotism. There are those who don't want us to wave a flag. There are those who don't want us to love America. Why not? That doesn't mean that I love other nations less when I love America specially. It just means that this is my native land. I love my family in a way I don't love your family. They are my family. The Psalmist said, "O Jerusalem, if I forget thee, let my right hand lose her cunning." Patriotism, love of the fatherland, is not wrong. We are to give honor to whom honor is due.

### **D. We Are to Preach to Our Government**

And then, next, we are to preach to our country. We're to praise our country when it does right; we're to preach to our country when it does wrong. God's people dare not be silent. Let me tell you something. We dare not identify the Christian faith with the Democrat or the Republican Party. We need to be free to tell both parties to repent and get right with God. We will be civil, but we won't be silent. Nathan warned David. Elijah preached to Ahab. Eliazar warned Jehoshaphat. Daniel preached to Nebuchadnezzar. Moses warned Pharaoh. John the Baptist preached to Herod. And I have an announcement to make. As long as they're killing babies and practicing infanticide, I will not be silent. As long as we have a government that's trying to normalize sexual perversion, I will not be silent. As long as they're handing out condoms to high school and junior high school students in so-called God blessed America, I will not be silent. And as long as a freeborn American is told that he cannot pray out loud anywhere, I will not be silent. We must preach to our government. And we must say to our government whatever is morally wrong is not politically right.

### **E. We Are to Participate in Our Government**

We pay for our government. We pray for our government. We praise our government. We preach to our government. And we participate in our government. Notice again in verse 7. We're to render all their due, custom to whom custom, and so forth. Jesus said, give to Caesar the things that belong to Caesar. And Jesus said, render unto God the things that belong to God. To God is our highest, greatest allegiance. But we don't have a Caesar as they did then, so, when you read a scripture, you ask yourself this question—what did it mean then? How does it apply now? And then, how does it apply

to me personally? What is our Caesar? What is our government? Our government is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, and I'm telling you, friend, if you do not participate in your government, you have not rendered to your Caesar the things that belong to your Caesar. If, for example, you do not vote, you do not inform yourself, in my estimation, you have disobeyed the Lord Jesus Christ. It is inconceivable that God would've ordained human government and told His people to stay out of it. If that is true, who does that leave to run it? Use your head! We as Christians are to participate not on the basis of parties or persons or politics or policies or prince or principles. We are to be informed.

Now, today, if you want to register to vote, we have arranged for you to register to vote—if you have changed your address, and don't want to go back to the old place, and you need to change that so you can vote in your new precinct, if you've never registered to vote. You say, Pastor, this is a church, why don't you do something biblical? That's what I am doing—you render to Caesar that which is Caesar's. My friend, you get involved. You say, Well, my little old vote won't make any difference. Well, in 1645, one vote gave Oliver Cromwell control over all of England. In 1649, Charles the Third of England, one vote caused him to be executed—it was important to him. In 1776, one vote gave America the English language rather than German. In 1839, one vote elected Marcus Morton governor of Massachusetts. In 1845, one vote saved President Andrew Jackson from impeachment. In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States. In 1923, one vote gave Adolf Hitler the leadership of the Nazi party.

#### **F. We Are to Persuade Our Government**

Last of all, we are to persuade our government. Our time is gone. I've got a whole third point—you're still awake. Maybe we'll get to that tonight, but we're to persuade our government. You see, listen. We're not here to start riots and kill an unbeliever for Jesus. Let me tell you something. Our government is a democracy; more literally, it is a republic, a representative rule by law. But all America is based on public opinion. May I tell you, the only hope for America is to change public opinion. Do you know the only thing that can change public opinion? The Word of God! We've got to get the Bible out. Friend, we're not going to out-argue these people. They're blind, they don't see it, and they're selfish and full of greed. They've got to know Jesus Christ. We're supposed to persuade our people. We're to be taking them back one at a time and winning souls to Jesus Christ. I've been to Rome, the Coliseum would seat 50,000 people. They would put the Christians in the Coliseum and make them fight with gladiators, and redden the mouths of lions with their blood, and it was for entertainment. The Caesars were up there looking down upon those people in that Coliseum, but underneath that Coliseum were the catacombs, subterranean tunnels, and there the Christians would meet to

worship, huddled together.

## Conclusion

I want to tell you something, friend. Those people underground who say Jesus is Lord, not Caesar, they were the ones who brought that whole thing in the Coliseum crashing down. That's where the power is. That's where the power is. It's not political influence that we need. It is the power of God that we need. When we change America, we'll change the politics. Amen? Amen and amen.

Let's pray together. Would you pray for America right now, and remember when you're praying for America you're praying for you, friend. O God, God, God, bless America. Lord, we deserve judgment, but we need mercy. Bring this nation, Lord, back to you. Maybe, Lord, the fires in Florida, and the other things that we see, are just, maybe, Lord, they're tokens, Lord, of your love to bring us to our knees. We don't know. Lord, it's beyond us. But God, we need you in America.

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you've never given your heart to Jesus Christ, friend, you need Jesus. Whether America survives or not, there is another kingdom and another king. His name is Jesus, and you need to render unto God the things that are God's, and your life belongs to God. I want you to give it to Him right now. Jesus died for you on the cross. As I said, He bore that capital punishment in your place. And, if you will receive Him, you'll be saved today.

Would you pray a prayer like this: Dear God—just pray it—dear God, dear God—speak to Him—I'm a sinner, Lord; I'm lost. My sin deserves judgment, but I need mercy. I want to be saved. Jesus, Jesus, thank you for dying on that cross for me; thank you for paying for my sin with your blood on the cross. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Pray that prayer from your heart. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you pray it? Then pray this: Lord Jesus, give me the courage to make it public. In your name I pray. Amen.

# Christian Citizenship

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: April 1, 2001**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 13:1–7**

*“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.”*

ROMANS 13:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Reasons for Human Government
    - A. To Restrain Evil
    - B. To Encourage Good
  - II. The Requirements for Human Government
    - A. We Are to Pay for Our Government
    - B. We Are to Pray for Our Government
    - C. We Are to Praise Our Government
    - D. We Are to Preach to Our Government
    - E. We Are to Participate in Our Government
    - F. We Are to Persuade Our Government
  - III. The Restraints on Human Government
- Conclusion

## Introduction

Find, if you would, the book of Romans chapter 13. I want to talk to you today about Christian Citizenship, and what our relationship ought to be to these dear people who have done so much for us and who are willing to do even more. If you don't have a Bible with you, most likely, there will be one there in the rack in the pew right before you. Romans chapter 13—as the choir is finding their place, let's look into the Word of God: “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”—the civil magistrate he's talking about now—“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”—that is, the civil servant—“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. For this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

The Bible has told us—yea, commanded us—that we are to honor those that we are honoring today. Now, what does the Bible have to say about Christian citizenship? Actually, you could put people's attitude into about four categories. First of all, there are those who have just dropped out all together. They say, I don't want to have anything to do with anything that has to do with government, citizenship, voting and so forth. These are those who just have withdrawn. They somehow equate Christian citizenship with the social gospel, and they say, "I'm not interested in all of that. I'm interested in preaching the gospel, and getting people saved." And so, they just drop out, and go off into their little holy huddles.

Now, there are others who have dropped out because they've given up hope. They've just hunkered down. They've said, there's no hope; there's nothing that we can do to change society, nothing we can do to change the government, so they've just dropped out.

And then, there are others who see politics and government as something worldly, something dirty. They don't want to contaminate themselves with it. They say, "Don't mess with it. We're better than that." And somehow, they look down on those who are in politics, and they say it with a laugh and a joke and a sneer about those who are paid by government, work for the government, or in the government.

And then, of course, there are some who have just dropped out because they are intimidated. The ACLU and others have prated so much about the separation of church and state, we think because we're children of God somehow we've been disenfranchised. Well, folks, we're to be involved in government. And, I want to tell you that God has commanded us to be involved. We're going to see that in just a moment.

Now, I said, on the one hand, there are those who have dropped out. On the other hand, there are those who have who have somehow jumped in with such a force, with misguided zeal. These are the ones who think that they can use government as a tool of the church. And somehow they think that government is to be used to maybe wage holy war against the heathen. These are just as dangerous.

Now, where are we going to get the perspective? I mean, how are we going to learn what really we ought to do, what our relationship to government ought to be? Where are we going to get the idea? Well, we're certainly not going to get it from the heathen. They haven't got a clue. We're not going to get it from the politician, who has an ax to grind. We're not going to get it from the liberal, who doesn't believe the Bible. We're going to

get it from the Word of God.

Now, look in this scripture that I just read to you in Romans chapter 13, and we're going to learn some principles. The very first thing I want you to see today is what I want to call the reasons for human government. You'll find that in chapter 13, the first four verses. Look again in chapter 13—Romans 13, first four verses: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers." Now, the word "higher powers" means governmental authorities here. "For there is no power"—that is, no governmental authority—"but of God and the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the..."—governmental authority—"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?"—the authority—"do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: For he..."—the policeman, the firefighter, the Mayor, the Governor—"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."

Now, in this place, God tells us that human government is ordained of God. You say, "what about bad rulers?" Bad rulers are ordained of God. Oh, Pastor, you shouldn't have said that. Well, it's true. It's true. Let me give you some Scripture to prove what I'm talking about. For example, put down in your margin Daniel chapter 2, verse 21. Now, Daniel is talking about the wicked rulers of Babylon, and this is what he said concerning God: "He removeth kings and He setteth up kings." Almighty God does that. He takes kings down, and he brings them up. And then, he said to Nebuchadnezzar, who happened to be a pretty wicked king, in Daniel 2, verse 37: "Thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power and strength and glory." God gave to Nebuchadnezzar his kingdom.

What about old Pharaoh? Was there a more wicked king than Pharaoh? Well, Pharaoh was ordained of God. Romans 9, verse 17: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout all the earth." Pharaoh was wicked. Pharaoh was ruling, but God was overruling.

When the Lord Jesus stood before Pilate—we're going to see that here in the Passion Play—that Roman governor, that calculator who allowed Jesus to be crucified, Pilate, in his pomposity, who was sitting on his dais, and he was saying to Jesus, "Hey, don't you know that I have power to release You or crucify You?" I want you to hear what Jesus said to him in John chapter 19, verse 11: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, if it were not given to thee from above." God gave Pilate power. These men were evil.

Why does God allow evil people to find places of authority? Well, we get about the

kind of government that we deserve. What does that say about us? We get the kind of government we deserve. But whatever kind of government that is there, it is better than anarchy. And to resist the government is to resist God. Look in verse two of this same chapter again: “Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.”

## **I. The Reasons for Human Government**

Now, there are two basic reasons for government.

### **A. To Restrain Evil**

Now, number one: to restrain evil. Look in verses 3 and 4: “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power?—the authority?—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 you 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.” Now, government is here to restrain evil. Have you ever heard anybody say, “Well, you can’t legislate morality”? How many of you have ever heard that? Let me see your hand. And, you know, they’re right. You cannot legislate morality. Now, what I mean by that is, there’s no law on earth that can make anybody good. There’s no law on earth that can make people love. There’s no law on earth that can make people honest. There’s no law on earth that can make people kind—not a law on earth. You cannot legislate morality. That’s why we have to have laws that legislate against immorality. What does law do? It does not make people good. Law restrains evil. Government cannot make us good. Only God can make us good. Do you understand that? Now, government is there not to make us good. Government is there to restrain evil. And so, we have to understand that. The policeman out there on the street, as we saw, there’s a lot of evil in this city, in every city. I would move out of Memphis, Tennessee, and I believe you would too, if there were no police force. Thank God for these people who protect us and restrain evil. I think it’s time we said a good word for our policemen.

Let me read something to you here. What is a policeman? A policeman is many things. He is a son, a brother, a father, an uncle, and sometimes even a grandfather. He is a protector in time of need, and a comforter in time of sorrow. His job calls for him to be a diplomat, a psychologist, a lawyer, a friend, and an inspiration. He suffers from an overdose of publicity about brutality and dishonesty. He suffers far more from the notoriety produced by unfounded charges. Too often acts of heroism go unnoticed, and the truth is buried under all the criticism. The fact is that less than one half of one percent of policeman ever discredit their uniform. That’s a better average than you’ll find among clergymen. A policeman is an ordinary guy who is called upon for extraordinary

bravery for us. His job may sometimes seem routine, but the interruptions can be moments of stark terror. He is the man who faces a half-crazed gunman, who rescues a lost child, who challenges a mob, who risks his neck more than we realize. He deserves our respect and our profound thanks. A policeman stands between the law-abider and the law-breaker. He is the prime reason your home hasn't been burned, your family abused, and your business looted. Try to imagine what might happen if there were no policeman around. Then try to think of ways to make their job more rewarding. Show them the respect you really have—the respect you really have. Offer them a smile and a kind word. See that they don't have to be magicians to raise their families on less than adequate salaries. We think policemen are great. We thank God for all the little boys who said they would be policemen and who kept their promise. We hope you feel the same way. And we hope that you will show it, so there will always be enough good policemen to go around.

That's why we honor them. The Bible says, give them honor. They are ministers of God. And sometimes a policeman may have to take a life. He bears not the sword in vain. Now, I know sometimes a man may feel very guilty, because he says, "Doesn't the Bible say, in Exodus chapter 20, verse 13, 'Thou shalt not kill'?" Yes, but that means, thou shalt do no murder; take no personal vengeance. But God does call upon a man to defend his family and his home. Now, that's Exodus chapter 20, verse 13, but look in Exodus 22, verses 2 and 3: "If a thief be found breaking up and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him. If the sun be risen upon him, there shall be blood shed for him." That is, if you were to kill a man in broad open daylight when there's no reason to it, yes, then, you'll be guilty. "For he should make full restitution. If he have nothing, he shall be sold for his theft."

Now, what did the Old Testament law say? If a man is coming into your home at nighttime, you don't know what his intent is, you can't see: you put him to death—God does not adjudicate you as guilty. But if you wantonly were to put a man to death because he stole something for you, God would not hold you guiltless. Now, what does this tell us? That all murder is killing. But not all killing is murder. The government is ordained of God to bear the sword. Look in verse 4: "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." "The sword" is the symbol of capital punishment. Does the Bible teach capital punishment? Indeed! Exodus chapter 9, verse 6: "Whoso sheddeth man's blood by a man shall his blood be shed. For in the image of God made he man." People want to prate about Exodus 20, verse 13, that says, "Thou shalt not kill." Move over to the next chapter, the very next chapter—Exodus 21, verse 12: "He that smiteth a man so that he die shall surely be put to death." The Bible is a very consistent book. Do you think you're more wise and loving than God Himself?

Listen. What is the purpose of government? Number one: it is to restrain evil. And you say, “But, Pastor, aren’t we supposed to love our enemies?” Indeed, we’re to love our enemies. Look, if you will, in Romans chapter 12, and begin about verse 19: “Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves...”—you’re not to become a vigilante—“avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance 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.” So, as citizens, we are not to become vigilantes. We are not to take vengeance into our own hands. That’s what the Bible teaches.

Now, Romans 12, verse 9, says, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” Now, turn to Romans 13, and you’re going to find out how God does that. In verse 4, “For he”—the civil magistrate—“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.” God says, you’re not to do it. I have my government to do it, and that’s the reason that we have policemen: to restrain evil.

### **B. To Encourage Good**

And then also, to encourage good. Look in verse 3: “For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then be afraid of that power? Do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same.” And so, government is here to restrain evil. It is to encourage good. It cannot make us good, but it can encourage good. And God’s ideal is a free church in a free state. And I thank God for the law enforcement people and the government that gives me the privilege today to do what I’m doing and preach the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, when we have a free church in a free state. That is something, and that wonderful, and I think that is God’s ideal. Now, that’s the reason for government: to restrain evil; to encourage good.

## **II. The Requirements for Human Government**

But what are the requirements for human government? We begin verse 5, and we go right on down. In human government there are certain rights and certain responsibilities. Now, we often hear people talk about the separation of church and state, as if that’s in the Constitution. It’s not in the Constitution. Read the Constitution through. You’ll never find the phrase “separation of church and state.” It’s not found. What is found in the Constitution is this: “Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.”

Now, we believe, therefore, there should be no state-mandated church. Taxes should never be used to support a religious institution. No state-mandated church. No official church—whether it’s Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Catholic, or anything else. But that does not mean, nor did our founding fathers ever think for a moment, that there

should be a separation of God and government. As a matter of fact, the Declaration of Independence says, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights.” You can’t teach creation in school, but this nation was built upon it. All men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. You see, we put, “In God we trust” on our money. Congress opens with prayer. When we stand and salute the flag, we salute the flag as “One nation under God.”

Our founding fathers never believed in separation of God and government. As a matter of fact, Abraham Lincoln said, “I believe it is the duty of all nations, as well as men, to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God”—the duty to own our dependence upon the overruling power of God. The Declaration of Independence from Britain was also a declaration of dependence upon Almighty God.

Now, what is Christian citizenship? What do we do as a church? What is our responsibility? The church is not to be the master of the state. The church is not to be the servant of the state. The church is to be the conscience of the state. We’re able to lift up the Word of God. Never try to separate God from government.

Now, let me give you five duties—five duties—that you have as a Christian citizen.

#### **A. We Are to Pay for Our Government**

Number one: you won’t like this one, but we’re to pay for our government. Look, if you will, in verse 6: “For this cause pay ye tribute also.” Now, the word “tribute,” you just put it down, that means taxes. Tribute would be like income tax. And then, later, he mentions, in verse 7, “custom.” “Custom” would be like a sales tax. We’re to pay taxes. I don’t like that. You don’t like it, but I would like it much less, if we didn’t have a government to pay taxes to. We’re to pay taxes.

Jesus paid taxes. Matthew chapter 17, verses 24 and following: “And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?” Doesn’t He pay taxes? Doesn’t He pay taxes? “He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? Of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? Of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money; that take, and give them for me and thee.” Pay taxes.

Now, Jesus had an unusual way to get His resources. He found a coin in the mouth of a fish. But the point is very clear: we’re to pay for our government. Now, I’m hoping for a tax relief. I hope that you are hoping for that. Increasing taxes are a great danger. And somebody has well said, “A nation is on its last legs when the people get the idea

that half the people don't have to work because somebody will take care of them, and the other half says it does no good to work, because somebody gets all that I work for." A Frenchman said that France fell in yesteryear when people looked at government as a cow to be milked rather than a watchdog to be fed. I agree with all of that. But I am saying, you cannot have government without taxes. We've already said that we are to see to it that the firefighters and the police and those who serve us are paid worthily. And that comes out of our pockets. They work for us.

### **B. We Are to Pray for Our Government**

Now, not only are we to pay for our government, but, folks, we are to pray for our government. If you don't pray for government, you lose your right to complain about anything. First Timothy chapter 2, verses 1 to 3: "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplication, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority: that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all, godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior." We are to pray for our government. Joyce and I make it a practice every Sunday morning to pray for our government. Not just this morning—we did this morning. But we pray for our governmental leaders. We pray for the mayors of our cities. We pray for those who lead us. Every Sunday, we pray for those who lead in America. And we pray for them, whether we agree with them or not. We do exactly what God told us to do. And, friend, if they are wicked—and there are wicked leaders—you ought to pray for them all the more. Proverbs 21, verse 1: "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord. As rivers of water, He turneth it whithersoever He wills." As I have told you, that sometimes wicked rulers are God's reward for wicked people. People want them, and God says, "you can have them." But the Psalms say He gave them the desires of their hearts but sent leanness to their souls. The greatest responsibility for Memphis, Tennessee may not lie in the mayor's office, and for Tennessee in the Governor's office, or in America in the White House and the Oval office. The greatest responsibility is in the hearts of godly people when we pray. Because God—listen to me—God can change a ruler, God can remove a ruler, and God can overrule a ruler. The king's heart is in the hands of the Lord. We're to pray—Proverbs 21, verse 1.

Now, one man was praying for a politician. The politician said, "I appreciate you praying for me. I appreciate you doing what the Bible says—Pray for those in authority." He said, "Well, the Bible says that, but that's not why I'm praying for you. I'm praying for you because the Bible also says, 'pray for them that persecute you.' That's why I'm praying for you." But we are to pray for them.

### **C. We Are to Praise Our Government**

Now, we're to pay for our government, pray for our government; we're to praise our

government. That's what we are doing right now. The Bible says here, in verse 7, we are to give honor to whom honor is due. Now, one thing that really bothers me is that patriotism is becoming passé. I believe in patriotism. I believe in civic pride. Today, everybody is wanting to move us to the homogenization of society, into sort of a one-world government. But we are to love America above other nations. Is that selfish? No, it's not selfish at all. We have a responsibility for America. We're to love Memphis above other cities. We live here. We're to do good to this city.

Now, I love my family like I don't love your family. I love your family. I want your family to prosper. But I love my family in a special way. They are my children. They are my grandchildren. I have a special responsibility to them. And we are to love our government. We are to pray for our government. We are to praise our government. I want to tell you, I make no apology for being a red-blooded, flag-waving American. I love this nation. And with all of her faults, it's still the greatest nation on earth. The Bible says, in 2 Peter 2, verse 19, "To honor the king."

#### **D. We Are to Preach to Our Government**

And not only are we to pay for it, not only are we to pray for it, not only are we to praise it, but folks, let me tell you something else we need to do: we need to preach to our society, and preach to our nation, and preach to this city. We dare not be silent. They think that, somehow, because we're Christians, we're just supposed to go under a rock. No, we're to come out and stand on the rock. We're to say something. We cannot identify the Lord Jesus Christ with any political party, whether it be Democratic, Republican, Independent, Libertarian, or anything else. No. Jesus supersedes all of that. And we need to be free enough as a church, and as a society, to tell every party to repent, to get right with God.

Sometimes people say, "Well, preachers, you know, they ought not to deal in these kinds of things." Well, you'd better go back and read your Bible. Nathan warned David. Elijah preached to Ahab. Eleazar warned Jehoshaphat. Daniel preached to Nebuchadnezzar. Moses was God's prophet to Pharaoh. John the Baptist preached to Herod. We can't be silent. As long as they're killing little babies, I'm not going to be silent. As long as people are trying to normalize sexual perversion, I'm not going to be silent. As long as they are issuing condoms in high school, and teaching sex education without moral values, I'm not going to be silent. We shouldn't be silent. Somebody tells a freeborn American he cannot pray vocally in school, I'm not going to be silent. We need to preach to our government.

#### **E. We Are to Participate in Our Government**

And then, I'm going to tell you something else: we need to participate in our government. Look, if you will, in verse 7: "Render therefore to all their dues." Now,

Jesus said, “give to Caesar that which belongs to Caesar. Give to God that which belongs to God.” What is our Caesar? Our Caesar is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

Now, if our government is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, What is our due? It is to participate in our government. We sin, if we do not. Proverbs 29, verse 2, says, “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked bear rule, the people mourn.” Do you think that God Almighty would have ordained government, and then told His people to stay out of it? No! When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice. The scandal of our time is the bad citizenship of good people.

Now, we need to participate in our government. And I think we could find that out, when we look at this past election, and see how important one vote is. In 1645, one vote gave Oliver Cromwell the control of all England. In 1648, one vote caused Charles the Third of England to be executed. In 1776—you ought to appreciate this: one vote gave America the English language, rather than German. Have you ever thought about that? I’d hate to have to learn German. In 1839, one vote elected Marcus Morgan Governor of Massachusetts. In 1876, one vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the Presidency of the United States. In 1923, one vote gave Adolf Hitler the leadership of the Nazi party.

I’m only one, but I am one. I can’t do everything, but I can do something. And what I can do, I ought to do. And what I can and ought to do, that, by the grace of God, I will do. We are to pay for our government. We are to pray for our government. We are to praise our government. We are to preach to our government. We are to participate in our government. That’s what the Bible teaches.

#### **F. We Are to Persuade Our Government**

Now, we should not only do that, but, folks, we should persuade our government. We need to lead people and, you know, we’re not here to come start a riot for Jesus, or try to force our views on somebody else. I wouldn’t, if I could. I want us to be persuasive in what we do. You know the best thing we can do, the most patriotic thing we can do, is to start a genuine, heaven-sent revival, to bring people to the Lord Jesus Christ, a revival of old-fashioned faith and love in the hearts and homes of Americans.

### **III. The Restraints on Human Government**

Now, I want to close this message thinking not only about the reasons and the requirements for governments, but the restraints on human government. Look again in chapter 13, verse one: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power—no authority—but of God, and the powers that be are ordained of God.” Government cannot command anybody to do anything that is absolutely contrary to the revealed will of God. Submission is not always the same as obedience. Our ultimate

loyalty is to God. And you're going to find out in the Bible that all human authority is limited. The apostles continued to preach when they were commanded not to preach. The midwives spared the little babies when Herod said that they should have been killed. And they just said, we're not going to take the lives of these little babies. Daniel prayed when the law said he was not to pray. He prayed. We need the spirit of Martin Niemoller, who said, back in the time of Nazi Germany, and they put him in a concentration camp and ultimately took his life, but he wouldn't bow the knee to Hitler—he said, "God is my *fuhrer*." We need more people like that. All human authority is limited. And we do as we best we can to obey the laws of God.

But when a minister is ordained in the gospel ministry, when I'm ordained, that doesn't mean that I'm a law to myself. I'm under the authority of God. I'm under the authority of this congregation. When a policeman is in the police force, he's not a law unto himself. He's under the authority of those that are over him. And, when a man is in the army, he's not a law unto himself. He's under the authority of those that are over him. All authority, human authority, is limited. We are to render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, and to God that which is God's, and I refuse to render unto Caesar that which is God's. And we just simply say, yes, there is a restraint upon human government.

## Conclusion

Now, let me just bring this message to a close. Is our hope in the American government or the Tennessee government, or this government here? No, not at all. Our hope, our trust, is in the Almighty. I've been to Rome. I have been to the Coliseum that would seat about 50,000 people. And they took the Christians out there and fed them to the lions in the Coliseum. While they laughed and drank their intoxicating beverages, Christians were put to death. But underneath that Coliseum were the catacombs. And I've been through those labyrinthian passageways under the catacombs. Up there, while they were killing Christians, and there was an ungodly government, a pagan government, and everybody was under the iron boot of Rome, down in the catacombs there were these believers who were worshiping Jesus, and who were praying. And had we been there that day, and had we looked, we would have said, there's not a chance—not a chance on earth—that these little people down there in the catacombs, underground in their prayer meeting, could have done something about what was going on up there. But I want to tell you: those folks started a spiritual revolution that turned that whole thing upside down, and caused a mighty revival that brought the empire, as it was then, crashing down, and exalted the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, I tell you, if you compare Coliseums and catacombs, I want to be in the catacomb crowd. I want to be in the crowd that just says, Lord God, You are God. We have no king but Jesus. Not

Caesar, not George Bush—Jesus is king. We're to love Him, and serve Him, and follow Him.

Now, I say all of that to say this: Thank God for these civil servants who are here today. We love you with all of our hearts. We honor you, and, as a congregation, we thank you. Let's thank them one more time.

Now, we're going to give a gospel invitation this morning. You know, there are two kingdoms. There's the human kingdom and then there's the kingdom of heaven. And, if we lived in perfect peace here on earth, and perfect tranquility, and died and went to hell, what good is that? To know Jesus Christ means, first of all, every sin is forgiven. Number two: it means that Christ lives in our heart, to give us peace, and power, joy, and purpose; to enable us to live as we ought to live, and to build our homes. And, number three: it means that, when we die, we go straight to heaven.

How is a person saved? Not by being good. Not by giving their money. Not being baptized. Not by being baptized. Not by believing certain theological precepts. Not by being a member of a church. All of these are well and good, in their place, but salvation is a gift of God. The Bible says. "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life." Eternal life is a gift, and like any gift, it has to be received. No matter how valuable a gift is, if you don't receive it, it will do you no good. It would only insult the giver.

Well, how do you receive salvation? If I would offer you a material gift like this pen, I would say, here, this is for you. You could take it by sight. You could take it with your hand. Salvation is a spiritual gift. You don't receive it by sight. You receive it by faith. You don't take it with your hand; you take it with your heart. You, by faith, receive the Lord Jesus. So the Bible says, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you'll be saved." And I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, if you today will trust Jesus, He will forgive every sin. He will cleanse you. He will come into your heart to give you peace and power you've never known. And when you die, He'll take you to heaven. But He wants you to mean business. Just repeating words can't save you. But trusting Him will.

Would you pray? Bow your heads in prayer. And I want you to pray this prayer after me, if you can pray it and mean it. 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. Tell Him that. I do trust You, Jesus. Right now, this moment, with all of my heart, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus. Pray it and mean it. Save me, Lord Jesus. Pray it with all of your heart. Save me, Jesus. Did you ask Him? Then, by faith, pray this way: Thank You for doing it. Thank You. Now, begin to make me the person you want me to be. And help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, here's what I want you to do: I want

you to make it public this morning. You say, in front of all of these people? Yes. If there were a million people here, I'd want you to do it. I'm going to ask you, when we stand and sing, to leave your seat and come forward. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a minister to welcome you. And I want you to say to him, if you can, I am trusting Jesus. We'll rejoice with you. We'll give you some Scripture to stand on, and seal it in prayer. Jesus said, "If you confess Me before men, I'll confess you before My Father." Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of Me before men, I'll be ashamed of you before the Father." Walking the aisle doesn't save you. It's what it indicates that saves you: that you're not ashamed of Jesus Christ, that you're trusting Him. And He'll save you this morning. If you're in the balcony, rather than coming all the way down here, just go to that banner over there that says "Redeemer," the one to my right, or that one that says "Messiah" to my left. Somebody will be waiting there to welcome and receive you.

Now, there are others here today who may need a church home. We're not looking for mere joiners, but, if you need a church home, and you know the Lord Jesus Christ, if you believe as we believe, and you want to be a part of the Bellevue family of friends, I invite you to come down any of these aisles, and say to the minister, "I want to place my membership here," and he'll tell you how you can become a member of this church.

# Freedom Is Not Free

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 4, 1982

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 13:1–7

*“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.”*

ROMANS 13:1

## Outline

Introduction

I. Strong Character Produces Liberty

II. Weak Character Produces Bondage

Conclusion

## Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and turn to Romans chapter 13—Romans chapter 13. I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: “Freedom is Not Free”—“Freedom is Not Free.” Romans chapter 13, beginning in verse 1—here is the admonition of the great Apostle Paul: he says, *“Let every soul be subject [to] the higher powers”*—now, the word *powers* here means “authorities,” and he’s talking about the civil magistrates—*“For there is no power but of God: [and] the powers that be are ordained of God”*—now, he means by that that human government is 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”*—that is, “the civil magistrate”—*“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. And for this cause pay ye tribute also”*—that means, because of this, we have to, every April the 15<sup>th</sup>—April the 15<sup>th</sup>—pay our income tax—*“And for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour”* (Romans 13:1–7).

Now, the Bible says that human government is ordained of God. And, governments

around the world—not just merely our government, therefore; all of the governments in the world—in some way, to some respect, are ordained of God. Now, that’s a very interesting thing. Why do some people have one government and another people have another government if government is ordained of God? Well, it’s a very interesting thing, but people generally get the kind of government they want and the kind of government they deserve. Wicked rulers are God’s reward for wicked people. Good rulers are God’s reward for a righteous people. And, Alexander Hamilton said this: “People get the kind of government they deserve.”

Now, I want you to go to the Old Testament with me for a moment and turn to 1 Samuel chapter 8, and look, if you will, in verse 4 for an illustration of this—1 Samuel 8 and verse 4: *“Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, And [he] said”*—“and said”—*“unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations”*—now, up until this time it had been a theocracy, and God, the Lord their God, had been their King. But, they weren’t satisfied with that; they were not satisfied with God ruling in their hearts, so they said to Samuel, “We want to be like everybody else. Make us a king.” Then, verse 6—*“But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD”*—now, I want you to notice verse 7—*“And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee”*—that is, “Give them exactly what they want”—*“for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them. According to all the works which they have done since the day that I brought them up out of [the land of] Egypt even unto this day, wherewith they have forsaken me, and served other gods, so do they also unto thee. Now therefore hearken unto their voice...”* (1 Samuel 8:4–9). But, He said, “Go ahead and warn them what they’re going to get”—and you can read the rest of the passage—and God says, “Oh, you want a king, do you? Well, that’s just what you deserve. As a matter of fact, I have one on the drawing board for you. I have one that’s coming down the tube. He’ll be ready in just a moment.” That is, “I am going to ordain a government for you; and it will be the government you desire, and it will be the government that you deserve.”

Now, I want you to understand that human government is ordained of God, but God generally gives people the government they deserve and the government they desire. That really means, ladies and gentlemen, that our government is not going to be any better than we are. There are two points in this simple message tonight, and I hope that God the Holy Spirit will give me the strength and the power to lay them upon your heart. Point number one is this: that strong character produces liberty. Point number two: Weak character produces bondage. That’s what I want you to see. I want you to see that freedom is not free, that strong character is necessary if we’re going to have liberty.

And, if we do not have strong character—if we have weak character—we are destined to bondage.

Now, there are three things that are inseparably wed together, and these three God has married. It is a marriage of three, not two. These are three things that go together: authority, responsibility, and liberty. Now, get that in your heart. These things are inseparably mixed together: authority, responsibility, and liberty.

Now, let me illustrate what I'm talking about. A little baby has no authority whatsoever. Now, the reason that a little baby has no authority is that a little baby can accept no responsibility, and you can't give to a baby authority because that baby would not know what to do with that authority. He couldn't exercise authority because the baby is not a responsible person. Therefore, the baby really doesn't have any responsibilities. It doesn't have to worry about a thing, but it has absolutely no liberties. It cannot decide to go when it wants to go or do what it wants to do. It's carried around and force-fed, and all of these things happen to the little baby because the baby has no responsibility. Therefore, the baby has no authority; and, therefore, the baby has no liberty. But, as the baby continues to grow, and as the baby matures, the baby takes on more and more responsibility. And, as the baby takes on more and more responsibility, then the baby is given more and more authority. And, when the baby has more and more authority, the baby has more and more liberty. These things are linked together. And so, the more mature we are, the more responsible we are, the more authority that is given to us. And, the more authority we have, the more liberty we have. And so, dear friend, responsibility, authority, and liberty are inseparably linked in God's plan.

Now, what happens when an adult grows up and all of a sudden he decides that he's no longer going to act responsibly, responsibly? He doesn't act in a responsible way. As a matter of fact, he acts very irresponsible. What do we do when he gets totally irresponsible? We put him in jail, and we take away his liberties; and he has no more liberties. He goes right back where he was as a little baby. Now, he doesn't have any responsibilities, either. He doesn't have to turn out the lights, but he can't unlock the door. You see, dear friends, when his responsibility diminishes, then his authority diminishes. And, when his authority diminishes, his liberty is gone. And, a man in jail is a man who has refused to live responsibly; and, therefore, his liberty is gone, and his authority is nil. Do you understand what I'm saying? These three things are linked together. They must always be.

Now, what is true for individuals is also true for a nation, for a nation is nothing but a composite of the individuals. And so, I want you to see, dear friend, that the character, which is another word for responsibility—and I'll use the words *character* and *responsibility* interchangeably through this message—the character of a people, of a nation, and the liberty of that people and that nation are inseparably linked. We will have

more or less liberty according to the measure of our character. If we have weak character—that is, little responsibility—we will find our liberties taken away. If we have strong character—if we accept strong responsibilities—then we’re going to see that we have great liberty. Wherever—mark it down, and listen to me plainly—wherever there is a loss of character there is a growth of government. To the degree that our people are weak in character, to that degree you have big government.

Do you know why the United States government has gotten so big? And, do you know why everything today is organized, and why we are regimented, and stamped, and marked, and coerced, and computerized as we are? Because, dear friend, there has been a loss of character in the American people. We cannot be irresponsible and remain free. That’s what I’m trying to say to you. There is no way that this nation or any nation can be irresponsible and remain free.

## **I. Strong Character Produces Liberty**

Now, the reason that we have the Fourth of July to begin with—the reason that we have our Independence Day—is that those early Christians—those early citizens, rather—were responsible people. There was a great birth of character in our nation.

I told you this morning that the Pilgrim fathers came over here seeking religious freedom and seeking the face of God. But, there was a struggle in the colonies; there was a struggle with the deists who just simply wanted to recognize a supreme being—sort of like a being that wound up a clock, and threw it out, and let it run down. They didn’t believe in a personal God, an eminent God, who dwelt in the affairs of God. But, there were others who believed in a personal God, an eminent God, a God to whom we must give an account, a God before whom we must bow. And, from the years of 1740 to 1770 there was a mighty revival in America. That revival was led by Jonathan Edwards, who preached his famous sermon, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” And, that revival was led by a faggot of fire named George Whitfield, a man who preached with purity, and fervor, and passion. And, there were others who were preaching up and down the breadth of America, and there was a great, emotional, blazing, passionate revival. And, because of revival, and because of repentance, and because these people were getting right, there were certain things that happened in America just before the Declaration of Independence and just before the writing of our Constitution—because of this revival that was called, incidentally, “The Great Awakening.” Schools were built, and most of the schools, if not all of the schools, in early America were built by Christians. Our great colleges and universities were founded by Christians. But, not only were schools built; principles were instilled in the people, and there was a growth in these people of something called character. And, because of this character—because of this growth of character—they drew what we call today “The Declaration of Independence.”

Now, some people will take umbrage with you and resent it if you call America a Christian nation or if you say that America ever was once a Christian nation. But, I found out—and you'll be interested to note—that in 1892, the United States Supreme Court made an exhaustive study of the supposed connection between Christianity and the government of the United States. And, after reviewing hundreds of volumes of historical documents, the Supreme Court of the United States of America asserted—and I quote: “These references and a volume of unofficial declarations to the mass of organic or...utterances that this is a religious people, a Christian nation”—“These references and a volume of unofficial declarations declare that this is a religious people, a Christian nation.” And, William O. Douglas affirmed that—and I quote the Justice of the Supreme Court: “We are a religious people, and our institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.”

Did you know that, when the Constitution of the United States of America was adopted and sent out to the states for ratification, there were only three-and-a-half million people here? And, it is conservatively estimated that two million of them were Bible-believing, Bible-practicing Christians, who were primarily Calvinistic in their orientation, in their belief. They believed in the work ethic. They believed in personal responsibility. They believed in the Word of God. And, because of that, there was character. And, out of this Christian character came the Declaration of Independence; out of this Christian character came the drafting of the Constitution of the United States of America. And, when the Constitution of the United States of America was drafted, it was written by a characterized people for a characterized people. Now, it's very important that you understand that our Constitution was written by people with character, and it was supposed to be carried out by people who have character. And, they had this premise and this understanding: that the best government is the least government; the best government—the least government, rather—is the best government. And so, they formed what we call today a “constitutional government.”

Now, we like to call the United States of America a “democracy,” but that's not altogether accurate, although it is a form of a democracy. When we pledged allegiance to the flag of the United States of America just a few moments ago, we said, “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the”—what?—“republic for which it stands”—“the republic for which it stands.” And, what is a republic? A republic is a government based not primarily upon the will of the masses, but it is a government that is based upon law. It is a representative government with the consent of those who are governed, and our fathers wrote out a very beautiful balance. But, we have a government that is based in law, and those laws have come from the Word of God and the principles of the Word of God. And indeed, this was the American dream. But, I want to say again that the kind of government that our Founding Fathers formed, and the things that were written into the Constitution, were written by a characterized people for a

charactered people and will only be maintained by a charactered people. And, when we lose our responsibility, at that moment, our authority is gone. And, when our authority is gone, our liberty will be gone. And, the greater the loss of character, the greater the growth of government and the least liberty we're going to have. Liberty is nothing more or less than responsibility assumed.

Now, some people think that liberty means everybody's free to do what he wants to do: do your thing; have your fling; let it all hang out; everybody is free—free speech, free sex, free liquor, free this, free that. It is not so. Liberty is responsibility. The kind of freedom that some people are calling liberty is license, and I want to tell you, that is not liberty; that is license. And, when there's a loss of character, there is only a moment of time or only a period of time that will come when those people who think that they have freedom will find out that they are living under a totalitarian government. Liberty is not some sort of a thing that is just simply written on a sheet of paper. Liberty is plain hard work.

Now, where does the character come from? I've said, dear friend, that your government is a reflection of your character. Now, where does this character come from? The character must come from God. To maintain liberty, there must be something that happens in the heart. When God had His ancient people, God first of all said, "I will be their King. I will rule in their hearts." And, had they continued to let God rule in their hearts, had they not refused to obey Him and to hearken to Him, God would have ruled in their heart; they never would have needed a king. That is, the stronger the heart, the less government that you need.

You see, dear friend, it's wonderful when you take the policeman off the street corner and put him in your heart. We're thinking, "Oh, we have...we need more policemen, more policemen, more policemen, more policemen." No, we need a revival! That's what we need. We need for God to do something in the hearts, and the lives, and the bosoms of people so that there will be a birth of character. Our nation is suffering from a lack of character. And, dear friend, to the degree that we refuse to let God reign in our hearts—to that degree—we're going to have other people to reign over us.

Now, let me tell you something, dear friend: the further we get away from the principle of God ruling in the heart, the more controls God is going to place above us. Whatever government we have is ordained of God. And, the difference between freedom and slavery is simply this: Where are the laws? In freedom, the law is in here. In slavery, the law comes down from above. That's the difference between freedom and slavery. When free people have enough character to govern themselves, and to love God, and to follow God, and to live by the principles of the Word of God, and when the policeman is in their heart, then, to that degree, those people are given authority. And, when they have that authority, they have liberty. But oh, when they do not have that

character, then there is some totalitarian government that is going to subjugate those people and going to put those people under.

Now, what I'm trying to say is this: that we have our Constitution and our liberties because of the character of our forefathers. If we lose the character that they had, then we're going to cease to enjoy the privileges that they enjoyed. And, all of the blessings that we have in America are the byproduct of that character. As we had our revolution, as we had our Constitution, as we had our government, then what happened? There was an Industrial Revolution, and we became a mighty industrial power. There was military strength. The American lived in safety. There was a birth of culture. There was a birth of prestige. As I said this morning, the American was admired and respected around the world. There was that grand American privilege of being an American and not being ashamed of it. And so, the very first thing I want you to notice—I want you to get it down in your heart: strong character is necessary for liberty—strong character is necessary for liberty. Our Constitution was written by a characterized people for a characterized people.

## **II. Weak Character Produces Bondage**

Now, the second point in this simple message tonight: a weak character, therefore, produces bondage. And, I want to tell you how we got into the mess that we're in tonight and what happened to America.

The great American dream began to dissolve. We went to World War I. We won World War I. But somehow, when we won the war, we lost the peace. We were drunk with the sense of our own power. We'd forgotten that it was God that had blessed us and protected us. And so, we went into the flapper age; we went into the Roaring Twenties. We lost our morality. We took our eyes from God.

In 1929, the Stock Market Crash came, and our house of cards came tumbling in upon our heads. We wanted self-government, but we did not want to exercise self-control. We thought that we could have self-government without self-control. We thought somehow that we could divorce responsibility, authority, and liberty, but "these hath God married, and no man shall part." And so, the people after World War I began to relinquish their responsibilities; they began to look more and more to the government. And, as character disintegrated, there was a loss of liberty, and government became more and more powerful, because I want to remind you again, the weaker the character, the stronger the government. And then, people came, in their mind, to equate security with dependency on the government. No longer were they looking to God and within themselves for security. They were looking to Uncle Sam, and this growing government then began to provide for the people.

Now, whenever a government begins to provide for the people, the people like it.

The people like to get in a government line and let the government give them something. But, any thinking person knows that the government cannot give what the government does not first take, but people like to think that they're getting something from the government. But, as the government, then, begins to give, and people begin to depend upon the government, the government grows more and more. And, as the government grows more and more, and as the character of the people weakens more and more, the government assumes more and more authority. And, once the government gets more and more authority, then the government begins to regulate.

Have you been regulated lately? Have you been asked to fill out any forms? Do they have your number? Of course they do. And, we're like little robots now, and Big Brother who is taking care of us is also Big Brother who tells us when to go and when to come, because people who want to be fed by the government will sooner or later be controlled by the government.

Years ago, I heard a story about a particular neighborhood that had some wild hogs that were rooting up the neighborhood gardens and so forth. And, they tried to capture the hogs; they tried to catch them, and no one could catch them. And, there was one man who said, "I can catch them. I know how to do it," and all he did was go out in the woods and put down something the hogs loved to eat, some corn or whatever, and left. And, after a few days, those wild hogs—those wary hogs—after they'd circled that food, temptation overcame them, and they moved in and ate it. The next day—more food. Several weeks he did that. Then, he went out and put one fence post up—just one—and continued to feed them. Then, after a while, another fence post—and continued to feed them. And then another, and then one strand of wire, and then another strand of wire—slowly he did this until finally the trap was built. And, when the wild hogs went in to eat for the last time, the bar was dropped, and, of course, they were caught and destroyed. And, he said with a smile on his face, "Anything I can feed, I can control." And, ladies and gentlemen, when we begin to look to a government as our source and our sustenance, then, at that moment, we begin to get weak in our character, and the government begins to regulate us.

Now, I want to say again—listen to me now—the government will grow as powerful as the character of the people permit it to grow, and liberty will last only as long as character and responsibility last. Do you know what's happened to us in America? Today, almost half of the people work to support the other half. Do you know how much we spent last year on dependency? Do you think you could spend a thousand dollars a minute, Brother Tommy? You say your wife could. A thousand dollars a minute! If you were to spend a thousand dollars a minute, you'd have to spend a thousand dollars a minute for 500 years to spend as much money as we spent last year on dependency. People depended upon the government, spending it at a thousand dollars a minute for

500 years. As character diminishes, dependency grows and liberty vanishes from the face of the earth.

Dear friend, I tell you, the government now has taken over responsibility that should belong to the Church, that should belong to the family, that should belong to the individual. We ought to be taking care of our children. We ought to be taking care of our orphans. We ought to be taking care of our elderly. I heard today on the television a person who was arguing against President Ronald Reagan, and he said, “When your baby is born, who will be there? Will Ronald Reagan be there to give your baby milk?” Whoever said he was supposed to be? I thought mothers were supposed to feed their babies, but the idea is now, “When I have a baby, I want a government to feed my baby.” Well, I tell you, my dear friend, when you have a government that’s going to feed you, you’re going to have a government that can control you, for any thing that allows itself to be fed will sooner or later become the slave of that thing that feasts. I want you to remember what Alexander Hamilton said. He said that “people get the kind of the government they deserve.” “There is no authority but that is of God, and the authorities that be are ordained of God” (Romans 13:1).

Now, if you want to find out, therefore, what’s wrong with America, just simply go look in the mirror. You say, “But wait a minute—there’s a lot right with America.” And, you’re right, but do you know why we’re enjoying blessings in America yet? The blessings that we are enjoying in America are residual blessings. We are living in the afterglow of a once great nation. We’re living in the shadow of a Constitution that is quickly receding over the horizon of yesterday. Do you know what happens to a family fortune? Someone has sloganized it this way: “The first generation generates. The second generation speculates. The third generation dissipates, and the fortune is gone.” Now, I want to tell you that same thing has happened to America. The first generation has generated. The second generation has speculated. We are now living in a generation that is dissipating, and before long, our American heritage will be spent and will be gone.

Government is but a reflection of the desire of the people. It seems incredible, but it is so. In 1 Samuel chapter 8, God said, “If the people want a king, it’s not My will that they have one. But, if they want one, they will have one” (1 Samuel 8:7–9). And, therefore, they had a government. They got ole Saul, and Saul got them in all kinds of trouble because they did not seek the will, the face, of God. They didn’t need a king; they already had a King. The scriptures say, “*The Holy One of Israel is [thy] king*” (Psalm 89:18).

Now, what’s going to happen to America if we let the trend continue? What is going to happen to our nation if we fail to become a characterized people? And, I want to say that this character can only come from God; it can only come from a spiritual revival.

What will happen to us, however, if we refuse to let God rule from within?

There will be, first of all, a disappearance of the middle class. That's what's going to happen. We are going to become like third-world countries. Do you know what there are in third-world countries—what there is in third-world countries? There is the ruling class and then the rest of the people—the very, very rich; the very, very poor; very few in between. And, those who are very rich are those who govern. They live by the “golden rule”: those who have the gold make the rule. And, that's the way they live—those who are very rich. And, they have authority, and the middle class is gone. And, you see, that's what's happening in America. There is a systematic war that is being waged against the middle class.

In 1930, dear friend, one out of every 205 people worked for the government. Today, one out of five people work for some form of the government. There is one dependent today for every three workers. And so, therefore, when you go to work, you must work from January into about June paying taxes before you make anything for yourself. January, February, March, April, May, June you are working for a government that has learned that it can take from the people, give back to the people, control the people, and thereby eliminate the middle class, where all you have is a ruling bureaucracy and the rest of the masses. And, we will become like the other third-world people. And, my dear friend, God did not plan that for us. God did not ordain that for us. That is not biblical. The middle class is being systematically destroyed.

And, when the government takes over... And, incidentally, let me tell you, dear friend, that if you were to compare the average wages of the government worker with the average wages of the other people, you'd find out that the government worker makes 46 percent more. As the money flows that way, and as these other people become dependent upon the government, then the middle class disappears; the wage earner—the producer—is no longer there; and the nation is printing inflated money; and we get into the financial spiral—the inflationary spiral—and all of the rest of it.

And, why does this happen? I'll tell you why it happens—listen to me: it is nothing more or less than a loss of character. The problem is not in Washington; the problem is with the people. Wicked rulers are God's reward for a wicked people. Alexander Hamilton said it—and I say it again: “People have the kind of government they deserve.” *“The powers that be are ordained of God”* (Romans 13:1). And, if we demand a king, a wicked king—if we cannot trust in God—then God will give us the desire of our heart, but it'll be the wrong thing when we get it.

And, once a government becomes strong and the people become weak, then, in order for that government to stay in power, that government must practice mind control. You see, the government has no business trying to control our thoughts, but now the United States government is trying to do that. You see, what is the purpose of

government? The purpose of government is not to provide for us; the purpose of government is to protect us and to protect life and property rights, but not to sustain us.

Have you ever thought about this phrase in our Constitution—that we are to “provide for the common defense [and] promote the general welfare”? You know, the Framers of the Constitution were very wise men. Now, listen to that phrase again: “provide for the common defense; promote the general welfare.” Notice the change there: they did not say, “Provide for the general defense and provide for the general welfare.” No, no. “Provide for the general defense; promote the general welfare.” Now, you see, they knew that you and I could not go out and build an army. They knew that a terrible thing would happen if every man strapped a .45 to his hip and went out to protect himself. And so, we need to protect the general welfare, or provide for the protection of our people, and protect life and property. We are to provide for the common defense, but we are only to promote the general welfare, the government. That’s the business of the government. And, *the government, therefore, is not a cow to be milked; it’s a watchdog to be fed.*

But now, this government—this government—says, “But, I will provide the general welfare, but in order for me to do this, then I must have your mind.” And so, now we have federal education, and now we have a humanistic thought. It’s amazing if you’ll go and read some of the textbooks and leaf through them, as I have, to see what portion of those textbooks is given to real, good, red-blooded, Christian, American values. You’ll find out that for a large part, in many of the textbooks, this has been taken out. And, you’ll find that our children today are not hearing these things taught. The government now is beginning to control the minds of these young people, and they’re going to school and studying such things as values clarification, the glories of the welfare state, one-world government. They’re learning that “religion is the opiate of the people” (Karl Marx). You see, a totalitarian government must somehow control the minds of those over which it rules. Hitler said in 1920, “You give me the minds of the children, and in one generation I’ll give you a fascist super state.” He got the minds of the children, and he got a fascist super state. Stalin said principally the same thing in 1900, and the Bolshevik Revolution was on.

So, what has happened to us? We have a weak character. Because we have a weak character, we have begun to take from the government and depend upon the government. The government has taken from us and given it back to us. And then, the government has taken more and more control until finally the government has taken control of the minds of the youth of America. And, humanism is in, the X-rated textbook is in, sex education is in, and God and prayer are out. And, the mind is being controlled, and young people will come up in America who will not know, and will not understand, and will not believe what you and I know, and understand, and believe.

## Conclusion

You say, “Pastor, you’re painting a dark picture.” Well, as long as there’s God, there’s hope. But, I want to say—I want to underscore, I want to re-iterate—what I tried to say this morning: that the only hope—the only hope, the only hope—of America is a spiritual revival, because the Constitution was written by a characterized people for a characterized people; and it can only be sustained by a characterized people, and character comes from God. To the degree that we get God in our hearts—to that degree—we can take America back for righteousness and decency. America needs a new birth of freedom, and our liberties will come when we have revival.

I said this morning—I want to say it again: we do not need a majority; “[we] are the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). Now notice, He didn’t say we’re the pepper, and He didn’t say we’re the sugar. “[We] are the salt” (Matthew 5:13). And, salt cleanses, and salt purifies, and salt preserves, and salt penetrates, and salt irritates. But, what did Jesus say? “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt [loses its] savour”—if the salt loses its saltiness—“it is...good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under [the] foot”—under the feet—“of men” (Matthew 5:13). Do you know what’s happening today? In the courts across the land, Christians are being walked on; they’re being trampled. And, our churches are wrecks. Did you know, today in America, pastors are being put in jail for standing on their constitutional rights? Did you know that? Did you know that some terrible things are happening in America? And, did you know the reason why Christians are being walked on? “If the salt [loses its saltiness]...it is...good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under [the feet] of men” (Matthew 5:13). God, help us to be salty. God, help us to understand that Jesus taught us that we’re to be the salt; we’re to be the light (Matthew 5:13–14).

Now, there are some people—say, “Hey, buddy, don’t mix religion and politics.” That would be like saying, “Don’t mix salt and fish. Put the salt in one barrel and the fish in another barrel.” And, what good is it going to do? No, my dear friend, we’re the salt—not of the Church; we’re “the salt of the earth” (Matthew 5:13). We’re the light—not of the Church; we “are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).

It’s time that God’s people understood who they were and what they were, and it’s time that we started being salty. It’s time that we started letting our light shine. It’s time that we got on our knees. It’s time that we prayed to God. It’s time that we said, “O God, bless America. God, give us a revival.” And, I want to tell you something, friends: we cannot just stand up and demand liberty. That would be like a 12-year-old demanding the keys to the family car. You want liberty? Then gain responsibility. Responsibility brings authority, and authority brings liberty. And, I tell you, when we start becoming responsible, when we start taking care of our children, when we start taking care of our parents, when we start paying our bills, when we start doing our work, and when we

start living like a people of God and like this book teaches, then perhaps God will give us a new birth of liberty.

And, the Constitution was written by a characterized people for a characterized people. *“The powers that be are ordained of God”* (Romans 13:1). Proverbs 29:2: *“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn.”* God, help us to reclaim our heritage, and may God bless America.

I want you to bow your heads in prayer. God our Father, help us to understand that freedom isn't free—that it's the result of repentance, and faith, and character that assumes responsibility and therefore deserves liberty. And Father, I just pray tonight that You'd help us as a church to be salty. Help us, as Christians, to let our lights shine. Help us, dear God, to be full of love, not to try to enforce our beliefs on any body, but, O God, to use the power of divine persuasion. And, may they see the beauty of Jesus in us. We pray for our President. We pray for our Congress. We pray for our governor. We pray for our mayors. We pray for our city council, and we pray, dear Lord, for all of those who are in authority over us, that we might live quiet and peaceable lives. In Jesus's name. Amen.

# The Bible, War, and Peace

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: March 17, 1991**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 13:1–7**

*“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.”*

ROMANS 13:1

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Plague of War
- II. The Prophecy of War
- III. The Perplexities of War
  - A. Is It Right for a Nation to Go to War?
  - B. Does a Government Have the Right to Take a Life?
  - C. What Are the Principles of a Just War?
    1. The Cause Must Be Just
    2. Your Intentions Must Be Noble
    3. A War Ought to Be a Last Resort
    4. A War Must Use Limited Means
  - D. Should a Child of God Blindly Obey His Government in All Instances?

Conclusion

- A. We Are to Work and Pray for Peace
- B. We, as a Nation, Need to Refuse to Trust in Armaments, Patriot Missiles, and Smart Bombs
- C. We Must Never Rejoice over Our Enemy and His Downfall
- D. We Must Endeavor to Bring This Nation to Her Knees in Revival
- E. We Must Bring Souls to Jesus Christ
- F. We Need to Pray for the Lord’s Kingdom to Come

## Introduction

Today, I’m speaking on the subject “The Bible, War, and Peace”—“The Bible, War, and Peace.” Now, we’ve just come through a time of war as a nation, and we are going to give thanks to God in a very special way for the victory that God has given us. I have received a communication from The White House that will be made public. It is from the Office of the Press Secretary. It is calling for national days of thanksgiving, April 5–7 of this year. I cannot read it all, but I want to share something with you. It is by the President of the United States of America—a proclamation.

Here's what our President has said: "As the psalmist wrote, 'O, give thanks to the Lord, for He is gracious. His mercy endures forever.' Almighty God has answered the prayers of millions of people with the liberation of Kuwait and the end of offensive operations in the Persian Gulf region. As we prepare to welcome home our courageous servicemen and women and join in the joyful celebrations of the Kuwaiti people, it is fitting that we give thanks to our Heavenly Father, our help and shield, for His mercy and protection."

And then, skipping some material: "As we unite in thanksgiving to Almighty God, let us pray in a special way for the innocent men, women, and children, wherever they may be, who have suffered as a result of the conflict in the Gulf. Recalling the words of President Wilson shortly after World War I, let us seek forgiveness for any errors of act or purpose and pray for God's help and guidance on the way that lies ahead. May the resolution of remaining questions and concerns, especially the return of all prisoners of war and the freeing of those who are detained, be as timely and as certain as this victory in battle."

And then, again, I want you to listen to our President: "Finally, seeing before us the promise of a safer, more peaceful world, one marked by respect for the rule of law, let us offer all these entreaties in a spirit of faith, humility, and gratitude, seeking reconciliation with all peoples. In so doing, we recall the timeless prayer found in Scripture: 'Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory. For all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine, and thou reignest over all. In thine hand is power and might, and in thine hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all.' Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee and praise thy glorious name. As the psalmist wrote, 'Come, behold the works of the Lord. He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth.' Now, therefore, I, George Bush, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim April 5–7, 1991, as national days of thanksgiving. I ask that Americans gather in homes and places of worship to give thanks to Almighty God for the liberation of Kuwait, for the blessings of peace and liberty, for our troops and families and our nation. In addition, I direct that the flag of the United States be flown on all government buildings. I urge all Americans to display the flag. And, I ask that bells across the country be set ringing at 3:00 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, on April 7, 1991, in celebration of the liberation of Kuwait and the end of hostilities in the Persian Gulf." And, it is signed by George Bush, and I thank God for that. And, I thank God for His victory.

But, we have come to a question. The question deals with war itself. What does the Bible have to say about war? And, how is the question going to be asked? How is it going to be answered? Is it going to be answered by the warmonger, the profiteer, the imperialist, or is it going to be answered by the pacifist? Or, is it going to be answered according to the tender hearts of mothers who see their sons march off to war? Is it

going to be answered in the Pentagon, the halls of Congress? Who has the answer? Do we look to the hawk who seems to savor war? Do we look to the dove who wants to refuse war? Do we look to the wise old owl who will sit on a limb and philosophize about war? Do we look to the sparrow, frightened over the prospect of war? My dear friend, we're going to look today to the Word of God and see what God has to say on this subject. And, if you'll listen, there will be words of instruction, words of comfort, and words of hope.

Romans 13:1: the Bible says, *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: [and] the powers that be are ordained of God”*—now, when he uses the word *powers* here, he's talking about authority: civil authority, governmental authority. And then, he says—*“Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation”*—that means judgment—*“For rulers”*—that is, governmental authorities—*“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”*—that is, the governmental magistrate, the ruler, whomever he may be—*“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”*—underscore that: he, the governmental authority, 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...for conscience sake. For this cause ye pay...tribute also”*—that means “we pay taxes; we pay tribute, also”—*“tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour.”* (Romans 13:1–7)

## I. The Plague of War

Let me speak with you this morning out of my heart, first of all, about what I want to call “the plague of war”—“the plague of war.” Look, if you will, in verse 3: *“For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil.”* (Romans 13:3) Ladies and gentlemen, we live in a world, like it or not, plagued with war because it is a world that is filled with evil. No one in his right mind will glorify war. No one in his right mind can love war. If you are a child of God, if you are born again, you are, by nature, as a child of God, a peacemaker. That is your nature. And, I want this to be said up front, lest somebody will say at the close of this message, “Adrian Rogers tried to glorify war. He's one of those who loves war”: I hate war. And, every child of God is, by nature, a peacemaker. The Bible exhorts us to pray for peace. The Bible exhorts us to seek peace. The Bible exhorts us to pursue peace. The Bible exhorts us to hope for peace. And, Jesus Christ said, *“Blessed are the peacemakers.”* (Matthew 5:9) I want you to keep that in your heart and in your mind, lest you misunderstand what I'm about to say.

But, I want to say, my dear friend, you would make a mistake—a deep mistake, a scriptural error—if you were to say that war is always wrong. War is always ugly. War is always painful, but war is not always wrong. People who think that we should never fight in a war do not understand the nature of human nature. They do not understand the evil that lures in the hearts and minds of people. James 4:1–2: James answers the question of war; he says, *“From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?”* (James 4:1) What he is saying is that we can’t get along with one another because there’s no peace in the human heart. *The heart of the human problem is the problem of the human heart.* *“From whence come”—he says—“wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even [from the] lusts that war in your [hearts]?”* (James 4:1) It is wicked, my dear friend, and foolish to glorify war. But oh, how foolish it is to ignore the wickedness in human hearts!

## II. The Prophecy of War

There is the plague of war. May I also say there is the prophecy of war? The Lord Jesus Christ has told us that we’re never going to come in this age to a time where there will not be either a war or a rumor of wars. You might want to put in your margin there Matthew 24:6–7, where the Lord Jesus said, concerning the course of the age and the things that would transpire before He comes again—and I say, *“Even so, come, Lord Jesus”* (Revelation 22:20)—Jesus Christ said, *“And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.”* (Matthew 24:6–7) “Oh,” you say, “well, we’re going to come to the place where we make the world safe. We’ll have a war one day that will end all wars.” Oh, no—not in this age, my dear friend. Don’t get the idea that we’re going to come to a new world order where there will be no more war. That is a fantasy. That is a dream. That is not a reality; it is a farce. The Bible says that *“evil men [are going to] wax worse and worse.”* (2 Timothy 3:13) The problem is, dear friend, we’re not as smart as our bombs. We have the smart bombs; we just don’t have the smart rulers. Dr. Vance Havner said that “civilization is like a chimpanzee with a blow torch in a room full of dynamite,” and that’s exactly where we are—we are in difficulty.

## III. The Perplexities of War

But, let me speak not only about the plague of war, let me speak not only about the prophecy of war, but let me just tighten the focus this morning and speak about the perplexities of war. Let me try to answer some questions. And again, I want to say these questions are not going to be answered by the hawks, the doves, the owls, or the

sparrows, but they're going to be answered by the Word of God.

### A. **Is It Right for a Nation to Go to War?**

Now, first of all, is it ever right for a nation to go to war? The answer is, without equivocation, yes—yes! Now, let me tell you why. First of all, let me tell you that human government is ordained of God. Look again, if you will, in our text, Romans 13:1: *“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers”*—that is, the governmental powers—*“For there is no power”*—that is, no government—*“but of God: [and] the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God.”* (Romans 13:1–2) Do you see that? Well, underline it.

You say, “But wait a minute—what about wicked kings? Are they also of God?” It may surprise you to know that that is true. Did you know, for example, that Nebuchadnezzar received his kingdom from God? Now, you don't have time to look up these scriptures. I've looked them up for you. You do have time to jot them down. For example, put down in your margin “Daniel 2:37–38.” Daniel looked at King Nebuchadnezzar, and this is what he said: *“Thou, O king, art a king of kings, for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom.”* (Daniel 2:37) Where did Nebuchadnezzar, that wicked Babylonian king, get his kingdom? Daniel said, “Nebuchadnezzar, God made you a king.” The Bible says in Daniel 2:21 that God *“changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings.”* (Daniel 2:21) You said, “I thought that the tides and the affairs of men do that?” Where men rule, God overrules. The Bible says clearly that *“[God] removeth kings, and setteth up kings.”* (Daniel 2:21)

Old wicked Pharaoh—who made Pharaoh a king? Well, it may surprise you. Put in your margin “Romans 9:17”: *“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared [through all of] the earth.”* (Romans 9:17) Who was it that made old Pharaoh king? God. Why did God raise him up? So He could bring him down. And today, when we talk about the power of God, what do we talk about? The opening of the Red Sea, the drowning of Pharaoh's army. And, even Cecil DeMille made a movie out of it. You see, God has gotten universal glory. He brought him up, that He could bring him down. When Jesus was standing before old Pilate—and we're going to see that displayed in the Passion Play here in a magnificent way—and Pilate said, “Why don't you speak to me? Don't you know that I have power to crucify you or to release you?” Jesus said to Pilate in John 19:11: *“[You don't have any power] except it [was] given [you] from above.”* (John 19:11) Nebuchadnezzar, Pharaoh, and Pilate all received their authority and power from God, wicked as they were. When the Apostle Paul wrote this—*“Let every soul be subject [to] the higher powers”* (Romans 13:1)—who was king? Nero, wicked as he was. So, you put it down: human government is ordained of God. Do you have it? Human government is ordained of God.

“Well,” you say, “why do we have wicked rulers? Why would God give wicked rulers?” Wicked rulers are God’s reward for a wicked people—wicked rulers are God’s reward for wicked people. We get the kind of government we deserve. But, God rules in the affairs of men.

### **B. Does a Government Have the Right to Take a Life?**

Secondly, does a government have a right to take a life? The answer is yes—the answer is yes. Now, my dear friend, I am fully aware that the Bible says in Exodus 20:13: “*Thou shalt not kill*” (Exodus 20:13), but I’m also fully aware that that means thou shalt not murder—thou shalt do no murder. The Bible never does allow personal vengeance. I don’t have a right to take vengeance on anyone. I don’t have a right to take your life. You have no right to take my life. Retaliation does not belong to you; it belongs to God.

For example, look here in Romans 12 now, where we are—verse 19: “*Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves*”—you have no right to take vengeance—“*but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay.*” (Romans 12:19) God doesn’t say, “I’m going to overlook that crime.” God doesn’t say that the murderer, the rapist, the arsonist, the thief is going to go free. God says, “*Vengeance is mine; I will repay.*” (Romans 12:19)

But, how will God repay? Well, just continue to read. Go to chapter 13:4. God speaks of the governor, the ruler, and He says, “*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*”—underscore the word “the sword.” The sword is not a slap on the wrist; it’s an instrument of death—“*he beareth not the sword in vain...he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.*” (Romans 13:4) Put those together, and you’ll find out, my dear friend, that you have no right whatsoever to take the law in your hands. God says, “*Vengeance is mine; I will repay.*” (Romans 12:19) How does God repay? God repays through human instrumentality and human government.

I will say this parenthetically: there is a time when you may defend yourself. There is a time, if there’s no law officer around, that you may defend your loved ones and your family. For example, in Exodus 22:2, the Bible says that “*if a thief be found breaking up, and be smitten that he die, there shall no blood be shed for him.*” (Exodus 22:2) Now, what does that mean? It means if, in the middle of the night, somebody is breaking into your home and you fear that they might have the intent to rape your wife, to murder your children, or to do you in, the Bible says that you have a right to defend your loved ones. My dear friend, all murder is killing, but all killing is not murder. Sometimes the governmental authority is the minister of God to bear the sword, and he bears it not in vain. (Romans 13:4) The governmental authority is God’s ordained ministry. Now, the Bible makes it very clear and very plain. There are those who do not believe that any life

ought to ever be taken, and the Bible says, however, in Genesis 9:6 that *“whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man.”* (Genesis 9:6) My dear friend, when you kill a man, it’s different than killing an animal. And, when you take man’s blood, the Bible says that *“by man shall [your] blood be shed.”* (Genesis 9:6) God has governmental authorities, and the Bible teaches that the governmental authority—in Roman 13:4—is the minister of God.

You say, “Pastor Rogers, do you believe in capital punishment?” With a broken heart, I must say yes, capital punishment is necessary. Put this verse down: Exodus 21:12: *“He that smiteth a man, so that he die, shall...surely [be] put to death.”* (Exodus 21:12) That’s what God’s Word says. Now, He’s not talking about accidental death. He’s not talking about manslaughter. The words “smite a man so he dies” speaks of premeditated, coldblooded murder. The God who gives life is the One who has a right to take it.

Someone says, “That is cruel.” My dear friend, no, that is not cruel. Coddling the criminal, pacifying the murderer, is cruelty to the community. Don’t get the idea that you’re more loving than God is. Don’t get the idea that you’re more wise than God is wise. Don’t get the idea that God is too good to punish sin. God is too good not to punish sin. God is, my friend, a good God.

Henry VIII pardoned a murderer one time. It was a time when capital punishment was called for, but he pardoned that murderer. And, that murderer then killed another man. They came back to Henry VIII a second time and said, “Pardon him again.” Henry VIII said, “I will not pardon him the second time. He killed the first man; I killed the second man. But, he will kill no more. He must die.”

People say that capital punishment doesn’t prohibit murder. Well, my dear friend, it does for the man who’s killed once. He won’t kill again, if we were to simply do what God’s Word says that we ought to do. Softness to the criminal is cruelty to the community.

Now, don’t forget. Listen, my friend, if you’re against capital punishment, don’t forget what we sang about today, which is the blood of Christ. Did you know that Jesus Christ took capital punishment? He died on the cross as my substitute and your substitute. He died the death that we ought to die, proving once for all that death is necessary, that God is a God of judgment, and the executioner was God Himself. *“It [hath] pleased the LORD to bruise him,”* (Isaiah 53:10) because He took our place. Yes, sometimes a government must use the sword.

Now, we have the pacifist today, and I am grateful that they seek peace in their heart. But, many times the pacifist does not understand the nature of human nature, and he does not understand the Word of God. Sometimes governments, acting as the minister of God, must use the sword. Be reasonable. Do you think that it is more noble

to refuse to oppose cruelty, and tyranny, and aggression, and inhumanity? Do you think it was wrong to oppose Adolph Hitler? Before Adolph Hitler was stopped, he slaughtered, massacred, killed literally millions of people. Do you think it's wrong for a government to stand against Adolph Hitler? Do you think it's wrong to stand against Saddam Hussein? And, people say, "Oh, no blood for oil." You don't understand the situation. Do you think it's wrong to stand against a man who literally gouged out the eyes—or had them gouged out—of thousands of people? Do you think it is wrong to stand against a man who used poison gas on his own Kurdish people? Do you think it is wrong to stand against the army that pillaged and raped Kuwait and literally raped the women of Kuwait? Do you think it is wrong to stand against a man, a megalomaniac, who is trying to develop the twin tyrannies of chemical warfare and atomic warfare? What kind of a world would we soon have if we had no one to stand against that kind of tyranny? Let's just be reasonable.

Do you think it is wrong to stand against evil at any point? For example, if you leave this place and you go down the road, and you see a great, hulking man beating up a little child, are you just going to pass by or are you going to try to stop it? Or, let's suppose that this afternoon, somebody comes into your home and begins to dismember your children or to rape your wife. Now, what are you going to do, sir? Are you going to say, "I'm a pacifist"? I'm not the man I used to be, but you lay your hand on my wife and you're going to deal with me, mister. If I can, I'll put you on the ground in a skinny minute. Why? Because there's an instinct in me that says you stand against aggression; you stand against those who would harm someone else.

Well, just expand that principle. Is it right to have a police force in the city of Memphis? Would you want to live in a city that does not have a police force? Do you know what a policeman is? He is a soldier. That's all he is. He is a soldier to stand against aggression. I thank God for our policemen who lay their lives on the line for us day by day. I'm sick and tired of these people putting down policemen. Yes, there are some bad policemen. There are some bad preachers. But, I thank God for men of God who will preach the Word of God, and I thank God for honorable men at meager salaries who stand to protect us—and who are protecting us right now as we preach this Word of God. Well, my dear friend, an army is but a police force bigger. As a matter of fact, the police force in New York City is bigger than the armies of some nations, and a drug bust is really a small war. That's all it is.

Don't tell me, dear friend, that you don't believe in the use of force. There's something wrong in your mind if you don't. Of course we need protection. Why? Because *"[government is] a terror [not] to good works, but to...evil."* (Romans 13:3) Romans 13:3: *"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."*

(Romans 13:3) No one should glorify war. No one should seek war. We should seek peace. We should pray for peace. But oh, don't forget the wickedness of human nature.

### **C. What Are the Principles of a Just War?**

What are the principles of a just war? Somebody says, "There are no just wars." Well, you're just smarter than God; that's your problem. What are the principles?

#### **1. The Cause Must Be Just**

Number one: The cause must be just—not offensive, but defensive; to protect life, limb, loved ones.

#### **2. Your Intentions Must Be Noble**

Number two: Your intentions must be noble. Your intentions are for peace and for freedom and for safety, not for selfish and greedy aggrandizement.

#### **3. A War Ought to Be a Last Resort**

Number three: A war ought to be a last resort. No one ought to ever rush into war. Notice what the Bible says here in Romans 12. The Bible says in verse 18: "*If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.*" (Romans 12:18) I mean, exhaust every responsibility. "*If it be possible...*" (Romans 12:18) But, do you notice it says, "*If it be possible...*" (Romans 12:18) That means it's not always possible.

#### **4. A War Must Use Limited Means**

A war must use limited means. You don't do an overkill. Our force must be limited. You wouldn't, for example, in order to win the war with Iraq, try to decimate the entire people of Iraq. Our nation could have done that. Schwarzkopf said, "When we were here, if we'd wanted to, we could have turned and gone on into Baghdad if we'd wanted to, but that was not our objective."

And so, my dear friend, somebody says, "But pastor, we're supposed to love our enemies." Of course we do. Joyce and I, morning by morning during that war, would join our hands and pray for the precious people of Kuwait. Oh, my dear friend, how my heart went out to innocent men, women, boys, and girls who suffered on that side and this side. But, loving an enemy has nothing to do with standing against evil. Do you think that a judge must hate every prisoner and every criminal that stands before him in order to be a judge? Do you think that a policeman must hate those that he arrests? Do you think that a soldier must be filled with hate in order to do what God tells him to do? My dear friend, we are to love all people, but there we must stand against aggression.

### **D. Should a Child of God Blindly Obey His Government in All Instances?**

Well, let me ask another question: Should a child of God blindly obey his government always and in every instance? The answer is absolutely not. There are times when we must disobey the government. You say, "When is that?" When a command of the

government directly and plainly contradicts the command of Almighty God, then we must obey God rather than men. Acts 5:29: *“Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.”* (Acts 5:29) Now, the civil authorities and the magistrates had commanded them not to preach any more in the name of Jesus, and they said, “We are going to obey God.” There are times, my dear friend, when you must obey God. You see, listen to me: the state has divine authority, and that divine authority that the state has can only be resisted by divine authority. The law of God takes precedent over the law of the state. But now, you listen to me very carefully: if you oppose the law of the state without the authority of God, you sin—you sin.

Let me give you an example. When Daniel was carried away captive by Babylon, Daniel served in the Babylonian government and he obeyed the laws of the Babylonian government until the laws of Babylon said that he was to bow down and worship an idol. He said, “I’ll not do it. I’ll not do it. I will obey God rather than men.” But, up to that point, he was such a model citizen that they made him a leader himself there in the government. And so, to oppose the state without the authority of God is a sin, my dear friend. But, when the state forbids what God commands, or when the state commands what God forbids, then you stand as you ought to stand.

## **Conclusion**

Well, let me just conclude this message today, as we talk about war and peace, by giving you six principles. Very quickly, I’m just going to name them. What should we do in these terrible days in which we live?

### **A. We Are to Work and Pray for Peace**

Number one: We are to work and to pray for peace. And, the Bible says in 1 Timothy 2:1–3 that we’re to pray *“for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we [might live] quiet and peaceable [lives].”* (1 Timothy 2:2) I want us to have as much (as is possible) peace in our church, peace in our homes, peace in our city, peace in our nation, and peace in our times. And, if you think this is a warmongering message, you haven’t heard a word that I’ve said. We’re to pray for peace, love peace, seek peace. *“If it be possible, as much as lieth in [us], live peaceably with all men.”* (Romans 12:18)

### **B. We, as a Nation, Need to Refuse to Trust in Armaments, Patriot Missiles, and Smart Bombs**

Number two: We, as a nation, need to refuse to trust in armaments, refuse to trust in patriot missiles, refuse to trust in smart bombs. Psalms 20:7: *“Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God.”* (Psalms 20:7) Proverbs 21:31: *“The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but safety is of the LORD.”* (Proverbs 21:31)

### C. **We Must Never Rejoice over Our Enemy and His Downfall**

Number three: We must never rejoice over our enemy and his downfall. Our hearts of love and compassion must go out to the Iraqi people. Proverbs 24:17–18: *“Rejoice not when [thy] enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.”* (Proverbs 24:17–18) We ought to have a broken heart for those who, today, while we sit in this beautiful place, weep in misery, wherever they may be. And, we do not rejoice that any human being upon the face of this earth suffers. I hope you believe that.

### D. **We Must Endeavor to Bring This Nation to Her Knees in Revival**

Number four: We must endeavor to bring this nation, the God-blessed America, to her knees in revival. God has been good to us, and God has granted victory. And, God has blessed us and given us one more window. And, the Bible says, *“The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”* (Romans 2:4) Proverbs 14:34: *“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.”* (Proverbs 14:34)

I was reading Deuteronomy 32:31; it blessed me. You know, we were thrown a challenge. We were told that Allah would give the victory. I love Deuteronomy 32:31: *“For their rock is not as our Rock, even our enemies themselves being judges.”* (Deuteronomy 32:31) I want to say, “Iraq is not like our Rock.” I just want to thank God for that. I believe that God in mercy—God in mercy, not because we deserved it—but God did it.

### E. **We Must Bring Souls to Jesus Christ**

And, I want to say, my dear friend, that we, in this interim, how many days we have left, must do all that we can do to win souls and to bring people to Jesus Christ. Oh, we must win. We are in a war—a spiritual war—against death, against sin, against Satan, and we need to bring souls bound in the golden chains of the gospel and lay them at Jesus’ feet. This world is destined for fire. And, if you’re just working for some sort of a pseudo-peace, may I tell you you remind me of someone rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic? What we’re out to do is to bring souls—men, women, boys, and girls—and snatch them as brands from the burning and bring them to Jesus.

### F. **We Need to Pray for the Lord’s Kingdom to Come**

And, last of all, we need to pray, *“[Oh,] thy kingdom come, Thy will be done [on] earth, as it is in heaven.”* (Matthew 6:10) My dear friend, one day there will be peace on this earth. One day the lamb and the lion will lie down together. (Isaiah 11:6) One day, my dear friend, men will *“beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: [one day] nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they [study] war any more.”* (Isaiah 2:4) One day *“the earth [will] be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as...waters [that] cover the sea.”* (Habakkuk 2:14) And, I say,

*“[Even haste that day.] Even so, come, Lord Jesus”—“come, Lord Jesus.”* (Revelation 22:20) I long for the time when we will lay down our sword and shield down by the riverside and study war no more.

Oh, do you know Jesus, or are you saved? My dear friend, in a world of war, you can have peace in your heart and in your home through Jesus, the Prince of Peace, 'til He come.

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Do you know Jesus? Oh, my precious friend, are you saved? The Bible says if you'll trust Christ, if you'll believe on Him, if you'll receive Him, He will, first of all, forgive your sins; secondly, He will enter into your heart and your life and give you a power and a strength that you never knew before; and thirdly, one day soon He'll take you home to heaven to be with Him. Oh, do you know Jesus? If you'd say, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me," I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He'll save you.

Lord, I pray for many today that they might come to Jesus and be saved and, Lord God, that others will make the decisions they need to make. In your holy name I pray, dear Lord. Amen.

# The Wake-up Call

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: July 12, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 13:11–14**

*“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”*

ROMANS 13:11

## Outline

Introduction

- I. It Is Time to Wake Up
- II. It Is Time to Clean Up
  - A. Put Off Rioting and Drunkenness
  - B. Put off Chambering and Wantonness
  - C. Put off Strife and Envy
- III. It Is Time to Dress Up
  - A. We Are To Dress Up in Jesus
  - B. We Are to Not Make Provision for the Flesh

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and be finding Romans chapter 13, and we left off in chapter 13 last Sunday and we will take up again here in just a few moments, beginning in verse 11. But let me tell you what happened a long time ago in the birth of our nation. The day was April the 18th, the year 1775, and the British had brought their troops into old Boston. And the plan was at nighttime, when everyone was asleep, to take small boats, go across the Charles River, and attack Concord and Lexington. Everyone was asleep, the British had their plans, but there was a man who was not asleep. His name was Paul Revere. He was awake. He knew what was happening. And Paul Revere, his famous ride, you remember the story, he got on his horse and he began to gallop from village to village and from house to house and he began to cry, Wake up, wake up, the British are coming, the British are coming, and he sounded the alarm and he knocked on doors and cried in the streets and galloped from place to place, telling everybody, Wake up. Candles were lit, windows were opened, curtains drawn back, people rubbed their eyes, men got up and put on their clothes, grabbed their muskets, they called them Minute Men, they were ready in a minute, and they went out into the streets to defend

their honor, to defend their country, to defend their children from the British who were coming in the night. Old Paul Revere sent out a call, and that call was, Wake up, the British are coming.

I want to tell you, there's another war, an invisible war, and somebody today needs to be a modern-day Paul Revere and tell us, Wake up, wake up, the enemy is upon us, the enemy is coming, and we need to sound the alarm and the sad thing is this: that the church is asleep, snuggled up in her pews with the covers pulled up over her head, and the sanctuary is dark, and the church needs to wake up before it's too late. That's what the apostle Paul is talking about here, beginning in verse 11. Look: "And knowing that, and that knowing the time," watch it, "it is now high time to awake out of sleep. For now is our salvation nearer than when we believed." Listen to this now: "the night is far spent, the day is at hand, let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lust thereof." The title of our message today, "The Wake-Up Call." What time is it on God's clock? Well, number one, it's time to wake up, and number two, it's probably later than most of us think. And this is a wake-up call that Paul gave to these saints so long ago, and I believe that he wants to give it to us today, because the alarm has sounded.

The late, great Vance Havner said, in today's world there is anarchy in the world, apostasy in the church, and apathy in the pew. Apathy in the pew—we're asleep and we need to wake up. And I thought about that, and there is anarchy in our world. I want to give you some alarming things. Remember—listen—we in America today are in a moral free-fall. Have you noticed? I am amazed, in all of my ministry, I've never seen such a loosening of standards such as we see. The Columbia Broadcasting System, that television network that we have grown up with, that brought us I Love Lucy, that brought us Jackie Gleason, that brought us Red Skelton, that brought us, more recently, Touched by an Angel, is now going to bring to us Howard Stern, the king of all filth. Let me tell you what Howard Stern said about himself. He said this: Television is ready for someone like me. Standards have gone to an all-time low, and I am here to represent the change. Now, that's bad enough, and I will not tell you what this lascivious foul-mouthed individual is like, because I don't want to soil my mouth by describing it, but this is the same television network that says, We don't want Reggie White to be a sports commentator, to have the unmitigated gall and audacity to say that homosexuality is a sin. Now, folks, I want to tell you something. The alarm has sounded.

And let me tell you what else has happened. Do you know now that there's a Broadway play in the making, a Broadway play depicting Jesus Christ as a homosexual, and did you know that this is being underwritten by tax dollars? This Broadway play

features a man named Joshua. Joshua is simply the Old Testament name for Jesus—it means Jehovah saves. But in this play, Joshua is pictured as the king of the homosexuals. This is presented by the Manhattan Theater Club. The name of the play is Corpus Christi. Now, Corpus Christi means body of Christ, and the theater where this is being played has received 80,000 dollars—80,000 dollars—from the National Endowment for the Arts—that's tax money—and let me tell you what the New York Times had to say about this play. Corpus Christi portrays Joshua as having a long-running affair with Judas, sex with other apostles, and a sexual encounter with an HIV-positive street hustler. Now, that's tax dollars. Folks, what I'm trying to say is, the alarm has sounded.

Did you know that there are 70,000—I did not say 7,000; I said 70,000—sites on the world wide web where you can now pick up pornography. Something is happening in the hearts and minds of boys and girls. Just recently, down here in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, a youngster took a gun to school and killed his erstwhile girlfriend. He had one objective, to go to school and kill her. And I read in the Commercial Appeal the other day why he did this, at least why he said he did it. He told of worshiping Satan and praying to Satan, and I give you a quote that I lifted right out of the newspaper from this young man: "At one moment I was a broken idiot, the next I was in complete control. That was the power Satan had given me. I know it is real." Now, how can we have boys and girls who are turning to Satan worship right in the very buckle of the Bible belt?

I was given a folder or an article that came out of a skateboard magazine. You know, boys and girls love to ride skateboards, and so much that there is a magazine—that magazine is called Thrasher. This is the September 1997 edition, and I have this in my office, it's a little comic strip, and it has a little smiley-faced devil, and another little imp there with horns on his tail and a little forked tail, and here's what the comic strip says. Here's the smiley-faced devil, and he says, Hi, Kiddies, and this smiling face devil is surrounded by half-naked women. He says, Hi, kiddies, it's me, Devil Man, along with my trusty sycophant, Flame Boy. Now, Flame boy is the little demon that's there. I want to make you a little offer. This is what Devil Man is saying to the kids—now listen to it. Imagine your boy, your girl getting this. I want to make you a little offer. Here's the deal—I want your soul. And then, little Flame Boy answers in the comic. He says, But, boss, won't they need their souls if they're going to go to heaven? That's where I want to go when I die. Then Devil Man answers. First of all, Flame Boy, you are already dead, that's why you are in hell. And, second of all, heaven is not all it's cracked up to be. I should know; I used to live there. You used to live in heaven, boss? I didn't know you used to live there. Oh, you see, when I lived there, I tried to make heaven a fun place, but that just got me and my friends kicked out. Note how bad we are. And in this picture there's Devil Man surrounded by half-nude demon spirits personified as women,

and he's got a bottle of booze in his hand, and then Devil Man says, After God told me to go to hell, things in heaven never were quite the same. Flame Boy says, What happened? Well, first of all, they set up a bunch of dumb rules, and then they imposed a really strict dress code. I'll wager the people must be quite bored up there, but hey, that's what they get for being good, and then there's some more vile talk that I'll skip, and finally, here's what Devil Man says to Flame Boy. Flame Boy, a dim-wit like you can see that hell is by far the best place to retire. Just look at the fun to be had, and remember in hell there is only one rule, and that is there are no rules. So, kids, now here's the way this thing ends, to ensure your permanent place in hell, send me your soul now. And at the end of this thing—now this is for girls and boys to read; I mean, it's for kids who pick up their skateboard magazine—and at the end there's a contract, and here's the contract. I, the undersigned, do hereby give possession of my soul to the devil for eternity forever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever and ever. And then, there's a place for their signature. And then, it ends with a smiling devil saying, I'll be seeing you. That's for kiddies to pick up in America today.

What I want to tell you folks is the alarm has sounded in America. I was reading recently where a Bronx schoolteacher had a student who drowned, and a student in the class asked about the student who drowned, and said, Is he in heaven? And the teacher said, Yes, the child is in heaven, and tried to say some comforting words to her students, and led them in prayer. Do you know what happened? She was fired. She was fired. And the reason that she was fired was because it's against the law for a teacher to lead students in prayer; a public school teacher is not to lead students in prayer. She was fired. The students in that class recognized a double standard. One thirteen-year-old said, We talk about guns and condoms, and they give us condoms to have safe sex on the streets, but we can't talk about the One who made us.

The alarm has sounded. I mean, the alarm has sounded from the church house to the schoolhouse to the White House. We're being told that it's competency in the White House that matters, not character, that there's no relationship between a person's private life and his or her public life. I don't believe that for a skinny minute. And we see anarchy in the world, we see the United States of America sitting down at the conference table with international gangsters and murderers, because we think it's good for the economy. Friend, a bear can hug you to death. I could say much more, but I'm talking here now, folks, about anarchy in the world.

But that would not be so frightening, if it were not for the second thing, which is apostasy in the church. I cannot believe what is happening in our churches today. We call ourselves evangelical Christians, but George Barna, who takes polls, says that, as he has surveyed evangelicals, that is, Bible-believing Christians, he found that 62 percent—now listen to this—62 percent said, there's no such thing as absolute truth.

Now, if that is true, there is no such thing as absolute truth, then we cannot know that the Bible is absolutely true. We cannot absolutely know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, or anything else.

Let me tell you what is happening. Our Commercial Appeal ran an article—you probably read it just a couple of weeks ago—the title of the article, Episcopal Bishop Denigrates Churches' Basic Concepts, and here's what it said—and if you're an Episcopalian, I'm not putting down Episcopalians, because I believe that all Bible-believing godly Episcopalians are heart-broken over this, but this is a bishop—now, this is a bishop. The Right Reverend John Shelby Spong believes—this is taken right from the Commercial Appeal—that time has come for intelligent Christians to grow up and admit that there isn't a personal God of any kind on the receiving end of these prayers and petitions. It's nonsensical to seek to understand Jesus as the incarnation of the theistic deity. The article went on to say that Spong rejects miracles in general, humanity's fall into sin, and any belief that the Bible contains revealed transcendent moral laws. He rejects the virgin birth, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ as historical events. Now, this is a bishop, a leader of leaders. And I want to quote from him his words: "The view of the cross as the sacrifice for the sins of the world is a barbarian idea based on primitive concepts of God and must be dismissed. Just dismiss the idea that Jesus died on the cross for our sins." That's a bishop. And the moderator of the United Church of Canada recently said—and I quote: "I don't believe Jesus Christ was God. I don't believe Jesus is the only way to God. I don't believe He arose from the dead as a scientific fact." Friend, the alarm is sounded. The alarm is sounded.

And not only is there this anarchy in the world, not only is there this apostasy in the church, but there's such apathy in the pew. What are people doing? Who gets excited? People just roll over and yawn in the face of God, and go back to sleep. Now, I say all of that to agree with the apostle Paul in these verses: it is high time to wake out of our sleep. That's what I'm trying to say. Verse 11 says, "it's high time"—that means the hour is here. Verse 12 says, "the night is far spent"—that means it's later than you think. I want to tell you, it's later in this age than you may think. It is later in this age than you may think. I believe that Jesus Christ is at the threshold, and I believe the trumpet is about to sound, and Jesus Christ is going to come soon, and it is only the restraining hand of Almighty God and the Holy Spirit that keeps the floodgates of evil closed as much as they are.

I'll tell you something else. It may be later in your life than you think. You only have so many more days, so many hours, yet to serve the Lord Jesus. James 4, verse 14, says, "What is your life but a vapor, that appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away?" I'll tell you something else. It's later in the day of opportunity than you may think. We have opportunities now that are unparalleled to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Jesus, when He was here on earth, said, in John chapter 9, verse 4, “I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, for night cometh when no man can work.” There are a lot of things you can do; but I’m going to tell you one thing you cannot do when you get to heaven: and that is you cannot win souls in heaven. All the soul-winning that you’re ever going to do, you’re going to do while you are here on this earth, and it may be later in that day of opportunity than you realize.

Having said all of this—and all of this is the front porch to get us in the house, so we have a small house and a big porch, but now listen—there are three things—there are three things—I pray God the Holy Spirit will write upon your heart that the apostle Paul told the church at Rome, and he wants to tell the church in Memphis, and all of those of you who are listening, wherever you may be listening, through television or through radio or through tape. Listen: there are three things you need to do.

## **I. It Is Time to Wake Up**

It is time, number one, to wake up. Look again in verse 11, if you will: “Knowing the time that it is now high time to awake out of your sleep,” or to wake out of sleep. Turn to your neighbor right now, and say, Wake up. Say, wake up! Listen. It is time—it is time—to wake up. You know what’s wrong in America today? Too many sermons are like bedtime stories rather than reveilles, and God’s alarm clock is going off all around us. Now, Jesus is coming as a thief in the night, but the apostle Paul said, “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.” How can we sit so comfortably in the pew when civilization is crumbling around us? One man wanted to impress his pastor. He said, Pastor, would you give me a little prayer that I can pray when I enter church? The pastor knew his ways, and said, Yes, I have a nice prayer for you: Now, I lay me down to sleep.

It’s time that we wake up, and we don’t need to just roll over and yawn in the face of God. The night is far past, and so many of our churches are like Samson, asleep in the lap of Delilah. And then, when we do wake up, finally, we don’t know that the Spirit has departed from us, and we go out to shake ourselves with no power. How do you wake up? The same way I woke up this morning. Not by feeling like it, but just getting up anyway. If I had waited till I felt like it, I still may be in bed. You don’t push the snooze button. You wake up and get up. Now, first thing, it’s time to wake up! Got it?

## **II. It Is Time to Clean Up**

All right, here’s the second thing. It is time not only to wake up, but it is time to clean up. Look, if you will, also in this verse now. Watch it—verse 12: “The night is far spent, the day is at hand,. Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness and let us put on the armor of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day, not in rioting and drunkenness, not in

chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying.” Now, the picture here is somebody who’s been out on the town all night long chambering in wantonness, strife, envy, drunkenness, reveling, and he comes in with his filthy, dirty clothes, reeking with the spots and stains of sin. He doesn’t even undress; he just falls into a drunken stupor, into sleep, and Paul says, Wake up and clean up.

Now, he mentions six things that we need to put off before we are ready to meet the day. And these six things he puts in couplets, so you have three couplets, six things.

#### **A. Put Off Rioting and Drunkenness**

First of all, notice these works of darkness. In verse 13, he calls, first of all, he says, You put off rioting and drunkenness. Put that off; get rid of that. Now, the word rioting means carousing. We know what the word drunkenness means, but carousing and drunkenness, that’s what keeps the taverns in business, that’s what keeps the nightclubs in business, that’s what keeps these casinos in business. And God says, put that off. You have no business in these places. If you’re a child of God, and you’re frequenting these places, God sent me here to tell you to stop. Quit! Put it off.

#### **B. Put off Chambering and Wantonness**

And then, God says, chambering and wantonness. Those are two words from the King James that we don’t use in our modern English very much, but chambering means sexual immorality. Wantonness means, without shame, or shamelessness. Think of sexual immorality today. If you’re a child of God and a member of this church, and you’re living in sexual immorality, you need to do one of two things. You need to get right, or get out. Get right, or get out. God says, put these things off. Hebrews chapter 13 and verse 4 says, “Marriage is honorable and the bed undefiled, but adulterers and whoremongers God will judge today.” We have so many people who are living together without the benefit of marriage. They don’t get married; they just live together, and today that is an accepted thing. Well, I want to tell you it is not acceptable in the Word of God. The Bible calls that fornication, and the Bible says, flee fornication; the Bible absolutely forbids that. You say, Well, we’re in love. Well then, get married. And if you’re not in love, get out. You say, well, what about what the movie stars do? What about what the rock stars do? What about what the sports stars are doing? Friend, you’d better begin to order your life by the Word of God.

Not in sexual immorality and not in shamelessness. I’m amazed today that there is no sense of shame. We have a generation today of unblushables, people who are going to be amazed that what I said I literally said. They what? You’re telling me that we’re not supposed to live together? That’s right. Oh, I mean, it’s like, well, we do that, we’re not ashamed of that. Put these verses down—Jeremiah chapter 6, verse 15: “Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? Nay! They were not at all ashamed,

neither could they blush.” Somebody said that man was the only animal that can blush, and he’s the only one that needs to. We have sin today that is arrogant and proud—no shame. I was reading in Isaiah chapter 3, verse 9—listen to it: “The show of their countenance doth witness against them and they declare their sin as Sodom. They hide it not.” That is, they’re literally proud of it—proud of it. Chambering and wantonness, sexual immorality and shamelessness—he says, put it away.

### **C. Put off Strife and Envy**

And then, strife and envy. Strife means the desire for power. Envy is wanting more and wanting what somebody else has. And if your heart is headquarters for hate, and if you’re full of jealousy and unsatisfied desires, these things are the works of darkness, and God says put them off. You say, Well, Pastor Rogers, I don’t think I can. Yes, you can.

I received a letter this past week I want to share it with you. It says, I was raised in a Christian home. My faith waned. I became agnostic and began studying other religions. Over the years, I became bitter. I subscribed to evolution, atheism, and eventually Satanism. It was during this dark time that I found Love Worth Finding on the VCYI America Radio Network. That’s way up in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He said, I found Love Worth Finding. I listened with a full intent of mocking the message, often ridiculing to those around me. But for some reason, no matter how much my hate raged, I still listened. The more I heard, the more I resisted, but I couldn’t stop listening. One day, my cynicism burst like a dam. In the middle of Adrian Rogers’ message I left work, bought a Bible, and began reading. Glory be to God, the Lord Jesus, and His grace. No matter how much I resisted, He wouldn’t let me go, and like the prodigal son returning, Jesus welcomed me back with open arms. I admitted all my sins, and they were aplenty, begged His forgiveness, and proclaimed my love for Him. What strength He has to forgive such a stubborn and direct sinner. Praise His name! And then, this man says, If any such an enemy of Christianity can turn and be saved, truly anyone can. There just isn’t enough room here to testify to the full glory of His grace, but it is good to be home. Thank you for your assistance, Pastor Rogers.

Now, I say that, not to pat myself on the back, but to give honor and glory and praise to this Word of God that can change a heart, can change a life.

### **III. It Is Time to Dress Up**

And what God is saying, number one, is Wake up! What He’s saying, number two, is, Clean up! What He’s saying, number three, is Dress up! Look, if you will, now in verse 12 of this same chapter, the last part of it. He says, “Cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.” And then, go down to verse 14: “But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ and make not provision for the flesh to fulfill the lust thereof.” That means that this

is the heart of the whole thing; this is the climax of the whole thing. What good is it to wake up and even clean up if you don't dress up? You don't want to be a spiritual nudist.

### **A. We Are To Dress Up in Jesus**

So you're to dress up. And, what are you to dress in? You're to dress up in Jesus. And notice, he uses the full title of Jesus—"Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Now, Lord means master. What do I do when I start out now after having waked up and cleaned up? What do I do? I put on Jesus Christ as Lord. That is, He is my master; I am His slave. What does the master tell the slave? What to do; He tells the slave what to do. He tells the slave what to say. He tells the slave where to go, and when to come. Is Jesus Christ your master? He is, if you put Him on. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. And Jesus means Savior. The name Jesus actually means, Jehovah saves. So not only do you put on the Lord Jesus as master for direction, but you put on the Lord Jesus as Savior for deliverance. I mean, it's a vile world out there, and as you go out you're going to have to be clothed, and you're going to have to have somebody who can deliver you and dress you in the robes of righteousness, and protect you, and to cleanse you, and to keep you clean. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, you're dressed in His righteousness alone, because not only is He Lord; He is Jesus, He is Savior. And then, the Lord Jesus Christ—and the word Christ means Messiah, king. And so, I have Jesus—I have Jesus—for direction. I have Jesus for deliverance. I have Jesus for dominion. He is the one who rules over me, and teaches me how to rule in this life, because He is the Messiah, He is the king, He is Lord of Lords, and King of kings. I am to wear Jesus like a suit of armor, armor of light.

And as I go out into this world, and as you go out, you're to have Jesus on. Put Jesus over your sorrows and around your tears. Put on Jesus. Over your aches and your pains, put on Jesus. Over your failure and your shame, put on the Lord Jesus Christ. A Sunday School teacher asked a little girl if there was anything God can't do. She said, Yes, there's one thing God can't do: He can't see my sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. Thank God for that. Listen, friend. Jesus Christ that Jim said, sing about Him today—and I'm glad we did—Jesus Christ is behind us, Jesus Christ is ahead of us. Jesus Christ is within us, and we're all dressed up in Jesus Christ—and I thank God for that.

### **B. We Are to Not Make Provision for the Flesh**

And then, he says, last of all, "make no provision for the flesh." That is, those old clothes that you cast off, don't keep them; get rid of them, make no provision for the flesh. King Alcohol has had you—give your heart to King Jesus. And let me tell you what to do with King Alcohol. Don't keep that fifth of whiskey up there in the cabinet. You're making

provision for the flesh. It'll clean the hair right out of the sink. Pour it down the drain. Trying to quit smoking? Well, don't keep that carton, in case you go back. Tear it in little pieces and flush it. Make no provision for the flesh. You've been having an illicit relationship? Well, quit. And I don't mean quit gradually; I mean quit. And, so far as that woman is concerned, or so far as that man is concerned, just make a big distance, and saturate that place with your absence, and get out of there, and get away from there, and make no provision for the flesh, because if you do, you're going down. You put on Jesus Christ. Put Him on. Put Him on for direction, because He's Lord. Put Him on for deliverance, because He's Savior. Put Him on for dominion, because He's king, Messiah. Wear the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **Conclusion**

Friend, I want to tell you, the hour is late. And don't you pull the cover over your head this morning and push the snooze button. God sent me here to tell you to wake up. Turn to your neighbor again, say, Wake up. Now, turn to him and say, Clean up. Now, turn to him and say, Dress up. Listen, folks—listen. The hour is late, and the night is far spent. What we're going to do for Jesus we better do; we better get at it right now. Life is too short. Eternity is too long. Souls are too precious. The gospel is too wonderful for us to sleep through it all. And soon, He's coming. And, when He shall come with trumpet sound, oh may I then in Him be found, dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.

# When Good Men Differ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Sermon Date: June 15, 1986**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 14**

## Outline

Introduction

- I. It's Not a Matter of Diet
- II. It's Not a Matter of Days
- III. It's a Matter of Lordship
  - A. Four Reasons Not to Judge Our Brother
    1. His Salvation Is of God
    2. His Service Is for God
    3. His Security Is in God
    4. His Summons Will Come from God
- IV. It's a Matter of Liberty
- V. It's a Matter of Love
  - A. Four Ways I Ought to React to a Weaker Brother
    1. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason for Stumbling
    2. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason for Sorrowing
    3. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason for Striving

Conclusion

## Introduction

**W**ould you take God's Word and turn to Romans chapter 14 with me for a moment—Romans chapter 14. Now we are going to be talking on this subject, this morning: "When Good Men Differ." Romans chapter 14, verse 1. And by the way, please have your Bibles open, and keep them open. Romans 14:1: "*Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations*" (Romans 14:1).

Now what on earth does that mean? Paul says that there is, in the Church, what we would call a *weaker brother*, and there is, in the Church, what we would call a *stronger brother*. And Paul, in this chapter, is talking about some who were weak in the faith, and some who were strong in the faith.

Now in Rome there were problems. There were some weaker brothers who were judging stronger brothers. And there were some stronger brothers who were despising weaker brothers. Now the weaker brothers were brothers who walked very straight, and very narrow, and there were some things they just absolutely would not do, say, touch, or whatever. They said, "That's wrong, and we're not going to participate in it." You say,

“That sounds like a stronger brother.” You’re going to find out he was really the weaker brother. Then, there were some stronger brothers, who knew that these things were not really wrong, in and of themselves, and so, they did them. Now the weaker brother would judge the stronger brother, and say, “He ought not to be living that way.” And the stronger brother would despise the weaker brother, and say, “He ought not to be so narrow-minded.” And there was a division. And by the way, this was compounded by this: The weaker brother thought he was the stronger brother. And so it was a very confused issue.

“Well,” you say, “Adrian, what does that have to do with us, today?” You stay tuned in, and you’re going to learn a truth, I pray, that will make this church stronger, and make you a stronger Christian, and help us to learn how to deal with those who disagree with us. Because, you see, the devil’s chief tool is *what?* Disunity in the Body of Christ. And the Bible says: “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*” (Psalm 133:1).

Now the devil would like to divide us, and divide Christians—not over things that really matter, but over things that don’t really matter, over incidentals. Now an old-time Christian divine once said this—and if you don’t hear anything else I say, if you just get this down in your notes, you will learn something very wonderful—he talked about how we are to react to one another, and this is what he said: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” What he is saying is: number one, in essentials, it is a matter of lordship; in non-essentials, it’s a matter of liberty; in all things, it’s a matter of love.

## **I. It’s Not a Matter of Diet**

Now let’s keep that in our hearts, and in our minds, as we look in Romans chapter 14. And we’re going to learn, today, some wonderful lessons. Now I begin reading here, in Romans chapter 14 and verse 1: “*Him that is weak in the faith*”—the weaker brother—“*receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.*” Don’t argue about doubtful things. “*For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him*” (Romans 14:1–3).

Now what is this all about? Well, back in this time, there were some people who had been saved out of paganism. And those pagans had been offering blood sacrifices to demon gods. Now after the sacrifice had been made, the meat was put on the meat market, and it was sold. And if you wanted to get a good steak, that was the place to get it. Because, friend, they used only the good meat for those sacrifices to those idols, and you could buy it at a greatly reduced price. Some of the Christians were eating that.

Now some of these other Christians, who had been saved out of dark paganism, had seen those pagan rituals, and said, “Don’t tell me that you’re going to eat that meat that’s been sacrificed to idols. I wouldn’t touch it with a ten-foot pole. Don’t you know what that’s been used for?” That’s the weaker brother who says that. And the other Christian—the stronger brother—says, “Now look, be reasonable. We know that an idol is nothing. That’s just a figure of stone. A cow is a cow. A sheep is a sheep. The meat is good meat. We can get it for less. We have more. And so we’re just simply going to be good stewards, and have good nutrition. We’re going to have good meat.” And so there was a division. Some people said, “Lest I eat any meat that’s been offered to idols, I’m going to be a vegetarian. I’m just going to eat herbs.” The other people, the stronger brother, said, “I’m going to eat this meat. Not a thing in the world wrong with it. I have every right to eat it. The Bible doesn’t say not to eat it.” Now who’s right or wrong in that case? Do you know?

## **II. It’s Not a Matter of Days**

Well, let’s leave that one, and let’s go on to the next problem that they had. Not only a matter of diet, but they also had a problem of the matter of days. Notice, if you will, also, in verse 5: *“One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord; for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks”* (Romans 14:5–6).

Now not only were they divided over diet, but also over days. There were certain people who’d come out of the Jewish tradition, the Old Testament, and they had certain feast days. You know, there were seven feasts of Israel. And they had certain fasts, and feasts, and all of these things. And these people went and got all of these things. And they said, “These are wonderful things; they are full of great truths.” And they brought it all over, and dumped it into Christianity. And they said, “We’re going to keep these feasts, and we’re going to keep these fasts.” The others said, “That’s a part of the old economy. It’s all fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. There are no special days. Every day is a holy day; 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, we’re going to live for Jesus Christ. And don’t tell us we have to keep a certain day.” And so they were divided, not only by diets, but by days.

## **III. It’s a Matter of Lordship**

Now what Paul is saying here is this: “It is not a matter of diet. It is not a matter of days. It is a matter of dominion.” That is, it’s a matter of lordship—who is Lord. Look, if you

will, now, in verse 8: *“For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living”* (Romans 14:8–9).

Now what Paul is saying is this: “Now look, folks, don’t be divided over days and diets, but be united over Jesus.” That’s what he is saying: “Don’t be divided over these incidentals, but be united over the fundamentals, that Jesus Christ is Lord. And anytime anybody says that Jesus Christ is Lord, then we receive that person, even if he’s weak in the faith. I mean, if he thinks that he has to have scruples about certain things, or, if he is wrong about certain things, still you must receive him. You must embrace him, because he is your brother in Jesus Christ. That is, you just take this young, weak Christian, and you bring him in, and you love him. You don’t try to exclude him. You try to include him, if he says that Jesus Christ is Lord. And if you harm him, you harm yourself, because you are both members of the same body. If you dishonor him, you dishonor your body, for God has received him. And so we need just to have open arms to all people who name Jesus Christ as Lord.”

“Well,” you say, “now, Adrian, let me ask you a question. That’s Old Testament stuff. We’re not worried about days and diets today.” Oh? We have the same kind of problems, today. Let me give you some examples of the same kinds of things they were dealing with back there.

Have you ever heard anybody say you ought not to celebrate Christmas? Sure you have! Every Christmas season, there will be someone who will say, “Hey, Christmas is rooted in paganism. You ought not to celebrate Christmas. Every Christian ought not to keep Christmas. Just stay out of Christmas altogether.” Other people say, “What a blessing it is at Christmas time! Oh, how close you get to Jesus! The sweetest time of the year is when we honor the birth, or the nativity, of the Lord Jesus Christ.” Who is right?

Same thing about Easter. Some people say, “You ought not to have anything to do with Easter. Easter is based in the pagan fertility rites, and all of that. The egg, and the bunny, and all of that.” They say, “Folks, if you knew what all of that meant, you wouldn’t have anything to do with Easter.” Someone says, “Look, that’s not the big thing to me. I love this day, our resurrection rally, where we commemorate the fact that Jesus Christ arose. Think how many people are blessed, and saved by our preaching, and emphasis upon the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” And every Easter, I’ll get letters from people, saying, “I hope we won’t celebrate Easter.” I’ll get letters from people, saying, “Hallelujah for what God did in Living Pictures!” I’ll hear from people who say, “Boy, I just don’t believe that Christmas is of God.” Other people say, “Thank God, thank God,

for what He's done for us in this time of the year." Hey, folks, I want to ask you: Who's right and who's wrong?

In the way we worship. Did you know we have members in this church who are divided by how we ought to worship? I don't mean that they don't like each other. They just have different opinions. Did you know there are some people who want us to have all anthems? All anthems. I mean, you know, the big, heavy, anthem type music. And do you know why? They say that God is a God of majesty and glory, and our singing ought to reverence God. And our singing ought to be in keeping with the majesty and the glory of God. There are other people who say, "Now wait a minute. These folks don't understand the joy that is in my heart. They don't understand that a church is like a family. We have come to celebrate, and we're to have something that is attractive and winsome. And we're not to be so pale and sanctimonious. And these other folks don't know the difference between dignity and rigor mortis. They are dead. And when you get too liturgical, and too that way, you just don't win souls for Jesus. And it empties out churches. And we want a church where we can have that freedom of worship, and just praise the Lord together, and have a good time in the Lord." Who is right?

There are some people who don't believe that you ever ought to applaud in church. They don't think you ought to clap hands. And they are good folks, and some of them are sitting in this auditorium. I mean, "I had just rather you didn't applaud. That just sounds so much like you are at a ball game, or a theater somewhere, when you applaud something. I mean, after all, we're not here to applaud people. We're here to give glory to God." The other people say, "Now wait a minute. Boy, I get excited, and I just can't stand still. And I want to tell you, 'I'm not applauding that person who sang, I'm applauding Jesus.' And the Bible says: *'Clap your hands, all ye peoples'* (Psalm 47:1). That's the 20<sup>th</sup>-century *amen*. It's just a way of giving praise to God." Hey, who's right? Who's right?

I get letters on both sides. I get letters from people, saying, "Pastor, I'm so glad we don't get so staid and bound up. We just have a joy and worship." Other people say, "My goodness, you ought not to do that." I mean, sincere people, good people. There are people, you know, in matters of dress. There are some people, if someone were to come to this church not just dressed... I mean, suppose a fellow came in here in cut-offs. We had a guy come in that way not long ago. Shorts. What if somebody comes without shoes? Or somebody comes who hasn't bathed lately?

You say, "Now wait a minute, this is God's house. They ought not to come in here like that. They ought to have enough respect. We're here to worship God. I don't think people ought to be allowed in a place where they are worshiping God, if they don't even care enough to present themselves decently. It's a disgrace and dishonor to God."

Other people would say, “Praise God, look who’s here today: those people off the street who need Jesus. They ought to be welcomed, and embraced. And we don’t need to scoot over a seat, just because they come in, and don’t smell just right, or don’t dress just right. Thank God they are here. Jesus died for them.”

Hey, folks, sincere people on either side. Those who are saying, “Let’s have proper respect,” and the other people who are saying, “Let’s have love.” Hey, don’t think that what Paul is talking about here in Romans 14 is old-fashioned. Folks, I want to tell you, it’s not an easy job being a pastor, when you get those letters on either side of all of these issues.

There are people who say, “I believe that our pastor ought to speak out more on abortion; he ought to speak out more on pornography; he ought to speak out more on liquor; he ought to speak out on communism; and he ought to speak out on these things. I mean, where is the Church? God put us here to be salt and light. Why don’t we speak when little babies are dying.” Somebody else says, “I wish the Church would stay out of politics. I mean, I just wish that the preacher would just get up there and preach the Bible, and not mention all this other stuff. That’s somebody else’s responsibility.” Hey, folks, who’s right? Hmm?

You could get in an argument on any one of those things. And a lot of things I didn’t even want to mention. Sure. And I’m not talking about bad people. I am talking about good people and things that are doubtful.

Friend, *I want to tell you what really matters and will make this church a different church than any or most churches that I know is if we can be mature enough to understand that we can be brothers without being twins.* That we don’t have to do everything exactly alike, and we can agree to disagree; and we can respect the other person’s opinion, and not judge that other person.

#### **A. Four Reasons Not to Judge Our Brother**

And actually, there are four reasons that we need to understand why we need to do that.

##### **1. His Salvation Is of God**

Number one: His salvation is of God. Notice verse 3: *“Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him who eateth not judge him that eateth; for God hath received him”* (Romans 14:3). Now friend, any friend of Jesus is a friend of mine. The psalmist said: *“I am a companion of all those who fear thee”* (Psalm 119:63). If that man has received Jesus, we must receive that man.

##### **2. His Service Is for God**

Number one: His salvation is from God. Number two: His service is for God. Notice

verse 4 of this same chapter: *“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be held up; for God is able to make him stand”* (Romans 14:4). Now you may not like the kind of music he does. You may not like the kind of witnessing he does. You may not like the preaching he does. But mister, he’s not doing it for you, and he’s not going to have to answer to you. He’s going to have to answer to God. Amen? And so are you.

### **3. His Security Is in God**

And so his salvation is from God. His service is to God. And I’ll tell you something else: His security is in God. The last part of that verse says: *“He shall be held up; for God is able to make him stand”* (Romans 14:4). That is, you’re going to be with him for all eternity. I mean, if you’ve been saved by God, you’re going to be kept by God.

### **4. His Summons Will Come from God**

I’ll tell you something else: The reason that we need not to judge him, and we need to receive him—God has received him, his salvation is from God—his service is to God, his security is in God, and, one day, his summons will come from God, and he’s going to have to answer to God. Notice verse 10: *“But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ”* (Romans 14:10).

Now dear friend, one of these days I’m going to have to stand before the judgment seat of God for my view on all of these things that we mentioned. It’s not that they just go scot-free. I’m going to have to face the Lord. *“We shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God”* (Romans 14:10–12).

Now you see, God is going to judge me. Now instead of judging one another about things that are doubtful, all of us should be preparing to meet the Lord. And we’re going to answer to the Lord. And I don’t need to be meddling around in your personal affairs, and you don’t need to be meddling around in mine.

And so this is first thing we need to understand, friends: “In essentials, unity.” It’s not a matter of days. It’s not a matter of diets. It is a matter of dominion. Christ is Lord. And because Christ is Lord, we are to receive those that He has received.

## **IV. It’s a Matter of Liberty**

Now not only is it a matter of lordship; secondly, it is a matter of liberty. Those who have been saved have been given a liberty—a freedom—in Christ. Now I’m as much afraid of legalism as I am liberalism. Legalism and liberalism are the opposite ends of the same

sin. I don't want to be a member of a liberal church. And I don't want to be a member of a legalistic church. Legalism will do as much damage, maybe more damage, than liberalism. Jesus said, "Beware of the Sadducees, and beware of the Pharisees—the leaven of the Pharisees, and the leaven of the Sadducees" (Matthew 16:6). The leaven of Sadducees was liberalism. The leaven of the Pharisees was legalism.

And so we've been given liberty. That means, we can choose in these matters. That doesn't mean that we can violate our conscience. Notice verses 13 and 14: *"Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more; but judge this, rather: that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean"* (Romans 14:13–14).

Now what does that mean? It means that I'm going to have to ask God, and I'm going to have to say, "God, is this thing wrong for me? God, you're going to have to show me." And God has given me a responsibility to come to Him as an individual. I don't have to come for you. I have to come for my own self. And if there is something that may be wrong, or, if I think it's wrong, I just leave it alone. Look in verse 23: *"And he that doubteth is condemned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatever is not of faith is sin"* (Romans 14:23).

Now what does that mean? It means this: If you're not sure whether a thing is right, or whether a thing is wrong for you, just leave it alone. Now God has given you liberty. But that liberty has certain rights, and it has certain responsibilities. And if you're not sure about it, *"He that doubteth is condemned if he eat"* (Romans 14:23). Now the word *condemned* here does not mean that he is going to Hell. He just condemns himself if he eats. Suppose I think to myself, "Well, I really ought not to eat that meat offered to idols. But boy, that looks so good. Man, I just believe I want it, and I'm going to eat it anyway." And the whole time I'm eating it, my conscience is defiled. Do you know what I've done? I've condemned myself because I have done something. Whether it's wrong or not, in my mind, I think it's wrong. And therefore, I've sinned. If I thought it were a sin to walk out that door, whether it is or not, and I walk out that door, I've still sinned against God in my heart and in my mind, because my conscience is defiled.

*"To him that esteemeth anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean"* (Romans 14:14). Do you understand what I'm talking about? So folks, if you're not sure about something, hey, just don't do it. Just don't do it. Somebody says, "He's doing a certain thing." And he says, "Well, when God tells me it's wrong, then I'm going to quit." Why don't you say, "When God tells me it's right, I'm going to start?" I mean, why don't you give God the benefit of the doubt?

One man was in his bedroom getting dressed, and he called out to his wife, who was

in another part of the house. He said, “Sweetheart, is this shirt clean enough for me to wear?” She said, “No.” So after a while, he came out buttoning up another shirt. He said, “You didn’t even come in and look. How did you know?” She said, “If you had to ask, it wasn’t.” That’s what Paul is saying: if it’s doubtful, it’s dirty. Just leave it alone.

## V. It’s a Matter of Love

Now look: In essentials, unity; that’s a matter of lordship. In non-essentials, liberty. “*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind*” (Romans 14:5). Now here’s the third thing: In all things, charity. We are to use love in all things.

Now let’s notice how beautifully Paul rounds this out, and we’ll be finished. Look, if you will, in verse 15 of this same chapter: “*But if thy brother be grieved with thy food, now walkest thou not in love. Destroy not him with thy food, for whom Christ died*” (Romans 14:5). Now what Paul is saying here is there are certain things that you just leave alone, not because they harm you, but because they might harm somebody else. Notice verse 16: “*Let not then your good be evil spoken of; for the kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 14:16). Paul says, “Some big deal!” Suppose you have to give up something. So what? So what? Suppose you don’t eat any more meat offered to idols? So what? “*The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit*” (Romans 14:16). Give it up! It’s no big deal. It’s not the *externals*, but the *internals* and the *eternals* that really matter. It’s not that meat, necessarily. So don’t worry about it.

Now here’s the way that we all are to live: We are to make sure that if a man has received Christ we receive him. Number two: We are to understand, in things doubtful, all Christians have liberty. They are going to have to answer to God, not to us. And number three: We are to walk in love toward other people.

### A. Four Ways I Ought to React to a Weaker Brother

Now let me give you four ways I ought to react to a weaker brother, and then, we’ll be finished.

#### 1. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason for Stumbling

Number one: I must not give that brother reason for stumbling. Now look, if you will, in verse 13: “*Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more; but judge this, rather: that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way*” (Romans 14:13). Now do you know what I am to do? I am to be very easy on you and very hard on me. Do you know what most of us are? We are very hard on others and very easy on ourselves. “Faults in others I can see; but praise the Lord, there’s none in me”—I mean,

that's the way we are. We are very critical of other people and quite easy on ourselves. But this verse says, "*Don't judge one another anymore, but rather judge this, that no man put an occasion to stumble in his brother's way*" (Romans 14:13). That's what we're supposed to do.

Do you know what I'm supposed to ask? Not, "Will this thing hurt me?" But "Could it cause somebody else to stumble?" There are certain things that I don't do. And I don't do them because I think that if I did them it might hurt me. I just don't do them because I think if somebody else saw me do them, they would stumble.

You know, there are so many things like that. For example, I don't believe in social drinking, folks. I mean, I know we're all against drunkenness. But there are some people—and I mean, good people, people in other denominations—who think it's all right to socially drink. Not bad people. They love God. They love God. But they think it's all right to socially drink.

Do you know why I couldn't socially drink? I mean, you talk about these little boys and girls who were out there at the airport to meet me, the other day. Well, you don't know what a blessing that was for me, just to walk by and touch those little children, and look into their little faces, and to show them love. I wouldn't ever want one of those children to see me with a glass of beer in my hand. I would never want them to see me in a restaurant with a cocktail in my hand. Do you know why? Some of them would stumble. I'll tell you how they would stumble. Some of them would say, "I don't think he's a man of God." They just wouldn't enjoy hearing me preach anymore. And others of them would say, "I do think he's a man of God, and I'll think I'll drink some, too, when I get old enough." They may become alcoholics. Even if I could handle it, either way, wouldn't it be a tragic thing?

Hey, you folks who are wondering about social drinking, let me give you a verse of Scripture. Look in verse 21 of this same chapter: "*It is good neither to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor anything by which thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak*" (Romans 14:21). Do you see that? The question is not, "Will it hurt me?" A man says, "Well, I can hold my liquor. It doesn't hurt me. I'm not a drunkard." Hey, folks, that's a selfish way to look at it. That's a selfish way. I have to ask myself, "Could it cause somebody else to stumble?"

Let me tell you something, friend. Everybody talks about moderation. I, personally, am convinced that moderation is not the answer to the liquor problem; it's the cause of it. It's the cause of it. I mean, it's the moderate drinker who causes the other people to drink who can't handle it; and, eventually, they become alcoholics, and wreck homes and lives, and, sometimes, eternally lose their souls.

You see, look: The thing I have to do is not to condemn a man if he's a social

drinker. I don't have a right to say he doesn't love God. I'll tell you what I do have a responsibility—is to say, “I'm not going to do it.” I'm not going to. I need to be hard on me. I don't have the right to go around and judge other people. But I have a responsibility to so live and so act, so that no one will stumble by what I do. See, that's what we're talking about. In all things, love. I am my brother's keeper.

## **2. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason for Sorrowing**

And so I must not give my brother reason—number one—for stumbling. Number two: I must not give my brother reason for sorrowing. Look, if you will, in verse 15. *“But if thy brother be grieved with thy food, now walkest thou not in love”* (Romans 14:15). I mean, if it grieves somebody to see you do something. If my mother, my dad were to say, “Adrian, it breaks my heart to see you living that way. It breaks my heart to see you acting that way. I hate to see you do this, say that, go there, drink this, eat that; it hurts me”... Hey, folks, I don't want to do things that are going to hurt other people. Even though I might justify it, even if I might say it's a doubtful thing, and I think I have liberty. Hey, if my brother is grieved, it's no big deal: I'll leave it alone. *“The kingdom of God is not food and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit”* (Romans 14:16). Do you understand what I'm saying?

## **3. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason for Striving**

Now thirdly, I must not give my brother reason for striving. Look, if you will, in verse 19 of this same chapter: *“Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace, and things with which one may edify another”* (Romans 14:19). Let's not do things that divide people, but things that unite people. And a stronger brother may give way to a weaker brother. He doesn't despise the weaker brother. And let the weaker brother stop judging the stronger brother. And let the stronger brother quit despising the weaker brother. And let us put our arms around one another. My job is to build you up, not to tear you down. We need to be so careful we don't judge one another, because see, folks, we don't have all the facts.

I think I told you this silly story, one other time. When I was in a church—a particular church in another city in Florida—a lady came in to counsel with me, and she got under conviction, and she reached in her pocketbook, and pulled out a flask of liquor. She said, “Preacher, I'm giving this to you and you just take this.” And so I said, “Well, praise God, victory!” We prayed and so forth, and she left, and there's that bottle of liquor sitting on my desk. “Well,” I said, “what if my secretary comes in here.” I said, “Well, I need to get rid of this bottle of liquor. What can I do with it?” I said, “Well, I'll just leave it here.” I said, “No, I can't leave it here.” I said, “Well, I'll put it in the cabinet.” And I said, “No, that would be worse. Somebody will open the cabinet and see it in there.” I mean,

you know, that could happen. I said, "I'll put it behind a book." I said, "No, that's worse. If somebody just happens to move a book, and finds a bottle of liquor there." I said, "Well, I'll throw it in a garbage can." I said, "Well, I don't want that liquor bottle in my garbage can." You know, it's hard to get rid of one of those things. I thought to myself, "What will I do with that?" So I tried to somehow put it down in a wastebasket, and put some papers on top of it. And I said, "Well, I'll just get rid of it. I'll carry it away, and throw it away somewhere on the way home." So I put it in my car, and said, "Oh, this is terrible." And I said, "Lord, if I have a wreck, Lord, it's your fault, you'd better keep me from having a wreck. If I get caught in a wreck with a broken liquor bottle." And I said, "Well, I don't want to put it in the trash," so I passed some woods, and said, "Well, I'll walk out here in the woods with it, and throw it out." And I said, "Wouldn't that be silly, if I get caught in the woods with this bottle of liquor? What would somebody say? The guys would say, "I saw him, caught him out there in the woods with a bottle of liquor." Ha, ha, I hate a litterbug, but I left that liquor bottle out there in the woods. I poured it out on the ground, left it there, pronounced a curse on it, and left. And left.

## **Conclusion**

Hey folks, listen. Did you know that there are times when any of us could find anybody else in a situation we don't know anything about and be quick to judge that brother or that sister? Listen. Do you know what the Bible says? Listen. In essentials, unity—Jesus is Lord; in non-essentials, liberty—you're going to have to answer before God at the judgment seat of Christ; but in all things, charity—we are to love one another.

Wouldn't it be a wonderful church if everybody in the church were walking so carefully—we didn't want to do anything that would cause anybody else to stumble, and, on the other hand, we didn't wrap our sanctimonious robes about us and start to judge somebody else about the way they work, the way they sing, the way they preach, the way they speak—but we just all began to praise God and love one another? Hey, folks, don't you want to be a member of a church like that? Nod your head.

All right then, you be that kind of a man, and we'll have that kind of a church. Let's bow our heads together in prayer.

# What to Do When Brethren Disagree

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 5, 1982**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 14:1–23**

*“But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.”*

ROMANS 14:10

## Outline

Introduction

I. In Essential, Unity

- A. We Should Receive Our Brother Because His Salvation is from God
- B. We Should Receive Our Brother Because His Service Is to God
- C. We Should Receive Our Brother Because His Security Is in God
- D. We Should Receive Our Brother Because His Scrutiny Is from the Lord

II. In Non-Essentials, Liberty

- A. The Rights of Liberty
- B. The Responsibility of Liberty

III. In All Things, Charity

- A. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason to Stumble
- B. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason to Sorrow
- C. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason for Strife

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles tonight and turn, will you, please, to Romans chapter 14. And we've been in the book of Romans off and on these past few weeks together, and God has been blessing my heart as I've been going back and looking at significant passages in the book of Romans. And tonight, we're going to be talking about "What to Do When Brethren Disagree"; when good people don't see eye to eye on certain points; how to face family feuds.

Did you know you can love someone and not necessarily always agree with them? Do you know Joyce and I don't always agree on everything? Of course! This is America. She has a right to be wrong. And even Joyce and myself sometimes do not see eye to eye on every minor point. And you're going to find out that this is true in a church. It's

true in a Baptist church. And that's all right. It's all right to disagree. We do not have to have uniformity in order to have unity. But let me tell you, dear friend, the devil loves to sow discord among brethren. And so it's very important that we study the fourteenth chapter of Romans to be reminded of some wonderful, wonderful truths.

Now I know that some people can act very religious and cut your throat at the same time. I heard of a missionary who was being chased by a lion. And the lion was about to catch up with the missionary. And finally, the lion did catch the missionary. And the missionary just fell in exhaustion, and he started to pray. And the missionary said, "Lord, you've got to deliver me from this lion." And the missionary noticed a strange thing: that when he stopped to pray, the lion stopped also, kneeled down, and folded his paws and bowed his head. And the missionary said, "Well, I must have a Christian lion." And the lion said, "Now, friend, all I'm doing is returning thanks for my meal."

Now, there are people who can look very pious when they are about to devour you. As a matter of fact, Paul says in Galatians chapter 5 and verse 15, "*But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*" (Galatians 5:15) There is such a thing as Christian cannibalism, where we bite and devour one another. And what a terrible thing it is when people act religious, like that old lion, and they're about to devour you! And so we're going to learn today how to disagree and still be agreeable; how to get along with those that we do not see eye to eye with about things that are doubtful.

Now what happened is this: that in the church at Rome there were people who loved the Lord Jesus Christ, but they were at counterpoint over some inconsequential matters, some things that really did not matter. They were arguing about matters of diet and matters of days. And because of that, Paul had to write this fourteenth chapter of Romans. And I'm grateful that he did, because we need to hear what Paul said.

And actually, Paul divided those in the arguments up into categories of persons: those that he called the weaker brothers and those that he called the stronger brothers. Now you would think perhaps that the weaker brothers were those who were perhaps a little more liberal in the way that they behaved. But Paul said that the weaker brothers were the ones who were, for the most part, the more straight and narrow. And the stronger brothers were the ones who had liberty in Christ and so they were doing certain things that the weaker brothers were criticizing them for. And the problem was even more compounded because you couldn't tell who was the weaker or the stronger brother, because the weaker brother thought he was the stronger brother.

And so you can see what a convoluted mess it was. And Paul writes to straighten the whole thing out. And, of course, since he wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he did such a wonderful, wonderful job!

Summing up what Paul said in the fourteenth chapter of Romans, a theologian of

yesteryear penned something that I think is very wonderful, and it would be well for you to write it in the flyleaf of your Bible. He said, concerning Christian unity and fellowship, “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” Isn’t that beautiful? Now, listen to it again: “In essentials, unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things, charity.”

Now I want us to take that statement and use it as the outline for our message tonight as we look at the fourteenth chapter of the book of Romans.

## I. In Essential, Unity

First of all, let us think about this statement, “In essentials, unity.” I want us to look in the first twelve verses. Here’s what Paul says: *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks. For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.”* (Romans 14:1–12)

Now, let’s go back and look at those first twelve verses. First of all, what Paul is saying is this: that unity and Christianity, number one, is not a matter of diet. Look in verses 2 and 3: *“For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.”* (Romans 14:2–3)

Now, what happened is this: In the church at Rome many were saved out of dark paganism. And they came into the church and they had been formerly worshippers of idols. And they noticed that the Jewish believers, who were stronger, and who were schooled in monotheism, and who believed in just one God, and understood that an idol is nothing, had no compunction about eating meat that had been offered to idols. You

could go down to the meat market and get a terrific buy on mutton or sirloin, and if it were normally sell for two dollars, or two fifty, or three dollars a pound, they could buy it for seventy-five cents if they bought it at the pagan meat market. And so they'd go down there and buy their meat, and they would have a wonderful time. But these who had just been saved out of paganism and who had formally been worshipping those idols said, "What? Do you mean that you call yourself a Christian and you would eat meat offered to idols?" And so they wouldn't touch it. They would eat only vegetables rather than eating this meat that might have been polluted by being offered to idols. And so, there were those weaker Gentiles who were criticizing stronger Jews.

And then, there were some weaker Jews who were criticizing stronger Gentiles. Now, the Gentiles had not come from the Jewish tradition. They'd not known about the Jewish holy days and the Jewish sacred days. They had not known about the Jewish feasts and the Jewish fasts. And so they were not all that worked up about the Sabbath days. They were not all that concerned about the various Judaic feasts. And so they just ignored them. They were not a part of their pagan religion, so it made no difference to them. Well, this scandalized some of the weaker Jewish brethren. They said, "You call yourself a follower of Jehovah God, and you don't even keep the holy days?"

And so they were divided. Some were divided over the matter of diet; others were over the matter of days. But what Paul goes on to show them is that these things are incidentals. They are not fundamentals. And he says to them, "It is not a matter of diet, and it is not a matter of days; it is a matter of devotion to the Lord."

Look in verses 7 and 8 as he moves past that from the matter of diet and the matter of days to the matter of devotion. Here's how Paul sums it up. He's getting down now to the essentials that are to bring us together. He says, "*For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.*" And now, one of the great statements in all of the Bible—verse 9: "*For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and the living.*" (Romans 14:7–9) What Paul says in a nutshell is, "He died to claim us as Lord. He lives to control us as Lord. He is Lord." And he's saying that we're going to get together. We may not be able to get together on the matter of diets, and we may not be able to get together on the matter of days, but we ought to be together in this matter of the lordship of Jesus Christ.

And, friend, I want to tell you something. There can be unity without uniformity as God's people say, "We love the Lord." You may not see things just as I see things. I may not see things as Paul sees things. Paul may not see things as Jim sees things. But that doesn't make any difference. We are brothers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We are the Lord's. He died to claim us as Lord. He rose to control us as Lord. So, whether we

live, or whether we die, we are the Lord's. **And so, you see, Christ is the hub of our church. The individual members are the spokes. Our faith is the rim. And the closer we come to the hub, the closer we are one to another.**

Now, because we are the Lord's, Paul gives us four reasons why we ought to receive one another. Now I want you to notice why we ought to receive one another. Look again in verse 1: *"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye."* (Romans 14:1) That is, just welcome him as a brother in Christ. And here are the four reasons he gives us.

#### **A. We Should Receive Our Brother Because His Salvation is from God**

Number one: His salvation is from God. Look in verse 3: *"Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him."* (Romans 14:3) Friend, listen. If God received him, you can receive him, whether he eats or he doesn't, whether he keeps a special day or whether he doesn't. If God has received him, you can receive him.

Listen. There are some people who try to tell me whom I can have fellowship with and whom I can't have fellowship with. But I'm going to have fellowship with everybody whom God has received, amen? I don't care what denominational label they wear. It doesn't make any difference to me. The psalmist said, *"I am a companion of all them that fear thee."* (Psalm 119:63) And if God has received him, he and myself are members of the same body. And if I harm him, I harm me, because we're members of the same body. And not only that: we're members of the same family. And if I dishonor him, I dishonor also his Father, and I give the Father a wound.

#### **B. We Should Receive Our Brother Because His Service Is to God**

And so, number one: I must receive him, because God has received him. His salvation is from God. But not only is his salvation from God; his service is to God. Look in verse 4: *"Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth."* (Romans 14:4)

And so he's not serving you. You don't have any right to go around picking faults and flaws and foibles in his life. He is God's servant. Too many times, we're so concerned about what somebody else is going to do and how they're going to serve the Lord, rather than how we are going to serve the Lord.

I'm thinking right now of that time when the Lord Jesus Christ was getting ready to leave this earth, and He was telling Peter what was going to happen to Simon Peter, and how Peter would serve Him. And about that time, the Apostle John walked up. And Simon Peter asked Jesus, "Well, what's this man going to do? What shall this man do?" Do you know what Jesus said to him? "What is that to thee? Follow me. That's none of your business." Jesus said, "Don't you worry about John. You worry about Peter. What is that to thee? Follow thou me." (John 21:18–23) Your service is to God.

Now, you know, so many times we just don't like somebody else who serves God a little differently than we serve God. Do you remember those disciples came and said, "Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he was not of us: forbid him"? "He didn't belong to our little club. He wasn't a member of our church. He wasn't a member of our denomination." Jesus said, "You leave him alone—you leave him alone. He that is not against us is for us."

You know, I've been amazed sometimes how we as Southern Baptists get all excited and worked up because of what God is doing through Jerry Falwell. You know, you'd think that some people would wish that God would just take Jerry away. I praise God for every time he preaches the gospel of Jesus Christ. I thank God for anybody who lifts up the name of our dear, wonderful Savior. But sometimes we say, "Oh, they're not a part of our little club. They're not a part of our little denomination. They don't do it just like we do it." Paul says, "To his own master he will stand or fall. Who are you—who are you—to judge another man's servant?"

### **C. We Should Receive Our Brother Because His Security Is in God**

Now, what Paul is saying is, "Look, we need to start receiving one another, number one, because his salvation is from God, God has received him; number two, his service is to God and not to us; number three, his security is in God." Notice again in verse 4: "*Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*" (Romans 14:4)

Now you don't need to pull him down, and you don't need to prop him up. God is able to make him stand. The same One who saved him is the One who shall secure him. And we're going around sometimes with people who don't see things just like we see them. They don't eat the things that we think they ought to eat. They don't observe the days that we think they ought to observe. They don't cross the *l*'s that we think they ought to cross, and they don't dot the *i*'s that we think they ought to dot.

Now, sometimes they dot the *i*'s and cross the *l*'s and misspell the word, and so we sometimes think that we have to move in to kind of help God out a little bit, and so we start pulling up radishes by the roots to see how they're growing, and then jam them back in the ground. That's what we're doing to some of these young Christians.

He says, "Listen. His salvation is from God. His service is to God. His security is in God. He shall stand. The Lord is able to hold him up, and he shall stand." And incidentally, brother, that's one of the best verses on eternal security in all of the Bible, isn't it? Listen. The Bible says, "*Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.*"

### **D. We Should Receive Our Brother Because His Scrutiny Is from the Lord**

I want to say, fourthly, another reason that we need to receive one another is that his scrutiny is of the Lord; or, if you want another word, his searching is of the Lord. Look, if

you will, in verses 10 and 11: *“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”* (Romans 14:10–11)

We don't need to go around searching one another. God's going to search us. And what Paul is saying here is, rather than judging your brother, you'd better start dealing with yourself, because one of these days you and your brother are going to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. And therefore your life is going to pass by in dress parade.

Now, the judicial judgment for the Christian has already passed. We're never going to be judged for our sins, for that judgment is passed: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 8:1) But as Christians we are going to appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or whether it be evil. (1 Corinthians 5:10) *“As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.”* (Romans 14:11) And so, his scrutiny is from God. God is going to look over the record. And if he has failed, God is going to deal with him. If he has done well, God is going to reward him. You know, so many times we're going around looking at others when we need to be examining ourselves.

I heard of a woman who entered into politics. And she'd normally been a housewife, but she got all interested in politics. And she kind of neglected her housework a little bit. But she came in one day and triumphantly said to her husband, “We're going to sweep the state.” He said, “I suggest you start at the back door.”

And now, this is what Paul is saying here: “Let this judgment begin with ourselves.” And so he gives us four reasons that we ought to receive one another. And what he's saying is, it's not a matter of diet. It is not a matter of days. It is basically a matter of devotion. And never, never, never, never split with a fellow Christian over a doubtful thing where the Bible does not give a clear and concise and precise commandment.

Now, let me give you some modern-day examples. What about the matter of Christmas? That's days. Did you know there are people who think that Christmas is the sweetest, happiest, holiest, most blessed season of the year, and they look forward to it; and there are other people who think that Christmas is of the devil, and that if you keep Christmas, you're about two-thirds pagan, and that Christmas has a pagan origin? And indeed, you can go back historically and show that Christmas in many ways is rooted back to some of the pagan festivals of some of the people, and that the Christians just kind of moved in and adopted it and adapted it and made a Christian thing over it.

You say, “Well then, I wouldn't have anything to do with it.” Well, are you going to have anything to do with Sunday? That used to be a day of worship of the sun. We come here on Sunday, you see, to praise the Lord. You say, “Yeah, but now it's the

Lord's Day." That's exactly what I'm trying to say. I'm saying, dear friend, that there are some honest arguments on either side of the fence. And some of the sweetest, most blessed, Christians I know enjoy Christmas. And, by the way, I do. I'm one of the sweetest and most blessed I know. I enjoy Christmas. I love it. And I just get all excited about Christmas. And it's a sweet blessing to me. But if you don't want to keep Christmas, then I have absolutely no right to despise you. And if I want to keep Christmas, you have no right to judge me. The same would go for Easter or other days. Some churches keep the liturgical calendar, and they want to keep Pentecost and other days. And so, Paul says, "*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*" (Romans 14:5)

What about the matter of dress? There are some people, you know, who would be scandalized that I would stand here in the pulpit tonight and wear a sport coat. Really. They think that a preacher ought not to wear anything that is sporty. I mean, their idea of a preacher is that he ought to have on a black suit, a black tie, black vest, black shoes, black socks, black Bible, and dandruff. And they just have this idea that somehow you're supposed to dress a certain way. And if a person wants to dress that way, I have nothing against it. That's fine.

Or there are people who have the idea that if you're a Christian, your hair has got to be a certain length. And, you know, it used to be that people would wear their hair a little longer and over their ears and so forth. And you look at some of the old-time preachers who used to be that way, and they would have beards. Then the time came, if you wore your hair down over your ears or had a beard, that was the mark, the sign, of the rebel. And perhaps it was. And so, Christians in the last decade, in the last fifteen years or so, started to divide up over the length of the hair.

Now I do believe the Bible says it's a shame for a man to have long hair—that is, if a man looks like a woman. (1 Corinthians 11:14) When you see a man, you ought to be able to say, "There goes a man," amen? And when you see a woman, the Bible says her long hair is a given to her for her glory. (1 Corinthians 11:15) You ought to be able to say, "There goes a woman." We used to have *shes* and *hims*. Now we just have *shims*. You can't tell whether it's a *she* or a *him*. But I'm trying to say, dear friend, that I don't want to get in one of those kinds of churches where people are going around with a ruler trying to see whether your hair touches the back of your collar or your ears, or something like that. That is not a matter of Christianity; that is a matter of somebody's own personal, private opinion. Now, if a man wants to wear it shaved off, I say, "Have at it." Or, if he wants to have a full haircut, then fine. But we do not need to go around judging one another about things like that.

Or, for example, let me give you another illustration. There are those who think that it's high time that the church got active in this matter of seeing that godly people are

elected to political offices, and it's time that the church spoke up and spoke out about some of the ungodly practices that are going on such as pornography and abortion and the whiskey business. And, incidentally, I am very disappointed that this weekend we turned downtown into a beer bust. And if anybody doesn't like that, then come see me about it and they can apologize to me. But I want to tell you, dear friend, that I'm disappointed in that. And I wish that our city fathers would not turn over downtown to the beer people. Personally, I don't like it. And I think that's it a bad image. And, ultimately, when we get what we want, we may not want what we get downtown.

Now, let me just tell you, dear friend, that we could have different ideas about so many things. And so, some people would say, "Well, Christians ought not to get into politics. And preachers ought not to speak out against whiskey. Preachers ought not to speak out against pornography. And preachers ought not to speak out against abortion. And people ought not to get all excited about getting good fiscal conservatives into political office, and so forth." And so they take umbrage at a preacher who takes a stand at something like that. Other people will get on your case if you don't. And they say, "You chicken-livered, pussy-footing, fence-straddling good-for-nothing! Why don't you stand up and tell the people what they ought to do?" Well, who's right?

Well, we're not to fall out with brethren about the person who feels concerned and that he ought to get into moving people and telling people to get involved. I, for one, believe we ought to get involved. It's hard for me to believe that God ordained government and then told His people to stay out of it. And if they stay out, then what crowd's going to be in? You just make up your mind. If all the good folks get out, then what's going to happen to it? But what I'm trying to say is, dear friend, there are some very sincere and very honest people who would clearly and plainly feel that the church ought to do nothing, and the preacher ought to say nothing, except preach the gospel pure and simple and plain. There are others who say, "If we do not take a stand, we are missing the message of righteousness taught by the Old Testament prophets and in the epistles."

Now I'm just trying to give you some illustrations. And I'm trying to show you, dear friend, how good people—I mean people who love God—can get on either side of any of those fences, right? And right now when I'm preaching, some of you are dividing up. Maybe I'll start a fuss here before I get over—and I'm trying to show us how to have unity. No, listen. As far as I know, there is no disunity. I'm not trying to heal anything tonight. I'm just simply trying tonight to lay down some principles for God's people.

You know, it's amazing what people think is right and what people think is wrong. Did you know that when radio first came out, there were good, sincere people who said that a Christian ought to have nothing to do with a radio? Right. And they didn't think the gospel ought to be preached on the radio like I'm preaching tonight. And the reason

they did not think that you ought to preach on radio was they said that there is something mysterious and strange about it, and the devil is the prince of the power of the air. (Ephesians 2:2) And so they thought that the airwaves were not an appropriate means to preach the gospel. And they were sincere people. And so, there was a time when some sincere people didn't think that you ought to communicate the gospel by the means of radio.

Or let me tell you something I read a long time ago. One of the great preachers of yesteryear was a man named Barnhouse. And Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse was a mighty man in the Scriptures. And I read somewhere a long time ago where Donald Barnhouse was preaching in a Bible conference center. I believe the year was 1928. And when he was preaching there, some ladies came up to him and said, "Dr. Barnhouse, some of the women have come to this conference, and they are not wearing stockings. And because they're not wearing stockings, Dr. Barnhouse, we want you to rebuke them openly and publicly." You know what Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse said to these women? He said, "Do you understand the history of stockings?" He said, "Did you know that the Virgin Mary did not wear them?" He said, "As a matter of fact, they were first worn by prostitutes in Italy."

And then he said, "In the fifteenth century, a lady of nobility who was a very daring woman decided that she was going to wear stockings to one of the state balls, and she did to the court ball, and a scandal erupted in the hearts and minds of many people. But because of her leadership and because of the style that she set, many of the upper classes started to wear stockings. And after a while, the matter of stockings got to be in vogue. And by the time of Queen Victoria, the wearing of stockings was the badge of a prude."

Now, is it right or wrong for a woman to wear stockings?" At one time, if she did, that was a mark of a prostitute. At another time, if she did, it was the mark of a prude. You see, these are external things. These are things that good people, godly people, honest people, people who love God, could disagree about. And in the church at Rome you could get on the day argument, and one man would give you a good argument on one side; another on another side. You could get on the diet argument, and one would give you a good argument on one side; and one on the other side. And, as a matter of fact, I believe I could explain it both ways tonight and divide our congregation. Some of you would vote one way, and some would vote another, and most of you take the Fifth Amendment and would not vote.

So, what Paul is saying is this—listen—he is saying, "In essentials, unity: we are the Lord's." *"For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living."* (Romans 14:9) "And whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's." (Romans 14:8) It is not a matter of days. It is not a matter of diets. It is a

matter of devotion.

## II. In Non-Essentials, Liberty

Now, in essentials, unity. The second thing he says: “In non-essentials, there must be liberty.” I want us to read verses 13 and 14 now. He says, “*Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself...*”—now, Paul was one of the stronger brethren who knew that this meat was not contaminated—“*there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean.*” (Romans 14:13–14) And then, look in verse 23: “*And he that doubteth is damned if he eat...*”—now, the word *damned* here does not mean “consigned to hell,” but it literally means he’s “condemned”—“*And he that doubteth is [condemned] if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.*” (Romans 14:23)

### A. The Rights of Liberty

Now, what Paul is talking about here is your liberty to discern certain things within your own heart. He talks about the rights of that liberty in verses 13 and 14. And what he is saying is this: that you must obey your conscience in these matters. Don’t let somebody else control your conscience. Be true to your own conscience. Now it is true that your conscience is not an infallible guide. But whether it is or whether it isn’t, until God changes it, you must obey it. Obey your conscience. And no man should willingly, definitely, knowingly violate his conscience. If he does, he’s going to sin against himself, for verse 23 says, “If any man esteems a thing to be wrong, to him it is wrong.”

Now, what he’s saying in verse 23 is, “If it’s doubtful, it’s dirty.” I mean, if I thought it were wrong for me to go over there and pick up that microphone, and I went over and picked up that microphone, whether it’s right or wrong for me to pick it up is not the issue. In my heart I feel I’m doing wrong. Therefore, I ought not to do it. Do you understand? If I think it’s wrong, I have sinned in my heart; I have sinned in my attitude, if indeed I’ve not sinned in my deed. And so, what he is saying is that we as Christians have a certain amount of liberty.

### B. The Responsibility of Liberty

He speaks of the rights of that liberty, but he speaks also of the responsibility of that liberty. Look in verse 15: “*But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat...*”—now, Paul says, “I’ve got liberty. I know that there’s nothing unclean of itself.” But he says—“*If thy brother be grieved with thy meat,*”—if I could just sit down and enjoy this steak—“*now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.*” And verse 16: “*Let not then your good be evil spoken of.*” (Romans 14:15–16)

What Paul is saying is this—and you’re going to have to understand it to be a mature Christian: Remember that in non-essentials we have liberty. Don’t lose your liberty, but don’t abuse it. You see, it would be better for you to forsake something than to cause somebody else to stumble.

I remember reading about Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Now, for those of you who are not familiar with church history, Charles Haddon Spurgeon was one of the great, great, great, great preachers of all time. He may have been the greatest preacher outside the Apostle Paul. And Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached in London. Something that many people do not know, Brother Don, is that Charles Spurgeon smoked cigars. And that was back before the American Cancer Society had done its work. But he smoked cigars. And he thought he had a liberty to smoke cigars. He thought that he had a liberty to use tobacco. And there is a sense in which he did. There’s really nothing in the Bible that says, “Thou shalt not smoke cigars.” It just doesn’t say that. And Spurgeon was a man mighty in the Lord.

And yet one day, Spurgeon was walking down the street, and he looked into a tobacco shop. And in that tobacco shop he saw some smoking paraphernalia. He saw some pipes and some cigars, or whatever they were, other things, where they had cigars or cigarettes. I know he smoked a pipe and some other things. And when he looked in there and he saw that, underneath it had this sign: “Spurgeon’s Brand. This is the tobacco that Spurgeon uses. These are the pipes that Spurgeon uses.” And do you know what that mighty man of God said? He said, “Shall I be known for the tobacco I smoke or for the gospel I preach?” And he made up his mind he’d never touch it again. And he didn’t. You see, he knew that he had liberty, and he knew the rights of that liberty, but he also knew the responsibility of that liberty. And so, here was a man who was not living under law, but he was living under love.

### **III. In All Things, Charity**

And so, what this theologian of yesteryear said was so wise: “In essentials, unity”—Christ is Lord. “In non-essentials, liberty”—“*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*” (Romans 14:5) But now, thirdly, and finally, in essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity. Look again, if you will, in verse 15: “*But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably*”—that is, “in love.” “*Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died.*” (Romans 14:15)

Now, there are certain things that I as a Christian do and certain other things that I don’t do, not because I have to, or not even because I ought to, but because I want to, because of the love that’s in my heart. Because of the charity that Christ has put in my heart, there are certain ways that I behave and you as a Christian ought to behave. And let me just give you, before I finish this message tonight, three things that love will

compel you to toward your brother. Now we're talking now about "in all things, charity"—or three things that you must not do because of love.

#### **A. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason to Stumble**

First of all, I must not give my brother reason to stumble. Look in verse 13: *"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."* (Romans 14:13) And then, look, if you will, please, in verse 21: *"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."* (Romans 14:21)

Now, what Paul says here is that I must not cause anybody else to stumble. You see, the great question is not "will it hurt me," although I must consider that. And if it will hurt me, for me it's wrong. But even if it will not hurt me, if it could cause me to hurt you, if it could cause you to stumble, then I ought to leave it alone.

Now, let's go back to this matter of drinking wine. He mentions drinking wine here. People want to know, should a Christian be a teetotaler? I think he ought to. I think he ought to be a total abstainer. And I'll tell you why. Not only because of the inherent dangers of alcoholism and all of these other things, but look in verse 21. The Bible says, *"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."* (Romans 14:21)

Now, nobody knows who's going to become an alcoholic when he starts to drink. As a matter of fact, one out of every three persons who begin to drink will become a problem drinker. Nobody starts out to be a drunkard. Nobody starts out to be an alcoholic. Nobody starts out to be a problem drinker. But they end up that way. Now, somebody says, "Well, I can handle my liquor. It doesn't bother me. I can keep wine in the cabinet. I can keep wine in the refrigerator, beer in the icebox. It doesn't bother me."

Well, that's not the end of the question. Now, suppose I could go out to a meal and have a highball, or suppose I could go out to the meal and have a glass of beer, or keep some wine in the refrigerator and so forth. And suppose that I knew how to control it, and it really didn't bother me. But that's not the end of the question. I have some children in my family. And my children might say, "Well, you know, Dad's a good man. Dad loves the Lord. And Dad drank on occasions, and it didn't bother him." And suppose one of my children began to drink, and they couldn't handle it, and they became one of these problem drinkers. Now, what have I done? I have caused them to stumble. I've caused them to become weak. You see, the selfish question is, will it hurt me? The loving question is, will it destroy or hurt somebody else?

I want to tell you something that may shock you. *Moderation is not the answer to the liquor problem. Moderation just may be the cause of it.* Now, what I'm trying to say

is this: that it is the moderate drinker, it is the man who can control his liquor, it is the man who can handle his booze, that emboldens and generates the drink for others. And so they show you that man of distinction with that beautiful suit, and with that Afghan Hound there by his side, and the beautiful woman there stroking his hand, and he's got that vodka in his hand. Oh boy, doesn't he look great? They don't show you that drunk in the gutter covered with his own vomit and flies. They don't show you that man down. They don't dare show you that. They can't show you that. They wouldn't show you that. But, my friend, that is a fact of life. And the liquor brewer doesn't want you to know that.

And so, this man over here who's handling it, he's got to ask himself a question. It's got to go far beyond, will it hurt me? And he's got to look at verse 21: *"It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak."* (Romans 14:21)

Do you have little children? Suppose you've got a toddler in your house, and you pick up the scissors, and you put the scissors up and don't leave them out. Is it because you're afraid the scissors are going to hurt you? No! You don't want him to be hurt with those scissors. And love makes you do that.

Now, you know what most of us do? Most of us are very hard on other people, and very easy on ourselves: "Faults in others I can see; but, praise the Lord, there are none in me." I mean, that's the way we are. We go around looking down our long noses at somebody else who does something we don't like in some doubtful area, and we judge him. Now we need to turn that around 180 degrees. And let me tell you what would turn every church and every convention and every Christian group that I know of into heaven on earth: if we would be very hard on ourselves, and very easy on others. You know, if we just say, "Well, if he does that, God bless him. I can't judge him for it. The Bible doesn't condemn it. Maybe I think he's wrong. But if I don't have a chapter and a verse, I'm just going to have to cast him on the Lord. To his own master he'll stand and fall. But, brother, I'm not going to do anything that causes anybody to stumble." Wouldn't it be wonderful if we'd do this? If we'd just say, "Well, God bless you, brother. I'm not going to judge you for that. I'm not going to criticize you for that. But I'm going to criticize me."

Now, look what the Bible says here. It says, *"Judge this rather"—"Judge this rather."* Here, if you want something to judge, he says, just judge yourself. Look again in verse 13. Here's the one to judge: *"Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way."* (Romans 14:13) *Every Christian ought to be a steppingstone and not a stumbling block to somebody else.* And so I have to look at my life, and I have to ask, is there anything in my heart, in my life, that might cause someone else to stumble? If there is, love says that, even though it may not harm me, I still would not want to offend

or cause someone else to stumble.

### **B. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason to Sorrow**

And so, love says, number one, “I must not give my brother reason to stumble.” Love says, number two, “I must not give my brother reason to sorrow.” Look, if you will, in verse 15: *“But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably.”* (Romans 14:15) Now, this word *grieve* means “to sorrow” or “to have pain.” That is, if he would look at me and would say, “It breaks my heart to see you doing that; it grieves me to see you acting that way, living that way,” I don’t want to grieve you that way.

He goes on to say, “Destroy not thy brother.” Now, the word *destroy* literally means “to overthrow” or “to ruin.” In the vernacular today, we say to be “wiped out.” Don’t just wipe out some other believer by the way that you live.

### **C. I Must Not Give My Brother Reason for Strife**

I must not cause my brother to stumble because of love. I must not cause my brother to sorrow because of love. And then, not only must I not give him reason to stumble, or reason for sorrow, but I must not give him reason for strife. Look, if you will, in verse 19: *“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”* (Romans 14:19)

Now I am to find out if there’s something I’m doing that would cause strife: then I’ll just leave it alone. It’s not all that important. I don’t have to do it. You see, it’s not as important whether I do something or whether I don’t. He says that there are some things that are not all that important. Look in verse 17: *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”* (Romans 14:17)

## **Conclusion**

Suppose I give up something. You say, “But wait a minute, Brother Rogers. I know my rights.” Yeah, but so what? So what? Suppose you can’t go to a certain place, and there’s really nothing wrong with it? Suppose you can’t do a certain thing, and you know in your heart it’s all right? So what? If you’ve got righteousness, joy, and peace, you’ve got it all anyway, don’t you? The kingdom of heaven is not meat or drink, but righteousness, joy, and peace.”

# The Lordship of Christ

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** September 15, 1996

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 14:7–11

*“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.”*

ROMANS 14:9

## Outline

Introduction

- I. The Redeeming Claim of His Lordship
- II. The Resurrection Conquest of His Lordship
  - A. It Means Your Entire Submission
  - B. It Means His Absolute Ownership of All That You Possess
  - C. It Means Unquestioned Obedience
- III. The Regal Confession of His Lordship
  - A. Confessing the Lordship of Christ Will Conquer Satan
  - B. Confessing the Lordship of Christ Confirms Saints
  - C. Confessing the Lordship of Christ Convicts Sinners
  - D. Confessing the Lordship of Christ Controls Service

Conclusion

## Introduction

Would you find, please, in the Word of God Romans chapter 14, and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 7—Romans chapter 14. Kingdom Authority begins when the King is supreme. Now every child of God, when he was born again, was born to win. And God wants you to live with authority—kingdom authority. The world, the flesh, and the devil are not to have dominion over a child of God. God has made us kings and priests, and the Bible says, *“Thanks be unto God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 2:14). But there can be no dominion—there can be no reigning in this life—until we submit to the authority that God has placed over us. And that authority is summed up in these words: Jesus is Lord. Amen? Jesus is Lord. *Kingdom authority is never given to rebels. And if you rebel against the King, you'll never know the King's authority in your life.*

Let's read here, in Romans chapter 14, and I begin in verse 7: *“For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself”*—that is, we're not independent. We're not autonomous. We don't live and die alone, by ourselves, to ourselves—*“For whether we*

*live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live, therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then, every one of us shall give account of himself to God"* (Romans 14:7–11).

Now what had happened is this: In the church at Rome, Christians had begun to judge one another. They were criticizing one another about things where there were valid and different opinions: about days, about diets, about particular behavior. And what the Apostle Paul said in this chapter, in which he is talking about those things that are doubtful, was this: He said, "Would you people get your eyes off of one another? Stop judging! Stop criticizing one another! It is not your opinion of them that counts, nor their opinion of you that counts. Remember this: You belong to Jesus. He is Lord. He is Lord." That's why he puts this right there, in the middle. One of the worst things that could ever happen to any church is for us to get our eyes off of Jesus and onto one another. Amen? Jesus is Lord. Whether we live, or whether we die, we belong to Jesus Christ, because He died and rose again, and therefore, He is Lord.

Now what does the word *Lord* mean? It means "the one who has absolute power, absolute authority; the one who is the owner, the master." And that is the Lord Jesus Christ. Many so-called Christians don't understand this.

I've told you before that when I was preaching in Romania, I was riding along with Joseph Ton. Joseph Ton was a man who was tortured—beaten—for his faith under that cruel dictator Ceausescu. And they threatened to kill Joseph. But Joseph, more, I suppose, than perhaps any other man, has been a leader in the great revival that took place in Romania. I was preaching some crusades in Romania, and Joseph and I were riding in his little automobile, and I said, "Joseph, would you tell me please about your concept of American Christianity?" He said, "Adrian, I'd rather not do that." I said, "No, Joseph, please tell me." He said, "Well, Adrian, in America, the key word is *commitment*." I said, "Well, that's good. Isn't it, Joseph?" He said, "No, not particularly. I don't think it's good." He said, "As a matter of fact," he said, "if you were to use the word *commitment*, and I'm translating for you in Romanian," he said, "I do not have a word in the Romanian language to even translate the word *commitment*." He said, "The word *commitment* did not come into use in the United States until about the sixties." He said, "It was in the dictionary, but not in full use. But," he said, "over and over again, in the churches in America today, you hear about the word *commitment, commitment, commitment*."

"But," he said, "I began to think about that." And he said, "When a new word comes

in, it generally pushes an old word out. So I began to think, ‘What word is *commitment* taking the place of?’” And he said, “As I read the Bible, I found out that that word that *commitment* has replaced is the word *surrender*.” I said, “Well, Joseph, what is the difference between commitment and surrender?” He said, “When you make a commitment, you’re in control, but when you surrender, you’re no longer in control.” He said, “For example, you can commit to win souls, because you decide to do it. You can commit to study your Bible. You can commit to tithe. You can say, ‘I have decided to do this or that.’ But,” he said, “suppose a man puts a gun on you and says, ‘Stick ’em up.’” He said, “You lift your hands this way, and you don’t commit to anything. You surrender. Now,” he said, “we Americans like to be in control. We like to make commitments, but the true word is *surrender*. He is Lord.”

Now I’m not playing games with words. And if I use the word *commitment*, don’t jump on me. If you use the word, I’ll not jump on you. But if we’re committed to anything, we need to be committed to the lordship of Jesus Christ. He is Lord! He is absolute Lord!

I was reading. I was reading about a French naval battle when Lord Nelson, the commander of the British navy, was fighting the French. And they had defeated the French, and the French admiral came on board Lord Nelson’s ship to surrender. And he walked up there in all of his regalia. He had his sword swinging by his side, and he came with a smile on his face and put out his hand to Lord Nelson. Lord Nelson impassively said, “Your sword first, sir.”

You know, before we embrace the Lord Jesus, we have to lay our sword down. We have to abdicate the throne. We have to surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. He is Lord! This is what this passage of Scripture says, in verse 9. “*For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living*” (Romans 14:9).

Now let me say this: The foundational truth in the New Testament is that Jesus Christ is Lord. To understand that, is the fundamental key to knowing and exercising *Kingdom Authority*. Jesus Christ is called *Lord* no less than 747 times in the New Testament. “Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, if that’s true, I think I’ll make Him Lord.” You’re too late for that. He’s already Lord. Acts chapter 2 and verse 36: “*Therefore, let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36). You cannot make Him Lord. The only decision you have, today is—number one—will you recognize that lordship; and—number two—will you bow to it. Is that not right? He is already Lord.

May I ask you two questions? Question number one: Do you believe that Jesus Christ is Lord? Question number two: Have you surrendered to the lordship of Jesus Christ? Is He Lord of all that you have and all that you do? Is He Lord of your thoughts?

Is He Lord of your tongue? Is He Lord of your temper? Is He Lord of your time? Is He Lord of your testimony? Is He Lord?

## **I. The Redeeming Claim of His Lordship**

Now having answered that question, I want us to think about three things. First of all, I want you to think about the redeeming claim of His lordship. Jot that down, the redeeming claim of His lordship. How does He claim to be Lord? Because, He died for us. Look in verse 9: *“For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living”* (Romans 14:9). Jesus died to claim us as Lord. Now when He died for us, He was redeeming us. He was buying us.

Why is He Lord? Verse 9 says because He died for us (Romans 14:9). Bloody Calvary says that He is Lord. He has purchased you; you’re not your own. He has redeemed you with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood. Let this thought get into your heart: Jesus Christ has purchased you! He has redeemed you with His blood. Therefore, the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 and verse 19, *“What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom ye have of God, and ye are not your own?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). You say, “Well, I belong to me.” No, you don’t, not if you’re a Christian. If you’re a Christian, Jesus died to claim you as Lord. By what right can He say that He is Lord of your life? He has purchased you with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood, and He now lives in you to possess you as Lord. That’s what 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19, is talking about.

When I first got saved, I’d learn about Jesus in the Bible, and that was wonderful to me. And then, as I began to live the Christian life, I would see what Jesus would do in the lives of other people. And I saw Jesus in history and Jesus in action, and that was wonderful to me. And then, as I studied more and more, I began to learn about Jesus in Heaven, ruling and reigning from His throne, and that was wonderful. But I’ll tell you the great truth that I am now learning is that Jesus is in the Bible—yes—and Jesus in history—yes—and Jesus in Heaven—yes; but here’s the great truth: Christ in me, the hope of glory. He now lives in me. He has possessed me. I am His purchased possession, and, therefore, I am under new management.

Let me tell you something, folks: We have a lot of pseudo-Christians, people who’ve come down church aisles and have never been born again—people who’ve gone through the baptistery and have never been saved. But if you are saved, you’re under new management; you are not your own. And when you gave your heart to the Lord Jesus Christ, that was the last legitimate independent decision you ever made. You are not your own. You belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

“Now,” you say, “Pastor, that’s foreboding.” No, it is not foreboding; it is glorious. Why? Because, He knows more how to manage your life than you know how to manage

it. Why do you think Jesus wants to be Lord? So He can be boss? He's already boss! So He can have power? He already has power. He could do anything He wants with you! He already has that. He wants to be your Lord, because He alone can make out of you what He wants you to be, and what you need to be, and what you would want to be, if you could only see it from His viewpoint. Get it down, that He is Lord of all!

Now since He's got such a great investment in you, and verse 9 says He has died for you, as I say, "with the silver of His tears and the gold of His blood," He bought you, and you're not your own. Think about it. Have you ever made a big investment in something? If you've made a big investment in something, did you not go about to protect it? If you made a big investment for something, did you not go about to maintain it, and to put it to optimum use? You see, His investment in you is a blessing, because it means that He is going to watch over you. Put in your margin this verse; it blessed me as I studied it: Ephesians 1, verses 13 and 14. It speaks of those of us who've been saved, and it says this: *"In whom ye also trusted"*—speaking of Jesus, the Lord—*"In whom ye also trusted, after 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, who is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession"* (Ephesians 1:13–14).

Now what does that mean? Well, you and I are a purchased possession, and, after we were saved, God put a mark on us. That mark is the Holy Spirit. After that, we have believed, we have been sealed with the Holy Spirit.

Now what, what was a seal? We're not talking about an animal in the zoo, and we're not talking about something that goes around your mason jar, when you put up green beans. It's a legal document. And the Bible says, when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, He puts that legal document upon us. Kings in that time would have a ring, a signet ring. They would make a document, and then put melted wax on it, and put the seal on it. When you went into a court, and some transaction took place, a sale was made, a transference of property, a legal seal would be put upon it.

Now this verse in Ephesians 1 says this: that we are the purchased possession, and because we're the purchased possession, God has put His seal upon us. That seal meant—number one—that there has been a legal transaction. Number two: It meant a transference of property. Number three: It meant security. In the book of Esther, chapter 8, and verse 8, the Bible says, "The king's seal can no man break" (Esther 8:8). You see, the king's seal is on us; we are His. We have been transferred over to Him. It's a legal thing. Satan has been defeated, and we have been sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise. Is that a blessing to you? It ought to be.

Go think about it, friend. You have no right whatsoever to call yourself a Christian, if Jesus Christ is not Lord in your life. No right! You see, you're saved by believing that

Jesus Christ is Lord and yielding to that lordship. Romans 10, verses 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).

Now this is more than just saying that Jesus is Lord. You can say those words, but, when Paul wrote this book of Romans to the early Christians, to say, “Jesus Christ is Lord,” it could cost you your life. Why? Because, Caesar was more than emperor. He was the god. The people of the Roman Empire had to say, “Caesar is Lord.” Now they could say, “Zeus is Lord”; they could say that Aphrodite was Lord; but they also had to say that Caesar was Lord. They had to put Caesar in with the other gods. Christians would not do that. They would take these Christians, and they would say to them, “Do you want to get along in the empire? Then, you must say what everybody else will say. Say, ‘*Caesar Kurios.*’” They would say, “No, I can’t say that. ‘*Christos Kurios.*’” They would draw the sword and say, “Say it! ‘*Caesar Kurios!*’” “I cannot say that. Jesus Christ is Lord.”

And these Christians were thrown into dungeons, they were burned at the stake, their blood, red in the mouths of lions, because they said that Jesus Christ is Lord. They could have been saved, by simply offering a pinch of salt to Caesar, and saying, “Yes, Jesus is Lord, but so also is Caesar.” It’s not Christ and, it is Christ only; not Christ, and this or that. Jesus Christ is Lord. That is the fundamental confession of the New Testament church.

You know, we hear so much today about receiving Christ as your Savior. Did you know that’s not New Testament talk? The Bible doesn’t talk about receiving Christ as your Savior. He is Savior, but He’s also Lord. The Bible says: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31).

You say, “Well, what’s the difference?” Well, when Joyce and I got married, that was a wonderful day. When Joyce and I got married, suppose that preacher said to me, “Do you take Joyce to be your lawfully wedded wife?” Suppose I said, “Well, I take her as housekeeper.” Now folks, I have an idea that I would not have gotten married. When I say, “I take Joyce,” I mean, all that comes with her! You see, I said to her and to that preacher, “I do.” And I spent a number of years learning what I did. Now listen. I do! I gave all of me to all of her! Now I didn’t understand all that marriage was about; I’m still learning what it’s all about.

When I gave my heart to Jesus, I didn’t understand what it was all about. But I’ll tell you one thing: I did not come with my fingers crossed behind my back. I gave all I knew of me to all I knew of Jesus, and I said, “I do” to Him. I took Jesus, and so must you. He is Lord. And I’m telling you from my heart—Listen to me!—don’t have the idea that

salvation is like a cafeteria line where you say, “I’ll take a little saviorhood today, but no lordship, thank you.” Jesus Christ is Lord. “*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*” (Romans 10:9). And you cannot have what He gives unless you accept who He is. And He is Lord!

One of the greatest preachers who ever lived was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Let me quote what he said. Listen to it. These words are worth hearing. “If the convert declares that he knows the Lord’s will, but doesn’t mean to attend to it, it is your duty to assure him that he is not saved. Don’t imagine that the gospel is magnified, or God glorified, by going to worldlings, and telling them that they may be saved, at this moment, simply by accepting Christ as their Savior, while they are wedded to their idols with their hearts, and their hearts are still in love with sin. If I do so, I tell them a lie, I pervert the gospel, I insult Christ, I turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.” It is not *Christ and...*; it is *Christ or....* Now why? Because, He died for us, to claim us, as Lord. There is the redeeming claim of His lordship.

## **II. The Resurrection Conquest of His Lordship**

Now here’s the second thing I want you to notice: not only the redeeming claim of His lordship, but the resurrection conquest of His lordship. Go back to our text, again, and look at it in verse 9. Look at it: “*For to this end Christ both died*”—He died to claim us as Lord—“*and rose*”—He has risen to control us as Lord (Romans 14:9). There is the redeeming claim and the resurrection conquest of His lordship. He is shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. You see, when He died, He gave Himself for us; but when He rose, He gave Himself to us. And now He now lives in us as Lord.

### **A. It Means Your Entire Submission**

Now what does that mean to you? Well—number one—it means your entire submission. There can be no other king in your life. No man can serve two masters. Jesus will not be a moonlighting King, a part-time King, with a duplex for a throne. It means that you are committed to Jesus Christ only. Somebody has said it well: “He must be Lord of all, if He is to be Lord at all.”

### **B. It Means His Absolute Ownership of All That You Possess**

Second thing it means: It means His absolute ownership of all that you possess. When a man owns the slave, He owns all the slave owns. And we’re slaves of Jesus Christ. And by the way, I have noticed, what a man does with his possessions is a good mark as to whether or not Jesus Christ is Lord of his life. You say, “Well, He’s Lord of my life; I give Him ten percent.” Then, He’s not Lord of ninety percent. Friend, He is

Lord of all. He doesn't own ten percent; He owns everything that you have!

Now when you bring your tithe to God's house—when you give what God has laid on your heart—that's only a tangible expression of the fact that He owns it all. Do you know what your giving is, today, when you give? You're saying, "Lord, this gift is a tangible, visible expression of my total surrender to You. This gift represents my brains; it represents my blood; it represents my ability; and it represents my time and my intellect. That's what it took to get this. And so when I am giving this, when I'm returning this to You, it only illustrates that it all belongs to You, and that I am Your steward."

### C. **It Means Unquestioned Obedience**

For Jesus Christ to control you means unquestioned obedience. Jesus asked a pertinent question, in Luke chapter 6, verse 46. Here's the question: "*Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*" (Luke 6:46). That's a contradiction in terms. We are to yield to the Lord Jesus Christ our reading, our recreation, our time, our friends, and our vacation; all that we do is under His control. You say, "Oh, Pastor Rogers, you've just ruined life for me. I mean, you've just cut me out. I can't be myself. That's terrible! No telling what He'll do to me, if I say that. He'll ruin me!" Folks, listen to me. *He wants for you what you would want for yourself if you had enough sense to want it.*

Suppose you had a son, and that son comes to you. And he's just entering into his teens, and he says, "Mom and Dad, I have been doing some thinking. In my prayer time, in my quiet time, I realize several things. Number one: I realize that you have far more experience and more maturity than I have. And also, I know that you love me very much, and I know that you would lay down your lives for me. And I've been thinking about it, Mom and Dad. Because of your wisdom, and your experience, and because of your love for me, I just want to say to you, as an obedient son, God helping me, I want to obey you, as best I know how, and bring honor to you." And you say, "Yeah, just suppose he said that." Well, suppose he said that. Now would you and your wife go into a back room and say, "Did you hear what he said? Ha hah! Ha hah! Have we got him, now! What can we do to make his life miserable? How can we make him suffer? Boy, will he be sorry that he said he's going to yield everything to us."

You think parents would do that? No, they'd go back, and with a tear in their eye, they'd say, "Thank God, thank God! Mom, you know, we were thinking about getting him that bicycle. I think we'd better do it, don't you? He's ready. We were thinking about this. We were thinking about that." And you would delight to show your love to this child. But the Father says: "*As a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him*" (Psalm 103:13). Don't you ever be afraid to trust your heart, your life, to the One who loved you enough to die for you. He is Lord! He is absolute Lord.

### III. The Regal Confession of His Lordship

Now here's the third and final thing I want you to see: Not only is there the redemptive claim of His lordship, and not only is there the resurrection control of His lordship, but there must be the regal confession of His lordship. Paul goes on to say, in this chapter, that there's coming a time, when we're all going to bow and confess to Him. Look in verse 11: *"For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God"* (Romans 14:11). You are going to confess Christ as Lord, you know. If you don't do it in this world, you'll do it in another world.

Put in your margin "Philippians 2, verses 9 through 11." I love this. It speaks of Jesus who left Earth, walked the dusty shores of Galilee, hung in agony upon a cross, and then, it says, in verse 9: *"Wherefore"—now listen to this—"God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven"—that's the angels—"things in earth"—that's the humans—"and things under the earth"—that is the devil and demons—"and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father"* (Philippians 2:9–11).

It is a fact of future history that every created being will one day announce Him and confess Him as Lord. That doesn't mean they're going to be saved, but, one day, they will confess Him as Lord. The saints of all of the ages will bow the knee to Jesus Christ. Noah will say, "Jesus is Lord." Moses will say, "Jesus is Lord." Abraham will say, "Jesus is Lord." Isaac will say, "Jesus is Lord." Jacob will say, "Jesus is Lord." Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel will join the chorus, and say, "Jesus is Lord." All of the kings and potentates who have ever lived will bow the knee and say, "He is King of Kings and Lord of Lords." One day, Madeline Murray O'Hare will say, "Jesus Christ is Lord." One day, Saddam Hussein will bow the knee and say, "Jesus Christ is Lord." One day, Satan himself will finally bow his head, and say, "Jesus Christ is Lord." Every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

But here's the wonderful thing: We don't have to wait 'til we die to say, "Jesus is Lord." If they were going to perform an operation on me and say, "Adrian, we're going to cut out your tongue. If you have anything to say, you better say it now. You only have strength for three words before we cut out your tongue, and you'll never say another word in this lifetime." I've already thought about what those three words would be: "Jesus is Lord." Jesus is Lord. If I could somehow broadcast to all of the world just three words, and that's all I could say, I wouldn't have to hesitate. I wouldn't have to think about it. I would want to confess that Jesus is Lord.

#### A. Confessing the Lordship of Christ Will Conquer Satan

What is this confession? What does it do? May I tell you what confessing Christ as

Lord does? Not only does it seal salvation, but, what does it do? Listen to me very carefully. This confession of the lordship of Christ will conquer Satan. Satan does not want you to say it and mean it: “Christ is Lord.” Remember the verse that we used last week, Revelation chapter 12, verse 11? *“And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death”* (Revelation 12:11). Think of that middle phrase. What is the word of their testimony? Our testimony is, “Jesus is Lord.” The devil does not like you to say that openly and publicly, to confess it with your mouth.

I never shall forget the first time I met John Bramlett, or had been around him for just a few moments. That was back in 1972. John had just been saved. You know, John was one of the premiere athletes in our modern society, played professional football, was a stellar athlete at Memphis State, but was known for a wild, and wicked, and lascivious lifestyle, and was a terror both on and off of the football field. And then, Jesus found him, bought him, saved him, redeemed him, and transformed him. And he was a brand new Christian, and I met him one time. And I met him there at gate number four at Liberty Bowl Stadium. And he was there, and he said, “Oh, Pastor Rogers.” And we were talking, and I could just see the glow of Jesus on this man’s face that they call “Bull” Bramlett.

And about that time, about five of his old friends came up. They had whiskey bottles; they had hooch; and they had the devil in liquid form in a bottle. And they looked at him, and they said, “John! John Bramlett! Hey, John!” And they held up that bottle and said, “Come on, man!” I never will forget that day. And John turned to them, and he said, “Hey, did I tell you what Jesus Christ has done for me?” Oh, he began then to confess Jesus Christ as Lord. I mean, a crowd of people, and he’s got that big voice. He said, “Did I tell you what Jesus Christ has done for me?” And boy, I saw the devil turn heels and run. I saw Satan defeated. Why? Because of a bold, clear, open testimony that **Jesus Christ is Lord!** Confession and conquest are linked together. Keep saying it, when Satan gets on you. “I am the Lord’s. He is mine. I belong to Jesus Christ. Satan, Christ is Lord in my life!” It conquers Satan.

## **B. Confessing the Lordship of Christ Confirms Saints**

I’ll tell you what else it does: It confirms saints. When you make a practice of confessing the lordship of Christ, it will help your faith to grow. Confession strengthens faith, and faith strengthens confession. And you get a reciprocal thing going, there. You see, the more we assert a thing to others, the stronger hold it gets on ourselves. Not only will it help your faith to grow as a saint, but it will help your love for the Lord Jesus to grow. What we love, we talk about<sup>F</sup> and what we talk about, we tend to love.

It will help, friend, your separation from the world. When you get into a habit of

openly, boldly, publicly confessing Jesus Christ as Lord, you're going to find out that the things of this world are going to fall away from you, more and more. People are wondering, "What am I going to do with my old friends?" You begin to confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you won't have to get rid of those old friends. They'll get rid of you! Learn to confess Christ as Lord. It will help your faith to grow; it will help your love to grow; it will help your sanctified, separated life to grow, when you openly, boldly, plainly, unashamedly, unapologetically confess Christ as Lord.

Confess Him as Lord in times of joy. If joy comes, remember it's Jesus who is the source of your joy, and say, "Jesus is Lord." If sadness comes, remember that nothing comes to you but what it comes through Him first. And in the midst of your sorrow, remember that joy comes in the morning, and that Jesus is Lord. When a loved one dies, and you go to the graveside, remember that He is Lord both of the dead and of the living, and say that Jesus is Lord. And when somebody gives you an honor, you have some success, and you get some award, in the middle of it, take the crown from your head, and put it on His head, and say that Jesus Christ is Lord. And when you're faced with a decision, and you don't know what way to go, this or that, say, "What would Jesus do? What would He have me to do?" And confess it, and say it: "Jesus is Lord!" He alone is worthy.

### **C. Confessing the Lordship of Christ Convicts Sinners**

I'll tell you what else it will do: Not only will it conquer Satan, and not only will it comfort saints, it will convict sinners, when you say that Jesus Christ is Lord. Do you know what is the problem with many of us today? Many of us, today, say, "Well, I'm not going to be an open, bold soul-winner, but I'll tell you what I do want to do. I want to so live that they'll see my life, and when they see my life, they'll want to be a Christian." Well, come up close. I want to tell you something, friend: They're not saved by your life; they're saved by His death. And unless you tell them the gospel, they're not going to get saved. As a matter of fact, if they see your life, and don't understand why you're living that life, you are accepting praise under false pretense, and you're getting the glory, rather than giving Him the glory. But when you say to your friends, "Jesus Christ is Lord, and Jesus is the One who's transformed me, and the secret of my life is Jesus Christ in me," then, friend, people are going to come under conviction.

### **D. Confessing the Lordship of Christ Controls Service**

I'll tell you what else it will do: Not only will it convict sinners, it will control service. So many of us are faced with decisions. When you say that Jesus Christ is Lord, a lot of your decision-making is drastically narrowed. Did you know that? Drastically narrowed! When I go to a hotel room, when I'm by myself on a trip, I don't have to keep asking myself, "Am I going to watch an R-rated film?" or something. I don't have to ask myself

that. Why? Because Jesus is Lord. You understand what I'm talking about? If there's something there that doesn't belong to me, I don't have to ask myself, "Am I going to take it or not?" It's not mine! Jesus is Lord! When you make that decision, so many other decisions are made. The best advice that anybody ever gave to anybody was the advice that Mary gave to the servants that day at the wedding feast of Cana when they'd run out of wine, and Mary said to those servants, concerning Jesus, "*Whatever he saith unto you, do it*" (John 2:5). Do it. Jesus is Lord.

## Conclusion

Now listen, folks. Do you want *Kingdom Authority*? Would you like for God to be pouring His life and His strength into you? I want to tell you that authority is not for rebels. You will never be over until you're under. And you must come under the absolute lordship of Jesus Christ. And don't be ashamed of that. Don't be afraid of that. And if one of these days every knee will bow and every tongue confess Him, don't you think it's time, right now, that we confessed Him? Don't you think it is time, right now, that we had a coronation service? Wouldn't you, right now, in your heart, and in your life, want to bow your knee, bow your heart, and say that Jesus Christ is Lord?

In every man's heart, in every man's life, there's a throne. If self is on the throne, Christ is on the cross. If self is on the cross, Christ is on the throne. Wouldn't you like to have a coronation service, today, and say, "Jesus Christ is Lord of my life"? And then, friend, when you get sick, and when it's time to die, and those chilly waters of death start to come around your feet, won't it be wonderful to say, "Jesus Christ is Lord"? And then, when the trumpet sounds, and the graves are giving up their dead, and the sky is split asunder, and the Lord Jesus comes in all of His glory, won't it be wonderful to rise in the resurrection, and say, "Jesus Christ is Lord"? And then, when the redeemed of all of the ages are around that throne, and angels, and principalities, and powers are bowing before Him, won't it be wonderful to join all of those redeemed, and look up at the One with the nail-prints in His hands, and say, "He is Lord, He is Lord"? He is risen from the dead, and He is Lord.

All hail the power of Jesus' name. Let angels prostrate fall. Let's all bring forth the royal diadem. Folks, let's crown Him Lord of all. Do you believe He is Lord? He is Lord. He died to claim us, as Lord. He rose to control us, as Lord. He lives to be crowned as Lord. He is Lord.

# The Things That Make for Peace

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached:** July 26, 1998

**Main Scripture Text:** Romans 14:19

*“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.”*

ROMANS 14:19

## Outline

### Introduction

- A. Unity Is the Desire of the Savior
- B. Unity Is the Delight of the Saved
- C. Unity Is the Dread of Satan
- I. Unity Is a Matter of Lordship
  - A. We Receive a Weaker Brother Because His Salvation Is from God
  - B. We Receive a Weaker Brother Because His Service Is to God
  - C. We Receive a Weaker Brother Because His Security Is of God
  - D. We Receive a Weaker Brother Because His Stewardship Is to God
- II. Unity Is a Matter of Liberty
  - A. Liberty Has Its Rights
  - B. Liberty Has Its Responsibilities
- III. Unity Is a Matter of Love
  - A. Love Doesn't Give Your Brother a Reason for Stumbling
  - B. Love Doesn't Give Your Brother a Reason for Sorrow
  - C. Love Doesn't Give Your Brother a Reason for Separation
  - D. Love Doesn't Give Your Brother a Reason for Suspicion

### Conclusion

## Introduction

Take your Bibles now, and turn, if you will, with me to Romans chapter 14, as we're continuing through the book of Romans. A solid word for an unsure age—that's what the book of Romans is. It has been called the Constitution of Christianity. And for a number of weeks now we've been making our way through this wonderful book, and, very frankly, we have only touched the very surface of this book. We could spend indeed not weeks, months, but years, and never do a full exposition of the book of Romans. I want to tell you something, as you're finding the book of Romans chapter 14, about the devil, and what the devil would like to do. The devil had rather send division in the body of Christ than to open a porno palace or open a new distillery—did you know

that? Satan wants to divide the brethren.

Now, what we're going to be talking about today is unity in the church, and the key verse here in chapter 14 is verse 19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace." And that's the title of our message today: The Things that Make for Peace. Because what God wants in the church—and if you're listening through television, and your church as well as this church—is unity in the church. Let me tell you three things about unity.

#### **A. Unity Is the Desire of the Savior**

Number one: it is the desire of the Savior. Jesus wants unity in His church. And, in John chapter 17, the Lord Jesus is praying His great high priestly prayer, and He prays in verse 22, "Father, that they may be one even as we are one." One of the things that gives Joyce and myself great joy is to see our children loving one another. We pray for our children every day; we pray for our children and grandchildren, and we want them to love Jesus, we want them to love us, and we want them to love one another. And I'll tell you that our Lord wants you to love your brothers and sisters in Christ, all of His children. It is the desire of the Savior.

#### **B. Unity Is the Delight of the Saved**

I want to tell you something else about unity: it is the delight of the saved. There's nothing more heartbreaking than to be in a church where there's division. There's nothing more glorious, in my estimation, than to be part of a church where you have a sweet fellowship and a oneness of spirit—is that not true? What a fellowship, and what a joy divine! That's the reason the Psalmist said, way back yonder in Psalm 133 and verse 1, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." And I just thank God for the unity that God, by His grace, has given us here in this our wonderful church that we thank God for.

#### **C. Unity Is the Dread of Satan**

Unity is the desire of the Savior, it is the delight of the saved, and it is the dread of Satan—it is the dread of Satan. Satan gets very nervous when God's people dwell together in unity, when they become one, because, when we dwell together in unity, we become a winning team. Coach Wooden of UCLA, the great basketball coach, a legend, was asked, What does it take to make a winning team? Now, they were expecting some great, convoluted explanation, Jamie, the most simple explanation of what it takes to make a winning team. He said, number one, get the players in condition; number two, teach them the fundamentals of the game; number three, teach them to play together as a team, teach them unity. Isn't that simple? That's exactly what it takes to make a great church. Get in condition, get right with God, learn the fundamentals of the game, learn what this thing of being a Christian is all about, and then, folks, become a team for the

Lord Jesus Christ.

I don't know how many of you read Peanuts, but, in the comics—you know, I'm a connoisseur of the comic strips—and Lucy came in the room where Linus was watching television. Linus was on his beanbag watching television, and Lucy says to Linus, Change the channel. Linus looks up, and says, Why should I do that? She said, I'll give you five good reasons. She held up five fingers, and she said, You see those? Like that, they're not much, but, she said, When I curl them together like this, they're a power awesome to behold. Linus said, What channel do you want? And then, after he changed the channel, he held up his five fingers, and said, Why can't you guys get together like that?

Now, folks, listen. The devil dreads it when this becomes this. When we are united together, then there is awesome power, and I think of the power that's in this building today, when we, anointed with the Holy Spirit, as one body, go out as onward Christian soldiers to do what we ought to do. Now, unity, however, is difficult, because, folks, you'd have to be a pastor to know how many different opinions there are in this church. You'd have to read my mail sometime to know.

Now, the folks at Rome—the folks at Rome, and it was a good church, a Bible church—the folks at Rome were in danger of disunity, and that's what this chapter is written about. Now, let me tell you what they were divided about—not fundamentals, but incidentals. They were divided primarily about two things: days and diets: what foods that they could eat, and what days that they should keep. And both sides were sincere, and so Paul was writing to get unity in the church, and I think that it's a wonderful chapter to study together, because we can learn that sincere people, people who love God with all of their hearts, can have different opinions.

Have you learned that yet? If you haven't learned it, you will learn it. Augustine—St. Augustine, the man that we call St. Augustine—was a great believer, great Christian, a great mind, and he made a statement that I would like for you to remember. You've probably heard it before, but he's talking about what we should do, what attitude we should take, when we differ in the body of Christ. And this is what Augustine said; he summed it up in this way: In essentials, unity—now, got that? In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity. Did that sink in? If not, I'll give it to you again. In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; and in all things, charity. Now, I'm going to borrow those thoughts from St. Augustine and use that as an outline to think about today, because we're going to think about essentials, and then we're going to think about non-essentials, and then we're going to think about the love that we ought to have in all things in the Lord Jesus Christ.

## I. Unity Is a Matter of Lordship

Now, let me tell you, number one, about unity—this is the first point: Unity is, number one, a matter of Lordship. That is the essential: the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Now, look, if you will, in verse 9 of this chapter, and this is another key verse: “For to this end, Christ both died and rose and revived that he might be Lord, both of the dead and the living.” It is a matter of Lordship.

There were some incidentals when compared to the fact that Jesus is Lord that don't seem so important. For example, they were disagreeing over the matter of diets. Go back now to verse 1: “Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.” That means, take a new believer, somebody who is weak, who doesn't understand a lot of things, receive him into the church, but don't argue with him about incidentals, doubtful disputations—that's just arguing about how many angels can dance on the head of a pin. For he goes on in verses 2 and 3, and says, “For one believeth that he may eat all things. Another who is weak eateth herbs.” Herbs is vegetables. Now, in the church, there were some people in Rome who had been saved out of raw paganism, and in paganism they made blood sacrifices to their pagan gods, to their idols, and these people had been saved out of that paganism. And they saw that some of the people in the church were buying that meat that had been offered to idols, and they were eating that meat, and these new Christians, weak in the faith, they were scandalized—they were former pagans. They said, How could you possibly partake of that kind of food? Why, I, lest I should touch any of it, I've become a vegetarian. And then, Paul says, in verse, 3, “Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not.” That is, if you're strong—and these Jewish believers have been in the faith for a long time—they knew that an idol was nothing. They knew that meat was meat, and that an idol was just a stick or a stone, and just sheer rationality said, there's nothing wrong with this food, and so they were a little hacked at these pestiferous, weaker brothers, who said, you ought not to be eating that. And so they're looking down on these people who are criticizing them. And Paul says, “Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him which eateth not judge him which eateth, for God hath received him.” They were just divided over an incidental—whether or not to eat food that had been offered to idols. So that, then, is the matter. Paul is saying, Look, it's a matter of Lordship, not a matter of diet.

And now, here's a second thing that was dividing them: not only diet, but days. Look, if you will, in verse 5: “One man esteemeth one day above another. Another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own heart.” Do you see how Paul is dealing now with the incidentals? How did this work out? Well, the Jews, who thought it was quite all right to eat this meat that had been sacrificed to idols, also have come out of Judaism, and they had their special high holy days. And even though they

had become Christians, these high holy days that the Jews had meant so much to them, so they observed these days. Now, these pagans had not observed these high holy days; these days didn't mean anything to them. And the early Jewish believers looked down upon these pagans because they would not keep those high holy days. And they said, Well, it's just a day; we're saved, and we're in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, again, Paul is saying, Look, it's not a matter of diet, it's not a matter of days; it is a matter of devotion. Jesus is Lord. Now, folks, we can get divided over incidentals, but we must stay united over one thing: Jesus is Lord. Now, get that down in your heart. If you don't, it's going to be a long, hard ride in this matter of being a Christian.

Now, because Christ is Lord—listen—when somebody receives Jesus Christ as Lord, we receive him, and we don't divide over incidentals. That's the way he leads out this chapter. Look in verse 1: "Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye,"—don't argue with him—"not to doubtful disputations"—don't divide over incidentals. And he says the same thing in chapter 15, verse 7: "Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us, to the glory of God." Learn this about being a Christian. And all the members of Bellevue, you listen to me. We can be brothers without being twins. We don't have to be just alike if we are from the same family. We can have different ideas, different opinions of different things. You can have unity without having uniformity.

Now, why should we welcome those who differ with us? Why should we not try to make everybody march in lock step?

#### **A. We Receive a Weaker Brother Because His Salvation Is from God**

Well, first of all, we ought to receive them because God has received them, and their salvation is from God. Notice verse 3: "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not, and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth,"—now, watch this; here's the key—"for God has received him. Now, folks, when God receives somebody, you better receive them. Say Amen. When God has received them, you had better receive him. See, his salvation is from God. If the brother or the sister is a Christian, we're in the same family; why, we're even in the same body. And so, if you hurt him, you dishonor the Father, and you harm yourself. So put it down.

#### **B. We Receive a Weaker Brother Because His Service Is to God**

Why do you receive a weaker brother? Well, number one: his salvation is from God. Number two: his service is to God. Look in verse 4: "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." Now, if you have somebody working for you in your business, who am I to come in there and tell him to do this or not to do that, or to criticize the way he does what he does in your business. He doesn't answer me. It's your business; he answers to you.

Now, folks, in the same way, brothers and sisters in Christ are servants of God, they're not your servants, and who are you to judge another man's servant? To his own master he stands or falls, so it's not your job to pull him down; you don't have to prop him up. Paul goes on to say—it's a great statement on eternal security: God is able to make him stand—God is able to make him stand.

### **C. We Receive a Weaker Brother Because His Security Is of God**

Now, we're talking about why we should receive one another. Number one: his salvation is from God. Number two: his service is to God. Number three—look at it right here in verse 4: his security is of God. God is able to make him stand. He may not be where you are spiritually—just give him time. You don't pull your radishes up by the roots to see how they're growing and then jam them back in the ground again; give him time. God will help him to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **D. We Receive a Weaker Brother Because His Stewardship Is to God**

His salvation is from God, his service is to God, his security is in God, and his stewardship is to God. Look in verses 10 and 12: "But why dost thou judge thy brother? Or why dost thou set at naught thy brother?" That is, to say to him, You're not worth much. "For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, as I live, saith the Lord, Every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God." And when Mark and I stand before Jesus Christ, I'm not going to have to answer for Mark; he's not going to have to answer for Adrian. Your stewardship is to God, and my stewardship is to God. And so, you know, rather than going around judging other people, we'd better to get ready to answer to God ourselves, isn't that right? We'd better to get ready to answer to God for ourselves.

You know, we're going to the polls pretty soon to vote. One lady had gotten into politics in a state election, and she told her husband, Looks real good. Said, I believe we're going to sweep the state. He said, I suggest you start at the back door. Now, folks, so many times we're out there looking at other people rather than looking at ourselves. Faults in others I can see, but, praise the Lord, there's none in me. Well, listen. Paul says, receive him: his salvation is from God, his service is to God, his security is in God, his stewardship is to the Lord.

Now, therefore, we're not to disagree about doubtful things. Very frankly, in Memphis today, the great issues of disagreement are not about diets and days. Not really to some degree it may be, but we have our things that we disagree with. Well, come to think about it, we do have disagreements about that, and in the Christian body. For example, I love Christmas. Do you love Christmas? I love Christmas. I love everything. I love the sights, the sounds, the lights, the music; I love our pageant that we have here and

everything. But do you know, every time we have a Christmas pageant, I'll get some letters from some people that say, How on earth could you celebrate a pagan celebration like Christmas? And they will send me volumes of material to tell me all of the pagan accouterments of Christmas and all of that sort of thing. And then, I think, Boy, I know that there's a lot of junk out there, but I know something else: I know our Savior was born sometime, and I love to take a time and celebrate it, and I've seen—we've seen—multiplied thousands of people come to Christ by the pageants and so forth that we do. But I'm telling you, folks, there are good and honest people who love God as much or more than you who think that Christmas celebration is wrong. Have you discovered that? Well, what do we do? Listen, folks: we can't judge them; they're not supposed to judge us. I mean, in the body of Christ, you know, I'm sure we have in this church some members who, when we have a pageant, just stay home, say, I just want preaching, praying, and singing. That's fine—that's fine.

Let me tell you another thing. I'm just giving you some examples. Did you know when we come in a church like this, and somebody will sing like Lisa just sang, there are people who want to applaud; they're just so blessed, they say, Praise God, that was wonderful. Other people say, Don't you know we're in church? And, save your applause for the theater. Now, that was unto God. You don't need to applaud some man, some woman, some performer. But who is right, and who is wrong? May I suggest to you, neither is right, and neither is wrong; it's just a matter of preference, it's a matter of difference. Some people call that a 20th century Amen, and the Bible says, "Clap your hands, all ye people." And sometimes I get so excited I can't sit still. That's fine. I mean, we don't have to make everybody a clone of ourselves. I jokingly said, sometime we're going to have the ushers at the door greet the people when they come, and say, Clapping or no clapping? and sit them on either side of the church.

Hey, folks, let me tell you something. You want to have some fun? You ought to be a pastor—you ought to be a pastor. I'm telling you, it is so easy for us to get divided over things that are, you know, incidental and not fundamental.

People talk about the way we dress, you know, and some people think that, man, you're so snooty, and you come to church, and you wear a tie. Who are you trying to impress? Why, I mean, this is just family. You don't have to wear a necktie to come to church, and dress up, and show off your glad rags. Who are you trying to impress? We just think we ought to come in our cut-offs, our blue jeans, our sandals. Well, you're welcome that way, and you're welcome to wear neckties, and dress in the way that you think is appropriate to give honor and glory to God. Hey, but don't look down your nose at somebody else, and don't criticize. Folks, we're never going to please everybody, and if we keep picking fault with people over incidentals, we're going to divide till there's nobody left standing but you and me, and then it'll just be me. You know, all kinds of things.

Politics. Boy, you talk about it. Some folks that say, I would to God that you never mention anything political from the pulpit ever again. And other people say, Good night, when is somebody going to stand up and speak out, and say what is wrong in this world, and call the people of God to action. Both people are sincere—both people are sincere. Now, folks, can you understand the kinds of situations that arise in churches? But, you see, you just come back to one thing. That's the reason Paul said, Look, it's not a matter of days, it's not a matter of diets; it's a matter of devotion. Jesus Christ is Lord to this end. He died and rose and revived that He might be Lord of the living and the dead. And the unity in Bellevue Baptist Church is not in the organization, not in the music, not in the preaching; it is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Say amen. Now, folks, we need to understand that. In unity—in unity—in essentials we have unity.

Donald Gray Barnhouse was a great Presbyterian preacher, and he went to a conference one time to preach. And it was a Bible conference, and some of the women there were not wearing stockings, and some of the older ladies in the church were scandalized that some people had come into the worship service, Brother Jim, and were not wearing stockings. And they told Barnhouse about it, and this is what Barnhouse said. He said, Did you know that the virgin Mary did not wear stockings? And he said, They were first worn by prostitutes in the fifteenth century, and then he said, A lady of nobility wore stockings one time to a court ball, and that was a scandal to many people. But before long, people in the upper classes began to wear the stockings, and then Queen Victoria began to wear stockings, and then wearing stockings became the badge of a prude. See, those are incidental things. Sometimes we say this is right, or that is right, and these are incidental things.

## **II. Unity Is a Matter of Liberty**

Now, listen to me—we're talking about the things that make for peace. Number one: in essentials, unity—that's a matter of Lordship. Number two: unity not only is a matter of Lordship; unity is a matter of liberty—that's the second point. Unity is a matter of Lordship—that's the first point. Number two: unity is a matter of liberty—that's the second point. Look, if you will now, in verse 17 of this chapter: "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink,"—that is, what you eat or what you drink—"but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." When you're saved, our Lord sets you free.

### **A. Liberty Has Its Rights**

Now, liberty has its rights. There are certain things that I can do just because I have been set free in the Lord Jesus Christ. Verse 14, Paul said, I know, and I'm persuaded by the Lord Jesus, there's nothing unclean of itself, this meat offered to idols, there's nothing wrong with that. Look, if you will, in verse 22: "Hast thou faith, have it thyself before God. I know, Paul is just saying, Look, I have faith; there is nothing wrong with

this meat, I could eat this meat if I wanted to; I have my rights, and, you see, liberty has its rights.

### **B. Liberty Has Its Responsibilities**

Now, but not only does liberty have its rights; liberty also has its responsibilities. Look, if you will, in verses 16 and 17. Now, Paul is talking about things that are good, nothing wrong with them, but he says in verses 16 and 17, “let not then your good be evil spoken of.” That’s the responsibility of liberty. Look at the balance in this chapter. Liberty has its rights, and liberty has its responsibility. I know that it’s fine, nothing wrong with it, but I don’t want my good to be evil spoken of. Now, you see, Paul says there’s some things that I’ll give up, because it’s no big deal if I give them up. The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, joy, in the Holy Ghost.

You know what is wrong in a church when people take their liberties and try to make such rights out of them that they wound the fellowship? Let me share this with you. I think this is one of the funniest things I’ve ever heard, but you’d just have to be a pastor to understand this—but I think you can understand it. A lady is writing, and she says—and I quote: A lady took my seat in church a while back. It’s not that important, really. She is a very nice lady, kind and considerate, a good friend, in fact. There were several other seats available. I can sit any place. The people in our congregation are as friendly and as caring as you will find any place in the world. A person should be comfortable sitting any place. It’s no big deal. My seat is on the seventh row back from the front of the church. I’m sure that she did not intend to take my seat. She just wouldn’t do that, nor would anyone else in our fine church. It doesn’t make that much difference. My seat is on the end of the pew on the north side by the windows on the left as you come into the sanctuary. I can rest my left arm on the end of the pew. It’s a good seat, but I would never raise a fuss about a seat. She probably didn’t intend anything personal by taking my seat. I would never hold a grudge. Actually, it was about three months ago when she took my seat. I really don’t know why she took it. I’ve never done anything to her. I’ve never taken her seat. I suppose I will have to come an hour earlier now to get my seat—either that, or sit on the south side. She really took it because it is one of the best seats in the house. That’s why she took it. She had no business taking my seat, and I’m not going to church two hours early to get what was rightfully mine from the beginning. This is the way great social injustices begin, abusive people taking other people’s seats in church. This is the way the seeds of revolution are sown. A person can only stand so much. Where is it going to end? If somebody doesn’t stand up and be counted, nobody’s seat will be safe. People will just sit any place they please, and the next thing they will do is to take my parking place, too. World order will be a shambles.

That’s what happens, folks, when we don’t realize that rights have responsibilities. And, you know, sometimes it breaks my heart, Brother Jim, it’ll happen here, somebody

will come down and sit down here. I've seen people try to move a guest out of their seat. May God have mercy upon your poor, pitiful soul; God have mercy upon you. Some soul that may be lost and on the road to hell. Say, Pardon me, that's my seat. Folks, I want to tell you: it ain't your seat.

We're here to win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ, and there are some things that are incidental, and there are some things that are fundamental. The thing that is fundamental is that Jesus Christ is Lord, and it's a matter of Lordship, and it's a matter of liberty. We have liberty, but liberty has its rights, and liberty has its responsibilities.

### **III. Unity Is a Matter of Love**

Now, here's the third thing I want to say. Unity is a matter of Lordship. Unity is a matter of liberty. And last of all, unity is a matter of love. Look, if you will, in verse 15: "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably"—charitably, that means in love. Charity, in the King James Version, is love.

Now, if you wound a weaker brother, you're not walking in love. Now, let me tell you what love will do in a church.

#### **A. Love Doesn't Give Your Brother a Reason for Stumbling**

Love will keep your brother from stumbling. Look in verse 13: "Let us therefore, let us not therefore judge one another anymore, but judge this rather that no man put a stumbling block, an occasion to fall, in his brother's way." Look in verse 21: "It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or made weak." Now, you see, love says, I'm not going to give him a reason to stumble. Now, there are certain things in life that I don't do, not because I think that they would hurt me, but because I think they may hurt somebody else who would see me doing those things. And I wouldn't want to cause anybody else to stumble. Now, I don't drink wine; I don't touch it. I don't drink beer; I don't drink alcoholic beverages. I believe it's wrong. I believe I could give you a Bible reason, and I have done this on occasion, why no Christian should drink even moderately. But one of the major reasons I wouldn't do it, even if I thought I could argue the case, is I wouldn't want to cause somebody else to stumble. I tell you, if you were to walk in a restaurant and see me sitting in there drinking a beer or wine, it would hurt my testimony before most of you, and especially little children. You had a son, a teenager, who said, Well, I want to go out with the boys and drink some beer. You say, You ought not to do that. Well, Pastor Rogers does it; he's a good man. You see, we have to be careful, folks; we have to be careful that we don't do anything that causes somebody else to stumble. It's good neither to drink wine nor anything whereby thy brother is offended, or is stumbled, or is made weak.

### **B. Love Doesn't Give Your Brother a Reason for Sorrow**

And so, love does not give somebody a reason for stumbling. And love does not give somebody a reason for sorrow. Look in verse 15: "But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest not thou charitably." I wouldn't want to do anything that would break your heart, even though I said I have every right to do it. But, you say, Pastor, it grieves me to see you do that. And then he says, don't destroy your brother with your rights. The word destroy here actually means to overthrow or to ruin. Don't mar his well-being.

### **C. Love Doesn't Give Your Brother a Reason for Separation**

Love does not give my brother reason to stumble. Love does not give my brother reason for sorrow. Love does not give my brother reason for separation. Look in verse 19: "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and whereby we may edify one another." Love says, What can I do that will maintain the unity in the church? We must not do anything that causes division or separation.

### **D. Love Doesn't Give Your Brother a Reason for Suspicion**

And, last of all, love must not give my brother reason for suspicion—suspicion. Look in verse 16: "Let not then your good be evil spoken of." And look in verse 22: "Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he allows." Now, what does all that mean? It means, look. Perception is one of the cruelest forms of reality, and if somebody sees you do something that in itself is not bad, but Paul says, don't let your good be evil spoken of.

Years ago, I shared this story with you. Down in Florida, I had a lady come to see me, and alcohol was her problem—ultimately we got there—but one of her problems I counseled with her. She reached in her pocketbook at the close of the session, and took out a pint of whiskey, and said, Pastor, I'm finished with that, and set it on my desk. We prayed, and I felt God had done His job, and she walked out, and now I'm sitting with that pint of whiskey on my desk. I said, This will not do, so I said, Well, what will I do with this pint of whiskey? I said, Well, I'll throw it in the trash can. I said, No, I can't do that. The janitor, you know, he'll come and pick that out of the trash can. I said, Well, I don't want to leave it sitting on the desk. Somebody may come in here. I know what I'll do: I'll hide it behind my books. I said, Oh, no, that's worse; just as sure as I put that pint of whiskey behind the desk, behind my books, somebody's going to come down, and pull, and look, and there it'll be. What am I going to do with this pint of whiskey? I've got to get rid of it. How am I going to get rid of it? I'm sure not going to drink it. What am I going to do with it? And so I said, Well, I'll dispose of it on my way home in some neutral spot. So I put it in a bag, and put it in my car. I said, God, if I have a wreck, don't let it happen, Lord. And so, I'm driving around with this half pint of whiskey in my car. And I stopped at a wooded spot, and I said, Well, I'll just walk out there in the woods and

throw it away. And I said, what if I get caught out in the woods with this half-pint of whiskey out here, somebody sees me? Folks, I breathed a prayer, and walked out in the woods with that bottle—I don't believe in littering, but I did, I poured it out, killed some ants, and threw that bottle away. I felt incriminated. You say, That's just a silly thing. Yeah, maybe, but you know what? The Bible says, "Don't let your good be evil spoken of." Don't do anything that causes anybody to be offended.

## Conclusion

Now, folks, listen to your pastor today. We've got a wonderful church. Those of you who are listening by television, I believe your church may be a wonderful church. Don't get divided over incidentals, okay? Not over days, not over diets, not over opinions, not over what somebody else does. If you know your rights, fine, but also exercise those rights in love, and receive one another. When people come into Bellevue Baptist Church, they may not know what you know. They don't need to be criticized, they need to be loved, they need to be received, and to help them to grow in the grace and the knowledge of Jesus, isn't that true? Now, folks, you know what makes this church the great church that it is? It's not a what; it's who. His name is Jesus. That's what we started with—Christ is Lord. He's like the hub of a wheel; our membership, the rim of that wheel; the members, the spokes in that wheel; and the closer the spokes get to the hub, the closer they get to one another. Our unity is in Jesus.

Let's bow together in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Would you begin now to pray for people in this congregation that may not have yet received Christ as their personal Savior and Lord? Remember one day you received Christ, and you know what it means to you to know Jesus. Just pray that others might come to know Him. And while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, precious friend, would you like to receive Jesus? You see, the Bible says we're to receive one another, because He has received us, and I can promise you that He will receive you. And Jesus said, "Him that cometh unto me I will never cast away." If you'll come, He'll receive you, I promise. You say, What if I'm not one of the elect? If you come to Jesus, you are the elect. Just come, just come—come to Jesus.

Pray this prayer: Lord Jesus, I need you. I want you. Thank you for dying for my sins. I believe you're the Son of God. I believe you paid for my sin with your blood on the cross and I, at this moment, yield my heart and life to you. I receive you as my Lord and as my Savior. Cleanse me. Save me, Lord Jesus. Pray that from your heart: Save me, Lord Jesus. Pray it and mean it. Save me, Lord Jesus. Did you pray it? Then pray this: Thank you for saving me. And, Lord Jesus, because you saved me, I will follow you all the days of my life, and, if you will only help me, I will never be ashamed of you, Lord Jesus, because you died for me. In your name I pray. Amen.

# Saved to Serve

*By Adrian Rogers*

**Date Preached: September 20, 1998**

**Main Scripture Text: Romans 15; 16**

*“That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles,  
ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles  
might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.”*

ROMANS 15:16

## Outline

Introduction

I. The Ministry of Encouragement

II. The Ministry of Evangelism

III. The Ministry of Giving

IV. The Ministry of Prayer

V. The Ministry of Fellowship

VI. The Ministry of Worship

Conclusion

## Introduction

Take God's Word, and be finding, if you would, please, Romans chapter 15, and when you've found it, look up here, and let me tell you, when I look at a congregation like this, and I think of the thousands that are here under this one roof, I feel very much like Ben Franklin must've felt when he saw that lightning and thought, Oh, if I could only harness that. You know one of the problems of twentieth-century Christianity is this that we think when we come to God and sit in the worship service on Sunday morning that somehow we've done God a wild favor. I mean, we have the idea that this is somehow what God requires of us and we have fulfilled our duties and our obligations to God when we come and sit and sing and listen to a sermon. And so we sit, soak, and sour, but God did not call us to sit, to soak, and to sour, but to serve. Now, look up here and I want to tell you something. If you are saved, you're saved to serve. Say Amen. Listen. You, my precious and sweet friend, have been called into the ministry. Now, not in the sense that I am a minister, a pastor of this church, but all of us are called to be ministers and servants of the Lord Jesus.

Now, we're going to be looking at two chapters today, so we're only going to be able to take the highlights out of these two chapters, but I want you to find the key word in

these two chapters. You're in Romans chapter 15. Look, if you will, in verse 8: "Now, I say that Jesus Christ was a minister," do you see that? Okay, now look, if you will, in verse 16. Paul says that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ. Now, look, if you will, over in verse 25: "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints." Now, look down in verse 31: "That I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea that my service," and by the way, this is exactly the same Greek word as minister, right here, "that my ministry that I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints." Now, look, if you will, in chapter 16 and verse 1: "I commend unto you Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant," and the word here literally means minister; it's the same word, "of the church which is at Cenchrea.

Now, what is the theme here? It is ministry—ministry, ministry, ministry. Every member is a minister. Now, Bellevue Baptist Church has a mission statement, and you as a member of this church ought to know the mission statement by heart. As a matter of fact, many of you are carrying the mission statement in your billfold or in your purse or in your pocketbook. If you are not, you need to learn the Bellevue Baptist mission statement. We don't exist for no purpose at all, but our purpose is clearly delineated. Let me give you our mission statement—are you read for it? Bellevue Baptist Church exists—look at it—for the purpose, number one, of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word. We're here to give Jesus Christ glory and honor. Number two, making Jesus known to our neighbors and to the nations, here and abroad—that's why we're here. Number three, moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry. See, we exist to help you to grow up, so that you can serve. That's what we exist for.

Now, folks, there is no such thing as an inactive church member. That an impossibility—that's an impossibility. Every church member is active. Either he's building up or he's tearing down, but he's active. Either he is a part of the team and helping, or he's not a part of the team and he's hurting. And you say, Pastor, is that true? Yes, it is true. In the book of Matthew chapter 12 and verse 30, the Lord Jesus said—listen to me—"He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad." Every member of this church is gathering or scattering. Every member of this church is working with the Lord Jesus or working against the Lord Jesus. Now, having said that, let me tell you again, nobody is excluded. If you are a member of this church, this message is not to whom it may concern; it is to you, it has your name and address on it, and God wants you to serve and to minister. You've been called into the ministry. I'm going to give you six areas where you need to minister. They're going to come right out of these two chapters, and I want you to ask yourself this question as we come to each of these six areas: God, am I willing that you would minister through me this way?

## I. The Ministry of Encouragement

Now, first of all, the very first ministry that I want you to look at is the ministry of encouragement—the ministry of encouragement. Now, in chapter 15, let's read the first seven verses: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbor, for his good to edification, for even Christ please not himself, but as it is written, the approaches of them that reproach thee fell on me." Jesus was willing to suffer for the Father—that's what that means. "For whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning," that is, the Old Testament Scriptures, now watch it, "that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." That's what Betty was singing about just a moment ago. Now, watch verse 5: "Now, the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded, one toward another according to Jesus, according to Christ Jesus, that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."

Now, the key to these seven verses is verse 5: "The God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded." The word consolation here is a word that we don't use much in modern English today, but there is a word that we do use a lot and it's the word encouragement and it's exactly the same word. He is the God of encouragement, and what he is saying in these seven verses is that we need to encourage one another. Now, if you're a strong Christian, according to verse 1, you are to encourage the weak Christian. You're not here to please yourself. This church does not exist to make you happy. Sometimes the choir might meet sometime, and they would say, Well, when's the best time to have choir practice? and someone would say, Well, let me see, if we did it at this time, this hour—no, that's when I bowl; or someone would say, No, that's when I have children in school; and so, I choose the time that's going to be best for me. Well, if the time is going to be best for you, it's not going to be the best time for everybody else, then you need to give up the time that's best for you. That's what he's saying. You don't please yourself. You don't put yourself number one.

The Salvation Army's done so much good. I thank God for the Salvation Army. William Booth started with the poor in London, started the Salvation Army. When William Booth got to be a very old man, they were having a convention of the Salvation Army and they wanted William Booth to come and speak and he couldn't come and speak, he was too weak, too old, too feeble. And he was on his sick bed, and so they said, Well, would you send us a telegram—just send us a telegram? And he said, Yes I will. And he sent a one-word telegram, just one word in that telegram. What do you think it was? It was the word others—others.

We don't please ourselves—that's what he's saying. Verse 2: "Let everyone of us

please his neighbor for his good unto edification.” You see, when we do this, this is what brings us together. Verse 9: “Now, the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded, one toward another, according to Christ Jesus.” The devil had rather start a church fuss than sell a barrel of whiskey, amen? God wants us to be together. God wants us to encourage one another, to lift up one another.

C. S. Lewis, a brilliant Britisher, a literary genius, wrote a book about how the devil works, and he called that book *The Screwtape Letters*. Screwtape was the name that C. S. Lewis gave to the devil, and he talked about the devil’s nephew who was called Wormwood. He was a demon, the nephew of Satan. And Wormwood and Screwtape were talking about how they can sabotage the work of God, and they get to talking about the church, and here is what Screwtape, the devil, says to Wormwood. Just listen to this quote: The church is a fertile field if you just keep them bickering over details, structure, organization, money, property, personal hurts, and misunderstandings. One thing you must prevent. Don’t let them ever look up and see the banners flying, for if they ever see the banners flying, you’ve lost them forever. What he’s saying is just keep them picking at one another, just keep them criticizing one another, never let them see the glory of God, because, Wormwood, if you do that, you’ve lost them. Now, folks, what we need to do today is to get our eyes on the glory of God and begin to love and serve one another.

Did you know in 1917 the bishops of the church, the Orthodox Church, in Russia were having a convocation, and they were having a heated debate. And the bishops and the leaders were fussing and fighting and feuding, going back and forth, back and forth. Just a few doors down the street, in 1917, the Bolsheviks were meeting. They were plotting the overthrow of the Czar. They were plotting a revolution. They were planning and plotting the thing that we have called communism, that has hurt, killed, maimed, damned so many souls. They were planning and plotting a diabolical scheme. But over here the bishops were debating. Now, just what was it that the bishops were debating during this whole time? It was whether or not they were going to use eighteen-inch candles or twenty-two-inch candles—that’s what the debate was about—while the empire was crumbling around them.

Now, folks, let me tell you—you and I need to be in a ministry of encouragement. There’s not a mother’s child in this building that doesn’t need encouragement. We are to encourage one another. The God of all consolation, He has been patient with us, and we need to be patient with one another. I need patience; you need patience. Let me say something. If you’re a guest today and you came to this church to find something to criticize, you can find plenty to criticize, and if you don’t know enough, come see me and I can tell you some more. And, I’m going to tell you something else: if you want to criticize, you can start with the man in the pulpit, because I have many things; but don’t

come and tell me—I won't tell you any more of those. No, no, no. Listen, folks. If you want to come to church like this and find a blessing, I'll guarantee you you'll find a blessing. You want a blessing? You want God to bless you? This place is full of blessings—it all depends on what you want to look for. People need encouragement. Some people think they have the gift of criticism. One pastor said, Brother Brown, would you please stand and lead us in a word of criticism? People need to be encouraged, everybody's hurting; there's a heartache, there's a tear on every pew. You want to minister? See the banners flying, get your eyes on Jesus, put your arm around a brother or a sister, and help them on. That's the ministry of encouragement. Would you say, God, give me the ministry of encouragement? Don't say it out loud, but say it.

## **II. The Ministry of Evangelism**

Second ministry. You've been called not only to the ministry of encouragement, but you've been called to the ministry of evangelism. Look, if you will, in chapter 15, verse 8: "Now, I say that Jesus was a minister of the circumcision..." when it says the circumcision, that's a term for the Jewish nation, "...was a minister to the [Jews] for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." Jesus came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Jesus came to bring their Jewish nation to a saving faith in Him. That's why He came, not that the Jews alone would be saved, but through them would all the nations of the world should be blessed. The Bible says, in John chapter 4 and verse 2, that salvation is of the Jews, and so it came through a Jewish Messiah. We have the Jewish Scriptures, and God brought this message to those early followers, that they might be a blessing to the Gentiles.

Now, notice—we're talking about evangelism—Jesus came as an evangelist to seek and to save that which was lost. And now, look, if you will, in verse 16—Paul said that he did this that "I should be minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost." Now, Paul says, Jesus came to minister, that is, through evangelism, and now He has given me the ministry of evangelism, and Paul became the great evangelist, to the Jews, and what Paul is saying, that as Jesus Christ came and set an example to minister, and as I came to minister to the Gentiles, every child of God has been called, saved to serve, and saved to win, bring souls to Jesus Christ.

Now, I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I want you to look up here and I want you to listen to me, very carefully at what I'm about to say. If you're a member of this church, I don't care how faithful you attend, I care not how beautifully you sing, how eloquently you teach, how liberally you give, how circumspectly you walk, if you're not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ, you're not right with God. I'm just telling you, you're not right with God—you are not right with God, you are not right with God. You are guilty of

high treason against heaven's king. You have been called to minister, you have been called to bring souls bound in the golden chains of the gospel, and bring them and lay them at Jesus' feet. Don't you boast about your salvation, don't you boast about your piety, don't you boast about your Spirit fullness, don't you tell me about your spiritual gifts, if you're not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ. What right do you have to call yourself a follower of Jesus Christ if your business is not His business? And what is His business? The Son of God came to seek and to save that which is lost.

Do you know what a headhunter is? Mark, I know you know. In business, when a company needs an executive, a CEO, some high-level executive—they're very hard to find people like this, and so they have professionals, people who seek out professional people, professionals who find professionals. In the business world they call them headhunters, and one headhunter was saying this, a very interesting story. He said, The way I look at an executive to find out what he really is like, because so many times all of us put up fronts, he says, I go into the man's office, and after we've talked a while, then we begin to have some small talk. He said, We begin to talk about sports; we begin to talk about the weather; we begin to talk about travel. He says, As I pull off my coat, I loosen my tie, I may even put my feet up on the coffee table, and we just talk for a while, and we get to laughing, and we may be having coffee or whatever, just very relaxed. And then, he says, When the man is disarmed, when he's not thinking, when he's not all prepared, I lean over and I look him right in the eye, and I say, Tell me what is the motivating purpose of your life. He's not prepared for the answer. I mean, he's just right there—What is the motivating purpose of your life? And he said, many times, these executives just come apart; they don't know what to say. He said, I asked that question to one man. I looked him in the eye, got sober, I said, Bob, what is the motivating purpose of your life? He said, he didn't hesitate. He said, To go to heaven, and to take as many with me as I can. Well, I like that. That's the motivating purpose of my life: to go to heaven and to take as many people with me as I can. Would you pray—oh, pray it, mean it, mean it, don't just say it, but mean it—Lord, lay some soul upon my heart, and win that soul through me. If you can't win an adult, win a child; if you can't win your neighbor, win somebody else's neighbor; if you can't win somebody in your family, win somebody in somebody else's family. If you can't bring a soul to Jesus, help somebody else to bring a soul to Jesus.

### **III. The Ministry of Giving**

The third ministry you need to be a part of—now, folks, you've been called into the ministry—there's the ministry of encouragement, there's the ministry of evangelism, and I don't think I'm going to hear much shouting on this next point, but there's the ministry of giving—the ministry of giving. Look, if you will, in chapter 15 now, and begin reading

in verse 25. Paul said, “But now I go to Jerusalem to minister unto the saints, for it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem, and it hath pleased them verily and their debtors they are, for if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.” The word carnal means fleshly things. Now, here is the whole point. The Gentiles in Greece had taken a love offering, and the love offering was for the Jews in Jerusalem. Paul says, Look, they didn’t mind doing that, they were happy to do that, because salvation is of the Jews, they had received an incredible spiritual blessing from the Jews. So he said, Why, if they have blessed, if they have blessed so much, why should we not take our material things, our mundane things, and help them when they are in need? Now, there are different kinds of offerings for different kinds of needs, but service to God is giving. It is the ministry. He calls it here the ministry of giving.

Now, when we come to the close of this service, we’re going to receive an offering—we do it every Sunday. Well, that worship to God; it’s also ministry. We’re not just taking an offering; it’s not a mere contribution—it represents a spiritual debt. Paul said, we do it because we’re debtors. Did you know every one of us is in debt? I mean, we’re in debt. I’m not talking about what you owe the credit card company. We’re in debt. You’re sitting on a chair. Where’d it come from? There’s a light shining down on your head. Where’d that come from? There’s a sound system here that’s helping you to see, hear. How did that happen? The roof that’s over your head, all of the ministry, all of the accouterments, all of the blessings here, where did that come from? Somebody did it for you. Do you think this all just floated out of heaven? I mean, do you think it’s a HUD project? Where’d it come from? I am telling you, dear friend, that since 1903 the blood, sweat, tears, prayer, faith, and sacrifice of people have provided what we enjoy today. We’re debtors. We’re debtors to the founders of this church. We’re debtors to the apostles who suffered, the martyrs of the faith. We are debtors to Jesus Christ and His precious shed blood. How can we sit in a service and fail to want to give as unto our great God, because if we’ve been so blessed spiritually, should it pain us that we give some of what we can’t keep anyway? Think about it. Some people, again, they think they’ve done God a wild favor if they give a little bit of money. He dropped a dollar in the plate and sung with might and mane, when we asunder parted, gives us inward pain. No, no. What a joy it is to give.

I was reading about a man in Kansas—in Lincoln, Kansas. His name was Davis. He was a farmer. And Davis started out as a farm hand, but he was very frugal, a very hard-working man. And old Farmer Davis accrued a little fortune. Now, he married a woman and his in-laws didn’t want him to marry that woman because they felt that she was marrying beneath her status in life, beneath her level, her social equal, and so they

began to be against everybody. But old Davis collected some money—as a matter of fact, he amassed a small fortune—and people would say, there, Davis, why, what are you going to do with that money? Why don't you build a municipal swimming pool? Why don't you help in the orphanage? He said, This community ain't done nothing for me; I ain't gonna do nothing for it. And he said, My in-laws are not gonna get one dime of what I have. Davis' wife died, and he built a monument to her and to him—it was a love bench, a statue, he sitting on one side, she sitting on the other side of it—very impressive monument. And he liked that monument so much that he got a sculptor to come and build another monument. This was a monument of himself kneeling at his wife's grave. And then he liked that one so much he commissioned this man to build another monument, this time a monument of his wife, who's already gone to heaven, kneeling at his grave where they would be buried, and since she was in heaven, he had wings put on her. And then he lost his fortune. Somehow things reversed on him, he became almost penniless, and he died in the poor house. And when he had a funeral, nobody came, just a small handful of people, just enough to stick him in the ground by his monuments. Oh, there was one person who came, a Mr. England who'd built all those monuments, the man who had collected all his money to build those monuments. And, Brother Jim, in the story I read, the sad thing is this: that those monuments now are sinking down into the soil of Kansas, and before long they're going to be buried, and nobody will see his old monuments anyway. He died broken, bitter, penniless, and hated because he'd lived for himself and himself alone. You're going to leave some kind of a monument.

You know what bothers me? I've been reading lately about, we are about ready to have a great transfer of wealth. I mean, there is a generation who's amassed a lot of money. Some of you are listening by television. You have money—you don't know what you're going to do with it. The government's going to get a lot of it. Your kids are going to get a lot of it. They're going to get divorced. They're going to fight over it. They're going to be at one another's throats. You're going to ruin them. You'd better start investing in something that's going to count. They say you can't take your money to heaven. Oh yes, you can, if you'll invest it in something going to heaven. The only thing I know going to heaven is the souls of men. I'm going to tell you something, friend: all that you're going to hold in your cold, dead hand is what you've given away—that's it. You cannot take it with you.

Maxie Jarman, businessman—you know Jarman shoes—gave away so much money. He gave away money, and then finally he had a financial reverse, and somebody said to him, Maxie, all of the money that you gave away, now that you're having these difficulties, do you ever think about that money? He said, Oh, yes, praise God, he said, that's the only thing I have left. You see, that you can't lose. You invest in

souls, it is a ministry, a ministry of giving.

#### **IV. The Ministry of Prayer**

Would you say, O God, give me the ministry of encouragement. O God, give me the ministry of giving. Now, here's another ministry, and you've been called to this ministry. It's the ministry of prayer. Look, if you will, not in chapter 15 and verse 30. Paul says, "Now, I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake," now notice, this is not just to help build the church, not just for Paul's sake, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayer to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea, and that my service," there's the word again, "which I have for Jerusalem may be accepted of the saints." Paul says, Listen. I minister, I am going to minister, but he says, I have enemies. I need protection, and I need reception. Would you pray that I would be delivered, and that I would be received? Would you pray? Folks, prayer is a ministry. Prayer is not getting ready to serve; prayer is service. You can do more than pray after you've prayed, but you really can't do much more than pray until you've prayed. And some of you say, Pastor, I don't have much money to give, and it's kind of hard to encourage other people because I don't get around other people very much. One thing you can do, you can pray.

I was preaching a revival meeting as a youngster in Jacksonville, Florida, and I was with a boy named Ernie Harvey. He and I were in college together—it was his home church. And, Ernie said, Adrian, I'd like for you to meet my mother. I'd never met Mrs. Harvey. Ernie was a big old tall, strapping athlete. He and I had played ball together. I went up to meet Ernie's mother. We went up to a little tenement, a little flat, threadbare on the back side there, very poor. This little woman came out, and she had crippling arthritis; her hands were very puffy, her joints were swollen, her knees were swollen, she could hardly stand up straight. She looked like an angel in the face, but a devastating case of crippling arthritis. And we visited with her, and then she said, Boys, how did the revival go last night? I was the young evangelist, gone to college to play football, and full of myself, and thinking I was more important than I was. But she said, Boys, how was the meeting last night? I said, Wonderful, wonderful. God came down; it was glorious. And I began to tell her all the things that happened. But tears popped out of her eyes. She said, I knew it; I knew it. She said, Adrian, the whole time you were preaching I was on my knees praying for you. I thought, O God, Adrian, you numbskull, you ignoramus, you lout—look at that little body. What pain it must be for her, even for this lady even to get on her knees, but what a ministry. I want to say to some of you mothers in Israel, some of you who are shut in who are sitting by the radio, television right now, would you do me a favor, and would you pray for me like Mom Harvey prayed

for me so long ago? And would you pray for your Sunday School teacher? And would you pray for people? That is a ministry, and you've been called into the ministry.

## **V. The Ministry of Fellowship**

Now, here, time is gone, but let me just quickly tell you what the next ministry is: it's the ministry of fellowship. I'm preaching this message because we're getting ready to put a great emphasis on fellowship. Look in chapter 16, verse 1: "I commend unto you, Phoebe, our sister, which is a servant, a minister of the church, which is at Cenchrea," and then Paul lists in this 16th chapter, twenty-six different people. Now, only was Paul a soul-winner, but he was a friend-maker. And he tells us how we are to minister, and I'm just going to read the headings. In verse 2, we minister by receiving people. In verse 3, we minister by greeting people. In verse 5, we minister by loving people. In verse 6, we minister by helping people. In verse 7, we minister by honoring people. In verses 17 through 18, we minister by guarding the fellowship against all kinds of false doctrine, that our fellowship might be pure. I wish I had more time to talk on that subject, but you didn't listen fast enough.

## **VI. The Ministry of Worship**

So now, here's the sixth way that we're to minister. Not only the ministry of fellowship by loving one another—and oh, how sweet it is, how good it is for brothers and sisters to dwell together in fellowship, and may the devil always cause you to understand that we're to love, receive, greet, encourage, honor one another—and then, last of all, there's the ministry of worship. Look, if you will, Brother Jim, I saved the best for the last; that's what we've been doing today. Chapter 16 verses 25 through the end. Here's the bottom line. I mean, Paul has given us the book of Romans. Now, here's the book of Romans. I mean the Constitution of Christianity. This is the greatest treatise ever written on the faith. If I had to be shipwrecked, I'd want to be shipwrecked—with nothing else to read—I'd want, if you could just give me the book of Romans. But now, let's get to the bottom line; I mean the bottom line of the bottom line. Here it is: "Now to him that has the power to stablish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ forever." That's it—that is it. To God be the glory through Jesus Christ. All hail the power of Jesus' name, let angels prostrate fall. Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown Him Lord of all.

Friend, we need to stop moaning and groaning and living in the last days. There's never been a greater day, a greater age, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Old

Vance Havner said, I'm proud of the business I'm in, and the company I work for. The president is God's Son, and His office door is always open, so that a country preacher like myself can walk in day or night and talk to the boss. I have stock in the company, and I've been cashing dividends for over sixty years. I made my investment where banks don't break, that is moth-proof, rust-proof, where thieves do not break through and steal. I'm not just a member of the firm; my father is the head of it, and I'm a member of the family. My bank can't fall, my business can't fail, because I am a laborer with God. Isn't that good?

## Conclusion

All right now, folks, look up here—look right here. I want you to say out loud, repeat after me: I have been called (I have been called), into the ministry (into the ministry); I am saved to serve (I am saved to serve), I am saved to serve (I am saved to serve). God make me a servant (God make me a servant), God make me a minister (God make me a minister); and God help me not to lie (and God help me not to lie). You know what you just said? Now, look, folks, God—God—has called you, God is calling us; you look around—look around—think what will happen if all of us really begin to minister. We'll turn this place upside down and inside out for Jesus Christ. Enough people in this room, friend, to change the world for Jesus if we just understand that we've been saved to serve. God has called you into the ministry. You don't just sit, soak, and sour, but serve. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

Father God, I pray in the name of Jesus, Lord God, that you will anoint the members of this church—not this church corporately, though I want you to bless it corporately—but Lord, bless it corporately by blessing it individually. And, Lord, that as individuals, each one of us, varying in gifts and abilities, might know, dear Lord, that these six ministries are ministries that each one of us in our own way can do. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how many in this building would say, Pastor Rogers, if I were to die today—I mean right now, this moment—if I were to suddenly die, I know that I know that I know that I'm going straight to heaven? No one looking around, no heads up, every head bowed—but if you can give me that testimony, would you just lift your hand? I know by the grace of God that I'm saved. Thank you. Now, take them down.

Now, if you could not lift your hand, I want to help you to get it settled right now today. I want to help you to pray to receive Jesus Christ. Would you pray a prayer like this? Dear God, I'm a sinner, my sin deserves judgment; but I want mercy. God, I know that you love me; I know that you want to save me. Thank you for loving a sinner like me, like I am. And Lord, I believe that Jesus Christ is your Son. I believe that He paid for my sin with His blood on the cross. I believe that you raised Him from the dead. Thank you, Jesus, for dying for me. And now pray this. Now, pray it with your heart. Now, right

now, I receive you as my Lord and Savior; right now, this moment, right now, I receive you as my Lord and Savior. I turn from my sin, I crown you Lord of my life, and by your grace and for your glory, I will follow you all the days of my life, if you will only help me. In your name I pray. Amen.