

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



1 CORINTHIANS

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

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1 Corinthians

1. **The Cross** | *1 Corinthians 1:17–24*
2. **The Christmas Cross** | *1 Corinthians 1:17–25*
3. **The Power of God** | *1 Corinthians 1:18*
4. **Fool, Wise, or Otherwise?** | *1 Corinthians 1:18–25*
5. **Conquering Through The Cross** | *1 Corinthians 1:18–25; 2:1–5*
6. **Good-bye to Boasting** | *1 Corinthians 1:18–29*
7. **Conquering Through The Cross** | *1 Corinthians 1:18–31*
8. **God’s Hall of Fame** | *1 Corinthians 1:26–31*
9. **Inferiority** | *1 Corinthians 1:26–31*
10. **Why Doesn’t God Heal All Sick Saints?** | *1 Corinthians 1:27; 2:3*
11. **Good-bye to Boasting** | *1 Corinthians 1:29*
12. **How to Know God Through the Bible** | *1 Corinthians 2*
13. **Superficial or Supernatural?** | *1 Corinthians 2*
14. **Supernatural or Superficial?** | *1 Corinthians 2*
15. **Knowing God** | *1 Corinthians 2:1–5*
16. **A Road Map to Maturity** | *1 Corinthians 2:6–3:4*
17. **The Road Map to Maturity** | *1 Corinthians 2:11–3:6*
18. **Are You Spiritual, Natural, or Carnal?** | *1 Corinthians 2:12–3:4*
19. **How to Be a Growing Christian** | *1 Corinthians 2:12–3:4*
20. **A Road Map to Maturity** | *1 Corinthians 2:14–3:3*
21. **It’s Time to Grow Up** | *1 Corinthians 2:14–15*
22. **The Judgment Seat of Christ** | *1 Corinthians 3:8, 11–16*
23. **The Judgment Seat of Christ** | *1 Corinthians 3:8, 11–17*
24. **When You Are Judged by Jesus** | *1 Corinthians 3:8–15*

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

25. **Don't Go to Heaven Empty-Handed** | *1 Corinthians 3:9–15*
26. **The Judgment Seat of Christ** | *1 Corinthians 3:9–15*
27. **Facing the Fire** | *1 Corinthians 3:11–16*
28. **The Believer's Judgment** | *1 Corinthians 3:11–17*
29. **Faithfulness** | *1 Corinthians 4:1–2*
30. **The Measure of a Minister** | *1 Corinthians 4:1–5*
31. **Christ, Our Passover** | *1 Corinthians 5:7–8*
32. **Let's Celebrate Passover** | *1 Corinthians 5:7–8*
33. **The Passover Lamb** | *1 Corinthians 5:7–8*
34. **Christ, Our Passover** | *1 Corinthians 5:7–8; 11:23–26*
35. **The Case for Moral Purity** | *1 Corinthians 6:9–7:2*
36. **Safe Sex** | *1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 7:1–9, 26, 29–33*
37. **Six Positive Principles for Proper Practice** | *1 Corinthians 6:12*
38. **Six Positive Principles for Proper Practice** | *1 Corinthians 6:12*
39. **Six Positive Principles for Proper Practice** | *1 Corinthians 6:12; 8:8–13; 10:23, 31–33*
40. **Family Fitness** | *1 Corinthians 6:19–20*
41. **My Heart: God's Home** | *1 Corinthians 6:19–20*
42. **The Cure for Carnality** | *1 Corinthians 6:19–20*
43. **Survival for the Family** | *1 Corinthians 6:19–7:9*
44. **Being a Family of Friends** | *1 Corinthians 9:14–22*
45. **Every Christian's Responsibility** | *1 Corinthians 9:14–23*
46. **How to Bring Loved Ones and Family to Christ** | *1 Corinthians 9:14–23*
47. **Turning Temptations into Triumphs** | *1 Corinthians 10:12–14*
48. **The Cup of Blessing** | *1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:20–29*
49. **The Lord's Supper: God's Ordinance** | *1 Corinthians 11:1–2*
50. **When Bellevue Breaks Bread** | *1 Corinthians 11:1–2*
51. **Thoughts for the Lord's Supper** | *1 Corinthians 11:1–2, 18–32*
52. **The Breaking of Bread** | *1 Corinthians 11:1–2, 23–32*
53. **Breaking Bread at Bellevue** | *1 Corinthians 11:1–2, 23–34*
54. **The Ministry of Women** | *1 Corinthians 11:1–16*

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

55. **The Priority of Authority** | *1 Corinthians 11:1–16*
56. **Women in Ministry** | *1 Corinthians 11:1–16*
57. **The Body Called Bellevue** | *1 Corinthians 11:29*
58. **Are You a Gifted Child?** | *1 Corinthians 12*
59. **The Distortion of Spiritual Gifts, Part 1** | *1 Corinthians 12*
60. **The Distortion of Spiritual Gifts, Part 2** | *1 Corinthians 12*
61. **Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift** | *1 Corinthians 12*
62. **You Are a Gifted Child** | *1 Corinthians 12:1–12*
63. **Unity Through Diversity** | *1 Corinthians 12:1–13*
64. **Faithful in Fellowship, Part 1** | *1 Corinthians 12:12–19, 25–27*
65. **Faithful in Fellowship, Part 2** | *1 Corinthians 12:12, 25*
66. **The Church: The Body of Christ** | *1 Corinthians 12:12–25*
67. **You Are Somebody in His Body** | *1 Corinthians 12:12–27*
68. **You Are Somebody in His Body** | *1 Corinthians 12:12–27*
69. **Christmas Is Spelled L-o-v-e** | *1 Corinthians 13*
70. **Learning to Love** | *1 Corinthians 13*
71. **Real Love** | *1 Corinthians 13*
72. **The Gospel Truth** | *1 Corinthians 15:1–4*
73. **What Is the Gospel?** | *1 Corinthians 15:1–4*
74. **Good News** | *1 Corinthians 15:1–6*
75. **The Guarantee of the Gospel** | *1 Corinthians 15:1–7*
76. **Easter’s Good News** | *1 Corinthians 15:1–8*
77. **The Gospel Truth** | *1 Corinthians 15:1–8*
78. **The Ironclad Guarantee of the Gospel** | *1 Corinthians 15:1–8*
79. **Freedom from the Performance Trap** | *1 Corinthians 15:9–10*
80. **If There Had Been No Easter** | *1 Corinthians 15:12–20*
81. **What If There Had Been No Easter?** | *1 Corinthians 15:12–20*
82. **Things Unthinkable** | *1 Corinthians 15:13–20*
83. **The Day Death Died** | *1 Corinthians 15:20–26*
84. **The Resurrection Body** | *1 Corinthians 15:35–58*
85. **The Resurrection Body** | *1 Corinthians 15:35–58*

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

- 86. **The Resurrection Body** | *1 Corinthians 15:35–58*
- 87. **Your Resurrection Body** | *1 Corinthians 15:35–58*
- 88. **The Day Death Died** | *1 Corinthians 15:45–58*
- 89. **In the Twinkling of an Eye** | *1 Corinthians 15:51–57*
- 90. **How to Make the Rest Day the Best Day** | *1 Corinthians 16:1–2*

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

The Cross

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 29, 1989

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:17–24

Sponsored by: Sponsor

*“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;
but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

Outline

Introduction

I. God Speaks to Us Through the Cross

II. God Saves Through the Cross

III. God Sanctifies Through the Cross

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s precious Word, would you please, and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 1. We want to tune our hearts for the receiving of the Lord’s Supper. And in order to do so, we want to think about the cross. First Corinthians chapter 1. I begin in verse 17. The apostle Paul said, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.” The apostle Paul said, “I didn’t come as a spell-binding orator. I didn’t come with convoluted language. I didn’t confuse the idea of the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ with philosophy. I didn’t come with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved, it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased god by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. 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.” Now the Bible says in verse 18 that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. And I might as well tell you right away, if you are a true Christian, a real Christian, you’re going to be looked on as a fool by this world. Now just remember that.

Ah, if, if, there's some people who don't want to seem odd and they don't want to look down on, and so, therefore, they have tried to adapt and adopt the cross and the message of Christianity to the world. And they think everything will be a little better if the church becomes a little more worldly and the world becomes a little more churchy. But I want you to know that the gospel and this world are going in two different directions. And you can't fit into this world and believe what the apostle Paul has to say right now. The world will think you are a sheer fool. The gospel of Jesus Christ and the cross of Christ starts at a different source, it follows a different course, and it ends at a different conclusion. And you're going to be going against the grain and against the world all the way if you follow what I have to say tonight. What the world calls wisdom, God calls foolishness, and what the world, world calls foolishness, God calls wisdom. The preaching of this cross is to them that perish foolishness. Now I want to talk to you about the cross tonight for just a moment before we get ready to have the Lord's Supper, or as we're getting ready.

I. God Speaks to Us Through the Cross

The first thing I want you to think of is this: that God speaks to us through the cross. God speaks to us through the cross. Look again at verse 18: "The preaching of the cross..." Actually, that may be translated "the word of the cross." Now God has spoken to us in many ways. God has spoken to us in history. God speaks to us in nature. God has spoken to us in prophecy. But the greatest way that God has ever spoken, the greatest way that God has ever revealed Himself to mankind is in the cross. Now I want to give you the background of all of this. Look in verse 22 if you will: "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." Now the apostle Paul was preaching the cross to two groups of people; primarily to the Jewish people and to the Grecian people. And he had, he had two different problems. The Jews wanted a mighty Messiah. They wanted a wonder-working Messiah. The Jews were all interested in the power of God. They were always saying, "Do something. Perform a miracle. If You're the Messiah, or if You're a man from God, we want some signs to prove it." That's the reason the devil tempted Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple. He said to Jesus, "If You'll just do that, why, You'll make such a spectacular entrance, all of the Jews will be convinced because the Jews require a sign." After Jesus fed the 5,000, the Jews came to Him and they said, "Now what sign are You going to do? What sign doeth Thou now?" And, ah, Jesus said in John 4:48, ah, to these Jewish people, "...Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Luke 11:29: "And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign. But no sign will be given to it, except the sign of Jonah the prophet." And Matthew 12:39: "He answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh

after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the prophet Jonas.” Now what does all of that mean? It means simply this, dear friend. If I had the power to work miracles, there wouldn’t be enough room to put people in this building. That’s right. All of I’d have to do is just come in here and, and, and do some sign in the heavens or, or multiply, ah, food, or, ah, heal the sick, or do anything: if it could be bonafide, authenticated miracle, you couldn’t keep the people away. Isn’t that true? All right. We have people like that. They want a sign. They’re what I call the miracle mongers. Now that’s what the Jews were like. They wanted a sign. Now the Greeks weren’t that way. The Greeks didn’t want a sign. Ah, the Greeks wanted wisdom. Ah, the Jews wanted power; the Greeks wanted philosophy. The Jews seek a sign; the Greeks sought wisdom. They were looking for a world leader who would be sort of a double Socrates. The Jews, ah, had, ah, were religionists, but the Greeks were more philosophers. They had developed the mind. They were great artists. They were great builders. And they were, ah, they, they gloried in being able to unpick all of divine mysteries with their mind. And they worshipped at the shrine of their intellect. And that’s what verse 22 says: “...the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.” Now how did Paul talk to these miracle mongers and these, ah, philosophy seekers? He just presented the cross to them. The greatest way God is ever going to speak is not in philosophy and not in miracles. The greatest way that God will ever speak is in the cross of Jesus Christ. Look in verse 23: “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.” It’s as if Paul had read their thoughts. The Jews were saying, “Give us a sign.” The Greeks were saying, “Give us some wisdom.” Paul says, “I’m going to preach to you not Christ the conqueror, not Christ the philosopher; I’m going to preach to you Christ the crucified.” Now the Jews could not accept this. To them, Jesus dying on the cross, that’s no sign of power. That was a sign of weakness. That was a sign of ignominious failure. And the Greeks said, “What kind of wisdom is there in dying on a cross?” But here’s what the apostle Paul said: “That is both wisdom and power.” Now look at it in verse 24. Paul says in verse 24, “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” What the Jews really wanted and what the Greeks really wanted was in Jesus and in the cross. The cross is the greatest demonstration of the power and the wisdom of God that the world can ever see. Now what is the greatest act of power? The greatest act of power is not the healing of a human body; the greatest act of power is the saving of a human soul. I hope you believe that. I hope you believe that. You see, ah, it, it takes no difficulty for God to heal a body. And God does heal. I’m not against healing. If I get sick, I hope He’ll heal me. You understand that? I believe in miracles, but I don’t want to become a miracle monger. Ah, you see, for God to heal is no difficulty for God. For God to create the universe, the Bible just simply says, “He spoke and it was so. I’m the Lord

thy God. Is there anything too hard for Me?” Miracles come easy for God. Dear friend, the only time God had any difficulty was Calvary when God hung His darling Son on the cross. And I want to tell you that the saving of a soul is the greatest miracle and the greatest demonstration of the power of God this world will ever know. A changed life is a demonstration of the power of God. I am a living testimony of the power of God and so is every born again child of God. I heard about some men in a barber shop who were arguing the Bible. And one of them said, “Do you believe that story about how Jesus turned water into wine?” An old alcoholic who had been saved said, “Sure, I believe it.” And he said, “If you’ll come to my house, I’ll show you a greater miracle than that. I’ll show you how Jesus turned whiskey into furniture.” He changed that man’s life. And, dear friend, He can do it. Now, you see, listen. The cross is the power of God. And now, watch this: The cross is the wisdom of God. You see, how is the cross the wisdom of God? In that cross, you can know the heart of God. In the cross, you can understand the mysteries of life and death. And the simplest of all people can understand it. Even little children can understand it. What amazing wisdom is this? And, and so the Bible makes it clear that God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and God has simply revealed them unto babes. Oh, the wisdom of the cross that reveals the heart of God. What greater wisdom is there than this, to know the heart of God? Both wisdom and power are seen in the cross.

II. God Saves Through the Cross

Now I want to show you not only does God speak in the cross, but God saves in the cross. God saves through the cross. Look in verse 18: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” It is the cross that saves. You’re not going to be saved apart from the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now listen world thinks that’s foolishness. The world believes in education rather than regeneration. The world believes in culture rather than Calvary. The world ranks people by color and bank account and the social register and their ancestry, but the Bible ranks men by the cross. They’re either saved or they are lost. Without the shedding of blood is no remission of sins. God speaks through the cross. God saves through the cross. One last thing before we have the Lord’s Supper. God sanctifies through the cross. Look, if you will again, in verse 18. The Bible says, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” Now look carefully at this phrase, “which are saved.” It maybe translated this: that those who are being saved. You see, God is still saving us through the cross those who are being saved. Salvation is in three tenses. I have been saved, I am being saved, and I shall be saved. Now I have, I have been saved from, ah, the penalty of sin. I’ll never go to hell. That’s already settled. I am being saved day by day

from the power of sin. And I shall be saved one day from the presence of sin. So the Bible speaks of salvation in three tenses. For example, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.” That’s past tense. Ah, Paul told Timothy, “Take heed to thyself unto the, ah, doctrine. And, in so doing, thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee.” Well, I thought he already was saved? Yes, but he’s also being saved. And then the Bible says, “Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” I thought we were already saved? But he’s talking about the future tense of salvation. I have been saved, ah, I, I am being saved, and I shall be saved. Now, ah, 1 Corinthians 1:18 talks about the present tense. “The preaching of the cross is to them which perish foolishness; but unto us which are being saved it is the power of God.” Now I like that because it tells me that the cross not only saved me; it is saving me. Day by day as I apply the principles of the cross I am being saved. I am being sanctified. Day by day the cross is saving me from self, from sin, and from Satan. You see, God’s not finished with me yet. Philippians 1:6: “He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Aren’t you glad God’s not finished with you? Aren’t you glad that you’re being saved? God is still working on you. Now what do you need in order to be saved, to be being saved? Two things you need – both wisdom and power. Now the cross is both wisdom and power. The way that you need to live the Christian life tomorrow is you need to remarkable things. You need wisdom and you need power, and both of them come in the cross. Have you ever thought, if you knew the will of God, your difficulties would be over? If you say, “Oh, if I just knew what God wanted me to do. If I just knew what God wanted me to do, I’d be so happy.” Friend, that’s only part of it. To know what God wants you to do, that’s the wisdom of God. But how to do what you know you ought to do, that’s the power of God. It takes more than just the wisdom of God. It takes more than just knowing the will of God. Almost everywhere you go on a college campus or somewhere people say, “How can I know the will of God?” But they ought to be asking another question – “How can I do the will of God?” In the cross, in the cross, you both know the will of God and have power to do the will of God. It is in the cross that you are being saved.

III. God Sanctifies Through the Cross

You see, God speaks through the cross. God saves through the cross. And God sanctifies through the cross. Now how does God, how does God, ah, sanctify you through the cross? How does God enable you to do what you ought to do? Well, you see, the cross is not just something you come to. You come to the cross for pardon, but you get on the cross for power. The apostle Paul said this: “I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me.” You need to learn, dear friend, that there comes power when you’re crucified with the Lord Jesus. I hear people talk

about taking up their cross to follow Jesus. They get the idea that the cross is a burden that they carry around on their back, like it's some big, heavy, wooden load and they're carrying it around and say, "Where are you going?" "Well, I'm just bearing my cross. I'm going to Sunday school meeting bearing my cross. I'm going to work bearing my cross." Crosses are not for carrying. They're for dying on. And when Jesus said, "Take up your cross," He meant, "Come, follow Me to death." He didn't mean that you'd carry that around everywhere you go. "Where are You going, Lord?" "I'm going to Calvary. Take up your cross and go to Calvary with Me." A cross is for dying. And, dear friend, listen. A cross isn't something that you can't help. It's not some incurable disease or it's not your wife or your mother-in-law or something like that. No. They may be cross, but they're not your cross. The cross, the cross, the cross is just simply saying no to self and yes to Him. That's what it is. No to self and yes to Him. Listen. In your heart and in your life there's a throne. Either you're on that throne or Jesus is on that throne. When you're on that throne, Christ is on the cross. When Christ is on that throne, self is on the cross. There's a throne in your life. Now, you see, it is the power of the cross that is wisdom and power combined that delivers you day by day when you say no to self and you say yes to Him. Well, you say, "I don't want to say no to myself. I, I, I love myself." Well, friend, if you love yourself, say no to yourself, because the Bible says, "He who would save his life will lose it. But whosoever will lose his life for My sake and the gospels, shall save it." Jesus didn't say I've come that you might have death. He said, "I've come that you might have life." But you'll never know life without a crucifixion. And He'll turn your Calvary to an Easter if you'll just say with the apostle Paul, "I am crucified with Christ." That old self life doesn't want to die. But, my dear friend, the preaching of the cross is the power of God to those who are being saved."

Conclusion

Both wisdom and power are in the cross. And as we take this Lord's Supper tonight, as you hold in your hand these elements, remember that Jesus died for you. His body was broken for you. His blood was shed for you. And you say, "Lord, if You did that for me, oh, my God, I give myself to Thee. I die to the old way. I die to my desires. I die to this world. I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me." And when you say that, friend, God is going to fill your life with incredible wisdom to know the will of God and incredible power to do the will of God, and you, my dear friend, will be being saved. Let's pray. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. Thank God for the cross right now. And as we take this Lord's Supper, ask God to be revealing to you the wisdom and the power of the cross.

The Christmas Cross

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 07, 2003

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:17–25

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Cross Is God's Supreme Word of Revelation
 - A. God Speaks Through Nature
 - B. God Speaks Through History
 - C. God Speaks Through the Voice of Conscience
 - D. God Speaks Through the Cross
- II. The Cross Is God's Supreme Word of Condemnation
 - A. It Speaks of the Power of Sin
 - B. It Speaks of the Presence of Sin
 - C. It Speaks of the Penalty of Sin
- III. The Cross Is God's Supreme Word of Justification
- IV. The Cross Is God's Supreme Word of Sanctification

Conclusion

Introduction

We're so grateful for our children. Thank God for our leaders, and thank God for the music program in this church. And, if you've been listening to the radio, you've listened to the boys' and girls' choirs as they sung tonight—and that was a boys' choir.

Now, would you turn, please, to 1 Corinthians chapter 1? I want to talk to you about "The Christmas Cross"—"The Christmas Cross"—because Christmas is not primarily about a cradle. It is about a baby who was born to die—a child who grew up knowing that He was sentenced to death upon a Roman cross. *One artist has painted a picture of the young man Jesus in Joseph's carpenter shop. There on the floor are the shavings, and the little child has been playing there in the sawdust and the shavings. And, it's toward the end of the day, and the sun is setting. And, He has come to the door, and He has His hands upon the doorpost like that, looking at the setting sun. But, if you look back on the floor of the carpenter's shop, there's the shadow of a cross. Jesus lived in the shadow of the cross. He was born to die.* And, I want us to emphasize, this Christmas season, not primarily the cradle but the cross.

Now, anybody can be sentimental about a baby—saved or lost, religious, irreligious, profane. People are sentimental about babies. But, when you start talking about the

cross, that's where the separation begins.

Now, notice, if you will, in 1 Corinthians chapter 1...and I'm going to begin reading in verse 17. First Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 17—1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 17: Paul says, *“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:17–18).

One of the greatest preachers who ever lived was a man named Charles Haddon Spurgeon, and somebody accused Spurgeon, one time, saying, “You know, all of your sermons—they sound alike.” Spurgeon said, “That may be true, because,” he said, “I take a text anywhere and make a beeline to the cross”—“make a beeline to the cross,” preaching the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

As a matter of fact, would you like to hear the test for a fool? Would you like to find out whether you're a fool or not, according to the Bible? Hmm... One man said to his wife in an argument, “I was a fool when I married you.” She said, “Yes, but I didn't notice it then.” Would you like to hear a test for a fool? It is your reaction to the cross. Notice in verse 18: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Now, there are some people who want to count the preaching of the cross as foolishness. I know that there are those in today's world and in the world of theology who would ridicule the man Adrian Rogers for what he's doing tonight. They call that the *bloody religion*; they call that the *religion of the slaughterhouse*—that old-fashioned religion. And so, what we try to do today is to take away the scandal of the cross—we try to make the church a little more worldly and make the world a little more churchy to see if we can change things, dress them up a little bit, and take away the shame of the cross. As a matter of fact, some hymnals, believe it or not, in some more liberal and modern churches, have had the cross and the blood excised, taken out, because it is offense, to modern-day society. I want to tell you that the preaching of the cross is to people who are headed to Hell foolishness. The cross is contrary to this world at every turn. It starts at a different source; it follows a different course, and it ends at a different conclusion. And, we're going to see, in the passage that we look at tonight, what the world calls *wisdom* God calls *foolishness* and what God calls *wisdom* the world calls *foolishness*. And again, a man's foolishness can be seen by his reaction to the cross.

I read again 17 through 21: *“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us*

which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and...bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Corinthians 1:17–21).

Now, it doesn’t say, “by foolish preaching,” but, “the foolishness of preaching”—what some people call *foolishness*. Now, the Bible says, “*The preaching of the cross is to them [which] perish foolishness*” (1 Corinthians 1:18). It really does not refer to preaching about the cross. Now, listen carefully—what the Greek construction here is this—is this: that it is what the cross preaches. The cross itself preaches to us. There is a message from the cross. What the cross preaches is foolishness. Now, I want you to hear what the cross, therefore, preaches. What is the word of the cross?

I. The Cross Is God’s Supreme Word of Revelation

The cross, number one, is God’s—and write it down—God’s supreme word of revelation. If you want to know God, you will know God supremely in the cross of Jesus Christ.

Now, God has many ways that He has spoken to mankind in the past. Hebrews 1, verses 1 through 3: “*God, who at sundry times*”—that means “at different times”—“*and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things*” (Hebrews 1:1–2). Think of how God has spoken in the past in various and sundry ways.

A. God Speaks Through Nature

For example, God has spoken in nature: the sun, the moon, the stars, the winds, the rains—all of these speak of God. If you walk out and look at the starry heavens, as I love to do, you could not help but let your heart just soar in praise to God. In Psalm 19, verse 1, David, the chief musician, said, “*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handywork*” (Psalm 19:1). God has put the candelabra of the stars in the skies to show what a mighty God He is. God speaks through nature.

B. God Speaks Through History

God speaks through history. If you look at history and study history, you find out that history is His story; it is the story of God.

C. God Speaks Through the Voice of Conscience

God speaks in the voice of conscience. There’s that inner voice; there’s that longing to

know God. God will speak to you.

D. **God Speaks Through the Cross**

But, the greatest way that God speaks is not in nature, not in history, not in conscience; the greatest way that God has ever spoken is the cross—not what I preach about the cross but what the cross preaches to me.

Now, notice how the world looks at things. Look in verse 22, if you will: *“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified”* (1 Corinthians 1:22–23). Now, the Jews wanted miracles. They said to Jesus, “Give us some miracles, and we will believe that You are the Messiah.” They were looking for a mighty miracle worker who would lift the iron boot of Rome and set them free; and so, they wanted a sign—they wanted a demonstration of miraculous power. They were miracle mongers. The devil knew that. That’s the reason the devil tempted Jesus—said, *“Cast yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple. The Bible says He’ll give His angels charge over Thee to bear Thee up, lest thou dash thou foot against a stone”* (Matthew 4:5–6). Now, wouldn’t that have been something, had Jesus Christ just come wafting His way down from this dizzying height, the pinnacle of the temple, right into the temple court? “Ah,” the devil said, “that will amaze them; that will blow them away. Do a sign.” The Jews always wanted signs.

I was reading the other day in my devotional reading about Jesus feeding the 5,000. And, the amazing thing—after He’d fed the 5,000, when He fed 5,000 with a little boy’s lunch, they turned around and said, “Now, what sign are you going to do? Now, what kind of a miracle are you going to do?” They were always wanting miracles. And today, there are people in churches across America who are talking about miracles, lusting after miracles, wanting to see miracles. We have preachers who go from place to place advertising miracles. You know, these people advertise miracles, and they never do them; Jesus did them and didn’t advertise them. But, these people were wanting miracles back in Jesus’s time and in today’s time.

Now, you need to be very careful when you ask God for a miracle. Now, God does miracles, but I want to remind you also that the devil can perform miracles. And, never make your approach to God or your belief in Jesus Christ subservient to miracles. If you do, you sin grievously. Let me give you some scriptures; jot them down:

John 4, verse 48: *“Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe”* (John 4:48). That’s not merely indicative—I mean, not imperative; it is indicative. What He is saying is, “You have a wrong approach to things. You’re wanting to see signs and miracles before you believe.” And, Jesus was scolding him.

Put this verse down—Luke chapter 11 and verse 29: *“And when the people were*

gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Luke 11:29). What was the sign of Jonah the prophet? Three days and three nights in the belly of the whale—so will Jesus be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. God says, "I've already tucked away a miracle in the Old Testament that prophesies and portends what I'm going to do. But, you are an evil generation. You're saying, 'Give us a sign. Do a miracle. Do something.'"

Put this scripture down—Matthew 12, verse 39: "*[And] he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign*"—"an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign"—"*there shall no sign be given...it, but the sign of the prophet [Jonah]*" (Matthew 12:39). Again, He's saying the same thing: "I'm not going to do some tricks for you. I'm not going to try to prove myself to you by some hocus-pocus, some magic, some sign to convince you. I'm not going to do it." But, the Jews of that day wanted a miracle worker.

Well, what about the Greeks? Look again in verse 22: "*the Greeks seek after wisdom*" (1 Corinthians 1:22). Now, while the Jews wanted miracles, the Greeks wanted philosophy. These were the highly educated, sophisticated, erudite Greeks—the home of the great philosophers—and they were looking for a philosopher. They were looking for somebody to follow, but they were looking for someone who was sort of a double-Socrates. They were looking for someone who would be able to unpick all of the divine mysteries of life because they wanted to worship not with their emotions and signs, but they wanted to worship at the shrine of their intellect.

Now, most all religion in America is divided into those two categories: those who look for signs and those who look for philosophy. There are some—they're too sophisticated to look for miracles. And, others are too superstitious to look to philosophy. But, neither one is the answer; Jesus is the answer. Look again, if you will, in verse 22: "*the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom*"—verse 23—"But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (1 Corinthians 1:22–23). Now, the Jews said, "Jesus crucified? We can't accept this. We're looking for a mighty Messiah, and you have somebody hanging on the cross?" And, the Greeks looked and said, "A Jew on a cross? You want us to believe that? That doesn't make sense. What wisdom is there in dying on a cross? That's what the..." The Jews looked for a sign; the Greeks looked for wisdom.

But, what do those who are saved find? Look, if you will, in verses 24 and 25—look at it: "*But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God*"—that is, "someone crucified"—"*is wiser than men; and the weakness of God*"—that is, "somebody hanging

on a cross”—*“is stronger than men”* (1 Corinthians 1:24–25). Now, what is he saying? Here’s what we discover: to those who are truly saved—listen. Oh, friend, listen to me—when we see the cross, we see in the cross the very thing that the Jews and the Greeks were seeking for, but they didn’t know where to look for it. We see both the wisdom and the power of God or the power and the wisdom of God. The Jews were saying, “Give us power. Show us a power sign.” Paul said, “I’ll show you power. You want to see power? I’ll show you power that can transform a life, make a person over anew.” The power of God is the gospel—the changed life. Paul said, *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation”* (Romans 1:16). That’s the power of God. Now, you may not agree with that, but that is so very true.

I know how people are. You know, if, for example, if we were to bring a crippled child into this building today... We announced that a dear boy died last night of a lingering disease. I went to visit this boy. He was, I think, 18-years-old when he died, in a wheelchair, precious Christian. Well, suppose I could bring that boy into this service, and I had the gift of healing. And, I would lay my hands on him and say, “In the name of Jesus, be whole,” and immediately he’s whole. His limbs are straightened; his body is filled with vitality—no *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts* about it, no hocus-pocus, no flim-flam, no saying that one arm’s short and then the other. I’ll have raised them out like that—no, none of that. Here he is dramatically, radically healed. If that happened—if it happened—that boy known to be ill for many years, and we bring him in here, and I were to lay my hands on him in front of all of you and heal him, I’m going to tell you something, folks: *The Commercial Appeal* would find out about it—Channel 3, Channel 5, Channel 24. And then, the national news would be here. And, I’ll tell you something: the next service we had you would not be able to put people in here with a shoehorn because they want to see somebody healed. Is that not right?

Now, you tell me it’s not true, and I’ll tell you it would thrill you—it would amaze you. You would say, “Look at that. Now—now—I know it is real.” No, you wouldn’t—no, you wouldn’t. The devil has power to do miracles. He’s able to make fire come down out of Heaven. You see miracles of compassion, yes—sometimes, miracles of authenticity, yes. But, as we study the Bible, we find out that miracles such as that really had no lasting, converting power. Even after Jesus fed the 5,000, they said, “Ha. Now what are you going to do next?”

Friend, the great miracle is the changed life. You say, “That’s just an escape clause ’cause you can’t lay your hands on people and heal them.” It is not. Was John the Baptist filled with the Holy Spirit? How many of you think he was? How many of you say, “I don’t know”? How many of you say, “You’re trying to trap me”? John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit. There are no *ifs*, *ands*, and *buts* about it ’cause the Bible

says clearly, plainly, without stutter, stammer, or equivocation that he was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb. Now, what does that do to your theology? From his mother's womb he was filled with the Holy Spirit. You might ask, "Is Adrian filled with the Holy Spirit?" Now, you could get a big discussion about that. Some say, "I think he is." Others say, "I think he's not." But, you wouldn't have to guess about John the Baptist. John the Baptist was Spirit-filled. And, you read in the Gospel of John, chapter 10, where the Bible speaks of John the Baptist, and the Bible says, "*And John did no miracle*" (John 10:41). Jesus said there was not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28). He did no miracles.

But then, it says the people came to follow Jesus, and they said of John the Baptist, "All things that John said about Jesus are true"—and the Bible says—"*and many believed on him*" (John 10:41–42). I had rather have the gift that John the Baptist had than to do miracles. I mean that. John the Baptist—Jesus said, "Not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist" (Matthew 11:11; Luke 7:28). And, the Bible says clearly and plainly, "*John did no miracle*" (John 10:41). But, multitudes believed on Jesus because of the ministry of John the Baptist, who said, "*Behold the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world*" (John 1:29).

A college student asked his pastor, "Do you believe there's life on other planets?" The pastor said, "No, I don't." He said, "You mean, in all of those millions, and billions, and gazillions of stars out there, and planets, and earthly bodies, and all of that—all of that—you don't believe there's life out there?" Pastor said, "No, I really don't." He said, "Well, then why did God go to all that trouble to make that stuff?" The pastor said, "What trouble?" *Poof*—and it's so. He spoke and universes came from His fingertips. I'm speaking anthroposophically—you like that word?—as if God had fingers. He spoke and it's so—just so. He made it all with a word. The only time God had trouble was bloody Calvary. I'm telling you, friend, to heal a child is no difficulty to God, if that's what God wishes to do, but to save a soul takes Calvary—to save a soul takes Calvary. In order to make the world, and the universes, and the stellar space, all He had to do was speak and it was so. But, to save my soul, He died in agony and blood. Now friend, that is power—that is the power of God. The Jews wanted to see power. That's power. And, wisdom—the Greeks wanted wisdom.

Let me tell you the wisdom that's in the cross: there is so much wisdom in the cross that in the cross you can know the heart and mind of God in no other way. Isn't that what people want to know—the heart, the mind, of God? You see, the preaching of the cross tells us the heart, the mind, of God. And, here's the wisdom—that even a child can understand it. Is that not wisdom—that the child can know things? Little children can understand and experience the wisdom and power of God through the cross of

Jesus Christ. What wisdom!—that God has devised a plan that the simplest of people can understand it. And, through the cross—through the cross, through the cross—we can understand the mysteries of life and death. The cross is God’s supreme word of revelation. I’ll say, “Got it?” You say, “Got it.” Got it? Okay.

II. The Cross Is God’s Supreme Word of Condemnation

Now, not only that, but the cross—here’s the second point—the cross not only is God’s supreme word of revelation, but the cross is God’s supreme word of condemnation. Look, if you will, in verse 18: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

A. It Speaks of the Power of Sin

You see, the cross tells us something of the power of sin. You see, what crucified the Lord Jesus Christ? Sin. It was sin that murdered Jesus. Jesus took my sin and your sin upon Himself and carried that sin to the cross. And, even Jesus Christ, the Son of God, could not combat sin and its awful power apart from the cross. It’s the cross that tells us of the power of sin. What sin did to Jesus Christ, my substitute, in His humanity, is an illustration of what sin will do to you. The cross is God’s supreme word of condemnation. It speaks of the power of sin.

B. It Speaks of the Presence of Sin

It speaks of the presence of sin. We live in a generation that doesn’t like to believe in sin. We call it a mistake, an error, social maladjustment, glandular function, but it is sin. We want to excuse it, or deny it, or minimize it; but the cross strips away all veneer. When you see Jesus Christ on the cross as our substitute, it reveals God’s holy horror of sin. You see, the power of sin—the presence of sin—is spoken of...

C. It Speaks of the Penalty of Sin

...and the penalty of sin. You write across the bruised and broken body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ these words: *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23); *“the soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die”* (Ezekiel 18:4).

Who crucified Jesus—not *what*, but *who*? He died because of sin—our sin and your sin. But, who crucified Him? You say, “Well, the Jews.” Well, there were Gentiles present. “Well,” you say, “The Roman government.” But, there were others who were there. You say, “Well, we all crucified Jesus. Our sins were the nails and our hard hearts were the hammers that drove those nails.” But, at the bottom line—listen to me—God the Father crucified the Son. “Oh, no, Pastor. No, no, no, no, no, no, no.” No, you don’t understand. Wicked human hands did it, and those who did it were culpable and

guilty. But, behind it all was the plan of God. God allowed it, God prophesied it, God planned it so that we might be saved. And, Jesus became my substitute. And, when He became my substitute and took my sin, God had to treat Jesus as God would treat me if my sin were still on me.

Now, listen to Isaiah 53, verse 10: *“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him”*—to bruise who? Jesus—*“he”*—the Lord—*“hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin”* (Isaiah 53:10). And then, listen to Romans chapter 8, verse 32: *“He that spared not his own Son, but [offered] him up [freely] for us all”* (Romans 8:32). God the Father bruised the Lord Jesus. God the Father offered Him up for us all. You see, listen—if God did not spare the Lord Jesus Christ when He became my substitute, what on God’s green earth makes you think that God is going to spare you if you refuse the substitute? It is the cross—the cross—that speaks of the power of sin. It is the cross that speaks of the presence of sin. It is the cross that speaks of the penalty of sin. The cross is God’s supreme word of revelation; it is God’s supreme word of condemnation.

III. The Cross Is God’s Supreme Word of Justification

Thirdly, the cross is God’s supreme word of justification. Now, look, if you will here, in this passage of scripture. The Bible says here that—in verse 23: *“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). Look in verse 18: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them [which] perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

On the cross, Jesus became my substitute. He took my sins and yours. He took my shame and yours. He took my suffering and yours. And, He took my separation and yours, and He bare it in His body as a substitution. Now, the world does not understand this; the world rejects it. The world does not like a blood sacrifice. Look in verse 23: *“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness”* (1 Corinthians 1:23). But friend, the world believes in education rather than regeneration. The world believes in culture rather than Calvary. The world likes to put people in different categories as to good sinners and bad sinners, and vicious sinners and respectful sinners.

I preached this morning on Nicodemus. Nicodemus is in John chapter 3. In John chapter 4 is the adulterous woman at the well. Both needed to be saved. I said often from this pulpit, *“There’s no one so good they need not be saved and no one so bad they cannot be saved.”* And, it doesn’t matter who you are. The lost man cannot be cultured and refined until he can pass inspection at the judgment bar of God. We taught you this

morning, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh”* (John 3:6). And, there’s not enough goodness in all six billion people on the face of this earth to save one sinner. *“The cross”—“the preaching of the cross is to them [which] perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). Apart from a blood sacrifice, there is no remission. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 9:22: *“without shedding of blood is no remission.”*

IV. The Cross Is God’s Supreme Word of Sanctification

Now finally, not only is the cross God’s supreme word of revelation, not only is the cross God’s supreme word of condemnation, not only is the cross God’s supreme word of regeneration, but the cross is God’s supreme word of sanctification. Look again in verse 18: *“For the preaching of cross is to them [which] perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). Now, look carefully at the phrase *“which are saved”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). Do you see it—verse 18? It literally says “which are being saved.” It’s continuous action.

Salvation comes in three tenses. I have been saved; I’m being saved, and I will be saved. I have been saved from the penalty of sin. I am being saved from the power of sin. I will be saved from the very presence of sin. Now, what he’s talking about here is the process of salvation. You see, God began something in me. Philippians 1:6: Paul said, *“Being confident of this very thing, [which] he [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* You see, I am being saved. God has saved me today. He saved me yesterday. He saved me the day before that. **He saved me yesterday when I got in the flesh. Somebody irritated me, and I wanted to irritate him; but God said to me, “You don’t have to do that, Adrian. You don’t have to obey your flesh.” And, I said, “Indeed, I don’t, Lord. Lord Jesus, love that person through me.” And, He did. I was delivered; I was saved. It had nothing to do with whether I was going to Heaven or Hell. That’s already settled. But, you see, the cross is God’s power to save me day by day.** I need to be saved daily from myself, from sin, and from Satan. And so, the same thing is true about those of us who have come to Jesus Christ. We have been saved from the penalty of sin; we’re not going to Hell, but we are being saved by the cross—and I’ll tell you how that works in a moment—from the very power of sin. And, the same thing is true about those that are perishing. The people who are without Jesus Christ—they may say, “Well, it’s not so bad. You mean I’m perishing? This is all right. I’m having a good time.”

I clipped this from the paper just recently. It says, “Welcome to Hef’s World”—H-E-F-S, Hugh Hefner. Now, Hugh Hefner is celebrating 50 years of the Playboy Empire, and here’s what he says: “We all”—this article in the *Los Angeles Times* says—“We all live

in Hef's world"—that is, in a Playboy world, according to the *LA Times* writer, David Shaw...commemorating the 50th anniversary of Playboy, admitted that he was a collector of the magazine that once and once had every issue ever published. He has even had the temerity to suggest that he likes the magazines because of the articles. Shaw's interview with Playboy founder Hugh Hefner was particularly disheartening, but true—"Hef, who just passed his 77th birthday"—this is Hugh Hefner, the founder of the Playboy Empire—"announced with no little glee, 'We all now live'—'we all now live'—'in a Playboy world. When George Will was here the other day interviewing me, he said, 'You won'" —that is, Hugh Hefner—"Fifty years ago, you were going to lead in a sexual revolution." George Will, now, the noted columnist, said to Hugh Hefner, "You won." Now, Hugh Hefner says, "And he's right. It's nice to have gone through the battles with all those puritans, all those forces of regression and hypocrisy, and to live long enough to see the victory parade."

"I'm so glad," he is saying—Hugh Hefner is saying—"I'm so glad I've seen all of this filth, I've seen all of this perversion, all of this adultery, all of this." He said, "I'm so glad I've lived long enough to see the victory." And then, it says, "Shaw"—that is, the writer from the *Los Angeles Times*—"rejoices with Hef and lauds him for his victorious struggle against the pleasure police." A historical reminder—the pleasure police also lost in Rome, Athens, Corinth, Pompeii, Sodom, and Gomorrah. But, the God who demands sexual purity still reigns.

Now, here's the point: here's a man in his silk robe, in his Playboy mansion, and he's perishing. But, he doesn't think he's perishing. He thinks he's doing fine, and he's saying, "We won! We won! Look, we've brought about a sexual revolution in America. What Rogers preaches and these other preachers are preaching—that's foolishness! That's foolishness!" "*The preaching of the cross is to them [which are perishing] foolishness*" (1 Corinthians 1:18). I would hope that Hugh Hefner would repent and get saved. God loves him. But, it's very doubtful that he will because he's so hardened in his sins and his pride.

What is the point I'm making? I'm making this point, friend—that the cross—the word of the cross—is God's supreme word of revelation, God's supreme word of condemnation, God's supreme word of justification, God's supreme word of sanctification. When you come to the cross, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, not only does He forgive your past, but day by day He is saving you and making you more, and more, and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. But, if you're perishing, you are getting more, and more, and more like Satan until one day you will go to Hell and suffer there for eternity. People are being saved or in the process now of perishing.

Well, how does the cross—how does the cross—sanctify? Well, Jesus said, "*If any*

man will come after me, let him...take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24). Now, what does it mean to take up your cross? It doesn't mean to put a cross across your back and walk around with it. That's not what He's talking about at all. People say, "Well, my lumbago is my cross," or, "My wife is my cross," or, "My boss is my cross." That's not your cross. If you've got a bad boss, I'm sorry for you; but that's not your cross. Your cross is not something you say, "Well, I'm going to take it up. Now, where am I going with the cross? Well, I'm going on a revival crusade. I'm bearing my cross." No, no, no, no. When a person put a cross upon his back, where was he going? Going to die. When Jesus carried the cross, He carried the cross to Calvary. When Jesus said, *"Take up [your] cross, and follow me"* (Matthew 16:24), He means go to Calvary to die, to take death to yourself, to be crucified with Christ, to take up your cross. Your cross is not something that happens to you. You have a sickness or a problem? No. Listen, your cross is something you take up—you take it up. You're a volunteer. Jesus, when He was crucified, said, *"No man [takes my life] from me...I lay it down of myself"* (John 10:18).

Now, how does the cross sanctify us? When I say, "Willingly, Lord Jesus—Lord Jesus—I say 'no' to me and I say 'yes' to You. I choose the Calvary road"—when I do that—an incredible power begins to work in my life. *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ [that lives] in me"* (Galatians 2:20). I want to submit to you this Christmas season we need to thank God for the cradle, but never forget the cross.

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Now, Father God, I thank You that the preaching of the cross is so powerful. And Lord, I pray that You would help me as a believer in Christ to die to self, to die to pride, to die to my arrogance and my selfishness, that, Lord, You might live your life through me. For Lord, not only is the cross the way to death, but the cross is the way to great life. And, you've come, Lord, that ultimately we might have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10). In Jesus's holy name. Amen.

Now, we're going to sing an invitational hymn. I'm going to ask the ministers of our church to stand here at the head of each of these aisles. And tonight, if you're willing to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior—to say, "I want Jesus to have control of my life. I believe He paid my sin debt on the cross; and now, I receive Him as my justification, as my sanctification." You may not even understand those words, but if you want to be forgiven and have power in your life—you come to Jesus.

Now, you say, "Oh pastor, are you calling me to a cross? Are you calling me to die?" Yes and no. I'm calling you to die to the old way, but I'm calling you to abundant life

through the Lord Jesus Christ. And, if you want it; if you want Jesus, boy, girl, man or woman; if you want to know that you know that you're saved, Heaven-born and Heaven-bound, I want you to come forward tonight and let us take a Bible and guide you in this decision. And, I promise you, on the authority of the Word of God, that Jesus will save you immediately, He'll be with you continually, and He'll keep you ultimately, if you trust Him.

Others of you may need a church home. And, if you're saved, and love Jesus, and need a church home, I invite you to come forward, also, and say, "I want to place my membership here." Let's stand together as we sing.

The Power of God

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 15, 1990

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18

Sponsored by: Sponsor

*“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;
but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

Outline

Introduction

I. God Speaks Through the Cross

A. The Desire of the Foolish

B. The Declaration of the Father

C. The Discovery of the Faithful

II. God Saves Through the Cross

III. God Sanctifies Through the Cross

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles, please, and open to the book of 1 Corinthians chapter 1, and in a moment we're going to begin to read verse 18. First Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18. I suppose the greatest Baptist preacher who ever lived was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Somebody accused Charles Haddon Spurgeon about his preaching one day, however. They said, "Mr. Spurgeon, no matter what text you take, all of your sermons sound alike." He said, "I mean it to be that way." He said, "I take a text and then I make a beeline to the cross." I like that. "I take a text and then I make a beeline to the cross." Any preacher, any time, any place, anywhere that has not centered in the cross of Jesus Christ has missed the point. I want you to take God's Word and look, if you would, 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." And I want to talk to you today about "The Power of God," the cross of Jesus Christ. Now in Paul's day there was a reaction to the cross, and people called the cross of Jesus foolishness. And they died and went to hell. And so it is today. There are those today who think of the cross of Jesus Christ as foolishness. And to, to the world what we preach is foolishness. And a real Christian, somebody who loves the Lord Jesus who really and truly knows the Lord Jesus and who is not ashamed of the Lord Jesus and lives it out in

his daily life, is going to be looked upon by the wise acres of this world as a fool. And so, some Christians, not wanting to be thought foolish, have sometimes tried to water down the cross. We've tried to tone down the gospel and adapt it to the wisdom of this world. And we think everything would be better if the church would become a little more worldly and the world would become a little more churchy. But let me tell you something, dear friend. From Paul's day to this day, the world and the devil and human nature have never changed. And the cross today will be just as foolish if it is truly preached as it was in Paul's day. You see, listen to me. Everything that the world calls wisdom God calls foolishness, and what God calls wisdom the people of this world call foolishness. And so I want us to think today about the cross of Jesus Christ and, and the preaching of the cross. And there are several things I want you to see.

I. God Speaks Through the Cross

Primarily, I want you to see that, first of all, God speaks through the cross. Now verse 18 says the preaching of the cross. It doesn't say preaching about the cross. Not what I say about the cross. The cross is preaching a message today. There is the preaching of the cross. God speaks through the cross. Now God has spoken in all kinds of ways. God speaks through the Scriptures. Thank God for that. God speaks through the Spirit. Thank God for that. God speaks in nature. Thank God for that. God has spoken through history. Thank God for that. But the mightiest revelation of God is the cross of Jesus Christ. God speaks through the cross. And God has a message to you today and it is from the cross. Now let me give the background of this passage of Scripture. These people who lived at Corinth to whom Paul were preaching were made up primarily of Jews and Greeks.

A. The Desire of the Foolish

Now the Jews were the religious people and the Greeks were the intellectual people. So the Jews were looking for some sort of a sign. They wanted a messiah that would come in great power. But the Greeks, they had sort of deified intellectualism and sophistication and they were looking for a world leader who would be sort of a, a double Socrates. And so, notice, if you will, skip on down to verse 22: "For the Jews require a sign..." That is, the Jews were always saying to their religious leaders, "If you are truly a man of God, or if you portray yourself as the messiah, you're going to have to prove it to us. You're going to have to give us a sign." And by a sign they meant, "You're going to have to work some great, mighty miracle." Even after Jesus fed the 5,000, they said to Him, "What other sign are you going to do? What sign are you going to do now?" And Jesus rebuked them because they were always looking for signs. Put these Scriptures down – John 4:48: "Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Or Luke 11:29: "And when the people were gathered thick together, he

began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign..." Or in Matthew **12:39**: "And Jesus answered and said unto them, An evil and an adulterous generation seeketh after a sign..." So, ah, there were those who were saying, "Hey, if You'll just perform some miracle, if You'll just do some publicity stunt, then maybe we would believe in You, Jesus." And it would be true today. You know, if I wanted to just run this auditorium over, if I had the power to perform miracles; that is, to bring crippled people down here and, and, ah, heal them, or to, ah, ah, change water into wine, or, ah, to do any particular thing, just to do any kind of a miracle, ah, ah, once the news got out, folks, you wouldn't be able to put people in here with a shoe horn - once the news got out that miracles were happening down here. Why, if they could just see some sign. Everybody. You know, every now and then somebody says, "Pastor, but wouldn't that be a wonderful thing? Wouldn't that be such a, a great, wonderful thing to reach people for Jesus if we could just do some signs and some miracles?" Well, fr, friend, I'm just like you. I, I'd get excited about a miracle myself. I'd like to see a few. I mean, ah, that, that would be exciting. But don't get pulled down that primrose path. Jesus performed miracles. They were not publicity stunts. Many times when Jesus would perform a miracle, He'd say, "Don't tell anybody about it. I, I know the kind of crowd that follows Me because of the miracles I do." Ah, the Bible says that many, ah, believed on Him when He changed water into wine. But the Bible says Jesus did not commit Himself to them, for He knew man and needed not that any should testify what was in man. Oh, the miracle mongers in this day are just like the miracle mongers in that day. And, and yet, even after Jesus had fed the 5,000, when He started talking to those people about spiritual reality, they left Him like rats leave a sinking ship. And He had to turn to His disciples and say, "Will you also go away?" Now Jesus said there's something evil in our heart that's always wanting God to prove Himself. "Give us a sign. Show us a sign." The Jews seek after a sign. But Jesus said, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks a sign." So, in Corinth there were those who were seeking a sign. And go on back to verse 22: "The Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom." Now the Greeks, oh my dear friend, how sophisticated the Greeks were. If you ever go to Athens, of course, you'll go to the Acropolis and, ah, you'll see the Parthenon. Friend, that exquisitely beautiful, incredibly magnificent temple that puts our modern architects, many of them, to shame at what they do, that thing was an antiquity in the time of Christ. What a civilization in the Golden Age of Pericles these Greeks had. And, oh, they thought how wonderful to take their minds and be able to unpick all of the divine mysteries. They had deified intellectualism. So you have the same two categories of people way back yonder that you have today. First of all, there are those miracle mongers who want some kind of a miracle, some kind of a sign. "Keep on proving yourself to me, God." And there are the other super sophisticates who worship at the

shrine of their own intellect, and they say, “Now give us some intellectual dissertation. Give us some wisdom. Give us a pastor who is a philosopher who can quote Dr. Sounding Brass and Professor Tinkling Cymbal. And, and just, just give us all of these wonderful intellectual niceties.” Paul faced that when he came to Corinth. He knew there were those who were wanting him to do miracles and there, he knew there were those who wanted him to spout philosophy. The Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom.

B. The Declaration of the Father

Now what did Paul do in the face of that? Well, all the apostle Paul did when he saw the desire of the foolish, he gave the declaration of the Father. Look in verse 23: “But, but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block...” And the word *stumbling block* there, *scandalon*, actually means a scandal. It was scandalous. They didn’t want a Messiah who was crucified. They wanted a Messiah who would throw off the yoke of Rome. They wanted a mighty Messiah. It was a scandal to them. Look. “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a scandal and unto the Greeks foolishness.” Why? Paul said, “I’m not preaching Christ the conqueror. I’m not preaching Christ the philosopher. I am preaching Christ the crucified.” The Jews said, “What power is there in dying?” The Greek said, “What wisdom is there in that? Why, that’s, that’s foolish.” The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.

C. The Discovery of the Faithful

But, you see the desire of the foolish for signs and philosophy. You see the declaration of the Father, Christ crucified. Now I want you to see the discovery of the faithful. Look in verse 24: “But unto them which are called (that means called to salvation), both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.” Paul was reading their mind. Paul knew what they wanted. Paul said, “I know some of you want a miracle.” And he said, “I know others of you are looking for wisdom.” Ah, he said, “I’m going to give it to you. You may not understand where it is, but I am going to preach the power and the wisdom of God, and it is this: Christ crucified. Christ crucified.” In the cross of Jesus Christ, my dear friend, you will see a mighty demonstration of both the power and the wisdom of Almighty God. What is the power of the cross? I’ll tell you what the power of the cross is. It saves. It saves. That was a good place for an amen, folks. Let me say it again. The power of the cross is that it saves. Now let’s go back. Somebody says, “Well, Brother Rogers, wouldn’t it be wonderful if you could heal little crippled children?” Yes, that would be fine. “Wouldn’t it be wonderful if you could turn, ah, ah, stones into bread?” Yes, that would be fine. Ha, ha, ha. But, oh my dear friend, all of those things are transitory and temporary. Let me tell you, when God made you, God breathed into your nes, nostrils the breath of life. You became a living soul. You will be in existence

somewhere when the sun, the moon, and the stars have grown cold. The most important thing is the salvation of your soul, not the feeding of your body, not the healing of your body, but the salvation of your soul. Many of you don't believe that. Many of you think, *Man, I want it all now*. But, friend, listen. The greatest miracle is not the creation of the world. God created worlds with a word. He spoke and it stood fast! The greatest miracle is the salvation of a soul. It's the salvation of a soul. I hope you believe that. A greater miracle than changing water into wine is the salvation of a soul. I heard of some men in a barber shop one day who were arguing about whether or not Jesus turned the water into wine. One man, who was a, a saved from alcoholism, was sitting there getting his hair cut. He listened to them banner back and forth. He said, "You fellows arguing about whether Jesus can turn water into wine." He said, "You come to my house and I'll show you where He turned whiskey into furniture." My dear friend, when, when Jesus comes into a life and He changes that life, that is a miracle. That is the power of God. That's what he's saying. Now look at it here. Ah, he says here, "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are saved, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Now, my dear friend, there is incredible wisdom in the cross. What is the wisdom of the cross? Well, first of all, let me ask you one question. If this generation is so wise, why are we in the mess that we're in? I mean, if, if, if, if, if the Pentagon and the scientists and the, and the Congress and, and, ah, the city government, if, if they've got all the answers, why are we in such a mess? No, dear friend. Listen. The wisdom is in the cross of Jesus Christ. And what is the, what do you know through the cross? What does the cross tell you? My dear friend, in the cross you see the heart of God. In the cross you see the answer to the great issues of life and death. And the incredible wisdom of the cross is that even a little child can understand it. Isn't that beautiful? I mean, friend, you might be 140 in your IQ and miss it and a little child can understand it, for the Bible says, "God has made foolish the wisdom of the wise by the cross." "God hath hidden these things from the wise and the prudent and He showed them unto babes." Now isn't that wisdom, that a human being can know the heart of God, that a human being can know the great issues of life and death, and even a little child can know it?

II. God Saves Through the Cross

Now, you see, that's what the cross does. That is, dear friend, the, the, ah, God speaks through the cross. Secondly, not only does God speak through the cross, but because God speaks through the cross, God also saves through the cross. Look again at verse 18: "For the preaching of the cross (that is, the speaking or what God says through the cross) is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of

God.” God saves through the cross. There’s no other way to be saved. If there’d been some other way to be saved, God would have taken it. You know, if people could be saved by good works, by church membership, by baptism, by the Ten Commandments, pray tell why did God allow His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on that cross? Listen. If there were some other way and God didn’t take it, and God let His darling Son die in agony and blood upon that cross, and yet there had been some other way that men could have been saved, then I think God is a dirty bully; that God let His Son die on the cross to save us when there was another way. Friend, there is no other way. Had there been another way, God would have taken it. The Bible says, “Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” The apostle Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes.” That means that God is powerless apart from the cross to save you or me or anybody else. Don’t tell me what God could do if He wanted to do. Dear friend, the very nature of God so hates sin, His holy righteousness burns against sin, that sin must be punished. Now I want to ask you a question. A lot of theologians get upset when I say it this way, but I want to say it this way: Who crucified Jesus? You say, “Well, the Jews crucified Jesus.” I want to remind you, my dear friend, that most of the early disciples were Jews. You say, “Well, the Romans crucified Jesus.” Well, they were only following out Pilate’s order. You say, “Well, we crucified Jesus because He died for our sins.” When you get to the bottom line, you want me to tell you who crucified Jesus? Are you ready? God the Father crucified Him. God the Father crucified Jesus. The Bible tells us in Romans 8:32 that God spared not His own Son. And the Bible tells us in Isaiah 53, concerning God the Father and His Son, the Lord Jesus, it says, “Jehovah hath put Him to grief.” God the Father bruised His own Son. You say, “I don’t understand that. Why would God the Father pick on His own Son?” He wasn’t picking on His own Son. He was in His own Son. God was in Christ. But let me tell you something, friend. God is a righteous and a holy God. And God says that sin absolutely must be punished. And so, when Jesus Christ willingly, vio, voluntarily, vicariously took my sin and your sin upon Himself and carried that sin to the cross, “Him who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us...” And Jesus, bearing our sin, the iniquity of us all was laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. And when Jesus became sin, God the Father did not spare Him. God the Father poured out His wrath upon His own Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. And not only was Jesus forsaken of the Father, but He endured the fury of the Father. The Father loathes the sin that was on the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says of God the Father that He was of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Alone Jesus died. Alone Jesus took my sin. Jesus took my shame. Jesus took my sorrow. Jesus took my suffering. Jesus endured the wrath of God the Father on the cross! Now listen, those of you who think you’re going to get into heaven without being born again. If God didn’t spare Jesus when sin was on

Jesus, what makes you think God is going to spare you when sin is on you? My friend, your sin will be pardoned in Christ or it will be punished in hell, but God will not overlook your sin. If God were to let one-half of one sin go unpunished, God would topple from His throne of holiness. He would no longer be a holy God. Now, my dear friend, God speaks through the cross and God saves through the cross. There's no other way. Now the world laughs at this. There are those out there who are listening to me. They will call me narrow-minded. They believe that a man can be educated, a man can be cultured. They believe that a man somehow can be made right without the cross of Jesus Christ. But I'm telling you, my friend, if there were some other way, God would have taken it. Years ago, I read a story about a preacher. He was one of these liberals. He didn't believe all of this book. He'd heard it when he was a boy, but he went off to school and got educated. And he was a nice man. He tried to do the best he could. He was a kind, compassionate man. He was in his study one day and there's was a knock at the door. And there was a little girl there, a little street urchin. He invited her in. He said, "Young lady, what can I do for you?" She said, "I need your help." He said, "All right. How can I help you, young lady?" She said, "I want you to come and, and help get mother in." Well, he looked at her and figured her mother probably was an alcoholic out on the street somewhere and maybe in some gutter somewhere. And he said, "Well, where is your mother so we can help get her in?" "Well," she said, "my mother's in the hospital." "Well," he said, "I don't understand. What do you mean, help get your mother in?" "Oh," she said, "my mother is dying, and she sent me to find a preacher to help get her into heaven. And they told me you were a preacher, and I want you to help get my mother in." He was a kind man, so he thought he would go and give this dying woman comfort. He got his hat and coat and went with that little girl to the hospital. And there was that woman in her emaciated body. She'd lived a vile life of sin and debauchery, was a woman of the streets. Now she was dying with a load of guilt upon her. She looked up into the face of that preacher and said, ah, "Sir, I've not lived as I ought to live. I've lived a life of sin and wretchedness. And now I am dying, and the doctors say there's no way that I can live. And I'm not ready to meet God. Can you tell me how I can be ready to meet God?" And that liberal preacher who didn't believe in the shed blood and the cross of Jesus Christ began to talk to her. He told her nice things about the Sermon on the Mount. He talked to her about the love of God. He talked to her about righteousness and purity and all of that. But she looked up in his face and said, ah, "Sir, you don't understand. All that you've said may be well and good and that may be fine for people who can live like you can live and who have an opportunity. But I have not lived that way, and I don't have a chance to live that way, and I am dying. Don't you have a message for me?" And do you know what? It dawned him he had no message for her. He didn't have anything to tell her. And then he remembered the story that his mother

had told him when he was a little boy of the Son of God who took our sins upon Himself and carried those sins to the cross. And there in agony and blood stretched out and died and paid the sin debt. And he told her the story of Christ and His love. And that woman said, “That’s the story. That’s the message I need.” She prayed and asked Jesus Christ to come into her heart and was gloriously saved. That preacher later on told that story, and that’s how we know it. And as he was speaking to a great congregation, he said, “Ladies and gentlemen, I want you to know that day that woman got in and this preacher came in, too. This preacher came in, too.” Oh, my friend, there’s only one way. *I must needs go home by the way of the cross, there’s no other way but this; I shall n’er catch sight of the gates of light if the way of the cross I miss.*

III. God Sanctifies Through the Cross

Listen to me, friend. God speaks through the cross. The wisdom of God and the power of God is the cross. God saves through the cross. One last thing I want to say. Not only does God speak through the cross, and not only does God save through the cross, but, my friend, God sanctifies through the cross. Now I lost about one-third of you when I said that, because about one-third don’t even know what sanctification is. But look how Paul begins this chapter. 1 Corinthians 1:2: “Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them which are sanctified in Christ Jesus...” Do you see that, chapter 1:2? And then look, if you would, in, ah, chapter 1:30: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification...” Now God sanctifies through the God. What does the word *sanctify* mean? Well, it means...it’s God process where He makes us less of what we are by nature and more like He is by the, by the, by our second birth. That’s called sanctification. Is, it is, it is God setting us apart and then progressively making us more and more like Him. Now listen. Go back to 1 Corinthians 1:18 and look at it. It says, “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.” Now look at the word *saved*. Do you see it? “...unto us which are saved (verse 18). Do you know what it literally says? Do you know what a literal translation of that is? A literal translation is “...to those who are being saved it is the power of God.” You say, “Adrian, are you saved?” Well, I’m being saved. That’s literally what it says. You’re being saved. You say, “I don’t understand. Either you’re saved or lost.” Well, that’s true, but now listen. Salvation is in three tenses. Past tense – I have been saved; present tense – I’m being saved; future tense – I shall be saved. I have been saved from the penalty of sin. I am being saved from the power of sin. One day I’ll be saved from the presence of sin. Now all of those tenses are in salvation. And in this, in this verse of Scripture it’s in the present tense – “...to those who are being saved...” Now I want to tell you, friend, that gets me very excited, because, you know, I’d be very disappointed if I thought this is all

there is, what I have right now. I mean, if I thought that God is finished with me, folks. You say, "Adrian, you may be saved, but you don't look very saved." Well, you don't look so hot either. Let me tell you something. Listen. Listen, friend. God is not finished with me nor you. We are being saved. Philippians 1:6: "...he who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." God will finish what He started. God not only has saved us – yes, our sins are forgiven – but He is saving us, and that being saved is the matter of sanctification. The same thing is true about being lost. You know, when it says "...the preaching of the cross is to them which perish foolishness," look at the word *perish*. Do you see it, verse 18? What it literally says is, "...the preaching of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness." You see, the unsaved people out here in this congregation today, you know what they're doing? They are perishing right now. Now just like I may not look completely saved, they may not look completely lost. I mean, I can't tell who's saved or lost by looking at you. I'm probably looking at some lost people. You're sitting there perishing, but you don't show it. A man went to the doctor. The doctor said, "You have an incurable disease. You are going to die in a matter of months." That man came back to his friend and said, "It's the strangest thing. I look all right and I feel good, and yet I am dying." You see, friend, sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death. You may be sitting here today with a big smile on your face just as lost as a goose. And you're saying, "Well, I feel all right." Friend, you're perishing. You're perishing. If you are not saved, you are perishing. But if you have found Jesus Christ, God is working in you and you're being saved. Now I'm like that old cowboy who said, "I ain't what I ought to be, and I ain't what I'm going to be, but thank God, I ain't what I was." And, my dear friend, God is working in our hearts and in our lives. We are being saved.

Conclusion

Now how does the cross speak to us. The cross saves us. And how does the cross sanctify us? Well, here's the way the cross sanctifies us. Here's the way it is. If you really want the power of God in your life – now all of us, well, let me just back up and say this: All of us believe in the miracle of salvation, I trust; that when we got saved, God dealt with our, our sins. That was the past miracle. One day at the rapture He's going to make us like Jesus. That's the future miracle. But, friend, what about the middle miracle? I mean, what about right now? Did you know that my life today and your life today ought to be a miracle? How can my life be a miracle today? It is the same cross that gives me the wisdom and the power to live today. How many of you have thought, *Man, if I just knew God's will for my life, my problems would be over*, let me see your hand. Well, don't lift your hand. But most of us. *Oh, if I just knew what God wanted me to do*. Friend, your power, your, your problem wouldn't be over if you knew

what God wanted you to do. You've got another problem – how to do it, how to do it. I mean, it's not just to know the will of God. You see, listen. The cross of Jesus Christ is the wisdom and the power of God. The wisdom – God speaks to you and God empowers you through the cross. Well, how does He do it? Galatians 2:20: "I am crucified with Christ..." When Jesus died, He died for you. Now not only do you need to come to the cross, but you need to get on it, and you need to say, "I'm finished with Adrian and I'm going to let my life die with Jesus." And, and I've done this so many times. I've said, "Lord, I've not, I'm not my own. Lord, I yield my life to You. I take up my cross." To take up my cross doesn't mean to bear some burden. It means to die, to die to Adrian and be alive to God. And, friend, when you do that, God begins to pour into you incredible wisdom and incredible power. That's the cross of Jesus Christ. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Father God, I pray today that there will be those who will receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior in this service today, amen.

Fool, Wise, or Otherwise

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 22, 1984

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18–25

*“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;
but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

Outline

Introduction

- I. God Speaks Through the Cross
- II. God Saves Through the Cross
- III. God Sanctifies by the Cross

Conclusion

Introduction

I want to speak to you on this subject: Fool, Wise, or Otherwise. First Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God, for it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent, where is the wise, where is the scribe, where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world, for after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God. It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block 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. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

Now, when you live for the Lord Jesus Christ, you believe the gospel, you’re going to be looked upon as a fool by this world. As a matter of fact, anybody who really believes this Bible, who lets go of the world with both hands and takes hold of Jesus Christ with both hands is going to be adjudicated a fool by this world, and for that reason some have tried to tone down the gospel a little bit, uh, because they don’t want to seem so foolish and they’ve tried to accommodate the gospel to this world, but dear friend, you can never do it. The gospel is so radically different, it starts at a different source, it follows a different course, it ends at a different conclusion, and so we don’t need to

make it compatible with this world. Just make up your mind that if you live for the Lord Jesus Christ you are going to be thought a fool by the people of this world. What God calls wisdom the world calls foolishness and what the world calls wisdom God calls foolishness. East is east and west is west, and ne'er the twain shall meet.

Now, the hallmark, the measuring rod, the standard by which we can see whether the person is a fool, wise or otherwise is to see what his reaction is to the Gospel, now, uh, which side of the cross you're on. If we believe the cross, accept the cross, embrace the cross, believe the cross, well the world's going to call us fools. We believe that without the cross they indeed are going to perish in their foolishness. How are we going to know whether a person is a true fool or not? The measure of a fool is the cross. One man said to his wife, I was a fool when I married you. She said yes, but I didn't notice it then.

Now, how are we going to know? How are we going to be able to notice? How are we going to be able to tell who is a fool and who is not a fool? Well, the preaching of the gospel, the preaching of the cross is to them which perish foolishness.

Now, the word *preaching* here, the preaching of the cross literally means the word of the cross, what the cross says to us, not what we say about the cross, but what the cross says to us. So I want us to pay attention to what I want to call today the word of the cross, and I want you to see three things as we look at our scripture that I read to you today, the thing about fools, wise or otherwise.

I. God Speaks Through the Cross

And the first thing I want you to see concerning the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ—which is the measurement of a man's foolishness or the measurement of man's wisdom according to how he relates to the cross—the very first thing is this. I want you to see that God speaks through the cross. God speaks through the cross. Now, God has revealed Himself and shown Himself in many ways, but you will never know the heart and mind of God until you understand the cross. God speaks through the cross.

Now, look if you will in verse 22. People have always been seeking after God and wanting to know what God was like and who the true Messiah is and all of this, and so verse 22 explains it. "For the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom. Now, Paul is writing to the people at Corinth and at Corinth there was a great contingent of Jews and Greeks that lived there in Corinth and the Jews, they had a particular idea of what God ought to be like and how the Messiah ought to reveal Himself, and so they sought after a sign. That is, the word sign means a miracle of great power. They were always asking the Lord Jesus to give them a sign. They were seeking for some great miracle because they had, they had confidence in a Messiah who would come, who would be strong and powerful and political, and He would just blow away His enemies

and He would set up the kingdom of, of God upon earth, and the, and the Jews would reign supreme and so forth. And so they were waiting for this kind of a Messiah. They did not like the idea of a meek and mild and lowly Messiah like the Lord Jesus Christ was.

Now, Jesus rebuked them for seeking a sign. Jot these three scriptures down in your margin by verse twenty two. John 4, verse 48: “Then said Jesus unto them, except ye signs and wonders ye will not believe.” Jesus had diagnosed them well; they were a group of people looking for signs and wonders. And then look in Luke 11 and verse 29: “And when the people were gathered thick together he began to say this is an evil generation, they seek a sign.” And by the way, when you ask God to prove Himself to you, when you ask God to perform a miracle that you might understand Him, that you might believe in Him, you might think that is good, dear friend, but God called it evil. “This is an evil generation, ye seek a sign.” And then He said, “and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet.” What was the sign of Jonas? Well, “as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, even the Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.” That is, the sign of Jonah is what? The resurrection.

Alright, and then again in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 39: “And He answered and said unto them, an evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign and there shall no be sign be given it,” again he says, “but the sign of the prophet Jonah.” Now, evil people seek after a sign and I don’t believe that, there’s probably not anybody in this building who has not at one time or another ask God to prove himself by doing some miracle. Isn’t that right? Oh, God if you’re real, do this. God if you’re real, do that. Isn’t that right? I mean, that’s human nature. Don’t make me feel all alone, folks; I’ve done it. I mean, nod your head, my goodness. Now we, we’ve all done that. We’ve said, “Now God, you show yourself to me. Work a sign. Prove yourself to me.” Now, that’s what the Jews were; the Jews were looking for a God who would demonstrate Himself that way with power.

Now, the Greeks were not that way. The Greeks were a little more sophisticated. The Greeks were a little more intellectual. The Greeks sought after wisdom. Now, what the Greeks were looking for was, uh, something that they could do intellectual gymnastics with. The Messiah that the Greeks were looking for would be sort of a, of a double Socrates. He would be some grand intellect who would help them to unpick all of the divine mysteries of life. That’s what they were looking for. And so, they thought, “Well, if God speaks...” The Jews said, “If God speaks, He’s going to speak through miracles.” And, uh, the, the Greeks said, “If God speaks, He’s going to speak through intellectualism and philosophy,” and they sought after wisdom. But here’s what God did. Here’s what, it’s as almost as though the apostle Paul could read their mind, and look if

you will in verse twenty three. He says, “But,” [that is in contradiction and contradistinction to verse twenty two] “but we preach Christ crucified,” not Just Christ, but Christ crucified. It would have been one thing if he’d have preached Christ, but my goodness to preach “Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block and unto the Greek foolishness.” Now, the word stumbling block here means scandal. Huh, they were scandalized! Why you mean we’re looking for a mighty miracle working, powerful Messiah and you’re preaching one who dies upon the cross. Why, that’s scandalous. That’s a stumbling block. We could never, ever except a Messiah like that. What power is there in dying upon a cross? And, and the Greeks said, “Why, not only is it a stumbling block, it’s absolutely ludicrous. It’s foolish, that, that here’s a Messiah. You mean God died upon a cross? A, a man who is the Son of God dying, writhing upon a cross? Do you mean to tell us that’s Gods answer to this world? That’s the way God speaks to this world? Absolutely absurdity; that is foolishness.” the Greek said.

But now I want you to go on to those who have been saved; notice what happens in verse 24. “But unto them which are called” [that is, called by God, called out of this world] “both Jews and Greeks, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God. Now, how is “Christ crucified” the power of God and the wisdom of God? Remember now the Jews wanted power and the Greeks wanted wisdom. Paul says, “OK, you want wisdom? You want power? I’ll tell you where power is. I’ll tell you where wisdom is. It is in Christ crucified.” Well, how is Christ crucified the power of God? Friend, do you know that, that, uh, the greatest demonstration of power is not when God made these, these worlds and universes and everything the greatest demonstration of power – are you listening? – is the salvation of the soul. Now, you may not believe that. You may say, “Oh, that’s preacher talk.” I tell you, ladies and gentleman, the greatest power on earth is the power that can save a soul, a poor lost sinner. That’s the reason the apostle Paul said, “I’m not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is” what? The power of God unto salvation, the power of God unto salvation. Oh what mighty working miracle power. When God made these worlds, He made them, He created worlds with a word. That’s all, He just spoke. But in order to save a soul He had to hang His darling Son upon a tree, upon a cross. Dear friend, I tell you there is no greater power than the power that can transform a life.

Some men were in a barber shop arguing about the miracles of the Bible, and one man said, “I don’t believe that miracle about the turning of water into wine.” Another man said, “I can show you a bigger miracle than that. You come to my house, I’ll show you where he turned whiskey into furniture.” Now, what he meant by that is, he had been saved; he’d been born again, and God had transformed him.

And not only you see, is, is the cross the power of God, but the cross is also the wisdom of God. You see, through the cross, you’re going to know the heart of God.

Through the cross, you're going to know the mind of God. Through the cross, God is revealed. How could we know that He's a God of infinite love that Clyde sang about, and infinite mercy, and a God of grace, and a God who cares? How could we know? Friend, don't, we'll never have to doubt the love of God, the mind of God again when we see the cross. Oh, how God displays His mighty wisdom. And listen, he says, "not the wisdom of this world." Had the princes of this world known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. And the Bible says, "and God by wisdom saw to it that the world by wisdom knew not God." What does that mean? It means that you guys who are the high intellectual uppity-ups, you, ah, intellectual top-waters, you PhDs and the rest of you, you don't have a head start; you don't have any head start. The world by wisdom knows not God. In the wisdom of God a little child can know God. Now, that's real wisdom, a wisdom that a child can know, wisdom that anybody can know. The common person can know it; it is revealed in the cross.

Now, what I'm trying to say to you – listen to me dear friend – God speaks through the cross. You will never understand the heart, the mind, the life of God, the power of God, or the wisdom of God until you understand the cross. "We preach Christ crucified to the Jews, a stumbling block, to the Greeks foolishness, but to those of us who are saved, Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God." Mighty power in the salvation of a soul! Mighty wisdom is revealed in the cross! Hallelujah for that.

II. God Saves Through the Cross

But now listen. Not only does God, not only does God speak through the cross, but God also saves through the cross. Now, look again, look again. First Corinthians chapter one, verse 18: "For the preaching of the cross is to them which perish foolishness but unto us who are saved it is the power of God," to those of us who are saved, God saves through the cross.

Now, the world does not like the idea of salvation through the cross. The world doesn't mind organ music. The world doesn't mind stained glassed windows. The world doesn't mind good works. The world doesn't mind platitudes and moral living, but the world resents the gospel of a bloody cross. Did you know that? Did you know that when you preach that the cross is God's way of salvation that is an offense, that is a scandal to some people? Again, I want to read to you what the Bible says in verse 21. "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe, for the Jews require a sign and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness." It's still the same way today. Friend, I want to you something. I've been preaching long enough to know this is not mere rhetoric. The world laughs at the idea of salvation by the blood. And the world is incensed by the idea

of the Gospel of no other name. They, they don't like for me to stand in the pulpit and say, "You'll come by a bloody cross or you won't come at all. You'll be saved by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus or you will not be saved at all." The world thinks that I'm un-American if I don't put my arms around everybody's shoulder and say, "Your religion is just as good as mine." But friend, I want to tell you that Jesus Christ crucified is the only way to heaven, and if there is some other way other than Jesus Christ crucified I wouldn't want to meet God in a dark alley because I wouldn't trust that kind of a God who'd let His Son die on a cross in agony and blood when there was some other way. I tell you there is no other way, God is powerless to save apart from the cross, and if you're not saved by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus you will not be saved. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter nine and verse twenty two, "without shedding of blood is no remission of sins."

Now, the liberals, the modern sophisticated preachers today have stopped preaching the blood, many of them, the cross, many of them have, and God pity them.

Ah, Billy Graham said that when he was a young man preaching he preached at a certain resort one time, and, and he preached on the cross. And after he'd preached, a, a former professor at Cornell University came up to him and said, "Young man, you have a lot of gifts; you have a lot of ability. You can go places in the religious world, but," he said, "Young man, I just want to give you some advice. Leave that blood stuff out, hmm?" Graham said he made up his mind he'd preach more on the blood of Jesus than ever. Praise God for that.

Oh the devil hates the blood. You can go to many churches today – and I'm not trying to be chauvinistic about it – but go to many churches across the land, and you'll never hear the bloody cross preached, that the Lord Jesus Christ gave His blood a ransom for many. But there is power, wonder-working power in the precious blood of the Lamb.

Years ago I read a story something like this; I'm not certain of every exact detail, but something like this. There was a minister; he was a liberal minister. He was not saved, just as lost as he could be. He'd been educated in one of the liberal, theological seminaries. He did not believe in the Book, in the Blood, in the Blessed Hope, but he was as men go, a very good and kind and considerate man. He was in his study, and there came a knock on the door. He went to the door, and there was a, a little girl there dressed in rags. This preacher's ministry was in the inner city, and there's a little girl there dressed in rags. And he said, "Little lady, ah, come in. What can I do for you?" And she said to him, "Please sir, would you come and help get mommy in?" He thought her mother was drunk, and he said perhaps you need a policeman to get your mother in. "No," she said, "I don't need a policeman. Mother sent me to get a preacher. Aren't you a minister? My mother is dying, and she says she doesn't want to go to hell; she

wants to go to heaven. And she wanted me to find a preacher to help get her in.” The little girl was talking about getting her into heaven, so this kind minister who was unsaved and lost got his hat and got his coat. The little girl took him by the hand and led him through the alley ways of that city into a run down, bedraggled, filthy apartment. And there on a dirty mattress was a woman with her gray hair spread out on the pillow and her eyes sunk back in her head, and a life that had been marked by sin, had marred and debilitated and degraded her body, and she was dying of a vile disease. The preacher looked at her. His heart of love went out to her, and he was moved with pity as he saw her. She looked at him, and she said, “Please, sir, I know that I’m dying, and I need help. I’ve lived a wicked and a vile life, and if you’re a man of God, I need help from God. Can God do something for me?” This preacher started to try to minister to her, and he talked to her about love, and he talked to her about goodness, and he talked to her about forgiveness, and he talked to her about good deeds, and kindness, and all of these things, all of the platitudes, and all of the high sounding phrases that he knew, but her countenance never changed. There was no joy, no peace, no release. And he said, “Madam, does this mean anything to you?” She said, “Sir, you don’t understand. All of that may be well and good for people like you, but not for a person like me. Don’t you understand? I’ve not lived that kind of a life, and further more, I can’t live that kind of a life, and furthermore, I am dying!” And then with a pitiful look on her face, she said, “Preacher, don’t you have a message for a sinful woman like I am?” And he thought. He realized for the first time, he did not have a message for a woman like that. And he remembered the story his mother told him of a Christ, who died on a cross, and with His shed blood paid for our sins, and that by repentance and faith our sins could be forgiven, we could be born again and made over anew through the shed blood and the power of the cross. And though he did not believe, the story he began to tell it to her, not believing it, but he just told it to her because psychologically he thought it would help her. And so he told her about Christ who died on the cross and how the shed blood of the Lord Jesus atones for sin, and though our sin be as scarlet it shall be white as snow, and through faith in His shed blood we could be forgiven, saved and redeemed. As he told her that story, the power of God and the, and the, and the spirit of God took those words from the mouth of an unbelieving preacher and brought them home to her heart. And she heard the message – true whether he believed it or not – it was still true, and she opened her heart and received Christ as her personal Savior, and her countenance changed, and the Spirit of God came into her heart and bore witness with that poor, pitiful woman, that she was a child of God, and with tears of gratitude she said, “Oh thank you! Thank you for telling me. Thank you for helping me to get in.”

The way we know about that story is this. That that same liberal preacher went around telling that story everywhere he went, and when he got to the end he said,

“Ladies and gentleman, not only did that poor woman get in, but that night this preacher got in also,” as he saw the power of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Tell me the old, old story of Jesus and his love. Friend, listen, God speaks through the cross. You'll never know the power of God, you'll never know the wisdom of God 'till you understand the cross. God saves by the cross.

III. God Sanctifies by the Cross

I want to say one last thing. God sanctifies by the cross. Look again if you will in verse eighteen. Look, look it says, “for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto those of us who are saved it is the power of God.” But unto us which are saved, now look at the phrase, “which are saved.” Now, it literally means which are being saved, which are being saved. Now, friend, I want to tell you something. That not only have you been saved, you are being saved. Now I want you to learn something, and pay attention now. Salvation is in three tenses. I have been saved, I am being saved, and I shall be saved. Now, that doesn't mean that I'm not on my way to heaven right now when I tell you I'm being saved. It doesn't mean that there's any chance that I could ever again be lost. But salvation is in three tenses. I have been saved. I've been saved from the penalty of sin; hallelujah, I'm not going to hell. Amen? I, but, but you know, between some people and hell the only thing between some of you and hell is a heartbeat. Did you know that? Between me and hell there's a cross and Jesus is on it.

Now, look, I have been saved from the penalty of sin. I am being saved from the power of sin. See I am now being saved from, he saves me daily from the power of sin. So that, that's a process that is going on. And I shall be saved from the presence of sin; when the rapture comes, I'll be caught up to meet my Lord in the air never again in, ah, you know, there, there's no sin going to enter into that place, so salvation is, a, a, a crisis that is followed by a process.

Now, you need to understand that I am now being saved, right now. And that's what, that's what this verse says. You see, look, folks. That's an encouragement to me. I would re, I would really be disappointed if I thought this was all the saved I'm going to be. I would re, I would really be disappointed if I thought this was all the saved I'm going to be. I mean, look at me. Ha, ha, I would be disappointed. Wouldn't you be disappointed if you thought you'd arrived? I mean this is all you're going to get. No, friend, look you are now being saved. There's not a one of us who doesn't need to be saved day by day; we need to be saved from self. How many of you have difficulty with something called self? Just kind of nod your head at me. Ha, ha, OK. How many of you have difficulty with something called sin? How many of you have difficulty with someone named Satan? Of course, we do, and day by day I need to be being saved.

By the way, listen, the Bible says that God's not finished with us. People use to wear these little buttons: "Don't be too hard on me; God's not finished with me yet." I like that. The ole cowboy said, "I ain't what I ought to be. I ain't what I'm going to be. Thank God, I ain't what I was." And God is in, in the process of moving us to where we need to be, and how does He do it? Through the cross.

Now, look, God speaks through the cross. God saves through the cross. God sanctifies through the cross. Do you know what sanctification is? It's just the process of where God makes us more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ because when you got saved you were not automatically holy and perfect. Oh, God did a miracle in your heart, but there had to be that, God had to work out what He'd worked in. And so there needs to be a process, and we call that process sanctification. I want to say conversely that the Bible speaks of those in verse eighteen who are perishing, and it says, "for the preaching of the cross is to them which perish foolishness." What it literally says is to those who are in the process of perishing. Did you know an unsaved man here today, he's in the process of, of being lost? Do you know why I want to say that? Because some of you say, "Well, if this is lost, it ain't so bad. Huh? Not so bad." Friend, devil's not finished with you yet. You know, the Bible says, "Sin when it is finished bringeth forth death."

A man went to the doctor, and the doctor told him he had an incurable disease. He said to his friend, "You know, it seems to strange. I don't feel all that bad, and yet the doctor says I'm going to die." And, friend, I want to tell you, that if you're saved, God's not finished with you yet; and if you're lost, the devil is not finished with you yet. There is a process. You see, salvation is a crisis – we've been saved – and it is followed by a process – that is, sanctification – and the cross, the cross is God's way of salvation. The word of the cross is God's way also of sanctification.

Now, look, look. Many of us know that being saved is a miracle, but we get the idea that the Christian life is something we have to do. And you'll never have victory in the Christian life until you understand that the Christian life is also a miracle. One man when he got saved, he said, "Boy, this is wonderful, wonderful." That was his, his first, it, I mean, this, this, this is easy. This is easy. That's the first thing he said, "Boy, I'm just saved. Hallelujah. Uh, my sins are forgiven." And then, then after a while when he did like the rest of us, he stumbled and fell some, he said, "Boy, this is hard." Ha, ha, and then after a while, uh, he stumbled and fell some more. He said, "This is impossible." Huh? And then he discovered the principle of the cross, and he said, "This is wonderful." And I hope you'll come all the way through back around to wonderful.

You see, the Christian life is not hard; it's impossible. And it commences with a miracle; that's the new birth. It concludes with a miracle; that's the resurrection. But it commences with a miracle, it concludes with a miracle, but listen, it continues with a

miracle. Now, what you and I need to learn is this: That when God saved us, he didn't abandon us. When a newborn baby gets born, that baby is not abandoned. You see, coming into the family is one thing, but now, now, how does God sanctify us? How does the cross sanctify us? What is the principle of the cross that sanctifies us?

What does sanctification mean again? It means that God is saving me from self and from sin and from Satan day by day. He's making me more and more like the Lord Jesus. He's making me more and more like the Lord Jesus. How does the cross do that? Well, do you want to know what the Lord Jesus said? Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow Me." You remember that? Look intelligent. Look folks, I just preach till I think you understand, so nod your head whether you do or not and you'll get out earlier.

All right, now, listen, listen, listen, Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow Me." Now, what does that mean to take up your cross? A lot of people think that just means you go around with a cross on your back. You know, it's, you've got this cross on your back, and so you're just following the Lord Jesus with this cross on your back. Jesus, where are you going? Well, I'm going to wholesome, preaching meetings. You take up your cross and follow me." So we just follow Him. That's, you know, that's, that's kind of really silly folks. I'm not saying what Jesus said was silly, but our conception of what Jesus said was silly. It'd be awful hard to sit down, by the way, if you had a cross on your back. No, when Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me," what is the cross for? A cross is not for carrying. A cross is for dying on. Jesus was going to Calvary. When Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me," what Jesus was saying is come and die, come and die. Die! Oh, you say, "Uh-oh, Ha, I don't want to do that." Well, dear friend, listen, that's the reason why it sounds so foolish to the world. When, when we're talking about dying, the world says, "My goodness, don't talk about that. Buster, I want to live. I don't want to die." And yet Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me," that is, come and die! And by the way, he says, "Take up your cross." You know, your cross is something you take up. It is voluntarily. Now, Jesus volunteered to die. Did you know that? "Oh," you say, "No, they took Him against His will." No, they didn't. Do you think they could take the Son of God against His will? Jesus said, "No man taketh my life from me, I lay it down of myself." Right? Jesus willingly, voluntarily took up His cross, and so must you willingly, voluntarily take up your cross. You know, ah, we, we have some misconceptions. Your cross is not your nagging wife. Your cross is not your unsaved husband. Your cross is not some sickness you have, some migraine headache. "Ah, it's just my cross I have to bear." No, it's not; it's your migraine headache, it's your husband, it's your wife, but that's not your cross. You see, your cross is something, not something that just happens to you, some circumstance that comes upon you or that you wish you didn't have. Your cross is something that you willingly, knowingly, deliberately voluntarily take up. Huh? See, that's what the cross is.

Jesus said, "Take up your cross."

Now, and when you take up your cross, it's not something you carry. Crosses are not for carrying, crosses are for dying on. Now, what I'm trying to say is that you're sanctified by the principle of the cross. God speaks through the cross. God saves through the cross. God sanctifies through the cross. Not only therefore do we need to come to the cross for pardon, we need to get on the cross for power, and it is not until we learn to live the principle of the cross. Now, I know right now I'm sounding a little confusing, but listen, friend. There's only one life that has power, and it is the crucified life. You say, "Well, I don't want to be dead." Neither do I, but you see, dear friend, listen. Jesus didn't say that I've come that you may have death and have it abundantly, did He? Huh? No, what'd He say? "I've come that you might have" what? Life! And have it more abundant, more abundant. But what is the way to life? The cross, the cross. What was the way to Easter and that resurrection? The cross. Was it not? You see, do you remember what Jesus said? "Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the Gospel's the same shall save it." Do you remember that? Do you remember reading that? OK, now look. When we were little kids, we use to find something that belonged to somebody else, and you probably did this. We'd say, "Finder's keepers; losers weepers." Did you ever say that? Huh? Or, "I found it; it's mine." Do you know what Jesus said? Keepers weepers; losers finders. Listen, you keep your life, you're going to lose it. When you lose it, for My sake and the Gospel's, you'll save it. What does He mean? When I, when I come to the Lord, when I come to the Lord, and I say, "God, I cannot, I cannot live this life, and so, Lord, I just want to say the Old Adrian Rogers has to die. Not only did You die for me, but I'm willing to die with You. I'm willing to die to self, sin and Satan. Lord God, I apply the principle of the cross to my life," then something supernatural begins to work in me. Now, this is going to be a little hard for you to get hold of, when you get hold of it, friend, it's going to change your life dramatically, radically, and forever. You're sanctified by the principle of the cross, and what is the principle of the cross? It is just simply saying, "No," to self, letting that old self die with Christ and saying, "Yes," to Christ. And then you can say with the apostle Paul in Galatians chapter two, verse twenty: "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ that liveth in me and the life I now live I live by the faith of the son of God."

You see, there's a wisdom and a power, when I say that. You know, for along time in my Christian life, and sometimes I still slip into this mode, for a long time, I would try to serve God, and to try to serve God is like being in quicksand. The more you struggle, the more you sink. And I would try to do better, and I would fail, and I would cry and weep and say, "God, I'm so sorry. I failed, and I, I, Lord, just help me. I'm not going to do that anymore. God, I'm so sorry, tomorrow it's going to be better. God, I'm going to

be a better Christian.” Tomorrow, I’d, it’s the same ole thing. Have you ever been there? Oh, it’s terrible. And, and, and then you come, and you, again, you say, “God, I’m so ashamed of myself. God, I’m going to try harder; I’m going to do better. God, please, give me another chance,” You fail again and fail again. Friend, listen, listen. You can’t, E. N. Thomas said, “You can’t; He never said you could. He can; He always said He would.” Now listen. It is time for you to stop trying and start trusting, reckon yourself to be crucified with Him, dead unto sin but alive unto God. You say, “What does that mean?” Just simply say, “God, as I trusted You to save me – and I did – now I’m going to trust You to make me what You want me to be.”

Now, look. Paul said to the Galatians, ‘Oh, you foolish Galatians. Are you so foolish you began in the spirit, are you going to be made perfect in the flesh?’ Most of us know that we’re saved, ah, by the Lord, and, and His death on the cross, and we can’t do anything to save ourselves. But then we think the flesh is going to make us mature. We think we’re saved by the spirit; we’re going to be made perfect by the flesh. How foolish that is, friend. Listen. Jesus is the One who saves us; He’s the one who sanctifies us. What am I saying? I’m saying this. The Bible says, “As you received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in Him.” How did you receive Him? Hmm? By faith. Then how do you walk? By faith. “As you received the Lord Jesus, so walk ye in Him.” It’s time to quit trying and start trusting and just understand there’s the principle of the cross. When I say, “Adrian, you cannot do it!” That’s just another way of saying, “Adrian, step out of the way.” That’s just another way of saying, “Adrian, die!” That’s just another way of saying, “Adrian, quit trying to justify yourself! Quit trying to make yourself acceptable to God. You’re already accepted by God, by the cross of the Lord Jesus. Rest in His love and let the power of the cross sanctify you.” And I’m telling you the same Jesus that died to save you and gave Himself for you is the One who rose to give Himself to you and will live in you and through you if you’ll let Him.

Conclusion

Now, what is, dear friend, the secret of the cross? God speaks through the cross. You know the wisdom of God and the power of God through the cross. God saves by the cross; there is no other way. “Without shedding of blood, there’s no remission of sin,” and God sanctifies by the cross. When I say, “I can’t; He never said I could,” I reckon myself dead. I step self out of the way, and by faith I say, “Now, Lord Jesus, You come and live your life in me, through me. To You be the glory,” and He’ll do it. And I want you to see if that’s not so. The next time you find yourself in that spiritual quicksand trying harder and harder and sinking deeper and deeper, just stop and say, “God, why am I doing this? I want to reckon myself dead. Now, Lord, You take over. You take over. And I just want to reckon myself crucified with You, and yet I live, but it’s You now that lives

in me. And I'll lose my life in order to find it for His sake and the Gospel's."

I want us to bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Now, some of you will never know the third step of sanctification because you've never known the second step of salvation. And some of you maybe have never known the second step because you've never known the first step, to understand that Jesus Christ truly is the wisdom of God and the power of God. You've been trying to find wisdom and power somewhere else, but Christ is God's wisdom and God's power.

Now, Father, I just want to pray today that if for any in this building who are not saved that today they'll give their hearts to Jesus. And I pray, dear God, for those of us who are saved, and Lord I pray for myself, that You'd help me that, Lord, to understand fuller what I preached this morning, and, Lord, more deeply the things the truths that we touched on, and, Lord, just to abide in You and to rest in You. And, Lord, to reckon ourselves dead unto sin, but more than that, by faith alive unto God. Nevertheless I live because Christ lives in me. Thank You, Lord Jesus. Thank You. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Conquering Through the Cross

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 28, 1976

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18–25; 2:1–5

Outline

Introduction

I. The Work of the Cross

II. The Word of the Cross

III. The Way of the Cross

Conclusion

Introduction

Now would you open the Word of God to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, and we will begin our reading in verse 18. I don't know of a book that's more applicable to our lives and to modern-day Christians than the book of 1 Corinthians; and so, that's what we're going to be studying. Today, our topic is, and the title of our message is, "Conquering Through the Cross."

Now 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 18: *"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men"* (1 Corinthians 1:18–25).

Off the south coast of China, some pilgrims and some harbor settlers once built a massive cathedral. And this cathedral was a place where they worshipped and enjoyed worshipping, until a typhoon came through and destroyed that cathedral, and proved that it was stronger than the work of men's hands. Only the front wall of that great cathedral was left standing. And on that front wall was a huge bronze cross. Sir John Bowring was shipwrecked off the coast of China and despaired for his life. And as he was clinging to a piece of the ship, he floated closer and closer to the shore, until finally, he saw that cross there, standing on the ruins of that old building. Silhouetted against

the sky, he saw the cross; and that cross spoke to him of safety, and spoke to him of security, because he knew that he was nearing the shore.

Later, that same man wrote:

In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering o'er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
Gathers 'round its head sublime (Bowring, John).

And I want us, today, just to glory in the cross, a little bit.

Three things I want you to learn about the cross of Jesus Christ: first of all, the work of the cross; secondly, the word of the cross; thirdly, the way of the cross.

I. The Work of the Cross

What is the work of the cross? Look in verse 18, again, will you, please: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us who are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). Now look at that phrase *“unto us who are saved”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). Look at it very carefully, because, may I tell you, friend, that it could be, and should be, translated *“unto us who are being saved.”* Now it's very important that you understand that, because if you don't understand that, I don't think you'll really understand what Paul is saying. So the work of the cross is this: that, through the cross, we are *being* saved.

Now that may be confusing to some of you, because you say, “Now wait a minute, Pastor, I thought I already was saved when I received Jesus Christ.” That's right; you were. The Bible says: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31). Yet, the Bible says: *“Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed”* (Romans 13:11). “Now wait a minute. I thought I was saved when I believed. How could it be nearer than when I believed?” And then, Paul told Timothy: *“Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine... for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee”* (1 Timothy 4:16). “You mean, he's a preacher, and he's not yet saved?” You say, “Pastor, you're confusing me.”

All right now, listen. Salvation is in three tenses. I have been saved; that's finished. I'll never go to Hell, bless God; hallelujah, it is done! 'Tis done, the great transaction is done. It is settled: I'm a child of God. I'm born again—that is fixed. I have been saved. But wait a minute. I'm also *being* saved. I am *being* saved, and I *will be* saved. Now if you don't understand that, you're going to get in a lot of difficulty understanding the Bible. You see, there's salvation in three tenses: I have been saved; that is, from the penalty of sin, I'll never go to Hell. I'm being saved; that is, from the power of sin, that's my sanctification. I will be saved from the presence of sin, when Jesus comes again. You see: I have been saved; I'm being saved; and I will be saved.

Now you need to understand what happened when Adam died. You remember, God said to Adam, “In the day that you disobey me, in the day that you eat, you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Well, Adam disobeyed God, and did he die that day? Well, if you read the record, he went on to live for eight hundred plus years. Well, did he die or didn’t he? Yes, he did; but he didn’t. Actually, the Scripture says: “Dying thou shalt die.” You see, what happened to Adam? When Adam disobeyed God, he died immediately in his spirit. God moved out of Adam’s spirit, and Adam became minus God. You see, the spirit of man is where God dwells. God dwells in your spirit.

Now when a man sins, or when a man is a sinner—an unregenerate, unsaved sinner—he is minus God in the spirit; and so, the minute Adam died, God moved out of Adam, and Adam became minus God. And he died immediately in his spirit. But he died progressively in his soul. The soul is the ego: the mind, the emotion, and the will. The Greek word for soul is *psuche*—the word we get psychology from, and psychiatry from. And so Adam died immediately in his spirit; he died progressively in his soul; and then, he died, ultimately, in his body. You see, Adam was dead from the moment that God moved out of him, but he continued to function in his soul and in his body. There are a lot of dead people who will go to work, tomorrow morning, in Memphis, Tennessee. Their soul is still functioning; their body is still functioning; but, they are dead, because they’re alienated from the life of God.

Now watch it: How did Adam die? He died immediately in his spirit, progressively in his soul, and ultimately in his body. Adam was body, soul, and spirit. When you get saved, God reverses all of that. When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, when you repent of your sin, you open your heart, you believe on Jesus, you receive Jesus, what happens? You are justified immediately in your spirit; you are sanctified progressively in your soul; and, you will be glorified, ultimately, in your body. You see. I have been saved; that is, I’m justified in the spirit. I am being saved; that is, I’m sanctified in the soul. And I will be saved; that is, I will be glorified in my body. What I’m trying to say is, friend, God isn’t finished with me yet. Amen?

Wouldn’t you be disappointed, people? The enemy put the tares in with the wheat, and wheat and tares are hard to tell the difference. And the workman on the farm said, “Master, do you want us to go and pull up the tares?” He said, “You be careful; you’d pull up some wheat, if I left it to you” (Matthew 13:25–29). You can’t tell, dear friend, who is saved and who is not by looking at them, because God isn’t finished with them yet. He hasn’t finished with me yet. But let me say, the same thing is true in verse 18 about those who perish. It says, “Unto them who perish it’s foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18). The same thing is taught; it literally means, “to those who are perishing.”

You see, God isn’t finished with the unsaved man yet, either. Here’s a guy sitting in church, today, who says, “Well, it’s not so bad being lost.” He’s living high, wide, and

handsome; and, he doesn't worry about being lost. He says, "I'm getting along all right without God." Maybe he is. He reminds me of a man who jumped out of a ten-story building. As he passed each window, he said he's "all right so far." He's getting along all right, now; but, you see, God isn't finished yet. You read in James chapter 1 and verse 15 this phrase: "*and sin, when it is finished*" (James 1:15). You need to see the finished product of the devil's art. You need to understand that sin is not yet finished yet. Salvation is not yet finished, and neither is sin.

There are people, right now, in this congregation, who are saved and lost; some are in the process of being saved; and some are in the process of being perished, if you can put it that way—*of being perished*. That's exactly what it means. They are in the process, right now, of perishing. "*Sin, when it is finished...*" (James 1:15).

There was a television series that was on, several years ago, about a man who had an incurable disease, and he knew he was going to die at a certain time. Do you remember that? And so he was trying to get all the gusto he could; he was just living it up until, *you know*. And the thing about that series is that that man, though he had an incurable disease, he didn't look sick, and he didn't act sick; but he was dying. And that's the way it is with a man without the Lord Jesus Christ. He may not look sick; he may not act sick, necessarily; but, if he doesn't have the Lord Jesus Christ, he is perishing. And you need to see sin when it is finished.

You see, God isn't finished with me yet; and, if you're not saved, the devil isn't finished with you yet. You need to see the finished product of the devil's art. You know, it's the end that really counts. Look, for example, at Proverbs chapter 23. Let's think for a moment about the sin of liquor, or the sin of drinking, in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs chapter 23 and verse 31: "*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright*" (Proverbs 23:31). Do you know there's nothing more beautiful to the sensual eyes than a glass of wine or some of these liquor advertisements? What are the most beautiful advertisements that you see around? Won't it be liquor advertisements? You know, the frosty glass, and the four roses, and, you know, all this is so beautiful. You know, they make it look so appealing. You see, that's the first, but you have to look beyond that. Listen to what it says now: "*At the last*"—you see, when it is finished; sin, when it is finished—"*at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder*" (Proverbs 23:32). You need to see it "*at the last*," not at the first.

You know, the liquor people don't want you to see the end, brother. I wish I could put in the newspapers some of the things that I have to deal with as a pastor. One time, when I was down in Fort Pierce, Florida, I had an artist in the church who painted a man in the alley, in the garbage, and by the garbage can. There was a big ol' rat, about *that long*, running past, and this man had in his hand a bottle, and he was dressed in rags,

lying up there in the alley with the vermin and so forth. And underneath, he wrote these words: “The finished product of the brewer’s art.” It was a sign that was on a piece of 4 x 8 plywood.

I thought that was a pretty good sign; and so, he said, “Pastor, you can do with this what you wish.” I said, “Well, I’ll just put it on our church parking lot.” So I put it up on the church parking lot, and, after a while, I got a phone call. It was from one of the local distributors. He said, “What is your name, sir?” He told me. I knew who he was. I said, “I’ll see you in fifteen minutes.” I went right down to my study and met him there, and I said, “Now what do you wish to talk about?” He said, “It’s about your sign.” I said, “What about the sign?” He said, “That sign discriminates against my product.” I said, “Your product is thickened with blood, flavored with death, and brewed with tears.” He said, “Huh?” I said, “If I were you, I would get on my knees right now and ask God to have mercy on me.” Well, he got a little incensed at that. He said, “Well, I think that’s grounds for a lawsuit.” I said, “So do I. I wish you’d sue me.” I said, “I’d like to see this picture on the front page, and I’d like for you to prove that’s not the finished product.” I said, “You’ve got some kind of nerve. You bombard me, day in and day out, in magazines, newspapers, television, radio, telling everybody to drink, drink, drink, drink. I put up one sign to warn Sunday school boys and girls that there’s more to it, and you get incensed.” I said, “I’ll make a deal with you. You take your sign down; I’ll take mine down.” Amen?

“You take all yours down, I’ll take mine down.” Well, he walked out—didn’t have much more to say. But let me tell you, friend, you need to see sin when it is finished. You see, the devil isn’t finished yet. God isn’t finished yet, and the devil isn’t finished yet. *At first, the man takes a drink; then, the drink takes a drink; and then, the drink takes the man.*

It’s the same thing with the sin of immorality. Open your Bible, again. You’re in the book of Proverbs; turn to Proverbs chapter 5. Proverbs chapter 5, verses 3 through 5: “*The lips of a strange woman drop as a honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil*”—ol’ honey lips. Oh boy, sure, she ought to get a centerfold, ol’ honey lips. And boy, listen to the way she talks, seems to make sense—“*her mouth is smoother than oil*”—but listen, watch verse 4—“*but her end is bitter as wormwood, sharp as a two-edged sword. Her feet go down to death; her steps take hold on sheol*” (Proverbs 5:3–5). God says, “Consider the end; consider the end. Look all the way through; see the finished product.” You see, the devil is not finished yet. “*Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterwards a man’s mouth shall be filled with gravel.*” (Proverbs 20:17).

Now for example, turn to the book of Jeremiah, chapter 17, and verse 11. Listen to this verse, those of you who perhaps say, “Well, liquor is not my problem, and immorality is not my problem.” Well, maybe materialism is. Listen to this—Jeremiah 17,

verse 11: *“As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not, so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool”* (Jeremiah 17:11). Now here’s a guy—he doesn’t care for God; he doesn’t care for the things of the Spirit; his creed is greed; his God is gold; and riches mean more to him than God. God says, “In the middle of his days, he’s going to leave them; and at his end, he’ll be a fool.” At the end. *“Sin, when it is finished”* (James 1:15). **That’s the reason when Billy Sunday was preaching to his congregation about ungodly riches, he said, “You can’t take it with you, and if you could, it’d melt, where some of you are going.”**

You see, verse 18 speaks of the work of the cross. The work of the cross is this: that it is to help us; not only to be saved in the past, but to be saved right now, day-by-day, from the power of sin. All right, what you will be you are now becoming, through the power of Satan or the power of the cross.

II. The Word of the Cross

Now the second thing I want you to notice: not only the work of the cross, which is salvation in the present tense—those who are being saved, but the second thing I want you to notice is the word of the cross. For, this verse says, *“For the preaching of the cross is to them who are perishing foolishness; but unto us who are being saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Now the word that is translated *preaching* here is not the regular word for preaching. It’s simply the Greek word *logos*, and it simply means “word.” And it could be translated “the word of the cross.” And that doesn’t mean, therefore, the preaching about the cross is power; that’s not what it’s saying. It’s not what I say about the cross; it is what the cross says to me. The cross has a message. There is the word of the cross; there is the preaching of the cross. And it is the preaching of the cross, or the word of the cross—what the cross teaches me, what the cross preaches to me—that is power, so that I can live victoriously day-by-day. And so the message of the cross is how to get the power of God in my life, now. Notice what it says: not the preaching of the cross *was* the power of God, not *will be*, but *is* the power of God, right now.

You see, salvation is a decision followed by a dynamic. It is a crisis followed by a process. I believe on Jesus; I am saved. That is, it’s settled; I’m going to Heaven. But that’s not all. Now the cross that saved me is the cross that is to empower me; it is the cross that is to energize, meant to help me to live day-by-day, in the power of God, right now. And so what is the word of the cross? What is the word that the cross preaches?

All right, let me get back to 1 Corinthians 1, and look, beginning in verse 18, again. *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and*

bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”—now watch verse 22—“For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness; but unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18–24).

Now two words I want you to underscore in verse 24: *power* and *wisdom*. You see, the two things that every man needs is the power to do right and the wisdom to know right. He needs to know what is right, and he needs the power to do it. That’s the way to be saved. That’s what everybody needs—wisdom and power. Now if you have the power without the wisdom, that’s no good. If you know what is right and can’t do it, that’s no good. So you need the wisdom to know right and the power to do right.

Now how are you going to get this wisdom, and how are you going to get this power? Well, from time immemorial, different people have been trying different ways to unlock the mystery of life, to see what is right, and to do what is right. For example, the Jews were very power-conscious. Look in verse 22. Verse 22 says: *“For the Jews require a sign”* (1 Corinthians 1:22). Now why is this? You see, the Jews were looking for a Messiah who would be a powerful being, a very glorious Messiah. They were looking for a kingly person who would come in majesty and glory, a person who would dazzle them with his great power. That’s the reason Jesus was tempted by the devil to jump off the pinnacle of the temple—because, if he were to just come floating down in the middle of the temple, everybody would say, “Look, how wonderful! Oh hallelujah!” But Jesus wouldn’t do that, you see. They required a sign. They said to Jesus, “Give us a sign from Heaven, and we’ll believe.” That is, make the stars dance around; do a little cosmic magic, if you will. Even when Jesus Christ was on the cross, they said, “Come down from the cross, and we’ll believe.” The Jews required a sign, but Jesus would not give them a sign. He said, “No sign will be given to this sinful and adulterous generation” (Matthew 16:4).

And so when the Jews saw Jesus hanging on the cross, they said, “What kind of a Messiah is that? Why, that’s a stumbling block to us. We can’t accept a crucified Messiah, someone who is crucified.” Notice verse 23: *“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block”* (1 Corinthians 1:23). “What kind of a king, what kind of a leader, who would die in agony and shame upon a cross? And oh,” they said, “give us a sign; we want to see some power.”

Now what about the Greeks? Look in verse 22. What did the Greeks want? Look in verse 22: *“The Greeks seek after wisdom”* (1 Corinthians 1:22). Now the Greeks were a

little more cultured than the Jews. They wanted a God they could intellectualize. They had Plato and Socrates; they had all of the great philosophers; and, amid their idea of a Messiah, their idea of a spiritual leader would be sort of a double Socrates. They wanted someone who would explain God, to put God in concepts that they wanted, someone who would do mental gymnastics with them. They were looking for wisdom and culture, and again, they said, “What wisdom is there in dying on a cross, of all things? To die? Foolishness.

And so notice verse 23: *“But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles foolishness”* (1 Corinthians 1:23). The Jews were interested in power, the Greeks were interested in wisdom, but Christ is both the power and the wisdom of God. Christ crucified. Look at verse 24: *“But unto them who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:24). Not Christ the conqueror for the Jews, not Christ the philosopher for the Greeks, but Christ crucified for everybody. And in the cross is seen the power of God, and in the cross is seen the wisdom of God.

Now how? It’s very simple. You see, man is very power-conscious, today. We think we’ve got so much power; we think we know so much. If we do, why are we in such a mess? The more we learn, the deeper we get. There’s only one power that can change lives, and it’s the power of the cross. *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation”* (Romans 1:16). I have preached it long enough now, I have opened this book long enough now, I’ve given enough invitations now, I’ve dealt personally enough now, and I’ve counseled enough now to know:

There is pow’r, pow’r, wonder-working pow’r

In the precious blood of the Lamb (Jones, Lewis E.).

I believe that. Brother, that’s the only power that’ll do this old sin-sick world any good. Atomic power is not the answer; and governmental power is not the answer; and intellectual power is not the answer; and physical power is not the answer. It’s the power of the cross or nothing, mister.

And what about wisdom? What about wisdom? Christ, the wisdom of God. You know the thing I like about Christ, the wisdom of God? Brother, you don’t have to be a high muckety-muck, a PhD, an intellectual top-water, to understand Jesus Christ. For, God hath *“hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and [hath] revealed them unto babes”* (Matthew 11:25). You talk about wisdom, what about the kind of a wisdom that a child can understand? Isn’t that wisdom? Where God, the great God who made the universes, the God who scooped out the seas, heaped up the mountains, flung out the stars—that God has made Himself known to a little child.

That’s wisdom which none of the princes of this world knew. If they had, they would not have slain the Lord of glory. Mister, you’ll never come to the Lord headfirst, you had

better come heart-first. For God hath *“hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and [hath] revealed them unto babes,”* and to anybody who wants to know, and wishes to know (Matthew 11:25). And what is the word of the cross? The word of the cross is that power is in Jesus crucified, that wisdom is in Jesus crucified, and all you need to know to live the victorious life is found in the power of the cross.

Now the work of the cross is salvation; the word of the cross is that Jesus is the wisdom and the power of God. Some of you say, “Well, that sounds a little non-intellectual.”

I heard of Harry Ironside, a great preacher of yesteryear, who used to pastor Moody Church. He was traveling with some friends on a ferry, going across, from San Francisco to Oakland. And they were Christians, and on the way to Oakland they were singing choruses and praising the Lord. And a man was standing by there, and he heard them, and, after a while, he started to criticize. He said, “Who are you people? What are you doing?” And Harry Ironside, the great preacher, said, “Well, we’re just some Christians; we’re having a good time; and we’re just praising our Lord.” And the man said, “You’re a bunch of fools.” Ironside said, “You’re right; we are.” He said, “We’re fools for Christ’s sake. Whose fool are you?” Fools for Christ’s sake. To those that perish, foolishness; but unto us who are saved, it’s the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).

III. The Way of the Cross

Finally, I want you to notice the way of the cross. How does this power become real in your life? How do I appropriate it? I know that the work of the cross is that I’m being saved. I know that the word of the cross is that Jesus is power and Jesus is wisdom. Jesus shows me what to do, and Jesus gives me power to do it. But now, what is the role of the cross? How does it become real in my life? How do I get a handle on it? How can I bring it in tomorrow and take it to work with me? How can I carry it home with me? How can the cross become real in my life? The way of the cross is faith. Notice chapter 2, verse 1: *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellence of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:1). That is, Paul said, “I didn’t try to dazzle you with my intellectual powers.”

Do you know the problem in America, today? In too many pulpits, we have the flesh on parade: book reviews, culture, quoting this theologian and that theologian, Dr. Smell-fungus, Professor Tinkling-cymbal. Paul says, “When I came to you, I came not with excellence of speech” (1 Corinthians 2:1).

This serpent lifted upon a pole represented Jesus Christ, who took our sin upon Him, and carried it to the cross. And so Moses said, “Now people, God’s plan is this: that if you want to be delivered from the hideous snakebite, from the fatal fangs of the fiery

serpent, you must look and live (Numbers 21:8–9).

Now let's suppose that we're back there in the desert. Let's suppose that the hideous reptiles are everywhere—faces are white with fear, eyes are red with weeping, hands are trembling—all over, there are hurried funerals as people are burying their loved ones who have died because of the venom of the poisonous snake, which represents God's judgment upon sin. Let's imagine that here's a mother who has taken her son and has placed him there, in her tent. She's waiting for him to die. His temples are throbbing with pain; his hands and limbs are growing numb and cold. He's being paralyzed, and he's dying very rapidly. And she's saying, "O God, O God, don't let my boy die! O God, save my boy!" And about that time, someone comes into the camp of Israel, and he's shouting at the top of his voice. And this is what he's saying: "A cure! There's a cure!" And everybody stops. And they find this man, and they say, "What is that, sir? What did you say?" He says, "I said, there is a cure." One of the elders of Israel takes him by the lapel and says, "I order, by God, tell me the truth. Is there a cure?" He says, "Yes, there's a cure." He says, "What is it?" He says, "Listen, man. I don't understand it. I can't explain it; but God told Moses, if he would take a serpent, and put it upon a pole, that whosoever would look upon that serpent, would live." "Tell me, sir, does it work?" "Yes, it works." "How do you know it works?" "Because I was healed." Amen.

Listen, friend. Not only should we be witnesses, we ought to be part of the evidence. "Because I was healed." And all over the camp of Israel. *"Or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling"*—he never would have won a Better Speakers tournament—*"And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:1–5). And there it is; there's the key: The way of the cross is faith: *"that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:5).

You see, there are two responses that you can have toward the cross: foolishness or faith. To those that perish, it's foolishness. To those of us who are being saved, we exercise faith; and through that faith, God's wisdom and God's power is released in us.

Let me illustrate it from the Old Testament, and we'll be finished. Do you remember in the Old Testament where the Israelites had rebelled against God? They were on their way from Egypt to Canaan, they were in the wilderness, and they began to complain and to criticize, and they said, "We're sick and tired of eating this manna, and there's no water, and we're going to die in the wilderness." And God sent fiery serpents among the people to bite them, and many people of Israel were dying. And they went to Moses and

they said Moses, “We’ve sinned, for we’ve spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to God that he’ll take away the serpents” (Numbers 21:7). Moses went to the Lord, and the Lord said to Moses, “Moses, make a brazen serpent, and put it upon a pole, and it shall come to pass that, if any man is bitten, when he looketh upon the serpent, he’ll live” (Numbers 21:8).

Now why a brazen serpent? Well, the serpent is a symbol of sin. Brass is a symbol of judgment. This was sin being judged. And there are rapturous shouts of joy as instantaneous healing takes place; people from all over—poor snake-bitten victims—are looking to a twisted piece of metal on a pole, and immediately, they’re being made whole.

I want you to notice this mother: As she goes back to her tent, she pulls back the flap of the tent, she goes in, and she says to her son, “My boy, Mother has wonderful news for you! You don’t have to die! God has provided a remedy!” And she says, “Now Son, Mama can’t explain it all; but you come to the door of the tent. You see that braising serpent over there on that pole? Look, Son; look at it, and you’ll be healed.” He says, “I see it, Mommy. Oh,” he says, “Mommy, something happened! Mommy, the pain is gone! The throbbing has ceased!” The swelling goes down; he sits up; he stretches; he stands; he leaps; and he says, “Mother, I’ve been made well!” And oh, they embrace and praise the Lord God Jehovah!

Now that’s one scene that may have taken place. I want you to notice another one that might have taken place: Here’s a woman; she rushes to her tent. Her husband lies dying. She goes in, and her face is glowing like the noonday sun. She says to him, “Husband, husband, listen! I’ve got good news!” “What is it?” “You don’t have to die, Husband! God has provided a remedy, Husband! I don’t know how to explain it, but let me tell you, Husband, what it is. Listen! God told Moses that if he...” “Hold it right there! Are you talking about the brass serpent theory?” “Well, Husband, I’m talking about the brass serpent; but it’s no theory, Husband.” “Are you...? Hold it! Hold it! I am a reasonable man. I have a philosophical bent of mind. And I’ve got enough sense to know that there is no possible connection between my poor, wretched, miserable condition, and some silly, stupid, twisted piece of metal on a pole. Don’t mention it again.” “But Husband...” “I said, ‘Be quiet; don’t you mention your foolish, fanatical religion around this house one more time.’ Do you hear?” “Yes, Husband.” And so he died.

Conclusion

“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it’s the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). You see, what did that brazen serpent represent? Jesus said: *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so*

must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14–15). The way of the cross is faith.

I want to tell you, with all of the unction and function of my soul, this morning, that, if you will believe that Jesus Christ is the wisdom of God and the power of God, and if you will put your faith in the blood of Jesus Christ and the Christ of the blood, God will reveal to you a wisdom that you'll never get from books, and God will give to you a power that no other source can give. And you will be saved from the penalty of sin; you will be being saved from the power of sin; and, one day, bless God, you'll be saved from the presence of sin.

In the cross of Christ I glory
Towering o'er the wrecks of time. (John Bowring)

Good-bye to Boasting

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 16, 2003

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18–29

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Method of God's Salvation
 - A. Why People Call the Preaching of the Cross *Foolishness*
 1. It Shows Man's Total Unworthiness
 2. It Shows Man's Complete Inability
- II. The Makeup of God's Artists
 - A. God Uses the Intellectually Weak
 - B. God Uses the Physically Weak
 - C. God Uses the Economically Debased
 - D. God Uses the Socially Despised
- III. The Manner of the Messengers

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, amen. You could not have chosen a song that would fit more with the message. Thank you, young men. First Corinthians chapter 1—and I am going to begin reading, in just a moment, in verse 18. But, we are going to be moving toward verse 29, which is the key verse. Paul writes this passage of scripture: “*that no flesh should glory in [God's presence]*” (1 Corinthians 1:29). I want to talk to you tonight on this subject: “Good-bye to Boasting.” When the Bible says “*that no flesh should glory in [God's] presence*” (1 Corinthians 1:29), it means literally that no one should boast. Goodspeed translates it this way: “So that in His presence no human being might have anything to boast of” (1 Corinthians 1:29). I want to say that boasting, when it comes to our faith, is not a very good thing. I have said often that most Americans are egomaniacs strutting to Hell, thinking they are too good to be damned, because they are filled with conceit. Somebody said, “Conceit is a disease that makes everyone sick except the one who is infected with it, and perhaps he is the sickest of all.”

Most religion—most religion—in America is man-centered religion, rather than God-centered. Most religion in America is man's best with God's help. Now, the problem in Corinth was pride. The problem in Corinth was boasting. The problem in Corinth was man-centered religion, rather than God-centered religion. Man-centered religion is a gross distortion of the gospel of Jesus Christ, because man-centered religion exalts

man; God-centered religion exalts God and humbles man. And, He is going to give us some truth, that we can study and see tonight *“that no flesh should glory in his presence”* (1 Corinthians 1:29).

I. The Method of God’s Salvation

The first truth I want you to see is what I am going to call the method of God’s salvation. Begin reading in verse 18: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent”* (1 Corinthians 1:18–19). Now, what God is saying here is that we are going to be saved by the preaching of the cross. Salvation is in the cross alone, by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That message needs to ring out through America, and it needs to permeate the life of our church. It is the message of the cross that is foolishness to this world. It is foolishness to human ego. Look at it again in verse 18: *“the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

A. Why People Call the Preaching of the Cross Foolishness

Now, all that human pride calls *wisdom* God calls *foolishness*. And, all that God calls *wisdom*, the world calls *foolishness*. Now, why do men hate the preaching of the cross? Why do people in this world call the preaching of the cross *foolishness*? Let me give you several reasons.

1. It Shows Man’s Total Unworthiness

First of all, it shows man’s total unworthiness. When you tell a man that he is going to have to be saved by the crucified Christ, by the blood of the cross, that says to him, “There is nothing you can do to yourself—nothing you can do for yourself.” Have you ever noticed in today’s society how much we use the word *deserve*? “You deserve a break today.” “You owe it to yourself.” “You have this coming to you.” Friend, in God’s sight, we deserve nothing but judgment. Now, if you don’t understand that, you will never have a sense of gratitude to God. If you get something, you will not feel grateful that you got it. You will only be perturbed that you didn’t get it sooner and angry if somebody gets more than you get. We deserve nothing but judgment. We deserve nothing but the wrath of God and eternal Hell.

2. It Shows Man’s Complete Inability

And, the preaching of the cross shows us that there is no other way to be saved. So much preaching today deals with man-centered needs. Look at the ads in the paper. Look at the religious ads. Listen to the advertisements. Listen to the brochures that are mailed out: “Are you unhappy? Are you confused? Are you dissatisfied? Then come to Jesus.” What does that do? It makes God man’s servant; man is at the center.

However, a man's unhappiness, man's confusion, and man's frustration is the result of sin, and sin is an affront to a Holy God. At the heart of the human dilemma is not what sin does to man but what sin is against God. Sin is a clinched fist in the face of God. The cross shows man's total unworthiness. It shows man's complete inability. There is nothing he can do to save himself. Now, human pride doesn't like that. Human pride... If you ask a man if he is going to Heaven, he will begin to tell you he is a good man. The Bible says, "*There is none...good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:12).

One of my favorite stories is of a little boy who came forward in a church service professing his faith in Christ. In the counseling room, they asked him if he was saved. He said, "Yes." They asked him how he got saved. He said, "I did my part, and God did His." Well, they said, "Son, explain that." He said, "I did the sinning, and God did the saving." Now friend, that's it. That is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, notice where this man-centered religion has brought us. Look, if you will, in verse 20: "*Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Friend, if there is text that needs to be preached today, it is this one: "*[has] not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?*" (1 Corinthians 1:20). We know more than we have ever known and are in greater danger than we ever been. The technology of today is the science fiction of yesterday.

I was thinking about it. I was in the airport the other day. I was sitting down. Across the way from me was a man with a laptop computer. Right over here to his right was a person with a cell phone—I mean, to his left. And then, to the left, again—his left—was another cell phone. Then, down to the end was another person next to them with a laptop. Over here was a person with a cell phone. Over here was a person with a Palm Pilot—all of these just sitting right there. And, there I was with a pencil and a yellow legal pad, trying to think. It's amazing.

We are in a technological transition now that is absolutely without precedent. It is coming to us so fast it's like drinking from a fire hose. I drive in a computer-operated automobile. I don't have to have my wife along; my dashboard nags at me—say, "You are running out of gas, stupid. Shut the door. Your trunk's up." The dashboard will tell me all of that. If I want to talk to my secretary, I can pick up a phone and dictate to my secretary if she is not even in the office while I am driving down the highway. I get to my house, and I can heat my tea in a second in a microwave, and then put the clicker in my hand, and change channels, and watch news from all over the world. But, where is the wisdom of this world? "*Hath God not made foolish the wisdom of this world?*" (1 Corinthians 1:20).

Look at what is happening. I think of my own lifetime—the things that I have seen: the New Deal, the Fair Deal, the Great Society, Camelot, Camp David, Reaganomics,

détente, Glasnost, a thousand points of light, a new covenant. And, we move from one dilemma to another dilemma, and we are sinking more, and more, and more. And yet, we strut; and yet, we boast. But, God says there is only one way to be saved—beginning now in verse 21: the Bible says, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God”—put down your slide rules. Throw away your calculator. Get rid of your computer, if you are going to try to find God that way—*“the world by wisdom knew not God, [but] it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe”* (1 Corinthians 1:21). Now, it doesn’t say “foolish preaching.” We have had too much of that. One way I know the Bible is the Word of God—it stood up under so much shoddy preaching. It doesn’t say “foolish preaching.” *“It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching”* (1 Corinthians 1:21). That is declaring the message of the cross.

Now, people today want anything except the preaching of the cross. Look, if you will, in verse 22: he says, *“For the Jews require a sign”* (1 Corinthians 1:22). What were the Jews looking for? They were looking for a mighty miracle-working Messiah who would do miracles and give some sort of a sign—a miracle sign—to prove that he was the Messiah. Jesus did miracles, but they were not publicity stunts. The Jews were saying, “Show us a sign.” Jesus said in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 39: *“An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas”* (Matthew 12:39). And, the sign of Jonas was the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Well, do we have a counterpart of the Jews seeking a sign? Of course we do. We have something in the world today called *power evangelism—power evangelism*. Go somewhere, advertise miracles, and you will get the crowds. The problem with these people today is that they are advertising miracles and not doing them. Jesus did them and didn’t advertise them. The Jews require a sign.

And then, look, if you will, in verse 22: *“the Greeks seek after wisdom”* (1 Corinthians 1:22). Now, the Greeks were sophisticated. They were looking for someone who could unpick all of the divine mysteries. They were looking for a double Socrates—somebody that could tickle their intellect so they could worship at the shrine of their intellect. Paul said, “I know what you are looking for. Some of you are miracle mongers looking for signs. Others of you are philosophers seeking after wisdom.” But, notice what the Apostle Paul says in verses 23 and 24: *“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).

“You Jews want to see power? It’s in Jesus. You Greeks want wisdom? It is in the Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul was not preaching to what church-growth people today call *felt needs*. He was preaching the power of God and the wisdom of God that is found in the

Lord Jesus Christ. And, all of this brings human pride low, because it shows to the humanity you don't deserve anything, and you can't do anything; and so your intellect and your miracles don't matter. It is Jesus Christ and Christ alone. But, think—think—of the power of the cross, and think of the wisdom of the cross. The power of the cross is that it can change the human heart. Nothing else can do that.

I have often told you of meeting a lawyer on an airplane. We were at the front of the airplane looking for a newspaper. The lawyer said, "What kind of newspaper are you looking for?" I said, "A conservative one." I said, "What kind are you looking for?" He said, "A liberal one." I said, "What do you do?" He said, "I am a northeastern lawyer. What do you do?" I said, "I am a Baptist preacher." So, we got to talking about what we read. He said, "What do you read?" I said, "Well, I read newspapers, books, journals, devotional studies, but," I said, "primarily the Bible." He said, "If you don't read any further than that," he said, "and you speak to people"—said—"how do you know what to talk about?" I said, "Sir, man only has three problems." He said, "No, man has more than that." I said, "No, only three." He said, "What are they?" I said, "Sin, sorrow and death." "Oh," he said, "there are other problems." I said, "There is no other problem. Any other problem you can mention is a subset of one of those three." He said, "No, there are more problems than that." I said, "All right, tell me another problem." He went off for a while, and came back, and said, "Man only has three problems." That's true. Man only has three problems: sin, sorrow, and death. And, ladies and gentlemen, the cross of Jesus Christ is the only thing that has the answer to those three problems. You give me all of the wisdom of this world. There is no other answer apart from the cross.

The Jews want a sign; it's the cross. The Greeks want wisdom; it is the cross. To this world it is foolishness, but to God it is not foolishness. Now, thank God for the message.

II. The Makeup of God's Artists

Now, not only of the message of God's salvation, but I want you to think of the makeup of God's saints. How is God going to spread this message? Well, look at it here, beginning now, if you will, in verse 26—look at it: "*For [you] see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence*" (1 Corinthians 1:26–28). Now, it is the message of the cross that humbles man, and it is the messengers of the cross that humbles man.

A. God Uses the Intellectually Weak

Don't get the idea that we have to have the high intellectual muckety-mucks and the movers and the shakers of this world. Notice whom God says that He has called. In verse 22, He speaks there—excuse me, verse 27—he speaks there of the foolish things of this world. The word there that is translated “foolish” is the word we get our word *moron* from. What it literally means is “those who are not Phi Beta Kappas, those who are not PhDs.” It is not speaking of literal morons, but it is speaking of those who are not necessarily intellectually gifted or erudite. God uses common people. You may not have an IQ of 140, but God can use you.

I think of Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday was the Billy Graham of his day. Billy Sunday was a former WMCA clerk and a baseball player. Billy Sunday held a mighty crusade here in Memphis, Tennessee, some years ago. Billy Sunday used slang language. He said, sometimes, ridiculous things. But, it is said that he won over a million men to Jesus Christ. You say, “That’s an exaggeration.” Well then, let’s say half a million. I mean, any way you put it, God used Billy Sunday in a wonderful way.

When I was in seminary, the president of our seminary, Dr. R. Q. Level, who was a dear man of God, at New Orleans Seminary said, “I went to hear Billy Sunday preach when Billy Sunday was in his heyday.” He said, “Billy Sunday got up there and did all of these antics, and he did all of these kinds of foolish things; but then, he began to preach Hell-hot, Heaven-sweet, sin-black, judgment-sure, and Jesus saves.” And, the power of God fell on that place, and he called it *hitting the sawdust trail*. He gave an invitation, and people streamed forward to give their hearts to Jesus.”

Dr. Level said, “I was at the front.” He said, “I was amazed at what was happening.” He said, “Among those who came forward was an old man with a long flowing white beard.” He said, “Billy Sunday was mesmerized by that beard. He couldn’t take his eye off that beard. During the invitation—souls getting saved, people weeping at the altar—but Sunday was taken with that beard. Finally, during the invitation, Billy Sunday went over there, and knelt down, grabbed that man by the beard, and went, ‘Honk, honk.’” Can you imagine that? Can you imagine that—during an invitation when souls are getting saved? You say, “Well, God could not use a man like that.” God did use a man like that, and Dr. Smell Fungus and Dr. Tinkling Brass can’t figure it out: “How could God use a man like that?” But, God took a Billy Sunday. Somebody called him—his biographer called him—“God’s joke on the ministry.” God uses the intellectually common.

B. God Uses the Physically Weak

God uses the physically weak. You don’t have to be an All-American. You don’t have to have bulging biceps. You don’t have to have mountains of muscles for God to use you.

Down in Florida we had a thing called *A Week of Champions*. We had the greatest athletes we could get from Athletes in Action, and Campus Crusade for Christ, and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and all of these to come and give their testimony. Among those who came was Paul Anderson—at that time, the strongest man in the world. He went over to Russia and lifted more weight than any man had ever lifted. This man—he was about this high and about that wide. He looked a little pudgy; but you touch him, and he is like polished steel. He gave his testimony. He said, “People ask me if I was ever once a 97-pound weakling.” He said, “Yes, when I was four years old.” Just strong—and his testimony was, “If the strongest man in the world needs Jesus, so do you.” And, many students were saved in that high school auditorium—that college auditorium, rather.

The next Sunday at the First Baptist Church of Merit Island I preached—I gave the invitation. A college student came forward. I asked him why he was coming. He said, “I want to confess my faith in Jesus.” I said, “Do you need to be saved?” He said, “I have already been saved.” I said, “When were you saved?” He said, “At the Week of Champions.” I said, “What night?” He said, “The night Paul Anderson was there.” And, I said, “Paul Anderson’s testimony was wonderful, wasn’t it?” He said, “I don’t know. I don’t remember. I don’t remember a word he said.” I said, “Well, didn’t that bring you to faith in Christ?” “Oh, no,” he said. “No.” I said, “Well, tell me about it.” He said, “Do you remember when you had free testimony?” I said, “Yes.” He said, “Do you remember the man in the wheelchair who came forward, and they lifted him up on the platform—that paraplegic? Do you remember that man?” I thought, “Well, yes, I did remember a man like that. I don’t remember the man’s name.” Let’s say his name was Bill Jones. He said, “It was the testimony of Bill Jones that convicted me.” I said, “How?” He said, “There was this man with his face like the noonday sun, talking about the joy that he had in the Lord Jesus Christ and the victory that he had in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, I thought to myself, ‘If Jesus could do that for that man, maybe He could do something for me.’” He said, “I gave my heart to Christ.” Now, here is the point: in that building that night was the strongest man in the world, and God used a precious man in a wheelchair to bring a college student to faith in Jesus Christ. And, don’t you dare insult God by saying God can’t use you. God chooses people like this.

C. God Uses the Economically Debased

There are those who are physically weak—those who are economically debased. Look, if you will again—he says in verse 27: “*God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world*” (1 Corinthians 1:27–28). The word base means “ignoble,” “from the wrong side of the tracks,” “without a pedigree.”

You didn't come from a long line of socially accepted people—you are base, from the wrong side of the tracks, as it were. You are not from the Rockefellers, the Kennedys, the Donald Trumps. But, God can use you. You make a very meager salary.

D. God Uses the Socially Despised

He speaks of those who are socially despised. Look, if you will, in verse 28: *“And base things of the world, and the things which are despised, hath God chosen”* (1 Corinthians 1:28). These are God's little people. They don't make *Who's Who*. They don't even... They haven't even made *Who's Not*. They don't get to lead in silent prayer. These people—they are not the class presidents. They are not the shakers and the movers. They are not the winsome personalities. But, God uses these people—the socially despised, the publicly forgotten.

Now, thank God it doesn't say, “not any mighty, not any noble.” I thank God for the PhDs who love Jesus; we have some in our church. I thank God for the men of medicine that love Jesus; we have some in our church. I thank God for the men of commerce that love Jesus; we have some in our church. I thank God for those who are great athletes who love Jesus; we have some in our church. But friend, let me tell you something: that's not the core of God's army.

Let's just find out how many—how many—of you here tonight were class president? Let me see your hand. Be honest. Lift your hand. Come on. I know we've got some. Okay, how many of you are PhDs? Lift your hand. Come on. We've got some. Yea, all right—all right. How many of you are Phi Beta Kappas? Lift your hand. All right. How many of you were All-State, All-Conference, All-American in some sport? Lift your hand. All right. How many of you girls were all Miss America, or Miss Tennessee, or something like? Don't lift your hand. All right. Now listen, if you could lift your hand for any of those things or all of those things, I have got some good news for you: God can use you, too. He will have to work a little harder to do it. That's right. You see, what God wants to do is to take a message—a message—of a crucified Jew, and then take ordinary people, and spread that message across the world, and get glory to Himself. That's what it is all about: *“that no flesh should glory in his presence”* (1 Corinthians 1:29). A foolish message, a weak messenger. Glory to God.

III. The Manner of the Messengers

Now, here is the last thing, and I will be finished: I want you see not only the message and the messenger, but I want you to see the manner of the messengers. Look, if you will now, in chapter 2, beginning in verse 1: *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save”—or, “except”—“Jesus Christ,*

and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:1–2). His message was a Christ-centered message. Do you say that’s restrictive? No. **Would a minnow be hemmed up by the Atlantic Ocean?** You see everything else that we preach has to flow from the cross. If it doesn’t flow from the cross or lead to the cross, there is something wrong with it. Now, Paul preached about many things. When he said, “I didn’t know anything among you except Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2), he meant that “everything that I say is a subset of the cross of Jesus Christ.”

In old Bellevue, the old building, we used to meet with the pastors downstairs. And, various pastors would preach to the other pastors on Monday. There was a black pastor in this town—he is in Heaven now—but I loved him very much. His name was Brother Brown—pastored a little, little church—a man of great wisdom. I loved to listen to Brother Brown. I learned much from Brother Brown. It was Brother Brown’s turn to preach. Brother Brown got up to preach, and he said something that hurt me—that grieved me. And, I said, “I disagree with that, but I couldn’t say it out loud.” But, Brother Brown said, “I don’t preach theology.” And, I thought to myself, “That’s a shame. You ought to preach theology.” But, he said, “I don’t preach theology.” But then, he said something I will never forget. He said, “I use theology; I preach Jesus.” Is that not good? Is that not good? Man, I have told that around the world: “I use theology; I preach Jesus.” That’s what Paul is saying when he said, “*[I knew nothing] among you, [except] Christ, and him crucified*” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Now, Paul had no confidence in the flesh. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: “*And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:3–4). Now, Paul refused to be an intellectual or an oratorical showboat. Paul said, “I have a fear that you might put faith in me, rather than faith in God.” I heard Billy Graham say on one occasion, “I stay frightened.” What did he mean by that? He meant, “I don’t want to do anything that will have people follow me, rather than follow Jesus Christ. I don’t want to produce preacher-followers.”

Now, what Paul is saying here is not that “I am trying to keep you from genuine wisdom. I am not trying to make you fools in the true sense of the word.” Notice again in verse 5 and 6: “*That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*”—that’s why I have often told you that anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of—“*Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto [His] glory*” (1 Corinthians 2:5–7). What Paul is saying is, “I refuse—I refuse—to be a trickster. I refuse to huckster the gospel. I refuse to use a

felt-needs ministry. I am going to preach the cross of Jesus Christ. The world may call it foolishness, and people may think we are fools; but I am going to preach Jesus Christ.”

Let me close the message with a verse from Jeremiah—Jeremiah chapter 9, verses 23 and 24. Listen to it—listen to it. Put it down—“Jeremiah 9, verses 23 and 24”: *“Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD”* (Jeremiah 9:23–24). Paul says good-bye to boasting, *“that no flesh should glory in his presence”* (1 Corinthians 1:29). And, listen to what Paul says in verse 18 again—chapter 1, verse 18: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us [who] are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Now, let me give you a little lesson in Greek. A Greek scholar I am not, but I was exposed to it. What it literally says is, “The preaching of the cross is to those who are being saved foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:18). You see, salvation is a process. I have been saved from the penalty of sin. You are looking at a man who is not going to Hell. I am going to Heaven. I am being saved day-by-day from the power of sin. Thank God He delivers me. Thank God He didn’t just forgive me and say, “Now, it is up to you.” And, one day, when Jesus comes, I will be saved from the very presence of sin. See, I am being saved.

But now, listen—it also says, “It is foolishness to those who perish” (1 Corinthians 1:18). But, what it literally says—“those who are perishing.” You may be without Jesus Christ tonight, and you say, “Well, this is not so bad. It is not over.” You are perishing. And, one of these days, just as I will end up in Glory, you are going to end in Hell. Never—no, never; no, never—call the cross *foolishness*. God so loved the world this much—God put a cross between you and Hell. And, if you go to Hell, you will have to climb over the cross of Jesus Christ to get there. *“The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness...[to those of] us [who] are saved it is the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:18).

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Would you begin to pray, first of all, for your own heart? Ask yourself this question: Am I saved? Do I know I am saved? Have I truly, truly, truly put my faith in the crucified Son of God?” Now, if you are not certain that you are saved, I want to lead you in a prayer. Now, if you are certain that you are saved, begin to pray for those around about you. And now, precious friend, this is your soul; this is your eternity. God loves you, and He wants to save you. And, He will save you if you will trust Him.

I want you to pray this prayer, if you can: “Dear God, I know that You love me. And, I know that You want to save me. Jesus, thank You for the cross. Thank You for Your rich, red, royal blood that has paid the awful debt and has taken the horrible punishment that my sin deserves. Thank You for dying for me. I believe You are the Son of God. I believe that You died in my place. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, with all of my heart, I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Come into my heart. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus”—pray that—“Save me, Jesus. Lord, I lay my pride in the dust. Save me, Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Did you? Then, by an act of faith, I want you to pray this: “Thank You for doing it—thank You for doing it. I just ask You, and I receive it. You promised that *“whosoever [would] call [upon] the name of the Lord [would] be saved”* (Acts 2:21). I am calling. I am trusting. I am saved. Thank You, Lord Jesus. And, Lord Jesus, I will make this public. I will not be ashamed of You, because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer and truly meant it, God saved You.

Conquering Through the Cross

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 27, 1988

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:18–31

Sponsored by: Sponsor

*“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness;
but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

Outline

Introduction

I. Wisdom

II. Righteousness

III. Sanctification

IV. Redemption

Conclusion

Introduction

Now take God’s Word and turn to 1st Corinthians. And in a moment, we’re going to begin reading in chapter 1 and verse 18. First Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 18: “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, 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.

Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.” And then, verse 30: “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

I want to talk to you tonight about “Conquering Through the Cross,” and I want you to look again at verse 30. There are 4 things that every member of this church needs, every Christian who is not a member of this church needs, and everyone who is not a Christian ought to have and can have in Christ. And here they are: Number one: Wisdom. Number two: Righteousness. Number three: Sanctification. Number four:

Redemption. Now all of these things are found in the preaching of the cross.

Go back to verse 18: ““For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved (literally, who are being saved) it is the power of God.” Now, when God speaks of foolishness here, He’s not speaking of a person who is mentally deficient. He’s speaking of someone who is morally deficient. A great test for a fool is his reaction to the cross.

Now in Paul’s day, the gospel; that is, the preaching of the cross of Jesus Christ, was foolishness. And it is in our day. Now there are a lot of us today who don’t want to be thought of as fools. So, therefore, we have tried somehow to tone down the gospel, to adapt the gospel, to somehow to remodel the gospel so it can fit in with the wisdom of this world. And we try to make the world a little more churchy and the church a little more worldly to see if we can’t get the two together, but it never works because the world, the devil, and human nature have never changed and the gospel and the cross and the Lord Jesus never change. The gospel starts at a different source. It follows a different course. It arrives at a different conclusion. And you’ll never be able to make this world and the gospel blend together. What the world calls wisdom, God calls foolishness, and what the world calls foolishness, God calls wisdom. And a fool can be recognized by his reaction to the cross.

Now go back again to verse 30. Here are 4 things that you need and they’re found in the cross. You need wisdom. You need righteousness. You need sanctification. And you need redemption. And I want to show you that all 4 of those are in the cross.

Now verse 18, back to verse 18, he speaks of the preaching of the cross. Now he does not mean what we say about the cross. That isn’t what, that isn’t what the Greek language here means. It doesn’t mean for me to take a text and preach on the cross. That’s wonderful, but that is not what this verse means. It is not preaching about the cross that he’s talking about. He’s saying the cross has a message for us. It is what the cross preaches. It is what the cross says that gives us these four things.

I. Wisdom

First of all, let’s, for example, take the idea of wisdom. Now look, if you will, in verse 19: “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise (that is, all of the high muckery-mucks and the smart-alecks of this world), I’ll destroy that, and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” (all of these vaunted philosophers and professors and those scientists who worship at the shrine of their computers). And then, God says, “Tell me where has all of this wisdom gotten them anyway? Where is the wise? Where is the scribe?” Now the scribes were those people who were supposed to have been the scholars who, at first they were the ones who simply copied down the Bible. Therefore, they were called scribes. But after a while, they got to be the learned doctors of the law.

“Where are the disputers of this world?” These are those who debate about various matters, philosophers, we would say. And then he says, “Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” Now you just have to say amen because, folks, if we’re so smart, why are we in so much trouble? I mean, think about it. We’ve never known more and we’ve never been in deeper trouble. The more we learn, the deeper we sink. We’re afraid of what we know. And we’re progressing right on to oblivion. And God says, “Er, see how smart you are! I mean, just take all your wisdom and add it up. Hath not get, God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

Now here’s the wisdom of God: “For that after in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God...” Isn’t God smart? You know how smart God is? God is so smart He’ll not let you be saved by being smart, see. Why? Because, dear friend, if you could be saved by being smart, then some folks would have a head start. Some are smart, and some of us are not too smart, okay. So in order to be saved then, you’d have to be smart. You’d have to be a philosopher. And the philosophers would all have a leg up. But God is so wise that He won’t let you be saved by wisdom. “For in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching...” This does not say foolish preaching. We’ve had too much of that. It says, “...by the foolishness of preaching...” It literally means by the foolishness of the thing preach, what the world calls foolish, “...to save them that believe.” And then he explains it. He says, “For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.”

Now the Jews were all interested in power. And what the Jews wanted was to see some sign of miraculous power. As you know, and I’m going to show you in a moment, the Jews of Jesus’ day were what I would call miracle mongers. That’s the reason the devil said to Jesus, “Jump down from the pinnacle of the temple.” Why was that? Well, if He just came wafting down on angels’ wings, they would say, “What a mighty Messiah,” because they wanted someone who was spectacular. They looked. The Jews of Jesus’ day looked for signs and more signs.

When Jesus fed 5,000, do you think they said, “Oh, well, surely He’s the Messiah.” No. They said, “What sign are You going to do next? What’s the next one coming?”

Now you, you could be very much like the Jews of Jesus’ day if you’re looking for a sign, some miracle, that will appeal to your physical senses. You want the Lord to do some trick for you. Jesus had those in His generation, and He said in John chapter 4, verse 48, “...Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.” He didn’t say that to commend them, but to chastise them. Luke 11, verse 29: “And when the people were gathered thick together, he began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; but no sign shall be given to it, but the sign of Jonah the prophet.” And what was that? The sign of burial and resurrection! Matthew chapter 12, verse 39: “...An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign...” We’re very much like that. All you have to

do is just advertise miracles, people flock in.

Coming to church tonight, I had the radio on, talk program. And the lady who was running the talk program said, “Stay tuned. We’ve got a psychic coming on and I know the lines will be real busy. I know the lines will be jammed.” Why? You could have a Baptist preacher on there and, well, they might jam the lines, too. But people are interested in that kind of thing. People are interested in signs, miracles, visions, wonders. That’s what the Jews wanted.

Now, see, Paul is writing to Corinth, and there was a colony of Jews there and a colony of Greeks there. And Paul was no fool. He knew what, he knew what kind of itch the Jews had. And he said, “I know what you want. You want some kind of a sign. You want miracles.” But then, notice also, he says in verse 22, “The Jews require a sign...” Then look in verse 22: “...and the Greeks seek after wisdom.”

Now the Greeks were a little more sophisticated and so they had deified wisdom. They wanted God to be intellectualized. And you still have those two groups today. You have those people who are more superstitious and they want signs, miracles, and wonders. Then you have those who are philosophical. They seek wisdom. They want you to explain God. I mean, they want you to somehow be a double Socrates and explain God. And the Greeks, very sophisticated. You know, they had their museums and they had their fine arts and all of that. And they prided themselves and their philosophers who were able to unpick all of divine mysteries with their minds. And they had made a shrine of their intellect.

Now it’s as if Paul could read their thoughts. He says in verse 22, “I know what you want, but that’s not what I give you. You Jews, you’re wanting a sign. You Greeks, you’re wanting wisdom.” But he said, “I’ll tell you what I’m going to give you. I’m going to preach Christ, and I’m going to preach Him crucified. And I know what that’ll be to the Jews. It’ll be to the Jews a stumbling block. And I know what the Greeks will say about it. It’ll be to the Greeks foolishness.” But he says, “It’s the greatest demonstration of the two things you really want – the power of God and the wisdom of God. The real power of God and the real wisdom of God are going to be seen in the cross.” Paul said, “I’m not going to preach for the Jews Christ the conqueror, but I’m going to preach Christ the crucified. I am not going to preach to the Greeks Christ, the philosopher, but I’m going to preach Christ crucified.” Now the Jews could not accept it. To the Jew, for Jesus to be crucified meant that He was a failure. And for the Greeks, for Christ to be crucified, that was absurd. What wisdom is there in dying like a rat nailed to a wall? They couldn’t see it. They said, “What wisdom is this?” But notice what Paul goes on to say in verse 24: “But unto them who are called (that is, who have received the calling of the Spirit in their hearts and lives), both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.” Now Paul doesn’t say they were wrong for looking for power, nor does he say

they were wrong for looking for wisdom. They were just looking in the wrong place. Christ is the very thing they're looking for. He is the power of God and He is the wisdom of God.

Now let me just say that Christ, therefore, is made unto us wisdom. What is the wisdom of the cross? The wisdom of the cross is this: Here's the wisdom of the cross: That when we see that cross, in that cross we know the heart of God. In no other way could we know the heart of God. For example, in the cross we see the absolute holiness of God, God's mighty hatred of sin, and in the cross we see the great, great love of God, that He sent His Son to die for us. In the cross and the redemption of the cross are unrivaled, are unraveled all the mysteries of life and death. But here's the wisdom of the cross: Listen to it. The simplest of all people can understand it. A wayfaring man, though a fool, shall not ere therein. And even little children can sing, "Jesus loves me, this I know; for the Bible tells me so." And that's what he says here that, that God hath, has, has "...hidden these things from the wise and the prudent, and He has revealed them unto babes." And so, one thing we need is wisdom, according to verse 30. And that wisdom and that power is seen in the cross.

II. Righteousness

But now there's something else that we need. Not only do we need wisdom, but we need righteousness. And the cross, and the cross alone, provides that righteousness. I mean, it is the cross, for example, that makes us see, once and for all, the need for righteousness. Were it not for the cross, we might excuse sin. We might deny sin. We might minimize sin. But when you see that horrible cross, it strips away all of the veneer and reveals the foulness of this thing we call sin. When you see the cross, you see that God takes no small view of sin. You see how seriously God takes sin.

Now God made the worlds with a word, but even Almighty God could not combat sin, apart from the cross. When God had to deal with sin, and when God dealt with sin, He did it in agony and blood. And what sin did to Jesus Christ on the cross is a bitter illustration of what sin will do to us if we do not have the Lord Jesus. Written across the bruised and bleeding body of Jesus Christ is the decree of all eternity – "The wages of sin is death!" If God did not spare Jesus Christ when Jesus Christ took our sins, it is crystal clear that God will not spare us if we don't take Jesus Christ. Crystal clear. You see, in the cross our sinfulness is so displayed and our need of redemption is so shown. The righteousness of God is provided in the cross.

And how is the righteousness of God provided in the cross? "Him, who knew no sin, Jesus, God hath made to be sin for us, that we (sinners) might become the righteousness of God in Him." He took our sins. We take His righteousness. The Bible says in Hebrews chapter 9, verse 22: "Without shedding of blood is no remission of

sins.”

One time, when I wanted to say something nice to my wife Joyce, I said, “Joyce, if you were to take the best attributes of all of the women on planet Earth; if you were to take the beauty from one woman, the most beautiful woman, or the beauty from all of the women, the sweetness from all of the rest of them, and the intelligence from all of the rest of them, and the charm from all of the rest of them, and if you were to combine those qualities into one woman and put her alongside you, darling, she’d come in second place.” She liked that. I want to tell you something, friend. If you were to take the best qualities of all five billion people on planet Earth and combine them into one man, that one man would still have to kneel at the cross to be saved. Take the best, not the worst, but take the best. “There is none good, no not one.” And in the cross, and in the cross alone, we learn of the righteousness of God.

III. Sanctification

Now, but there’s a third thing we need. Not only do we need wisdom, and oh, what wisdom there is in the cross, that the world by wisdom cannot know God, but that a little child can know God. And then, what righteousness there is, not our own, but the righteousness that is blood-bought. But then notice there’s a third thing that comes in the cross that we need, according to verse 30, and that is sanctification.

Now let’s get a little theological. That’s a word we don’t use very much today is sanctification. Look at verse 18 again. “For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto those of us, but unto us who, which are saved it is the power of God.” That verse literally says this: “For what the cross preaches is to those who are perishing foolishness, and unto us who are being saved, it is the power of God.” That’s very important that you understand that. “...those who are being saved...” You see, I am being saved. Well, you say, “I thought you already was, were saved.” I am, but I’m still being saved. You see, I have been saved. I’m being saved. And I shall be saved. That’s not contradictory. You see, ah, I have been saved from the penalty of sin. I’m not going to hell. But I am being saved from the power of sin. He saved me today from the power of sin. And I shall be saved from the presence of sin. So, you see, I am being saved. Now, if you look at me and say, “Well, you don’t look too sanctified,” well, you don’t look so good either. But thank God, He’s not finished with us, amen? You see, Philippians chapter 1 and verse 6: “Being confident of this very thing, He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” We are being saved.

Now God did not forgive us and then abandon us. You don’t abandon a newborn baby. You don’t chunk it out in the back yard and say, “Root, hog, or die.” When that, God gives you that new baby, then you bring that baby in and you nurture that baby.

The Holy Spirit will do that.

You see, day by day I need sanctification. What is sanctification? Sanctification is a process by where I work out what God has worked in. The Bible says, "Work out your salvation, for it is God that worketh in you both to do and the will of His good pleasure." Now I work out what God has worked in. I don't work for my salvation, but I work out the salvation that God has given me. I am being saved day by day from self, from sin, and Satan, and He saved me from all three today. God's not finished with us yet. I mean, folks, there's going to be more than this. All we've got is, is the down payment now, the earnest. The purchase possession, the redemption of the body, is still out there. But we are being saved. That doesn't mean that we, there's a chance that we might die and go to hell. No! You don't understand what I'm saying. That is settled once and for all. Once you're born again you cannot be unborn. But God is not finished with you yet.

Now I want to say, let me just turn that around. If you're unsaved, the devil's not finished with you yet. And judgment is not finished yet. You know, there are a lot of folks unsaved. They're living high, wide, and handsome. They're saying, "Well, it's not so bad to be unsaved." Not finished yet! You see, the Bible doesn't say, "... to those who are perished." It says, "... to those who are perishing."

A man had a disease. He went to the doctor, and the doctor said, "You have a terminal disease and it's going to kill you in a matter of months." The man was so shocked, he went to see his pastor. He said, "Pastor, it is the strangest thing." He said, "I have never felt better in my life." He said, "I feel good. And yet, if my doctor knows what he is talking about, I have a disease that is going to take my life."

You may be sitting here in church very much like that man spiritually. And you're saying, "Well, it, it's not so bad to be lost." Friend, you're perishing. "Sin, when it is finished when it is finished, bringeth forth death."

So, what is the process of sanctification? That's in the cross. I'm being saved. Now, what, what is the, the power of sanctification? Pay attention. Did you ever get the idea if you just knew the will of God, you'd, you'd have it made, and if you just had wisdom? Oh no, friend. You need also power. To know the will of God is only one side of the coin. You've got to do it. You need what it takes to do it. Aren't you glad that Jesus is both the wisdom of God and the power of God, see? I mean, He's the one who shows you what's right. And then He's the one who enables you to do what is right. I need the ability, the wisdom to know and the power to do.

Now, it, the, the power of sanctification is the same power that was purchased there on the cross and that raised up Jesus from the dead. That becomes mine purchased at Calvary. But, wait a minute. I know the process and I know the power, but what is the principle? Now watch this!

The principle is this: That this cross that Jesus died on is not something merely that I

come to for forgiveness; it is something that I get on for sanctification. Now, you see, it is the cross, it is the principle of the cross that provides this wisdom and this power. You see, I need to be crucified with Christ. Have you ever heard people talk about carrying your cross and bearing your cross? Of course, we all do. Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow Me." Suppose you'd heard Jesus say that. And Jesus is going from Pilate's judgment hall, and you say, ah, "Lord, I want to follow You." He says, "Okay, take up your cross and follow Me." Now where would you be going if you took your cross and followed Jesus? You'd be going to Calvary. A lot of people don't understand what it means to bear the cross. They say, "Well, you know, I've got some circumstance in my life I can't control. That's my cross." Or "I've got a nagging wife. That's my cross." Or, "I've got an unsaved husband. That's, that's my cross." Or, "I'm, I'm sick. That's my cross." No, it's not, that's not your cross. Those things may bother you and perturb you and cause you to suffer, but those things are not your cross. A cross, in the terminology of Jesus, is something that you take up willingly.

Now, did you just get sick willingly? I mean, did you just say, "You know, I'll just get sick. That'll be my cross." No. You see, Jesus said, "No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of myself." He embraced the cross. He took up the cross. He could have called twelve legions of angels and obliterated them all. He willingly took that cross.

Now, folks, you'll not know this sanctification until you willingly embrace the cross. What does taking up your cross mean? I'll put it to you plainly. It means dying. You say, "That's foolish." Well, you just showed me you're perishing. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness..." Jesus said, "Whosoever will save his life shall lose it." If that's foolish to you, you're perishing. The test of a fool is his reaction to the cross. Hold up the cross and see how a man reacts to it and you can tell whether he's a fool or wise. "The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness..."

Again, the cross is not just something we come to; it's something we get on. We take up our cross. And to take up our cross does not mean to bear a problem; it means that I die! Anybody here whose flesh wants to die? Not a one of us. We have to choose against the flesh to die. The way to lose your life is to try to keep it. The way to save your life is to lose it.

IV. Redemption

Now let's go to the fourth thing and I'll be finished. Look. In the cross, there's wisdom (verse 30). In the cross, there's righteousness (verse 30). In the cross, there's sanctification (verse 30). Now in the cross, there is redemption because redemption is the sum total of these other three things. We are redeemed. We're set free. I would have been a poor preacher if I had ended my message without getting to the fourth point, if I had ended and left you on that cross.

I'm going to tell you something that's going to sound controversial to you, and I had to think about it today, but I think I'm right. No, I know I'm right. God did not call you to live a crucified life. He called you to live the resurrected life. Now, friend, if you live in a crucified life, you're stopping short of Easter. There's no way you're going to go around the cross. You see, listen to Galatians chapter 2 and verse 20. Paul said, "I am crucified with Christ..." That's true, right? "...nevertheless I live..." I live! Not I die. I live! I'm not inviting you to death. I'm inviting you to life. "...nevertheless I live; yet not I, but the life I live, I live by the faith of the Son of God who died for me and gave Himself." Listen. What is the key word in that verse? Live, live. I live. "...the life I now live, I live by the faith of the Son of God..." Live, live live! The message of Christ is not die; it is live! It's redemption, being set free. But not without the cross. As you constantly take death to self, you take life. But when you say yes to self, you take death. It's all in the cross.

Conclusion

Wisdom is in the cross. The greatest demonstration of the heart, the mind of God is in the cross. If you want to see the heart of God, go to Calvary. That's wisdom. My dear friend, if you want to know what righteousness is, and where it is found, and God's hatred of sin, and God's provision, go to Calvary. There and there alone is righteousness. If you want to know what sanctification is, go to Calvary, because it is the power of the cross whereby we are being saved. God comes into us and that crucified life that's yielded to Jesus. And then, you want redemption? Mister, you'll have it because you passed through Calvary to Easter, and you'll live a life that will be Christ's life.

You know, all of us believe that our Christian life begins with a miracle, the new birth. And all of us know that it ends with a miracle, the resurrection. But I want to tell you, dear friend, between the beginning and the end there's supposed to be a miracle. It's to be lived with a miracle. And that's the power of the cross. Let's pray.

Thank You, Lord, for Your Word tonight. And, Lord, ah, I just pray that You'll help me, Lord, that I might be able to say no to the flesh and that I might take up my cross, be crucified with Christ, that I might live with him. But I thank You, Lord, that You did not call me to death, but You called me to life. Death to the old way, but life through Christ. Life full and abundant, a redeemed life. In Jesus' name, amen.

God's Hall of Fame

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 5, 1976

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:26–31

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Qualifications for Being in God's Hall of Fame
 - A. This Verse Says Nothing of the Mighty or of the Noble
 - B. I'm Not Putting a Premium on Halfheartedness, Laziness, or Mediocrity
 - C. God Uses Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Way
- II. Illustrations of Those Who Are in God's Hall of Fame
 - A. The Foolish Things of the World
 - B. The Weak Things of the World
 - C. The Base Things of the World
 - D. The Things Which Are Despised
 - E. Things Which Are Not
- III. Applications for Our Hearts
 - A. A Rebuke to Our Pride
 - B. A Reckoning of Our Power
 - C. A Response in Praise

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to 1 Corinthians 1. Last Sunday we spoke on "Conquering Through the Cross," and we spoke of the work of the cross, the word of the cross, and the way of the cross. And, we left our reading in verse 25. Now, we will begin our reading in verse 26, and our subject matter this morning will be a message that I brought to our seminary here in their founder's week—a message I think that needs to be sounded again, and again, and again: the people that God deems to use, the people that God chooses to use—the message that we're calling, this morning, "God's Hall of Fame." And, I want you to notice, if you will, in verse 26: *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are"* (1 Corinthians 1:26–28).

Now, the message this morning is primarily a message to encourage, because when

we see talent like that and when we hear people like this—and sometimes we behold people who are greatly gifted—it gives us a grand inferiority complex. And, we say, “We’re so grateful that there are the Kim Wickes, but what about us? Can God use us? Can God use people like the ordinary, average person?” May I tell you, dear friend, that it is God’s wonderful plan to use you? As a matter of fact, God had rather use you. Now, I want you to listen very carefully: God can use you. God can use you now. God can use you where you are, and God can use you with what you have. You see, you don’t have to be a very important person to be used of the Lord.

As a matter of fact, let’s just take a little survey and find out how many important people we have here, this morning; let’s just find out. I want to know. How many people here—don’t lift your hand right away—but how many people here have been listed in anybody’s hall of fame—maybe the Music Hall of Fame, maybe the Football Hall of Fame, basketball? Or... All right, don’t lift your hand yet. All right, how many of you are listed in Who’s Who? Wait a minute—don’t lift your hand. How many, when you played football, were All American or All State?

Well, let’s go on. I want to find out—how many of you were presidents of your class when you were in college? How many of you are Phi Beta Kappas? How many of you were voted Most Likely to Succeed? How many of you were Miss America? All right, now, if you were any of these things, or all of these things, or one of these things, be honest enough and lift your hand, will you? Okay. See, there are a few—there are a few. Well, I’ve got good news for you: God can use you, too, but He’ll have to work a little harder to do it.

Now, really—really—I want you to see what this passage of scripture is teaching. I want you to see that God does use the mighty, God does use the noble, but that is not His ordinary plan. You see, God wants to use ordinary people to do extraordinary things; and though you may have never won anything but the bad prize, God can use you.

I. The Qualifications for Being in God’s Hall of Fame

First of all, let’s look at the qualifications for being in God’s hall of fame. Look in verse 27: *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world”* (1 Corinthians 1:27). Are you feeling a little foolish today? Congratulations. All right. And, verse 27: *“and God hath chosen the weak things of the world”* (1 Corinthians 1:27). Do you have a headache, palpitations around the heart, feeling a little trembly? Wonderful, all right—verse 28: *“And base things”* (1 Corinthians 1:28). Are you feeling low-down—just feel low-down and unappreciated? Wonderful, all right—and verse 28: *“and things which are despised”* (1 Corinthians 1:28). Say, is there somebody who doesn’t like you? Fantastic. Somebody despises you? Well, wonderful, according to this passage of scripture. And,

look in verse 28: “*and things which are not*” (1 Corinthians 1:28). You say, “Brother Rogers, they don’t hate me; they don’t even know I’m here.” Well, this is talking about you: “*things which are not*” (1 Corinthians 1:28). Now, these are God’s qualifications for being you. Isn’t that wonderful?

You see, God has a marvelous plan. First of all, He takes what the world calls a *foolish message*. Remember, we preached about that last Sunday: “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness*” (1 Corinthians 1:18). All right, but then, not only does He take a foolish message, but then He takes a feeble messenger and He compounds them in the crucible of His wisdom; and the result is glory to God. You see, God is after glory to His own dear name. And so, God has fixed it that none of us can steal the glory from the Lord. So, you see, it is not scholarship that counts as much as relationship. It is not fame but faith. It is not ability; it is availability. It is not who you know—it is whose you are that counts with God. And, God takes ordinary people and does extraordinary things with them.

A. This Verse Says Nothing of the Mighty or of the Noble

Now, having said that, I want to make three things very clear before we go on. First of all, this verse does not say anything of the mighty—not anything of the noble. I thank God for all the Americans who love Jesus. I thank God for the Phi Beta Kappas who love Jesus, and for the class presidents who love Jesus, and for the beauty queens who love Jesus, and for the great talent, and for the Kim Wickes who love Jesus, and for others who have great ability—I thank God for those. And, the Apostle Paul was a mighty and a noble man, according to the flesh. Why, he had all the pedigrees; he had all the accoutrements of learning; he had all the background; he was a Hebrew of the Hebrews, a Pharisee of the Pharisees—he had it all. But, he said, “I count it all but dung that I might gain Christ” (Philippians 3:7). He laid it all at the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ, and he realized that these were not reasons that God was using him. God did not use him because he was mighty; God did not use him because he was noble, but God used him because of the grace of God. So, number one: it doesn’t say not any mighty and not any noble.

B. I’m Not Putting a Premium on Halfheartedness, Laziness, or Mediocrity

Number two: I want to say that I’m not putting a premium upon half-heartedness, upon laziness, upon mediocrity. You see, *it doesn’t take much of a man to be a Christian; it just takes all there is of him*. Now, you may be a singer and you may have only a very average voice, but it ought to be your ambition to make that voice sing the sweetest note it can sing for Jesus Christ. You may have an average mind—maybe you are not brilliant, maybe you’re not a genius, maybe you have an average IQ—but God can use you if you’re willing to “*study to shew [yourself] approved unto God, a workman that*

needeth not to be ashamed" (2 Timothy 2:15), if you're willing to let every point of that IQ count for Jesus Christ. Maybe you'll never be a super athlete. Maybe you don't have mountains of muscles. Maybe you don't have superior coordination. I know some people who can't walk and chew bubble gum at the same time, so maybe you're not very coordinated and all of that. But, you see, your ambition ought to be to make every nerve, every fiber, every corpuscle, every hair, every nail—all that you have—count for Jesus Christ. That's what I'm trying to say. You see, look, I'm not saying, "Be lazy"—I'm not saying, "Be half-hearted"—when I say that God uses ordinary people.

C. **God Uses Ordinary People in an Extraordinary Way**

Now, the third thing I want to say is this, and this is the most important: God uses ordinary people in an extraordinary way, and that is the secret of the whole thing. You see, don't go around insulting God, saying, "God cannot use me. God cannot use me because of what I am." That would be an insult if you were to say that. You see, because God wants to infuse you with His mighty, dynamic Holy Spirit, He wants to give you power. You don't need to go around serving God in your poor little ole' weak way; you can serve God in His mighty, glorious, dynamic way.

II. **Illustrations of Those Who Are in God's Hall of Fame**

Now, secondly, not only do I want you to notice some qualifications for being in God's hall of fame, I want you to notice with me, this morning, some illustrations of those who are in God's hall of fame.

A. **The Foolish Things of the World**

Notice, first of all, in verse 27: "*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*"—"the foolish things of the world" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Just draw a circle around that word *foolish*. It means, "nonintellectual"; it's the root word that we get our English word *moron* from. And, it means that you don't have to be learned—you don't have to be a PhD—for God to use you.

I can think of many illustrations of that in the Bible. I think of the little slave girl in Naaman's household when Naaman, the great mighty general, had leprosy. This little girl never had any education—just a little slave girl—but she was used of the Lord to guide Naaman to find the healing for his leprosy and the way to God.

I can think of a modern-day illustration. I think, when I think of foolish things, I must consider Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday, in many ways, was a foolish man—I mean, he was a clown. He had laughable ideas. He was an ex-baseball player and a very fine baseball player—very fast on the bases, much of an athlete. But, he only had a high school education; he used slang language. He did all kinds of antics when he was in the pulpit. Sometimes he would take the pulpit furniture and the chair and smash it on the pulpit,

when he was pretending to be fighting the devil. One person told me that Billy Sunday sometimes would do a complete somersault and just do a back flip, illustrating repentance and all of these things—and just an amazing man. And, he would preach in excoriating terms against the liquor crowd and so forth, and he’s just a man. By the way, how many of you have heard Billy Sunday preach? All right, well, you know Billy Sunday—quite a few. I imagine maybe 150–200 here have heard Billy Sunday preach.

I never heard Billy Sunday preach, but my professor, when I was in seminary, Dr. Roland Q. Leavell, said that he heard Billy Sunday preach. And, he said Billy Sunday got up and with all of those antics and all of that carrying on. And, Leavell said, “How could God use a man like that—all that foolishness? But then,” he said, “Billy Sunday started to preach; and when he preached, he preached Hell—hot, Heaven—sweet, sin—black, judgment—sure, and Jesus saves. And, the power of God came down upon that place; and when Billy Sunday gave the invitation, people started coming forward to give their hearts to Jesus Christ. Sunday was moved, and he was thrilled and happy that people were coming; but among those who came forward was a man who had a long flowing beard—a white beard. And, Sunday got his eye on that beard and couldn’t take it off. He was fascinated by that old man’s white beard. Now, this was during the invitation time. And finally, temptation overcame Sunday; and during the invitation, the man standing near the platform, Billy Sunday, went up and took the beard and went *honk, honk.*”

Now, can you imagine that? I say, can you imagine that in an invitation? You say, “God couldn’t use a man like that.” He did. His biographers said over a million men came to Jesus Christ through the preaching of Billy Sunday. You say, “That’s an exaggeration.” Okay, let’s say half a million—how do you like that? And, I know of people and preachers all over this world whose lives have been touched by the ministry of Billy Sunday. His biographer called him “God’s laugh at the preachers.” He was God’s joke of the preachers. You see, there are a lot of men who have studied at the university, a lot of men who’ve been to the seminary, a lot of men who have all of the accoutrements of high learning. They are very scholarly; and yet, God chose to use Billy Sunday, and they can’t understand it. Dr. Sounding Brass, Professor Tinkling Cymbal, cannot understand why, when he preaches, nobody gets saved; and over here, God takes a Billy Sunday. Why? God is just showing that a university and a seminary can’t make a preacher, only God can make a preacher, and that “*the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God*” (1 Corinthians 3:19). I’m not saying man ought not to study, for the Bible says that we are to “*study to shew [ourselves]...unto God, a workman that [need] not to be ashamed*” (2 Timothy 2:15), but I’m also saying that there are some things that the world cannot understand. “*God hath chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise*” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

B. The Weak Things of the World

Now, let's look at the next thing. The Bible says, "*And God hath chosen the weak things of this world*"—"the weak things of this world"—"to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:27)—the weak things. What's an illustration of that?

Well, let me give you a Bible illustration, first of all. I think of the little baby Moses. Remember Moses' mother hid him in the bulrushes there. Mighty Pharaoh had decreed that all the little boy babies in Egypt—all the little Hebrew children—would be stained at the time of their birth and they'd be put to death. And, God in His plan took the little baby Moses and had Moses' mother hide him there in that little ark of safety—in the bulrushes. And, just at the particular time when the princess came down to bathe, the Bible says, "Behold, the babe wept," just a little babies cry—"Whaaa," like that; that's all. And, the weeping of that baby was enough to capture that princess's imagination and to break her motherly heart. She found the child—took the child to be her own. God grew the child up and used the child to deliver the people of Israel. But now, notice—here is a baby. You can't get weaker than a baby—a little baby in a river. You can't get weaker than that. And, here is mighty Pharaoh. But, God used a baby to set aside the plans of mighty Pharaoh.

The illustration I think of in modern times—when I was down in Florida, we decided that we would try to win our high school students by having what we called a *Week of Champions* in Florida, in Cocoa Beach. We invited all of the great athletes that we could think of to come down there to give their testimonies for Christ, and we worked with the fellowship of Christian athletes. And, we worked with the athletes in action from Campus Crusade, and we got All-Americans and great football players—professional football players—and other sports personalities to come and give their testimony; and the kids came to the gymnasium. It was a wonderful week. Among those who came was Paul Anderson. Now, Paul Anderson at that time, was reputed to be the strongest man in the world, and he had all of the medals to prove it; and he looked the part—about *that* wide, about *that* high. and had arms like watermelons, just a great big fellow. Looks a little pudgy when you first see him, but you touch him—he's like polished steel. Somebody asked him, "Mr. Anderson, were you ever once a 98-pound weakling?" He said, "Yes, when I was four years old." Just a big man—big and strong—and his testimony was this: "if the strongest man in the world needs Jesus, so do you." I thought, "Well, that's a good testimony." Here he was the strongest man in the world, and he said he needed the Lord.

But, later on, as the week had concluded and I was preaching in the First Baptist Church of Marriot Island, I gave the invitation, and a college student came forward to profess his faith in Jesus. And, I asked him when he was saved, and he said, "During the Week of Champions." I said, "What night?" He said, "The night Paul Anderson was

there.” I said, “What was it that Paul Anderson said that really impressed you? Do you know what he said?” He said, “I don’t remember what Paul Anderson said.” I said, “Well, tell me—what touched your heart?” He said, “That night there was a man in a wheelchair—a paraplegic in a wheelchair—that gave his testimony. This man had been paralyzed in a diving accident and could not move—had to be carried around. And, here was a man in a wheelchair, and he said, “I looked at that man, and I saw the radiance on his face and I saw the victory in his life.” And, he said, “I got to thinking if Jesus Christ could do that for a man in a wheelchair, maybe Jesus Christ could do something for me; and I want to be saved.” And, I want to tell you, friend, that night, the strongest man in the world was in that auditorium, but God used a paraplegic in a wheelchair to bring a college student to Jesus Christ. You can’t get weaker than that. *“But...God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things [that] are mighty”* (1 Corinthians 1:27).

C. The Base Things of the World

And then, go on down and look in verse 28: *“And base things of the world”* (1 Corinthians 1:28). This word *base* means, “of low birth, ignoble, without pedigree”—if you please, “from the wrong side of the track.”

The illustration I think of from the Bible is Gideon. Do you remember Gideon, who was on the threshing floor when the Lord appeared to him? And, the Midianites had taken over the land, and the Lord said to Gideon, *“[Hail], thou mighty man of valour”* (Judges 6:12). Gideon must have looked over his shoulder to see to whom the Lord was speaking. And, the Lord said, in effect, “Gideon, I’m talking to you. I want you, Gideon, to deliver My people from the bondage—the oppression—of the Midianites.” And, when He said that, Gideon remonstrated with the Lord, and he said, “Lord, You don’t want to use me.” And, this is what Gideon said: “My family is the poorest in Menasa, and I am the least in my father’s house” (Judges 6:15)—in effect, of all of the tribes in Israel, Menasa’s the worst—“Of all of the families in Menasa, my family’s the poorest; and of all of the kids in my family, I’m the runt of the litter. I am the least in my father’s house” (Judges 6:15). And, the Lord said, “You’re just low enough I believe I can use you.” See, the Lord is looking for base things.

And, I want you to understand what the Lord did. You remember the story of Gideon. He took a nothing army and a nobody general, and He whipped the Midianites; and the result was glory to God. You see, he didn’t go forth with a big army; he went forth with a small army but with God on his side. He was like that sergeant in the war who looked up in the midst of the battle and said to his men around him, “Men, we’re surrounded by the enemy. Don’t let a’ one of them escape.” And, that’s the way Gideon was. Gideon was a man who had God fighting with him.

D. The Things Which Are Despised

Now, let's go on. Look, if you will, in the verse 28: and he mentions here, *"things which are despised"* (1 Corinthians 1:28). This means, "those that they would write off, those that the world hates, those that the world militantly opposes." God can use them, also.

The illustration that I think of is David and Goliath. We've preached on David and Goliath so much, but I want you to turn again, if you will, to 1 Samuel chapter 17—1 Samuel chapter 17 (1 Samuel 17). Now, you remember the story. There's Goliath over there on the mountainside, and the Philistine army. Over here, on the other side, are the children of Israel—the Israelites. And, there's a valley in between. Goliath is standing there with his huge ham-like fist raised into the sky, and he's blaspheming God—he's cursing God. He's saying, "Hey, you bunch of sissies, send somebody over here to fight me," and nobody was going. And then, little David decided he would go, and I've told you the difference between David and everybody else was this: everybody else looked at Goliath, and they said, when they saw Goliath, "Look how much bigger he is than we are." But, when David saw Goliath, he said, "Look how much smaller he is than God is." Everybody else said, "He's too big to hit." David said, "He's too big to miss." And, little David took five smooth stones and a sling, and he went forth against Goliath, who was over nine-feet-tall—the biggest man David had ever seen.

And, I want you to begin the scripture reading now in 1 Samuel chapter 17, beginning in verse 42, and I want you to get the picture—1 Samuel chapter 17 and verse 42: *"And when the Philistine looked about, and saw David, he disdained him: for he was but a youth, and ruddy, and of a fair countenance"*—now, that tells us how young David was; that means that David just had a little peach fuzz on his chin. He hadn't even started to shave yet—just a little kid, just a boy, just a stripling, teenage boy. And, when this mighty giant saw this teenage boy coming against him, he's infuriated. *"He disdained him,"* the Bible says, in verse 42 (1 Samuel 17:42). That's what we're talking about: things that are despised—things that are disdained. And, verse 43—*"And the philistine said unto David, Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves? And the Philistine cursed David by his gods. And the Philistine said unto David, Come to me, and I will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the air, and to the beasts of the field"* (1 Samuel 17:42–43). That is, "Sunny boy, when I get my hands on you, I'm going to break you in little pieces and feed you to the pigeons. Just let me get my hands on you. Come to me."

Now, what would you have done? Well, I want you to see what David did. I want you to notice in verse 45: *"Then said David to the Philistine, Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I*

will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth”—and now, I want you to notice the rationale, I want you to notice the philosophy, I want you to notice the reasoning in this whole passage of scripture. Don't miss the next phrase. Listen to it—“This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and the wild beasts of the earth; that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (1 Samuel 17:45–46).

Now, I want to ask you a question: Suppose the Philistines had a giant, and Israel had a giant, and the Israelite giant went out and defeated the Philistine giant—what would that have proven? Not a thing in the world. But, when God took a little teenage boy and defeated a mighty Goliath giant, then everybody had to say, “There's a God around here somewhere.” Amen. Do you understand what I'm talking about? You see, when God uses some people who are brilliant and when God uses some people who are gifted, that's fine. God does use some mighty, God does use some noble, God does use some beautiful, God does use some wealthy—and we thank God for them. But, I tell you, it is also a testimony to the grace of God when God takes an ordinary person and God does extraordinary things through that ordinary person, *“that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel” (1 Samuel 17:46).*

E. Things Which Are Not

And then, go on down, if you will—look back to 1 Corinthians to our text, again. And, the Bible says not only has God used the base things and things which are despised, but our text also says, *“[And God hath] chosen...the things which are not” (1 Corinthians 1:28).* What does that mean? These are the people that nobody ever really hears from. They don't get their names in lights. Their names are never printed on the program. They're never introduced. They're God's nobody's. They didn't make Who's Who; they didn't even make Who's Not—things which aren't, things that are nothing, nobody. So the world says. *“But,”* the Bible says, *“many that are first shall be last; [and many that are] the last shall be first” (Matthew 19:30).*

I'll tell you, dear friend, if you were to take the things which are not out of the king's army, it would all collapse. I just thank God for the multitudes of brothers and sisters around the world who serve Jesus who are hardly ever mentioned. Just now, while I'm preaching, there are some that you don't know about who are taking care of the nursery. Did you know that? Did you know, right now, while I'm preaching, there are some that you don't know about, who are in the sound room and who are working the television equipment; and some, perhaps, you never think about, who are ushering; and some who are seeing that this building is heated and cooled; some who are taking care

of things. We don't ever notice those people, perhaps. There are those who stand at the door. There are those who pick up a piece of paper off the churchyard. There are those who just give a smile. Jesus said, "You can't give a cup of cold water in the name of the disciple and lose your reward" (Matthew 10:42; Mark 9:41). I thank God for these in the nursery, wiping little runny noses, and giving kids little cups of water, and changing diapers, don't you? I tell you, Jesus knows about that—Jesus knows about that.

Sometimes we place the emphasis and the praise, sometimes, in the wrong place. It'll take another world to show who the great preachers are; it'll take another world to show where the great churches are and who the great servants of God are. You see, the Bible says, "That which is highly esteemed before men is an abomination to God" (Luke 16:15). God doesn't see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart.

I remember one of the first revival crusades that God gave me the joy and privilege of preaching. And, I was a 19-year-old boy, and I preached in Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida; and it was a wonderful meeting—not because of me. I looked back at some of the sermons I preached; I saved the notes. Honest, folks, they were terrible—terrible. I tore them up, and I said, "Dear Lord, how could I ever have preached this?" It was Truth, but it was just terrible. It was put together wrong—it was. But, it was Truth, you see—Truth. God blesses Truth, not our cute little outlines and all that. It's Truth that God blesses. And, God did bless—I mean, God blessed. I don't believe in all of my ministry I've ever been in a revival meeting where there's more power than there was in that, and I didn't know much about preaching. And, you talk about preaching long—you think you got it bad then! I preached 'till about 9:30 every night, you know; and then, we had about an hour-and-a-half invitation. But, God just blessed. I mean, there was a wonderful revival and first revival meeting I'd ever preached in, and I was just thrilled.

And, I had a friend, Ernie Harvey, who was working with me. It was what we called a *youth revival* in those days, and that was his home church. And, Ernie said, "Adrian, I want you to meet my mother." So, I said, "Well, Ernie, I'd like to meet her"; and so, we went to meet Ernie's mother. We went to the very poorest section of Jacksonville, Florida, to a little apartment upstairs apartment over a business, and it was clean but very threadbare. And, when Ernie's mother came out, I was very surprised. She was all twisted and gnarled with arthritis—just a little woman. And, her hands were swollen and very tender, and every joint in her body was swollen; and she could hardly move without pain, but her face had the smile of an angel. And, she looked at us, and she said, "Boys, how did the revival go, last night?" I said, "Wonderful, Mrs. Harvey—wonderful. Oh, God blessed! Oh, you should have been there! Souls were saved; people came down the aisles. It was just glorious!" A tear welled up in her eye. She said, "I knew it'd be that

way.” I said, “How did you know?” She said, “Young man, the whole time you were preaching I was down on my knees praying for you.” And, I looked at that little old twisted, gnarled body, and I got to thinking about all the people who came by and shook my hand and said, “That’s a good sermon.” I know it wasn’t now, but all those people came by and patted me on the back and all of that.

But, I tell you what, dear friend, nobody in that revival knew about Mom Harvey being on her knees the whole time that no good lanker of a preacher boy was preaching, but God knew about it—God knew about it. And, I tell you, God hath chosen people like that in this church. I tell you, we’ve got some of the finest saints of God. These precious little ladies around here—I love them. I tell you, every one of them is a mama to me. And, I thank God for them, and they say to me so often, “Pastor, we’re praying for you.” They never preach; they don’t sing solos. But, I just thank God for them, and I thank God for a great vast army of people around the world who love the Lord Jesus Christ and who serve the Lord Jesus Christ. And, I tell you, it’s going to be a great day when the saints go marching in and God gives out the crowns.

III. Applications for Our Hearts

Now, the last thing I want you to notice before we go—I want you to notice some applications, if you will, for our hearts. Turn, if you will, back to 1 Corinthians chapter 1, and let’s read now verses 29 through 31. God has told those that He wants to use and why He wants to use them. And now, very quickly, let’s make an application. Here is the reason that God does it this way. Here is the reason that God doesn’t choose many mighty. Here’s the reason that God doesn’t choose many noble. Here’s what it says: *“That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1:29–31). What is the response that we should make? What is the application?

A. A Rebuke to Our Pride

First of all, there is a rebuke to our pride. Look in verse 29: the Bible says God does it this way *“that no flesh should glory in his presence”* (1 Corinthians 1:29). God hates pride. Too much preaching is flesh on parade. Too much singing is flesh on parade. Too much so-called Christian service is people thinking they’re doing God a favor with their mighty talents. But, God says, “Wait a minute—I’ll take ordinary people, and I’ll give glory to My name. *‘That no flesh should glory in his presence’*” (1 Corinthians 1:29). I told you about a woodpecker that was pecking on a tree, one day, when a bolt of lightning hit it and split it in two. He looked at it for a moment, flew off. Later on, he was seen flying back with nine other woodpeckers and said, “There it is, gentlemen—right

over there.” Oh, how calm we are to want to take credit for what God does!

B. A Reckoning of Our Power

Not only is it a rebuke to our pride, but oh, there ought to be a reckoning of our power. Notice in verse 30: *“But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption”* (1 Corinthians 1:30). That is, all you need is in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is sufficient—He is your wisdom, He is your righteousness, He is your redemption, He is your sanctification. When God called Moses, Moses said, *“Who am I, that I should [speak] unto Pharaoh?”* (Exodus 3:11). Moses asked the wrong question. He should have been asking, “Who is God?”

C. A Response in Praise

All right now, finally, not only a rebuke to our pride and the reckoning of our power, but there ought to be the response in praise. Notice verse 31: *“That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1:31). Friend, that’s what it’s all about. God is in the business of giving glory to His name, and He says, “My glory I will not share with another.”

All hail the power of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all (Edward Perronet).

Conclusion

Let’s bow in prayer.

Inferiority

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 26, 1986

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:26–31

Outline

Introduction

- I. God's Simple People
 - A. God Can Use Extraordinary People
 - B. There Is No Premium upon Laziness, Mediocrity, or Halfheartedness
- II. God's Special Power
 - A. The Foolish Things
 - B. The Weak Things
 - C. The Base Things
 - D. The Things Which Are Despised
- III. God's Sovereign Purpose

Conclusion

Introduction

Today, we're going to be talking about this matter of inferiority and whether or not you feel inferior. A lot of us do feel inferior, and our friends don't help us. I heard about one preacher—at breakfast one morning, he asked his wife, "Honey, how many really great preachers do you think there are in the world today?" She said, "I don't know, but I believe there's one less than you think there is." And, we all kind of get put down that way a little bit. And, many of us get the idea, you know, "God just can't use me. God can use him. God can use her. God can use them, but God can't use me." We just feel inferior, and we go through life, as it were, just sucking our thumb, sitting in a corner, and feeling inferior. Well, I pray God today that God will use this message to remove that thought from your heart and from your mind. And, I want to show you that God can use you—God can use you now, God can use you where you are, and God can use you with what you have.

I heard about a man who sang a song, and when he finished singing, the people sitting out there said, "Sing it again." So, he said to himself, "Why, I must have excelled." And so, he sang it again. And then, they said to him, "Sing it again." But, he thought, "I didn't know I was that good." But, he sang it the third time and the fourth time. They said, "Sing it again." He said, "Why?" They said, "You're going to sing it till you get it right." Listen folks, some of the thoughts that I want to share with you today I have shared with some of you before. I am aware of the fact that some of these thoughts

you've heard before. But, I want to share them with you in this sequence of messages, because, number one, I want this material in a cassette book of tapes that I hope will be a blessing to other people. And, this is material that you definitely need to hear and get X'd in your mind and upon your consciousness of how God takes ordinary people and God does extraordinary things with ordinary people.

Now, I want us to begin reading here in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 26: *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 1:26–31). Now, I don't really know how many of you feel inferior or not today. I don't know how many of you... Some of you may not feel inferior at all. And, outwardly speaking, you have no reason to feel inferior.

You don't mind if I take a little survey, do you? Shake your head if you don't mind. All right. You will cooperate, won't you? Nod your head. All right. Now, I want everybody to be absolutely honest. How many people in this auditorium today have been listed in Who's Who? If you have, lift your hand. How many Who's Who? Hey, pretty good. All right. Now, how many of you, when you were in athletics, were All State, All American, or All Conference? Let me see your hand. Wonderful. All right. How many of you have an earned doctorate of some kind—a PhD, MD, ThM, ThD, or whatever? Let me see your hand. All right—MD? Okay, quite a few doctors. How many of you ladies have been Miss Tennessee, Miss America, Miss Florida, Miss World, Miss Universe, or something like that? Beauty queens, let me see your hand? All right. Here's one, two, three. All right. How many of you, in school, were the president of your high school or college class? Let me see your hand. Hey, quite a few college class presidents. Wonderful. How many of you were voted “Most Likely to Succeed”? All right. Well, what's funny about that? All right. You just laughed when he lifted his hand—you couldn't imagine why. All right. Now, “Most Likely to Succeed”? Well, that's amazing; that's wonderful, and I'm glad you're here. Now, if you lifted your hand for any of these things or all of these things, I've got wonderful news for you: God can use you, too, but He'll have to work just a little harder to do it.

Now, I'm not being facetious; I'm being serious. Now listen, God can use you, too, but He'll work just a little harder to do it. Now, let me tell you what God's plan is, and it is a tremendous plan. It is a wonderful, wonderful plan. And, here's God's plan, and here's

the crux of my entire message. Are you listening? God takes ordinary people and does extraordinary things through ordinary people and gives glory to Himself. Do you understand that? God takes ordinary people and God does extraordinary things through ordinary people, and, thereby, God gets glory to Himself.

I. God's Simple People

Now, the very first thing I want you to notice is what I'm going to call "God's simple people." Now, let's look again in verse 27: "*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Now, look at that word *foolish*. The word *foolish* comes from the Greek word that we get our word *moron* from, and it literally means "the nonintellectual," those people who were not the head of the class, those people who don't have an IQ of 130, and those people who are not PhDs, Phi Beta Kappa's. God chooses the nonintellectual to "*confound the wise*" (1 Corinthians 1:27)—the intellectual top waters.

All right. "*And God hath chosen the weak things of the world*"—look at that word *weak*. The word *weak* here literally means "those who are physically weak." What we would call "anemic," "emaciated," "run down," "without physical strength," or even "sickly"—"*to confound the things which are mighty*"—that is, God uses the nonintellectuals to confound PhDs; God uses the weak to confound the All Americans. All right—"And *base things of the world*"—the word *base* means "ignoble," "of low degree," "without the proper pedigree," "not a blueblood," "people from the wrong side of the tracks." God has chosen the base things of the world—"and things which are *despised*"—the word here *despised* means "those things that are looked down upon," "things that the world scorns, and ridicules, and actually laughs at"—"*hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not*"—you say, "Pastor, it's not that they hate me; they don't even know I'm here." All right. You're included here. I mean, if you didn't even come up to the level of being hated, you can still be used. You didn't make Who's Who; you didn't even make "Who's Not." All right. You... These are people...these are people...they don't...you...they never sing a solo like Nan did. They've never preached a sermon. They never get their name in the bulletin. They don't even get to lead in silent prayer in the nursery. They are... Nobody knows about them. They're God's little nobodies and things which are not—"to bring to nought things that are" (1 Corinthians 1:27–28). Things that the world thinks are so important that—the Bible says these things are just passing away. These are the people, the Bible says, that God has chosen (1 Corinthians 1:27). These are God's simple people.

A. God Can Use Extraordinary People

Now, having said that, I want to say several things to put it in context. Number one: he

does not say, “Not any mighty, not any noble at all.” You see, there, he says, “*Not many*” (1 Corinthians 1:26). He doesn’t say, “not any.” Thank God for the PhDs that love Jesus. Thank God for the movie stars that love Jesus. Thank God for the millionaires that love Jesus. Thank God for the All Americans that love Jesus. Thank God for the beauty queens that love Jesus. Thank God for them. And, “*Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*” (Luke 12:48). The Apostle Paul was one of these mighty; he was one of these noble. He was a Pharisee. He was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. He was one of those learned men of his generation, and he was used of God. And, God took that brilliance and used it. But, before God could use it, he said, “*And do count them but dung, that I may win Christ*” (Philippians 3:8). Right? He laid them in the dust before the Lord Jesus Christ. But, God does use these things, and I’m not saying that God does not use people who are extraordinary people. Thank God He does.

B. There Is No Premium upon Laziness, Mediocrity, or Halfheartedness

All right. The second thing I want to say is that I am not putting a premium upon laziness, mediocrity, or halfheartedness, when I say that God uses ordinary people. Now, you misread me if you thought that if I’m talking about just being lazy, and indifferent, and expecting God to use you. For example, you may not have mountains of muscles, you may not have bulging biceps, you may not be a towering giant, you may not be the athletic type, your body may be sick and weakly—but I’ll tell you this much, dear friend: no matter what kind of body you have, every ounce, every inch, every nerve, every fiber, every sinew, and every corpuscle must be given to Jesus Christ. Somebody has well said, “It doesn’t take much of a man to be a Christian; it just takes all there is of him.” You see, anything less than all is not enough for the Lord Jesus Christ. The same thing intellectually—I mean, you may not be brilliant, you may not be witty and have a mind that some people have—they just seem to be so intelligent. You may be like that guy who said, “I’ve got a mind like a blotter. It soaks up everything, but then gets it backward.” Maybe that’s the way you are. You don’t have that. Maybe you have an average IQ—maybe less than average. But, dear friend, that is no excuse for not studying. Right? For the scripture says we are to “*study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed*” (2 Timothy 2:15).

I heard of a preacher, one time—had a reputation of being a foxhunter. He wasn’t much of a preacher, but he was a good foxhunter. One time a Quaker met him on the street and said, “If I were a fox, I would hide me where thee could not find me.” The preacher said, “Where is that?” He said, “In thy study.” Amen. We are to “*study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed*” (2 Timothy 2:15). Maybe you’re a singer—maybe you can’t sing like Nan Gill just sang. Maybe you don’t have the voice box, maybe you don’t have the lung capacity, maybe you don’t

have just quite that ear to hear like other people hear—but you know that God has given you a voice, and you want to sing for Him. Then, dear friend, I don't care what kind of a singer you are—it ought to be your sacred and holy ambition to sing in the spirit. Make your voice make the sweetest sound it can make for Jesus Christ. Isn't that right? No matter whether you're an ordinary singer or not, you still need to practice, you need to prepare, you need to pray. And, I'm not talking about laziness—I'm not talking about mediocrity—when I tell you that God wants to take ordinary people and do extraordinary things through them. But, I am telling you, dear friend, that there is a way in which God is going to get glory to Himself by choosing people just like many of us who are here today, who think of ourselves as being quite ordinary and sometimes thereby thinking that we're going to have to sit on the sidelines while the superstars do their stuff. Not so, my dear friend—God has been looking for people just like the ordinary, average person that comes to church on Sunday morning.

Now so, we're thinking, first of all, about what I want to call "God's simple people." Now, the Bible says God doesn't just make up His mind that He's going to have to use it. No, God chooses—I mean, God actually goes out after these kinds of folks; these are the ones that God chooses.

II. God's Special Power

Now, the second thing I want you to notice is God's special power. Now, look, if you will, in verse 30, and you're going to find out here's the way this thing works. Look in verse 30: "*But of him*"—that is, "of God"—"*are ye in Christ Jesus*"—now, that's where I am. I'm in Christ Jesus—"*who of God*"—that is, "Jesus is of God"—"*is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*" (1 Corinthians 1:30). You see, I am in Christ; Christ is in me. And, if I don't have wisdom, who does have wisdom? Jesus—and He is in me. If I don't have righteousness, then who has righteousness? Jesus—and He is in me. If I don't have sanctification, who has sanctification? Jesus—and Jesus is in me. And so, He "*made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*" (1 Corinthians 1:30). That is, all I need, He supplies. I may be ordinary, but He is extraordinary. He is in me, and, therefore, He does something through me.

One of the greatest secrets I've ever learned is this, and I want you to learn it here. I learned it after I was already in the ministry. Are you ready? It's quite simple, but it's very important. I learned that God didn't want me to do anything for Him; He wanted to do something through me. Now folks, that's more than to turn a phrase. That is more than just some slippery way of saying something. That is a fundamental and basic truth, so I want you to get it down in your heart. You see, God wants to do something through you. People say, "Well, I just serve God in my poor little ole' weak way." I feel like

saying, “Well, quit it. He doesn’t want you to serve Him in your poor little ole’ weak way. He wants you to serve Him in His mighty, glorious, dynamic way.” For the Bible says, *“For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure”* (Philippians 2:13). You see, it is *“God that worketh in you”* (Philippians 2:13). God works through you, and what we need to do is to make ourselves available to God and say, “Dear God, I’m tired of being inhibited. I want to be inhabited. I want You to inhabit my humanity, and I want You to live Your life through me.” Then, I can say, *“Nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me”* (Galatians 2:20).

Now, I want us, as we’re looking at God’s special power, I want you to see how that works out, and I want us to use some illustrations from the Word of God for example from the Bible and from contemporary illustrations, also.

A. The Foolish Things

For example, let’s think of that—God choosing the foolish things. Now remember, I said the word *foolish* means “the nonintellectual.”

I think for an illustration I want to use Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday was the evangelist of his day. He was the Billy Graham, the Dwight L. Moody, of his day. Many of you have heard Billy Sunday; some of you old-timers have heard Billy Sunday preach. Most of you have heard about Billy Sunday. Now, Billy Sunday was different from Billy Graham. Billy Graham is cultured, erudite, educated, and intellectual—not Sunday. Sunday was an ex-baseball player, a YMCA clerk, that God called into the ministry. He had laughable ideas. He used slang language, and many times he’d do acrobatics on the platform. He would do bizarre things like take a pulpit chair and smash it on the pulpit. Sometimes, to illustrate repentance, he’d do a back flip. He did strange, weird things. That’s right—he really did. Don’t expect that out of me; I can’t do one. All right. Now—now listen. You say, “Well, God couldn’t use that.” It is said that Billy Sunday won over a million men to Jesus Christ. Now, you say, “Well, that’s an exaggeration.” Okay, let’s say half a million. Anyway you look at it, folks, he was mightily used of the Lord. And, I meet people all over who came to faith and who were good solid citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven who were saved under the ministry of Billy Sunday.

Now, many a’ time some man who has all of the accouterments of learning—he’s been to seminary; he’s got all the polish, all the class; he has all of the background and so forth—hasn’t been used like Billy Sunday. And, they’re perplexed about it. I mean, Dr. Sounding Brass, Professor Tinkling Cymbal—why doesn’t God use him? Why did God use Billy Sunday? Billy Sunday’s biographer called him “God’s joke on the ministry.” I think God just chose Billy Sunday to show that God could use him. Now, you

preacher boys from Mid-America Seminary—don't you do what Billy Sunday did. That was not what made Billy Sunday; God made Billy Sunday. And, don't mimic those things about Billy Sunday. But, I'm just trying to tell you this: God did that to show that He could take what the world would call "something foolish." And yet, here was a man who loved God and was really just being himself, and God took that man and fused that man with His mighty power. And, he won hundreds of thousands of people to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. The Weak Things

And then, the Bible says, "*God hath chosen the weak things of the world*" (1 Corinthians 1:27). Now remember, I told you this word *weak* means what? It means "physically weak."

When we were down in Florida, Brother Whitmire and I were down there together at the First Baptist Church at Merritt Island, Florida. We thought one time we'd have a thing called "Week of Champions." We rented the high school gymnasium and brought all of the best athletes we knew from all over the United States to come give their testimony—people from Athletes in Action, the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and others (All Stars, All Americans, professional football players, and so forth) to come and give their testimonies. It was a great week. High school students came. These men shared the faith that they had in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Then, next Sunday, when I preached in my particular church down there and I gave the invitation, a college student came forward. And, I met him, and he said, "I want to profess faith in Christ." I said, "Wonderful, when were you saved?" He said, "During the Week of Champions." I said, "What night?" He said, "The night that Paul Anderson was there." And, I thought, "Boy, that's wonderful." You see, Paul Anderson had given his testimony. And, have you ever seen Paul Anderson? He's the strongest man in the world. Paul Anderson—only about *that tall*, but also about *that wide*. His legs are like barrels, and his arms are like watermelons. He's just a great big strong man. He was the strongest man in the world. Folks, he could almost lift this auditorium. It's unbelievable the strength that guy had—and the strongest man in the world. I remember in his testimony, the people asked him—said, "Well, were you ever once a 97-pound weakling?" He said, "Yes, when I was four years old." Just big—and his testimony was basically this: if the strongest man in the world needs Jesus, so do you.

Well, I thought it was a good testimony, but when I asked that student, I said, "What night?" He said, "The night Paul Anderson was there." I said, "What was it that Paul Anderson said that really impressed you?" He said, "I don't even remember what Paul Anderson said." And then, he said, "It was what So-and-so said." And, he mentioned another man's name whose name I'm not sure of right now. I couldn't remember. I tried

to figure out, “Which athlete was he? Where’d he come from?” Then, I remembered he wasn’t an athlete at all; he wasn’t even on the program at all. We had a time of free testimony, and in that time of free testimony, a man in a wheelchair rolled himself forward. He was a paraplegic in a wheelchair. He couldn’t get on the platform, so some men took the wheelchair and everything and lifted him up. He wheeled around, and with a face shining like the noonday sun, he told about his faith and his love for the Lord Jesus Christ. He talked about the joy that he had in the Lord Jesus Christ. That college student said, “When I saw that man, when I saw the joy that he had, when I saw the reality of Jesus Christ in that emaciated body, I said to myself, ‘That is reality.’ I said to myself, ‘If God can do that for that man, maybe He can do something for me.’” And, he said, “I gave my heart to Jesus Christ, and I’ve never been able to get over it.” Brother Bob, in that auditorium that night, he was the strongest man in the world. And, God used a paraplegic in a wheelchair to bring a college student to Jesus Christ. “*God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty*” (1 Corinthians 1:27).

C. The Base Things

And then, he goes on to say, “*base things*” (1 Corinthians 1:28). Now remember, this word *base* means “ignoble, of low degree, without pedigree, from the wrong side of the tracks.”

Let me give you an illustration: there was a man in the Bible whose name was Gideon. Gideon was on the threshing floor because the Midianites had invaded the land. And, he was threshing wheat. He was really in the backside in a corner. He was afraid that he might be seen, because he was afraid that the Midianites might come and pounce him. And so, he’s back there threshing wheat. And, an angel of Jehovah appears to him, and the angel addresses him with this salutation: “[*Hail,*] *thou mighty man of valour*” (Judges 6:12). Now, if there’s anything that Gideon was not, it was a mighty man of valor. Gideon was a chicken with a capital “C.” He was afraid; he was in fear. He was hiding out, and the angel of the Lord calls him a “*mighty man of valour*” (Judges 6:12). And then, to heap abuse on that, He says, “I have chosen you to deliver My people from the hand of the Midianites. You’re going to be My general” (Judges 6:14).

Now, Gideon, at that time, remonstrated with the Lord and reminded the Lord of this: “*And he said unto him, Oh my Lord...behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house*” (Judges 6:15). Now, what he was saying is this: “of all of the tribes in Israel, Manasseh is the worst. Of all of the families in Manasseh, my family is the poorest. And, of all of the kids in the family, I’m the runt of the liter.” What he was saying is, “You have gotten to the bottom of the barrel. You can’t use me.” But, I believe

God was thinking, “I think you’re just about low enough I can use you.” And, you remember the story: God wouldn’t even let him have a big army. Right? He only had what? Three hundred men. And, God took a nobody general, a nothing army, with the Midianites, and who got the glory? God got the glory.

I want to show you something: I want you to see my coat. Now, just pay attention to my coat right now. Coat, stand erect. Coat, wave your arms around. It’s an amazing coat, isn’t it? Watch this. Coat, hold my Bible up high. You say, “Wait a minute, Adrian. That’s not the coat; that’s you in the coat.” You’re 100% correct. Have you ever read in the Bible where the Bible says, “And the Spirit of the Lord clothed Himself with Gideon”? (Judges 6:34) God wore Gideon like I’m wearing this suit, and it wasn’t Gideon; it was God in Gideon. And, God took an ordinary man, and God did extraordinary things to an ordinary man. And, God got the glory to Himself.

D. The Things Which Are Despised

Now, the Bible also says that God has chosen those “*things which are despised*” (1 Corinthians 1:28). That means “the things that are looked down upon.”

Remember when little David came against Goliath? And, you read it over there in the Samuel materials. Goliath—that great blasphemous giant—was defying the armies of Israel. He was over nine-feet-tall, and nobody was going out to fight Goliath. David said, “*Is there not a cause?*” (1 Samuel 17:29). (“Why doesn’t somebody go?”) And remember, finally, David went. I’ll not rehearse the story because you remember the story, but David was a teenage boy. The Bible says he was “*ruddy, and of a fair countenance*” (1 Samuel 17:42). That means... I take it that he had a little peach fuzz on his chin; he hadn’t even started to shave yet. And, here was this warrior; this warrior was tall. He had big and brazen armor. He was demon-possessed. And, David went out against him. He said to David, “When I get my hands on you, I am going to feed you to the fowls of the air and the beasts of the field” (1 Samuel 17:44). That is, “When I get my hands on you, I’m going to break you into little pieces and feed you to the pigeons.” But, David said to him, “*Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied. This day will the LORD deliver thee into mine hand; and I will smite thee, and take thine head from thee; and I will give the carcasses of the host of the Philistines this day unto the fowls of the air, and to the wild beasts of the earth*”—are you listening?—“*that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel*” (1 Samuel 17:45–46).

Now, pay attention. I want to ask you a question: What would have happened that day if the Philistines had a giant and the Israelis had a giant and the Israeli giant went out and beat the Philistine giant? What would that have proven? Not a thing in the

world. Just another Super Bowl—that's all. I mean, here's their champion, and here's their champion. And, they go out, and we're going to say, "Who's going to win—the bears or the pats? Who is going to win? Who is the strongest?" But now, suppose a Junior High School team goes to New Orleans and plays the Bears, and they say, "We're coming in the name of Jehovah." And, they win the battle. What do you think people in New Orleans are going to think? "There must be a God around here somewhere," right? There must be a God when a junior high school team whips up on the Bears and puts the refrigerators light out.

Now, let me tell you something folks: listen, there's more than one Goliath around, isn't there? Listen folks, David said, "I am going to do this *'that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel'*" (1 Samuel 17:46). And, when a teenage boy goes against Goliath of Gath and wins the victory, everybody says, "To God be the glory. Amen." You see, that's what God is about—taking ordinary people, and doing extraordinary things through ordinary people, and then giving glory to Himself. And then, God says, "*And things which are not, to bring to nought things that are*" (1 Corinthians 1:28). I already told you these are God's little nobodies who are really somebodies. They're the people that nobody else knows about; they're the people that are ordinary people, and they never get mentioned. But, God knows about these precious people.

There was a Sunday School teacher who was burdened for a boy—a teenage boy in his class. That boy was 19 years of age and was working in a shoe store. That Sunday School teacher went into that shoe store to witness to that boy. The Sunday School teacher was scared to death; he'd never done anything like that. With stammering lips he witnessed; he laid a trembling hand on the shoulder of that shoe clerk and shared Jesus Christ. The shoe clerk was ready; he received Christ, and he was saved. The shoe clerk then made application for church membership, but the church refused him. They said he didn't know enough. Do you know who he was? He was Dwight L. Moody, another of the world-famous evangelists in the same category with Billy Sunday and Billy Graham.

Moody began Sunday School Workers—a layman in the city of Chicago. Hundreds and thousands of kids were transformed by the ministry of Dwight L. Moody. He became so proficient, so well known, that he was invited overseas. He went overseas, and he was speaking in a church of a very elegant, erudite, and intelligent British man named F. B. Myer (Frederick Brotherton Myer). Moody spoke in Myer's church, and Moody had hardly opened his mouth before Myer felt he'd made a terrible mistake because Moody murdered the King's English. It was said of Dwight L. Moody that he could pronounce Jerusalem in two syllables. He was a man with a heart on fire for God, but he was untrained. Myer, this Englishman, was sitting there bumping his fingers, thinking, "When will it be over? What a colossal mistake I've made." And then, to top it

off, Moody told what we would call “a deathbed story.” He told the story of a Sunday School teacher who learned that he was going to die. He had some incurable disease, and before he died, he went out and won all of his members of his class to faith in Jesus Christ. It was what we would call today a “tearjerker.”

Well, finally the service ended. Myer was glad that it was over. But, later, Myer was having tea with one of the ladies, and he said, “How goes it with you?” And, she said, “Wonderful, Brother Myer.” She said, “Since Moody has been here God has set my soul afire for souls,” and she said, “I have won every girl in my class to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.” Myer testified—he said, “That day I learned the language of the soul, and my life was forever changed. I learned something supernatural.” F. B. Myer came to the United States to preach. He was preaching in a Bible College, and there were some students there who were discouraged. And, F. B. Myers said this: “Are you discouraged? Are you ready to quit? Are you ready to throw in the towel?” He said, “If you’re not willing to give everything to Jesus Christ, would you at least come this far to be honest with God and tell God that you’re not willing? But, will you tell God this: ‘O God, Thou knowest I’m not willing, but I am willing to be made willing’? Would you at least come that far?”

There was a man out there, Wilbur Chapman, a youngster—had a lot of ability, but he was about ready to quit—he said, “God, that is me. God, You know that I have been ready to quit, and God, I haven’t been willing. But God, at least I’m willing to be made willing. O God, make me willing.” And, God made him willing, and Wilbur Chapman became a dynamic evangelist, teaching the gospel of Christ across America. When he needed more help, he called that YMCA clerk that I referred to earlier, whose name was Billy Sunday, to be his helper. Sunday helped put up the tent, take down the tent, take the offerings, pass out the hymnals, do the counseling, and so forth. Later, when Chapman got out of evangelism, he turned everything over to Billy Sunday. Billy Sunday even took Wilbur Chapman’s sermon notes. He didn’t know how to prepare a sermon, but God’s hand was upon Billy Sunday, and Billy Sunday preached in great, great power, and many souls were saved.

Billy Sunday came to Charlotte, North Carolina, in 1924, and held a revival crusade in Charlotte, North Carolina, that shook Charlotte. Out of that revival crusade in Charlotte, North Carolina, there was a prayer meeting that got started that continued for a decade. They said... Those businessmen, as they met together, they said, “O God, we want You to send another revival to Charlotte, North Carolina, that not only will shake Charlotte, but will shake the world for Jesus Christ.” And, God, in answer to that prayer, they came out of the Sunday crusade...sent Mordecai Ham to Charlotte, North Carolina—a man with white hair; a man that preached Hell-hot, Heaven-sweet, sin-black, judgment-sure, and Jesus saves. And, in that crusade, a boy from a dairy farm—

a tall, lanky teenager, blondish hair, and skinny kid—came forward and gave his heart to Christ. His name was Billy Graham. Billy Graham has preached the gospel of Jesus Christ before kings, princes, and presidents. He has preached the gospel of Jesus before nationwide television and radio. He has girdled the globe with the gospel. Behind the Iron Curtain, only God knows how many souls have come to faith in Christ through the ministry of Billy Graham.

An amazing chain of events, but I remind you it started with a Sunday School teacher that few of us know. Many have never even heard the name of Mr. Kimball that led Dwight L. Moody to faith in Jesus Christ. He's one of those little nobodies, isn't he? Billy Graham is a household word. Billy Sunday is a household word. F. B. Myer is a household word. Mordecai Ham is a household word, but not Mr. Kimball. But, don't you have a sneaking suspicion that God knows Mr. Kimball's name? I do. I mean, dear friend, that God knows you, Sunday school teachers; God knows you, ushers; God knows you, people in the sound people; and God knows those people over there in the nursery. He says, "Not a cup of cold water will be given in My name to one of these little ones that you'll lose your reward" (Matthew 10:42). I'll tell you, dear friend, God is keeping the score. What a wonderful thing that is to me—that God takes the nobodies, who are really God's somebodies, and God uses them in an extraordinary way!

III. God's Sovereign Purpose

Now listen—God's simple people, God's special power. The last thing I want you to see is God's sovereign purpose. Why does God do this? Well, look, if you will, in verse 29. He tells us why He does it. Here's His sovereign purpose: "*That no flesh should glory in his presence*" (1 Corinthians 1:29). There are not going to be any peacocks in Heaven. "*That no flesh should glory in his presence*" (1 Corinthians 1:29). That's the reason why He saves us by grace. He won't save us by works, will He? "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should*"—what?—"boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9). Why does God use ordinary people and give them extraordinary power? "*That no flesh should glory in his presence*" (1 Corinthians 1:29). No superstar is in Heaven. "Oh," you say, "I have more ability than someone else." Good. "*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*" (Luke 12:48).

Conclusion

And, I tell you, dear friend, when God comes to judge you, God is going to judge you whether or not you fill that place that He had for you. And, what is that place that He has for you? Do you want me tell you the highest place in the world? It is not being Billy Graham; it is not being the pastor of a church, and it is not writing a big book. The

highest place in the world is the center of the will of God for you, wherever that is. I have news for you, dear friend, if you want to be used of God, you can be used of God. Now, you may not be used of God the way you want to be used of God. That doesn't matter. If you're willing to be used of God the way that God wants to use you, then that's what matters, right? You don't choose your place of service. If you make yourself available to Him... Do you know what the greatest ability is? It is availability—it is availability. So many times, my prayer's just simply this: "Lord Jesus, inhabit my humanity and do what You want to do in me. Just inhabit my humanity. I am available. I yield myself to You, dear God, to do, to be, to say, to think what You want me to do, be, say, and think. Okay?"

And folks, no matter whether you are known or unknown, mighty or weak, base or noble, if you're there, you are used mightily of God. Are you listening to me? Don't you dare insult the grace of God by saying that God can't use you. God has been looking for somebody just like you. He made you. And, God's people said, "Amen."

Let's bow in prayer.

Why Doesn't God Heal All Sick Saints?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 13, 1977

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:27; 2:3

Outline

Introduction

- I. Power May Come Through Suffering and Sickness
 - A. Your Strength May Be Your Greatest Weakness
 - B. Your Weakness May Be Your Greatest Strength
 - II. Productivity Often Comes Through Suffering and Sickness
 - III. Purity Comes Through Suffering and Sickness
 - IV. The Praise That Comes Through Suffering and Sickness
- Conclusion

Introduction

Boy, I tell you, like a breath of Heaven blew through this place, as God brought these two wonderful men to minister to our hearts. I don't believe that my life, your life, and our lives can ever be the same. But again, I want us to get our thoughts back on the Book of 1 Corinthians, and we'll be, for quite a while, studying through this wonderful book. Say, I want to ask you a question: If the Apostle Paul were to stand up here today, what do you think he would look like? I want you just to use your sanctified imagination and see if you can visualize the Apostle Paul. What do you think he would look like? Well, he probably would not be at all handsome. He probably would not be large. As a matter of fact, he'd probably not be so nice to look at. He would probably be sickly, weak, and probably would have very poor eyesight—I imagine, hunched over a little bit. He would be scarred somewhat. He would be a very weak man, physically.

Let me give you some verses here, and we'll go all the way through 2 Corinthians also, but let's look at a number of verses, and we'll use them as sort of a quasi-text, because we won't have a specific text. But look, if you will, for example, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 1, and verse 27—Paul himself said: *“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise”* (1 Corinthians 1:27); and I believe that Paul was speaking of himself, along with others, when he said that. Look in chapter 2, verse 3. He says of himself: *“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling”* (1 Corinthians 2:3). He never would have passed a Dale Carnegie course, until he changed his manner of being a public speaker. *“And I was with you in*

weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:3). His hand would tremor, as he would speak.

And then, if you would, turn to 2 Corinthians 1:5–6: *“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us,”*—Paul was a man who not only suffered, but suffered abundantly—*“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ”* (2 Corinthians 1:5). Look at verse 9: *“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead”* (2 Corinthians 1:9). Then look in 2 Corinthians 12:7: *“And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities,”*—now, Paul was weak—*“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 am strong”* (2 Corinthians 12:7–10). I want us to think today on this subject: “Why Doesn’t God Heal All the Sick People?”

Now, there’s hardly anyone here who is not feeling pain somewhere, and there are some who are very sick who are listening to me, and some of God’s choicest of saints. May I remind you that the man who wrote the books of 1 and 2 Corinthians was a great spiritual giant, and yet he was a man, by his own admission, and by these scriptures, that we have just read who was sick and weakly. As a matter of fact, he was a man who had power to heal others, and yet he himself bore, in his body, a sickness.

But, let me just give you three things, by way of introduction, that I believe, with all of my heart, about healing. I believe, with all of my heart and soul and function and unction that is within me, that God miraculously heals the sick. Secondly, I believe that, many times, it is God’s plan to use doctors and medicines. I thank God for the medical profession. And, I want to say that, thirdly, I believe with all of my soul that it is not always God’s will to heal. “But, what about those who love the Lord, and yet they are not healed?” I say, dear friend, that it is abundant in the Scripture that you can be right with God and still be sick. Paul was a great man of God, and yet he was sick. He asked God three times to take away this stake—what the Bible calls in the King James *“a thorn in the flesh”* (2 Corinthians 12:7). Actually, the Greek indicates that it was a figure of speech, which was a stake upon which he was impaled, and he had it for a long time—14 years. It was just not something that had come up overnight. If you read the context, 14 years ago, this thing came upon him; three times, he’d asked God to take it away, and thrice the answer had come, “No, I will not do it.”

Now, why was Paul not healed? Was it because he was weak in the faith? No, he was strong in the faith. Was it because there was sin in his life? No, his heart was pure. Was it because he was out of the will of God? No, he was walking hand-in-hand with the Lord. I can give you other illustrations.

For example, there was Trophimus. You can jot this down in your Bible: 2 Timothy 4:20; Paul said, concerning this dear brother: *“Trophimus have I left at Miletum sick”* (2 Timothy 4:20). Now, Paul had the power to heal, but evidently, he didn’t have the power to heal everybody. He certainly wasn’t able to heal Trophimus. I know that he would have had he been able to, but he said, “I left Trophimus, my dear brother, at Miletum sick.” And then, you remember what Paul told young Timothy? First Timothy 5:23: *“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities”* (1 Timothy 5:23). Now, I don’t believe that there’s a boozier who wants to mix water with his wine, so what Paul was saying here is, “Take fruit juice, put it in your water to cut down the alcohol content that is so prevalent in the water there, because of your stomach condition.” Now, I don’t want to get sidetracked on the liquor issue today, but I want to put another emphasis upon this verse of Scripture. Paul told Timothy, “Here’s something that you can do to help your constant sickness.” He was often sick, and yet he was a man of God who loved the Lord with all of his heart.

I could give you another illustration from the Old Testament. As a matter of fact, let’s just mark this one, because it’s very good. Turn to 2 Kings 13:14: *“Now Elisha was fallen sick of his sickness whereof he died”* (2 Kings 13:14). Now, why did Elisha die? Was he a sinner? Absolutely not, in the sense in which I’m speaking about. Of course, all men have sinned; but, as you read this Scripture, you find out that Elisha was in perfect communion with God, and, even on his deathbed, made one of the most remarkable prophecies in all of the Bible. And yet, here was a man of God—an eminent prophet—who got so sick that he died.

Now, I’m just saying all of that to say this: It would be a very dangerous thing for us to point our fingers at someone who is sick and say, “You must not be right with God, or you wouldn’t be sick.” The man who wrote that—we’re preaching from 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians—was a sickly, weak man, who had a thorn in the flesh. And, many of God’s choicest of saints have had to suffer that kind of sickness. Now, God often has a loving purpose in sickness. God often has a loving purpose in sickness. I want to mention four of them. We’ll take them, basically, from these books of 1 and 2 Corinthians.

I. Power May Come Through Suffering and Sickness

First of all, power may come through suffering and sickness. Go back to 2 Corinthians 12:9, for a moment, and notice, as God gave Paul wisdom concerning his sickness,

what the rationale was: *“And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me”* (2 Corinthians 12:9)—that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Power may come through sickness. Paul made an amazing discovery; Paul discovered that the weaker he became physically, the stronger he waxed spiritually. “That the power of Christ may rest upon me” is an unusual phrase. The words *rest upon me* may literally be translated “spread a tabernacle over me.” The power of God was spread over that weak, sickly body just like a tent. What a mighty baptism of power the Apostle Paul had. That little Jew shook the world for Jesus Christ in a little old, sick, weak, emaciated, hunchback, shriveled-up body. He stood up with his hands trembling, and with his knees knocking, and he said, “I know that my presence is contemptible.” But, he says, “The power of God is spread over me like a tent.” When he realized what God was doing for him, Paul just said, “Praise the Lord. Had God not done this for me,” Paul said, “I might have been tempted to have trusted in my own strength. But now,” he says, “I’m not trusting my strength—I am trusting the dear Lord.” You see, God wanted His strength, not Paul’s strength. Paul had a tendency toward pride—not that he was proud, but God had given Paul such an abundant revelation of Himself, that Paul could have been proud. And so, God gave him—graciously gave him—a thorn in the flesh.

A. Your Strength May Be Your Greatest Weakness

Now, let me say that, sometimes, we may be sick so that God’s power can be released through us. Would you learn a lesson today? And, it not only applies to sickness—it applies to many areas. What we think makes us strong may be our greatest place of weakness. Many times, we say, “Oh well, I’ve got a good mind. God can use that.” That may be where the devil gets you. You say, “I’ve got a strong body.” That may become the devil’s tool. Let me tell you something, friend: Your strength may be your greatest weakness.

Edinburgh Castle in Scotland, a great fortress-like building, built high on a rocky hill, has only been captured one time, and let me tell you how it was captured: They put sentries all around the important places in that castle, except for one place. On one particular side, there’s such a sheer rock cliff that it was thought impossible that the fortress could ever be attacked from that side; and so, no sentry was placed on that side. And, it was from there that the enemy came, and it was there that the castle was overtaken. It was at the strongest point that the castle fell, because there, the guard was let down. God is very wise to point out to us that sometimes our place of strength is really our place of weakness.

B. Your Weakness May Be Your Greatest Strength

And then, let me say, conversely, that our place of weakness may be our greatest place of strength. We say, “I can’t do this. I can’t do that.” Well, wonderful, then you can let the Lord do it, can’t you? When you say, “I can’t,” then you say, “He can, and I’m going to let Him.” That’s exactly what God was doing with the Apostle Paul, and Paul said, “God allowed me to have weakness, that I might be strong.” And so, Paul said, “I glory in my infirmity.”

Sometimes we get stoical and say, “What can’t be cured must be endured.” Paul said, “What can’t be cured, can be enjoyed.” Hallelujah! I glory in my infirmities. Have you ever thanked God for your sickness? Maybe there’s somebody watching today on television who couldn’t even be here—why don’t you just say, “Dear Lord, I glory in my infirmity.” I believe that it would praise the Lord and bless the Lord in everything to give thanks.

Many times we say, “I am so weak.” It may be that we’re still not weak enough, and that is our problem. Watchman Nee told a story of a Chinese man who was drowning. He was out in a particular river, and many of the other Chinese people there did not know how to swim, and the man was begging for help. One man stood on the shore. Though he was a swimmer, he would not go in and rescue the drowning man. Finally, it seemed as though the man who was drowning went under for the last time, and the man on the shore finally jumped from the river bank and, with powerful strokes, went out to him, put his arms around him, and brought him to safety. But, they didn’t cheer him; as a matter of fact, they scolded him. One man said, “I don’t believe that I’ve ever seen a man so much in love with his own life that he waited so long to save this man’s life.” The other man said, “You don’t understand. I’m not that good a swimmer. Had I gone out there while this man was still fighting, he would have drowned us both.” He said, “I had to wait until he was weak enough for me to save him.”

I wonder if we think that we’re going under for the last time, and that we are so weak; but we’re still not yet weak enough. We still have not bowed our heads and said, “O Lord, I can’t, but You can.” Now, the point I’m making, however, is this that power may come through sickness. It definitely did in the life of Paul, and that gives a new dimension and a new dignity to sickness.

II. Productivity Often Comes Through Suffering and Sickness

Secondly, not only may power come through sickness, but, following close on the heels of power, productivity often comes through suffering and sickness. How greatly the world has been blessed—not always through the ministry of healthy, wealthy, and happy people—but how greatly the world has been blessed through the ministry of those who have been sick and those who have suffered.

Think of blind Fannie Crosby who became blind at six months of age and never saw the light, until she saw the light of Heaven. And yet, she wrote thousands of gospel hymns. She has touched the life of Christendom more so, perhaps, than any of us will ever touch the life of Christendom. And yet, I dare say, had it not been for her blindness, God would not have used her the way that he used her.

Look in 2 Corinthians 1:6, and see what Paul said happened because of his ministry. He says: *“And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation”* (2 Corinthians 1:6). Paul is saying, “I have learned to trust the Lord, and when I trust the Lord, great things happen; that makes me productive.” Notice again, in 2 Corinthians 1:9: *“But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead”* (2 Corinthians 1:9). Every day to Paul was a Resurrection Day. Paul said, “Lord, if You don’t do it, then it won’t be done. There is no way possible that I can take this old weak, sickly body of mine, and perform the ministry You don’t want me to perform unless You do it through me. But Lord, You’ve taught me a lesson. I no longer trust in me; I’m trusting in You, who raise the dead.” “My suffering,” said Paul to the Corinthian believers, “is for your salvation and for your consolation.”

Sometimes sickness and sorrow cause us to be so very, very productive. Jesus said, in John 15:2, that, when He wants a branch to bear forth fruit, He’ll purge it: *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”* (John 15:2)—that it might be more productive. Do you know what *purging* a branch is? That’s pruning it. Here, the gardener takes his pruning knife; and, he goes to the vineyard, and he starts cutting away. If the little old vine could talk, it would say, “Ouch! That hurts! Don’t do that! Why are you making me suffer like this?” And, the gardener, if he could talk to the branch, would say, “It’s not my purpose to make you hurt, but to make you productive.”

A man was walking through an apple orchard in the Shenandoah Valley, and he saw a tree that was just laden with apples; so heavily fruited was it, that the caretaker had to prop up the limbs with sticks, lest they break. And, the man who was visiting the orchard asked the caretaker, “Why is this tree so productive?” He said, “Sir, you wouldn’t believe it, but this, at one time, was one of our least productive trees, until we deliberately split it wide open.” They had taken an axe and had split that apple tree in half. And, the man said, “Why?” And, the caretaker said, “We have learned that when a tree has nothing but branches and leaves, nothing but beautiful foliage and lumber, and no fruit—that if it is hurt and wounded, then it will bear fruit.”

That was certainly true in the Apostle Paul’s life. When Joyce and I lost our little baby boy, I remember the dear pastor, brother Alan Watson, from West Palm Beach, Florida, put his arm around my shoulder, drew me up close to him, and said, “Adrian,

when God wants to use anything, He always breaks it first. God will use this in your life. He is not cruel; but Jesus said, 'Every branch in me that bringeth forth fruit, He prunes it that it may bring forth fruit.'"

There was an evangelist named Paul Hutchens. He was used of the Lord in great citywide campaigns. Just when his ministry began to be the most useful, he found out that he had tuberculosis, and he had to be shut away for a long time. Paul Hutchens wrote this, and I think it's great; I want to share it with you. He said, "If blind Milton could write *Paradise Lost*, if John Bunyan in Bedford Jail could write *Pilgrim's Progress*, if Luther, imprisoned in Wartburg Castle, could translate the entire New Testament into the German language, if Robert Louis Stephenson, tubercular, suffering with sciatica, one arm in a sling, sentenced to absolute silence and darkness, could produce *The Child's Garden Of Verses*, if Paul, confined to a Roman prison and chained to a guard 24 hours a day, could still proclaim the gospel—if these men, under such mighty handicaps, could and dared to make progress and history—then why should not we?"

Sickness and suffering may not only mean power, but because it means power, it will mean productivity; and that causes it to have a dignity in our hearts and in our minds that it may not have.

III. Purity Comes Through Suffering and Sickness

Now, the third reason: not only may there be that power, and not only may there be that productivity, but may I say also, that purity also comes through suffering and through sickness.

I don't believe that this was necessarily the case for Paul. I don't believe that there was any sin in Paul's life that God was trying to purge from him. I believe that there may have been something that God was trying to keep him from. But certainly, Paul understood this principle: that purity comes through suffering and through sickness. Let me give you an example of that—turn to 1 Corinthians 11:30: "*For this cause*"—their irreverence at the Lord's Supper and other sins—"*many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep*" (1 Corinthians 11:30). That is, many have already died because of sin in the church and sin in their personal lives. But then, Paul seems to give a reason for that sickness as we continue to read: "*For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged*" (1 Corinthians 11:31). And here, he speaks of that sickness as a judgment from God, but he says that there's a way that we can escape that judgment—and that is to judge ourselves before God has to do it.

But then, notice, as we continue to read: "*But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world*" (1 Corinthians 11:32). Now, why are we chastened? The Bible says that we are chastened, that we might be made partakers of His holiness. So sometimes, when we are judged, we are

made sick. And, why are we made sick? So that we might be chastened. And, why are we chastened? So that we might be purified. Sickness has a way, many times, of purifying. I'm not saying that everybody who is sick needs to be purified; but I am saying that is one of the benefits and the blisses of being sick. Purity may come through suffering and through sickness. Let me give you some other scriptures—1 Peter 5:10: *“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you”* (1 Peter 5:10). Suffering may perfect you, may establish you, may strengthen you, and may settle you. That's what Job meant when he said, in Job 23:10: *“When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold”* (Job 23:10). Do you know what the Psalmist said, in Psalm 119:67? *“Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now I have kept thy word”* (Psalm 119:67). You see, there may be a purifying power to sickness, and I'm so grateful for that.

I found a precious poem that I want to share with you. I'll read it to you, and I want you to listen to it. This is talking about the purifying power of sickness:

He sat by a furnace of seven-fold heat
As He watched by the precious ore,
And closer He bent with a searching gaze
As He heated it more and more.
He knew He had ore that could stand the test
And He wanted the finest gold,
To mold as a crown for the King to wear,
Set with gems of price untold.
So He laid our gold in the burning fire,
Tho' we fain would say Him, “Nay”;
And watched the dross that we had not seen,
As it melted and passed away.
And the gold grew brighter and yet more bright,
But our eyes were dim with tears,
We saw but the fire—not the Master's hand,
And questioned with anxious fears.
Yet our gold shone out with a richer glow
As it mirrored a Form above,
That bent o'er the fire, tho' unseen by us,
With a look of ineffable love.
Can we think it pleases His Loving heart
To cause us a moment's pain?
Ah no! but He sees thro' the present cross

The bliss of eternal gain.
So He waited there with a watchful eye,
With a love that is strong and sure,
And His gold did not suffer a bit more heat
Than was needed to make it pure. (Irene Lindsay)

Oh, there's the purifying power of suffering. Job said: *"When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold"* (Job 23:10). I thank God that He has a loving purpose—not only of power, and not only of productivity, but purity.

IV. The Praise That Comes Through Suffering and Sickness

May I say that, finally, there is the praise that comes through suffering and through sickness. God gets glory many times through our suffering and through our sickness. There's an abundance of Scripture that tells us that we learn to praise and glorify God when we're sick—that is so true. In John 11:4, Jesus said: *"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God"* (John 11:4). Now, that's clear, isn't it? *"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God might be glorified thereby"* (John 11:4). You see, many times, God gets glory in a strange way. And certainly, if you'll read the rest of that chapter, then you'll find out that Lazarus' sickness, subsequent death, and resurrection caused many to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Why, even our death ought to glorify the Lord. The Bible says: *"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of His saints"* (Psalm 116:15). And, the Bible describes Peter's death in John 21:19: *"This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God"* (John 21:19). I want to tell you, friend, that you can glorify God with your health. You can glorify God with your sickness, and you can glorify God with your death.

Isn't it wonderful that in all things He can have the preeminence? Whatever we do, we should do all for the glory of God. You see, friend, the devil has a lie out about Christians. We know that the devil tells this kind of a lie, because it's recorded in the Book of Job. The devil said to God, "The only reason ole Job serves you is that you bought him off. He's just a fair-weather Christian; he doesn't really love you. The only reason that Job serves you is because you've been so good to him. If you'll make him real sick, then he'll deny that he knows you—he will curse you to your face, God." You know what the Lord says? He said, "You don't know my servant Job. Job doesn't love me because he's healthy. Job doesn't love me because everything is going his way. Job just loves me." I'll tell you: God got such great glory out of ole Job, who suffered sickness, but he didn't deny his God. He glorified God.

I believe that God has chosen some of you people who are watching right now from a sick bed to shut the devil's mouth. And, when people see you there, praising the Lord, glorifying the Lord, and saying with Job: *"Though he slay me, yet will I trust him"* (Job

13:15), they'll say that there's a quality of life about you, sir, about you, lady, that's different—different. Oh, the praise of God that can sometimes come through sickness and through suffering! Jesus made it plain: *"This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God"* (John 11:4). Many times sickness may be for the glory of God.

Conclusion

Andrew Murray was a great saint of yesterday, and Andrew Murray said something that I think is so good. He said, "In times of trouble, God's trusting child may say first, 'He brought me here. It is by His will that I'm in the straight place. Next, He will keep me here in His love and give me grace in this trial to behave as His child. Then, He will make the trial of blessing—teaching me the lessons He intends me to learn, and working in the grace He means to bestow. Last, in His good time, He can bring me out again, how and when, He knows.'"

Isn't that good? You see, He brought me here, and nothing comes to me except what comes through Him first. He will keep me here. He will teach me a lesson, and in His own good time, He will bring me out again.

Good-bye to Boasting

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 28, 1990

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 1:29

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“That no flesh should glory in his presence.”

1 CORINTHIAN 1:29

Outline

Introduction

- A. Pride Is a Sense of Independence from God
- B. Pride Is a Spirit of Ungratefulness to God
- C. Pride Is a Spirit of Esteeming Oneself Better Than Others
- I. The Message of His Salvation
 - A. The Message Is Scripturally Declared
 - B. The Message Is Socially Demonstrated
 - C. The Message Is Sovereignly Decreed
 - 1. Require
 - 2. Seek
- II. The Makeup of His Saints
- III. The Method of His Servants
 - D. The Content of Paul’s Ministry
 - E. The Confidence of Paul’s Ministry
 - F. The Consequences of Paul’s Ministry

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God’s Word. Find 1 Corinthians with me please this morning, chapter 1. And I’m going to break in in the middle of the chapter; at least in the middle of a thought, the end of the chapter, verse 29. God is telling us that He is doing many wonderful things and He has a purpose, and it is this: That no flesh should glory in His presence. I really want to talk to you today about the problem of pride. How many of you think you have a problem with pride? Let me see your hands. All right. I’m going to preach to you today. But I’m really going to preach to those who didn’t lift their hands. They’re the ones I’m looking to right here.

Dear friend, there’s not a human being that doesn’t have a problem with pride. Just go ahead and admit it. Jesus said that pride just flows out of the human heart. But God says that He’s going to do something that will cause us to say good-bye to pride. The

title of the message this morning is “Good-bye to Boasting. Good-bye to Boasting.” God has given us the gospel in such a way that He says, “That no flesh should glory in His presence.”

Now I looked that up this morning in several translations as I came down early just to tune my heart. One translation, The New English Bible, says, “He’s doing that so there is no place for human pride in the presence of God.” That’s The New English Bible. Goodspeed gives it this way: “So that in His presence no human being might have anything to boast of.” They all say the same thing. That no flesh should glory in His presence.

Oh, my dear friend, pride is such a dangerous sin. There’s nothing that is holding back revival in this church or anybody else’s church more than pride. There is nothing that is destroying the homes of America more than pride. There is nothing that is ruining this nation more than pride. There is nothing that is causing Christians to live a life of spiritual defeat more than pride. There is nothing that is sending souls to hell more than the sin of pride. As a matter of fact, it was pride that made the devil the devil when he said, “I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.”

Pride is the mother sin, the father sin, the sin of sins, the sin out of which all other sins grow. It’s such a destructive sin and it’s such a deceitful sin. You know, those who are proudest are those who least know that they are. There’s a benefit and a bliss to being a drunkard. At least the drunkard knows he’s a drunkard. To the least the thief knows he’s a thief. But the proud person says, “Well, you know, if I were proud, I’d admit it. You know, if I had any faults, I’d admit it. But, you know, I, I’m really not so proud. I’m really a pretty humble person.”

I heard about a man that they gave him an award for his humility, and then they took it away from him when he wore it.

Dear friend, pride is such a deceitful thing. Now when I’m talking about pride, I’m not talking about a good self image. You ought to have a good self image. If you don’t have a good self image, you haven’t been reading your Bible, dear friend. You are somebody. First of all, you were created in the image of God. Then you were bought with the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. People go around saying, “Well, I’m just an old sinner saved by grace.” Well, technically, that’s true, but the Bible doesn’t call you that. The Bible calls you “...the righteousness of God in Christ.” That’s who you are. The Bible says the Lord Jesus is not ashamed to call you His brother, His sister. That means you’re next of kin to the Holy Trinity. And pride is not thinking lowly of yourself. Never think that pride is thinking lowly of yourself.

Who was the most humble person who ever lived? Jesus. Jesus said, “I am meek and lowly.” Did Jesus think lowly of Himself? He acted lowly, but did He think lowly of Himself? No! The Bible says that Jesus, knowing that He came from God, and that He

went to God, took a towel and washed His disciples' feet. That's humility. Humility is not thinking that you are no good.

Humility, dear friend, is understanding that all that you have and all that you are is by the grace of God. And God hates human pride. In Proverbs chapter 6 and verse 16 He says, "These six things doth the LORD hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him." And number one on the list of things that God hates is a proud look.

So what is pride? It's not a good self image nor is it doing a job well. Didn't the choir do wonderfully well this morning? Now they did well because they wanted to be the best they could be for Jesus. And, Brother Jim, you told me one time music never gets too good for God. That's right. I mean, we ought to do the best we can do, but not, not for human glorification, not that we might strut in His presence. The book of Proverbs, over and over again it speaks of integrity and industry and doing things well and doing things good. But that's not what the Bible condemns when the Bible condemns pride.

Do you want me to tell you what pride is? I can give it to you very simply. Three things.

A. Pride Is a Sense of Independence from God

Pride, number one, is a sense of independence from God, a sense of independence from God. Like that blasphemous poem that was written, *Invictus*, where the writer of that poem says, "I am the captain of my fate. I am the master of my soul." I feel like saying, "Captain, your ship is about to sink." "I am the captain of my faith." A sense of independence from God.

B. Pride Is a Spirit of Ungratefulness to God

Secondly, dear friend, pride is a spirit of ungratefulness to God. You see, when you feel independent from God, then you feel ungrateful to God. You think that you have done it. Benita just sang, and God has given her a wonderful voice. I hope she's grateful for it. Now if she doesn't understand that that voice is not hers; that's God's, because the Bible says, "What do you have that you haven't received?" Anything you have, friend, you, you received it, isn't that right? Of course. What do you have that you've not received?

C. Pride Is a Spirit of Esteeming Oneself Better Than Others

Pride is a sense of independence from God. And, therefore, a sense of ungratefulness. And, therefore, a feeling that you're better than somebody else; that, that you take credit for things that really you have no right to take credit for. Esteeming one's self better than other people – that's pride. Do you want to see if you're proud?

Let's just check up a little bit. Do you get irritated when you're corrected for mistakes? Huh? Oh, you look so holy. Do you accept praise for things over which you have no control? Maybe your beauty, your talents, your abilities. Is it hard for you to

admit a mistake? Are you one of those kinds of people who never seek counsel from anyone else? Do you have an ungrateful spirit? Do you often complain? Do you find yourself in competition with other people, trying to lord it over other people? Do you want more? Not just more for you, but more than someone else has? Friend, you're just proud. That's your problem.

Now God deals with that right here in 1 Corinthians chapter 1 and 2. God gives us three ego slayers, three things, three ways in which He has so given us the gospel, so as to cause us to say good-bye to boasting. He says, "I've done something (verse 29) that no flesh should glory, should boast in the presence of God." Now most religion is man-centered, but the gospel is God-centered. Most religion is man's best with God's help, but, O friend, that is not the gospel. The gospel is that which absolutely, totally slays human ego and becomes God-centered. Most of the people in America have religion and it's rooted in pride. They need to turn from religion to the gospel of Jesus Christ and be saved. Most of the people in America are egomaniacs who are strutting to hell thinking they are too good to be damned.

Now the true gospel exalts God and it humbles man. I want to give you three areas in which that is true. And I pray God that He will burn these three things into your consciousness in this message entitled, "Good-bye to Boasting." In the first place, where God just slays human ego – and why does God hate human ego? Why? Because it's rooted in pride. And what did pride do? It created a devil and cursed God's universe. God hates pride.

I. The Message of His Salvation

Now the very first thing is what I want to call, "In the message of His salvation." Look in verse 18. First Corinthians 1 and verse 18: "For the preaching of the cross (some translations give it 'the message of the cross') is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." Now think about the message of salvation, the message of the cross?

A. The Message Is Scripturally Declared

First of all, it is scripturally declared, scripturally declared. The Bible says in verse 19: "It is written..." Now let me tell you what the cross, the message of the cross does to our human ego. Jesus died upon the cross for our sins. And God says (now listen), God says that you're saved by the cross of Christ alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. By the cross alone, by grace alone, through faith alone. Now why does that cut across human ego? Because man always wants to say, "I did it. Look how good I am. Lord, bring me to heaven because I have been such a good church worker." The Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

not of works (what's the next phrase?), lest any man should boast." Lest any man should boast! It is the preaching of the cross that slays human ego.

Have you ever noticed how Madison Avenue knows how egotistical we are? Have you....you read the ads and you'll see how many times this word is use – deserve. "You deserve it." "You owe it to yourself. "You deserve a break today." Isn't that right? I mean, hey, I'm a pretty good person. "Drive the kind of a car you deserve. You've earned it." And we all have the idea somehow that, that we deserve salvation. It's so man-centered rather than being God-centered. And this idea of people when they have the idea that they deserve something, when they get it, they're not grateful. Why should they be grateful? They deserve it. They're only angry they didn't get it sooner. And they're a little more angry that they didn't get enough. And they're a little more angry than somebody else got more than they got because they think they deserve it. Do you know what we deserve? Judgment and hell! The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against our sins. And O, how the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ just slays human ego. We just want to strut into the presence of God.

B. The Message Is Socially Demonstrated

My dear friend, not only is it scripturally declared; it is socially demonstrated. Look, if you will, in verse 20: "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" Now what God says is, "Hey, hot shot, where's it gotten you? You're so smart. You and your boasting. You and your pride. Where has it gotten you?"

Now when, when He's talking about the scribe and the disputer of this world, you know what He's talking about? Friend, He's talking about that bunch up there in Washington for one thing; the statesman, so called; the movers, the shakers, the philosophers, the thinkers, the scientists, the educators. I mean, all of these mindbenders who are telling us we have the solution. Boy, do we? I mean, I just, I've been thinking about the few years I've been here, and, boy, I'm just a child.

But I've been thinking about, you know, you think of what they've told us. "Now we're going to fix everything." They gave us the New Deal. Then they gave us the fair deal. Then they gave us the Great Society. And then they gave us Camelot. And then they gave us Camp David. And then they gave us Reaganomics. And then they gave us detente. Then they gave us glasnost. And then they gave us a thousand points of light. And we're sinking deeper and deeper all the time going down. God says, "Where has it gotten you? Where are the high muckety-mucks, the smart alecks, the wisdom of this world?" Friend, we know more than we've ever known and we're in deeper trouble than we've ever been. Isn't that true? I mean, it, it, man says, "Oh, I'm so smart." God says, "Oh, you are, huh?"

Look at it. I mean, it is scripturally declared. There's only one way to be saved. It is

socially demonstrated. Verse 20: “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?” Friend, I am telling you, we’re a royal class of fools. The gadgets we have today are the science fiction of my boyhood. I mean, things I never dreamed of. I was just thinking the other day. Man, I leave this church and I drive in a computer-regulated automobile. I am talking through a cellular phone to my secretary and listening to a, a recorded magnetic tape in the tape player. I go into my house, walk in, into my house that, ah, is air-conditioned and regulated again. I, I, I come home from work and put me a cup of tea in a microwave that heats it in an instant. And I go and sit in front of a television and flick a thing that turns it on across the room and I bring in a message from a satellite of something that’s happening instantaneously across the world. That’s incredible. We just take all that for granted. It’s so incredible. And yet we are in a royal mess talking about our world. I read this the other day, and, boy, listen.

Here’s what a social critic had to say. You have to listen to it a little carefully, but it’s worth reading. Listen to it. “Thus did western man decide to abolish himself, creating his own boredom out of his own affluence, his own vulnerability out of his own strength, his own impotence out of his own erotomania; himself blowing the trumpet that brought the walls of his own city tumbling down, and having convinced himself that he is too numerous, labors with pill and scalpel and syringe to make himself fewer until at last, having educated himself into imbecility, and polluted and drugged himself into stupefaction, he keels over, a weary, battered old brontosaurus and becomes extinct.” That is us, folks. That is us. And we are so smart. We can fly through the air like a bird, and swim through the sea like a fish, but we still can’t walk on earth like a man.

C. The Message Is Sovereignly Decreed

Oh friend, listen. It is, it’s scripturally declared. It is socially demonstrated. And it is sovereignly decreed that there’s only one way. Go again in verse 21: “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God (that is the sovereign God) by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” It doesn’t say foolish preaching. There’s been too much of that. But by the foolishness of preaching. The, the thing preached, the cross, to save them that believe.

And, by the way, let me say this: I see in this last day a move away from Bible preaching. Churches today are built on music and pageants and activities buildings and socials and suppers and all of those things. And I’m not against a one of those things, but I’m going to tell you, dear friend. None of those are substitute for preaching the Word of God. And you’d just better believe that. They can be built on the Word of God, but you can’t build a church without the preaching of the Word of God and of the cross!

Now look here at the verbs in this passage here. It’s very interesting. Beginning in verse 22: “The Jews require a sign...” That’s one verb. Underscore the word *require*.

“The Jews require a sign...” That’s, he’s talking about the Jews of Christ’s day. They were looking for a Messiah who would come with a great display of glory. They wanted some signs and wonders. Matthew chapter 12, verse 39: “And he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonah,” which was the sign of death, burial, and resurrection. But, you know, human flesh says, “We want to see something that’s going to impress us.”

1. Require

So that’s the first verb, require. Now look in verse 22: “...the Greeks seek after wisdom.” Now Jews require; Greeks seek. The Greeks, they weren’t necessarily interested in miracles. They were interested in sophistry, philosophy. They just reveled in being able to unpick all of the divine mysteries with their minds. And the Jews were looking for sort of a double Socrates.

2. Seek

The first verb, require. The second verb, seek. But here’s the third verb. “But we preach Christ crucified...” The Jews require, the Greeks seek, but we preach. My dear friend, you can’t preach anything but the gospel and you can’t do anything with the gospel but preach it, declare it. Not with some display of miracle and not with some double-jointed, obtuse, philosophical ideas, but to preach the gospel, which is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

What is the power of the cross? My dear friend, I’ll tell you the power of the cross. The cross, the cross, the cross, the cross, and the cross alone has the answer to sin, sorrow, and death, and nothing else does. And those are the only problems that anybody has. You don’t have another problem other than sin, sorrow, and death. And there’s no solution other than the cross. That’s the power of God. And I’ll tell you, not only is the cross the power of God; the cross, my friend, is the wisdom of God. You see, it is such wisdom that through the cross you can know the heart and mind of God. You see the love and the power and the wisdom of God displayed at Calvary like no other place. And it’s such wisdom (listen), such wisdom, that a little child can understand it and a PhD may stumble over it.

The wisdom of the cross is so deep that a scholar can swim in it and never touch bottom, and so shallow that a little child can come and drink without fear of drowning. My dear friend, that’s wisdom. That’s power. And that is in the cross of Jesus Christ and the cross of Christ alone. And that slays human ego and pride who wants to strut into the presence of God. *“I must needs go home by the way of the cross, there’s no other way but this; I’ll n’er catch sight of the gates of light if the way of the cross I miss.”*

II. The Makeup of His Saints

Now the second way (listen), the second way that God slays human ego is not only in the message of His salvation, but in the makeup of His saints. Look, if you will, in verse 26: “For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh...” Now he’s talking about the makeup of the church, the congregation of the redeemed. I want you to listen to this five-ranked army of fools. That’s us, folks. “...not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen (first of all) the, the foolish things...” The word *foolish* is the word we get our word moron from and what it means is the non-intellectual. You know, most of the people in our churches, they’re not PhDs and Phi Beta Kappa’s, philosophers. God takes the intellectually common person. And then it says, “...and God hath chosen the weak things of the world...”

Now this speaks of, of the physically weak. Not only intellectually common, but physically weak. Do you know what the world puts the emphasis on? Beauty, brains, bucks, and brawn. Isn’t that right? The big Bs. But God has chosen the weak things of the world. Not the beauty queens, not the All Americans; just folks like us, built like us, who look like us, ah, to confound the things which are mighty. “And base things of the world...”

You know what the word base means? The first word deals with the, our intellectual commonness. The second word deals with our physical commonness. This deals with our financial commonness – base things. It means of low pedigree from the wrong side of the tracks; just ordinary people. Not the Astors, not the Rockefellers, not the Trumps, not the Helmsleys; just the ordinary folks. And then he says, ah, “...and despised hath God chosen...”

Now He’s not only talking about those who are intellectually common and, and those who are physically common and, and those who are financially common, but now He’s talking about those who are socially common. These are the people who are despised. That is, they’re looked down upon. I mean, they’re not invited to the big parties. They’re not the people that everybody lionizes; everybody gets their names in the paper, and so forth. And then He goes on, ah, to talk about those who are politically insignificant, “...and things which are not...” That’s, that’s the last thing, “...things which are not...” These people didn’t make Who’s Who. They didn’t even make Who’s Not. I mean, nobody knows about them. And, and God just puts all these people together. These are His saints. These are His saints. Now do you know what human flesh wants to do? Human flesh wants to belong to the club that nobody else can belong to. Human flesh wants to walk in through a door that says, “Private.” Somebody at the door to check your card. Somebody to invite you in. “We’re this and we are that.” But, my dear friend, when you get saved by the blood of Jesus Christ, you lay all of that in the dust, and you

come in with ordinary, plain people who are saved by the grace of God.

Boy, I love a good New Testament church. What a leveling influence it has. I don't care whether you're a millionaire or a washer woman. Dear friend, you're the same in the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It doesn't say not any mighty, not any noble. Thank God for the All Americans. Thank God for the beauty queens. Thank God for the movie stars. Thank God for the financiers and the captains of industry. Thank God for those who believe in Jesus. Paul was a mighty man, but he said, "I count these things but garbage, that I might gain Christ." The dung, refuse. Oh, how the gospel of Jesus, how it just lays low human pride. And God says that He does all of this in verse 29, "That no flesh should glory in his presence."

Reggie White is a great football player. If you ever watch professional football, just take your eye off the man who's running the ball and put your eye on that defensive tackle, the minister of defense. And he loves God. Reggie is a friend of mine. I'm not really intimate with him, but I know him and prayed with him. He's such an awesome football player. I mean, awesome, friend. When I see him on defense, I'm just glad I'm not playing football on offense. But I heard him as he talked to a group of boys. He loves God. You know what he said to those boys? He said, "I'm a nobody telling anybody about somebody who will save everybody who'll trust Him." I love that. "A nobody telling everybody about somebody who'll save anybody (I think that's the way he said it) who'll trust Him." You see, God just lays low our pride.

III. The Method of His Servants

There's a third way, and I'll have to hurry on this. Not only in the message of His salvation, and not only in the makeup of His saints, but the third way, which God just says good-bye to boasting is in the method of His servants, in the method of His servants. How are we to serve Him therefore? Well, let's go right on in to chapter 2. And as I remind you, the chapter divisions are just manmade. They're there to keep preachers from preaching too long. Now look in chapter 2: "And I, brethren..." Now here's Paul, here's Paul, this mighty, towering intellect. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God."

D. The Content of Paul's Ministry

Now notice the content of Paul's ministry. I'm talking about the method now of his, of his messengers and the method of His servants. Notice the content of Paul's message. He

says in verses 1 and 2, he says, “Listen.” He said, “I determined when I came to Corinth not to know anything among you except Christ and Him crucified.” Oh, you say, he was really hemmed in. No, he wasn’t hemmed in. That’s not restrictive. Friend, you listen to me, and if you don’t hear anything else this preacher says this morning, you listen to this: All of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, to one message – Christ and Him crucified. If you don’t understand that, you don’t have the foggiest about what the Bible is about. That’s not restrictive. That, my dear friend, is what it’s all about.

Somebody said to Charles Haddon Spurgeon, “All your sermons sound alike.” He said, “That’s right.” He said, “I take a text and make a beeline to the cross.” You see, Christ and Him crucified. I heard an old preacher say one time, “Oh, it blessed my heart. It was just like a light came on in my heard.” He stood up. He was preaching in the basement at the Pastor’s Conference at Bellevue. He never pastored a big church. Old Dr. Brown (some of you may know him), he said, “I don’t preach theology.” I thought, *Well, boy, that’s, that’s dumb. You ought to preach theology.* He said, “I don’t preach theology.” But then he floored me with what he said next. He said, “I use theology; I preach Christ.” Boy, that is super. Friend, the Bible is so theological. But you take all your theology and put it in the garbage can if it doesn’t present Christ. I mean, “I use theology; I preach Christ.” Paul said, “I preach nothing but Christ and Him crucified.”

E. The Confidence of Paul’s Ministry

That’s the content of his ministry. And what was the confidence of his ministry? Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: “And I was with you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power.” Paul said, “I did not come to Corinth and dazzle you with philosophical presuppositions and ideas. I didn’t come as some sort of an intellectual or oratorical showboat.” Paul said, “I came trembling with no confidence in the flesh, saying ‘Oh God, God, if You don’t do it, it won’t be done.’” That, my dear friend, was the confidence of his ministry. And I don’t, God knows, I’m not trying to draw attention to myself when I say, dear friend, before I walk out here, I get on my knees and say, “Oh God, if You don’t do it, it won’t be done.” Paul wasn’t afraid of them. He was afraid when he said, “I was in weakness and trembling.” Just afraid that he might steal the glory or try to do what he did in the power of the flesh.

I heard Dr. Billy Graham say one day, “I stay afraid. I stay afraid. I’m so afraid that I might touch the glory. I’m so afraid that I might take the glory,” that somehow that their faith might stand in the wisdom of man rather than the power of God. Do you know what’s wrong in America? We have too many songs and too many sermons that are flesh on parade. And, dear friend, when you depend upon human flesh, you get what human flesh can do. But when you depend upon God, you get what God can do. And I’ve told you so many times, anything I can talk you into, somebody else can talk you

out of. But anything God gives you is yours forever.

F. The Consequences of Paul's Ministry

And so what was the, the content of his ministry? It was Jesus crucified. What was the confidence of his ministry. Power and of the Holy Ghost. And what was the consequences of his ministry? Look at it, if you will, in verses 5 and following: "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect..." Don't think that what I'm saying is fool's babbling because I say that I'm against the wisdom of men. Friend, I'm giving you real wisdom, not the wisdom of this world. And you bankers and you lawyers and you doctors and you professors and you captains of industry and you artisans, may I tell you, dear friend, I am giving you something you won't get any place else except from God. Here it is. "Not the wisdom of this world, nor, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought. But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world (now watch this next phrase) unto our glory."

Conclusion

Do you see that? Friend, the gospel is not here to put you down; it's here to lift you up. You say, "Well, you're preaching against human ego and human pride. You're trying to tell us we're no good. You're trying to push us down." No, my dear friend, I want you to know the glory that God has for you. All of this is done that you might say good-bye to boasting, that you might lay your pride in the dust and then receive the glory that God has for you so that you can be a man, so that you can know life, so that you can know peace and joy and be transformed into the image of Jesus Christ. It's all for your glory, not that He might drive you down. Oh, my dear friend, God wants to exalt you and make you something you could not even dream that you might be. But before He can do it, you've got to say good-bye to boasting.

Let's pray. Heads are bowed. Jeremiah said in Jeremiah chapter 9 and verse 23: "Thus sayeth the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory I his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me..." Do you understand and know the Lord? Would you like to be saved? Would you, in a moment of honesty, humble yourself before God, and say, "God, even my righteousness is as filthy rags in Your sight. I cannot strut into Your presence. I cannot say I don't need to be saved because I'm such a good person. I confess my sin. I bow my head. I admit to You, Lord, my inability to save myself. I say good-bye to boasting and I say yes to the grace of God. I open my heart. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me, Lord Jesus. Father, I pray that many today will be saved. In Jesus' name, amen.

How to Know God Through the Bible

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 1, 1985

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Deficiency of Human Wisdom
 - A. It Is Superficial
 - B. It Is Transitory
 - C. It Is Limited
 - D. It Is Dangerous and Ungodly
- II. The Sufficiency of Heavenly Wisdom
 - A. Supernatural Revelation
 - B. Supernatural Inspiration
 - C. Supernatural Illumination
 1. Illumination Does Not Mean That You Can Know Everything About God
 2. Illumination Does Not Extend to Areas Beyond the Word of God
 3. Illumination Does Not Mean That You Don't Have to Study the Word
 4. Illumination Does Not Mean That There Are No Spiritual Requirements
 5. Illumination Does Mean That the Average Person Who Is Obedient and Diligent Can Understand the Word of God
 6. Illumination Does Mean That You Can Have a Personal Communion with God

Conclusion

Introduction

Amen. I hope He has touched each of us tonight, and if He has not, then perhaps tonight will be the night that you'll meet the Lord Jesus Christ in power, and fullness, and glory, and joy. Take God's Word and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. I think this is one of the greatest chapters in all of the Bible. I want to tell you tonight how you can be blessed. I know you want to be blessed. Anybody here who doesn't want a blessing is not thinking. I think so many times we pray, "Lord God, bless me, bless me, bless me." Well, let me...I'm going to tell you tonight how you can get a blessing. And folks, when you're blessed, you're blessed.

Now, how can you get a blessing? Well, the way to be blessed is to obey God. "Well," you say, "I knew there was a catch to it." The way to be blessed is to obey God.

There is no blessing without obedience. Now, let me say this: How do you obey God? Well, the way to obey God is to trust God. Now, you know, a while back I said, “Everybody ought to bring at least a tenth of their income to God’s house on God’s day, that God’s work will be done in God’s way.” Now, right away, some of you got to thinking, “Now, let me see how much money I make, and a tenth of that will be... Wow, wait a minute—that’s a lot of money.” Well now, folks, listen—if you trust God, then you will believe that you could do more with 9/10 and God as a partner than you could do with 10/10 by yourself. Right? For God said, *“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it”* (Malachi 3:10). So, in order to be blessed, you must obey.

In order to obey, trust. Now, how are you going to trust God? Well in order to trust God, you must love God. You see, you can’t trust any body you don’t love. All right. You’ve got to love God in order to trust God. When you love God, you automatically trust Him. Well, how are you going to love God? Well, you can’t love a God that you don’t know. So, in order to love God, you’ve got to know God. Now, think about it, friend—in order to be blessed you must obey, in order to obey you must trust, in order to trust you must love, and in order to love you must know. Now, this chain of events begins with the idea of knowing God. The reason that so many people are not blessed is that they don’t know God, that they might love God, that they might trust God, that they might obey God, and that they might be blessed. And so, tonight, I want to talk to you really about how to know God through the Bible, how God can become real to you—not someone that you know about, but someone that you know, because to know Him is to love Him, to love Him is to trust Him, to trust Him is to obey Him, to obey Him is to be blessed.

It all begins with this idea of knowing God. And, the entire second chapter of 1 Corinthians deals with this idea of knowing God, and it deals with the word *wisdom*, because wisdom is the knowledge of God—wisdom is the knowledge of God. Wisdom is seeing life from God’s perspective, from God’s point of view. That’s what wisdom is. Now, he talks here in this chapter about human wisdom and its deficiency, and then he talks about heavenly wisdom and its sufficiency. Now, we are going to talk, first of all, about human wisdom and its deficiency. And then, we’re going to talk about heavenly wisdom and its sufficiency—how we can sufficiently know God through the heavenly wisdom that He gives.

I. The Deficiency of Human Wisdom

Now, let’s begin reading, therefore, there in chapter 2 and verse 1: *“And I, brethren,*

when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).

A. It Is Superficial

Now, when I think, first of all, about the deficiency of human wisdom, the first thing that comes to me is that this human wisdom, dear friend, is so superficial. You see, if you knew God just simply by human wisdom—if I, tonight, could just begin to teach a course in systematic theology, I could tell you all of the facts about God, and you could get out your notebook, and you could write them down, and you could say, “God is omnipotent; God is omniscient. And, God is this, and God is that,” and you could learn all of the facts about God—you wouldn’t know God. I mean, if I were to be able to pour it on and use all kinds of flamboyant speech, and clever phraseology, and all of these things, that wouldn’t help you to know God.

You see, the Apostle Paul said, “When I came to you and when I preached to you, I didn’t come this way—with human wisdom” (1 Corinthians 2:1). You see, the people at Corinth had been swept away by worldly philosophy. Now, the Apostle Paul, if he had wanted to, could have done it. The Apostle Paul was mighty in intellect; he was mighty in learning. But, he was terrified at the thought that their faith should stand in human wisdom, because it is so superficial. And, I remember hearing Billy Graham say—on one occasion, he said, “I stay frightened.” I wondered why Billy said that, and I listened more carefully. He said, “I stay frightened,” and he went on to explain it. He said, “I’m so afraid that I might do something or say something that would discredit my Lord or have people following me rather than the Jesus that I preach.” That’s what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, “*And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling*” (1 Corinthians 2:3). “I don’t want people,” he said, “to follow me, and I don’t want to be able to use human ingenuity, human philosophy, and human wisdom to get any kind of follow-ship,” because the deficiency of human wisdom is that it is so superficial. You can know about God but not know God.

B. It Is Transitory

But, secondly, not only is human wisdom so superficial—it is so transitory. Look again in verse 6: “*Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world*” (1 Corinthians 2:6). Now, the word *princes*—it stands for those intellectual top waters of this world, these people who have attained in their learning. He said, “We speak wisdom, but not the wisdom of this world, not what

the princes of this world know that will come to naught” (1 Corinthians 2:6). Now, when he says, *“the princes of this world”* (1 Corinthians 2:6), he literally says, “the princes of this age.” That is, for this time, there are certain people in this day and age, and they are supposed to be the great, vaunted intellectual leaders. And, Paul said, “Hey, all of that is just going up in smoke. It’s going to come to naught.”

I remember hearing Dr. R. G. Lee express himself so eloquently in a talk about philosophy, and he said, “Philosophy is a chunk of cloud bank buttered with the night wind.” Now, that’s what the Apostle Paul was talking about here. It’s the wisdom of the princes of this world. Folks, it’s just going to come to nothing. It is so superficial. It is so transitory.

C. It Is Limited

And, it is so limited. Look again, if you will, in verse 7: *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory”* (1 Corinthians 1:7). Now, human wisdom is totally incapable of understanding or probing into what Paul called here “the divine mystery”: *“we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom”* (1 Corinthians 1:7). What does he mean here by “mystery”? He’s talking here about a sacred secret that you can only know as God reveals Himself to you. You see, human wisdom can never fathom God. I don’t care how smart you are—you don’t have a head start toward God. You see, the finite can never probe the infinite. You can never fathom God. The natural man can never know the supernatural God. Wisdom is so superficial. The wisdom of this world is so transitory. It is so passing away. The wisdom of this world is so limited.

D. It Is Dangerous and Ungodly

And then, he goes on to speak of the wisdom of this world that is actually so dangerous and ungodly. Go on to verse 8: he speaks of the wisdom of this world as compared to the wisdom of God, and then he says, *“Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”* (1 Corinthians 2:8). If these smart alecks in this world had known real wisdom, they never would have nailed Jesus Christ to the cross. Here the classic truth of the bankruptcy of human wisdom is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. And, who crucified Jesus Christ? I want to remind you that Jesus Christ was crucified by the best minds of His day. It was not the rebel; it was the Jewish and Roman intelligentsia that that nailed Jesus Christ to the cross. And, I want to tell you something else: they did not do it casually; they did it carefully after they applied their minds to it—not a few of them, but many of them. And, the Bible says, *“They took counsel together”* (John 11:53). That is, they pooled their so-called “wisdom,” and they crucified the Lord of Glory.

Why is all of this? Why is human wisdom so superficial? Why is human wisdom so

transitory? Why is human wisdom so limited? Why is human wisdom so dangerous? And, why does a natural man—a man without Christ—why does he have such a difficulty understanding the things of God? Well, look in verse 9: *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Now, what Paul is saying is, “The reasons these people don’t know God is they don’t have the proper equipment. They are trying to understand things with their eyes, with their ears, and with their heart.” And, you can’t do it. *“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Now, when he talks about your eyes and your ears, he is talking about objective knowledge—things which you can read, and see, and hear. And, when he talks about your heart, he is talking about subjective feelings. And, what he is saying here: “Whether it is the objective fact or subjective feelings, you will never know God that way.” Now, you may know Greek, but you won’t know God. You may know Hebrew, but you will not know Him. Why? Because you don’t have the ability to know Him if you’re a natural man.

Look in verse 14 of this second chapter: he says here, *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14)—or understood. Now, what does he mean by natural man? The word *natural* is a translation of the Greek word *psυχικός* or “soulish” man. You see, when God created man, God created man to begin with body, soul, and spirit. With his body he has physical life and knows the physical world. With his soul he has psychological life and knows the psychological world. His soul is his mind, emotions, and his will. And then, he has his spirit, and with his spirit he knows the spiritual world. With his body he knows the world beneath him, with his soul he knows the world around him. And, with his spirit he knows the world above him. Now, that’s the way Adam was created: he was body, soul, and spirit. But, when Adam sinned against God, Adam died.

But, how did he die? He did not die in his body; he did not die in his soul, but he died in his spirit. His death was a spiritual death. God said, “In the day that you eat, you will surely die” (Genesis 2:17). Well, he ate, and he died; but he continued to exist. But, he was spiritually dead. That is, the spirit in him fizzled up. And now, rather than being a spiritual man, Adam became a natural man. That’s the same word that’s used here in verse 14: “he became a soulish man” (1 Corinthians 2:14). And, rather than knowing God through the spirit, he now has his soul as the organ of knowledge. His soul deals with what his eye can see. His soul deals with what his ear can hear. His soul deals with what his heart can feel. And, he lives by mind, emotion, and will. But, he doesn’t know God, because, you see, it is the spirit that is the organ of spiritual knowledge. And, you

can only know God as a spirit. You can never figure God out. You can never come to God intellectually and understand God. *“The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD”* (Proverbs 20:27). That is, when God wants to speak to you, when God wants to illumine you, and when God wants to teach you, He is going to teach you in the spirit. And, *“God’s Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we’re the children of God”* (Romans 8:16). Now, that doesn’t mean that God bypasses your mind; it doesn’t mean that you have to crucify your intellect, but it means that you know God in your spirit. And, your mind only analyzes, codifies, organizes, expostulates, and expresses what you know down deep in your spirit.

Now, if you’re a natural man and never have been born again... And, a natural man is a man who’s only had one birth. He was born into the natural world and he is bound by the material world. He’s only had one birth, and he can never ever know the things of the spirit of God until he has a second birth. Look at it again: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). *Now, for example, if you were to come into a room—and there’s some music going on in that room, but you’re deaf—and I say to you, “Smell that music”—well, some music I think you could do that—but “smell that music,” you say, “That’s impossible.” But, that wouldn’t mean that there was anything wrong with your nose; it just would mean that the nose is the wrong organ for perceiving music. Don’t you hear music? Now, there may be nothing wrong with your mind, your emotion, and your will. But, that is the wrong organ for knowing God. The soul—you do not know God primarily with your soul; you know God primarily with your spirit. As we’re going to see, it is the spirit that is the organ of spiritual knowledge. “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). And so, we see the deficiency of human wisdom. Human wisdom is so superficial. Human wisdom is so transitory. Human wisdom is so limited. Human wisdom is so dangerous. You cannot know God through human wisdom.

II. The Sufficiency of Heavenly Wisdom

Now, let’s just turn it over and tell you how you can know God. Now remember, to know God is to love Him, to love Him is to trust Him, to trust Him is to obey Him, and to obey Him is to be blessed. And, I want you to know God—not to know about God, not to know Him with your mind, your emotions, and your will, but to know Him with your spirit. That will affect your mind, your emotions, and your will. All right. Now, God had done three mighty acts, that you might know Him. There are three things that God has done, and because God has done these things, you can know God.

A. Supernatural Revelation

The first of these mighty acts is what we call “revelation”. God simply reveals Himself. Now, we left off in verse 9, and let’s pick up verses 9 and 10. Let’s go back and read it again—verse 9: *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Now remember, not by objective facts or by subjective feeling are you going to know God. But now, notice verse 10—notice the word *but* that is in contradistinction to what you perceive with your eyes, your ears, and your emotions: *“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 2:10). Now, the first thing that God has done, that you might know Him, is revelation. God reveals Himself. The only way that you can know God is for God to disclose Himself to you. I want to tell you again, dear friend, that you can never take your mind and unpick the divine mysteries. The finite can never know the infinite. The natural can never know the supernatural until the infinite reveals Himself to the finite. And, the supernatural reveals Himself to us supernaturally. And, this is what we call “supernatural revelation.”

Look at it again: *“God hath revealed them unto us”*—verse 10—*“for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:10). Now, he’s talking here about the Holy Spirit. Verse 12 says, *“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”* (1 Corinthians 2:12). That is, it takes the Holy Spirit revealing truth to you in order for you to really know that truth.

Now, I have told you before, I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit of God can impart truth. You might want to jot these scriptures down. John chapter 3 and verse 27: *“John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven”* (John 3:27). Well, that is a phenomenal statement: *“A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven”* (John 3:27). How that ought to cause us to lay our intellectual pride in the dust! We’re never going to pry truth out of the Word of God. If God doesn’t give it, you will not have it. *“A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven”* (John 3:27).

Let me give you again 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 3: Paul said, *“Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed”*—well, I think we would all agree to that, but most of us, perhaps, would not realize the rest of that statement—*“and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost”* (1 Corinthians 12:3). **Now, you have to understand what Paul is talking about. You could go down here to 3rd and Poplar somewhere, and find a wino, and give him ten dollars, and say, “Say Jesus is Lord,” and he’d say, “Jesus is Lord.” Now, that’s not what Paul is talking about here. What he means is this—that no man**

can have Christ as Lord in his life, can know Jesus Christ as Lord, so as to make a proper confession of faith that Christ is Lord until the Spirit of God gives him that. No man can do it. *“A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven”* (John 3:27). No man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Ghost. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 5: *“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost”* (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

Oh, that’s what I pray for in my own preaching: “O God, don’t let me just stand up there and give facts. O God, I pray that that You will bring the Word home to the hearts of people.” That’s exactly what Paul was talking about here in 2 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 4: *“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:4–5). Now, what has God done, that we might know Him? The first mighty act of God is what I call “revelation.” God supernaturally reveals Himself to us. Revelation is the communication of God’s truth to man by God Himself.

B. Supernatural Inspiration

Now, the second thing that God has done is not only has God given us supernatural revelation, but God has also given us supernatural inspiration. Continue to read now in verses 12 and following: *“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. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual”* (1 Corinthians 2:12–13). Now, when Paul uses the word *we*, he is talking here about the apostles and he’s saying that we have received this message. And now, he says, “We give you this message.”

Now, what is the difference between revelation and inspiration? Revelation is God disclosing Himself; inspiration is those taking what God has given and recording it in such a way that it is absolutely without error. It is the very Word of God. Notice in verse 13: *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth”* (1 Corinthians 2:13). That is, the Holy Ghost gave the Word. We believe in verbal inspiration. The word *verbal* means “word by word” inspiration. God did not just inspire the thoughts of the Bible; God inspired the words of the Bible, because you cannot have thoughts without words any more than you can have mathematics without numbers.

Now, there are some people who laugh at the idea of a verbal inspiration. The Latin word *verbum* means “word”—word by word inspiration. Now, if you laugh at the idea of

verbal inspiration, I want to tell you that you are laughing at Jesus Christ. Jesus said in Matthew chapter 4, verse 4: *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every”*—what?—*“word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matthew 4:4). Now, dear friends, God disclosed Himself. That is what we call supernatural revelation. “No man can receive anything except it be given him from above, from Heaven” (John 3:27). But, not only is there that revelation—there is that inspiration. And, these words—inspired—are written down, and we have them in what we call “the Word of God”—“the Bible.” And, I want to remind you that God gave the very words of the Bible.

C. Supernatural Illumination

Now, I will tell you the third mighty action. Here’s where it comes to you now. First of all, there is that revelation. Then, there is that supernatural inspiration. Finally, there must be a supernatural illumination. Now, continue to read now in verse 13: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 2:14–16). Now, that is illumination.

Now listen, the same Holy Spirit of revelation and the same Holy Spirit of inspiration is now the Spirit of illumination. He is the One who illuminates the Christian. He is the One who turns the spiritual light on so that you can understand the things of God. We have a divinely inspired Bible in our hands, but we cannot understand it apart from spiritual, supernatural illumination. I can never know the Bible as I ought to know the Bible until I have the mind of Christ.

Do you know a prayer that would be a good prayer for you to pray when you begin to study the Word of God? It is Psalm 119, verse 18: *“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law”* (Psalm 119:18). “O God, illumine me. Open my eyes, that I might understand.” When you pray that prayer and when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, then a part of you will know that never knew before and a part of you will see that never saw before.

And, a man who is living by divine illumination is going to be a mystery to those around him. Look in verses 15 and 16: the Bible says, *“But he that is spiritual judgeth all things”*—that is, he has a penetrating insight into the way things work; he has a supernatural wisdom about him—*“yet he himself is judged of no man”* (1 Corinthians 2:15). That literally means, “He’s not understood of no man.” The word *discerned* is a better word here: *“he himself is [discerned] of no man”* (1 Corinthians 2:15). The world is not going to understand us. I tell you, we’re going to know some things that they won’t know, and they’re really going to think we’re the crazy ones. They’re going to think we’re

a few bricks short of a full load, and they are going to say, “There is something wrong with that guy.” Well, there’s not something wrong with us; there’s something wrong with him. You see, we’re tuned in where he’s not tuned in. We are marching to the beat of a different drummer. Now, they cannot understand us, but we understand them. The reason they can’t understand us is that we have the mind of Christ, and they can’t understand Christ. Now, this is what we call “illumination.”

Now, I want to give you some lessons about illumination very quickly, and I’ll be finished. I want to give you some warnings here, as I talk about illumination. And, illumination is really, right now, where the rubber meets the road in knowing God. To love God is to trust God, to trust God is to obey God, and to obey God is to be blessed. And, we said that you cannot know God with the natural mind. You must know God in the spirit, supernaturally. And, the way you can know God is because God has divinely revealed Himself. And, God has divinely inspired that revelation. We have a Bible. And now, we have a Bible in our hands, but in order to understand the Bible, there must be that divine illumination, that supernatural illumination. Now, let me give you some facts about illumination, and we will be finished tonight. Now folks, it’s all headed down right to this. This is the important thing, so I want you to understand this. What does illumination mean?

1. Illumination Does Not Mean That You Can Know Everything About God

Number one: It does not mean that you can know everything about God. No one knows everything about God, and we’re not supposed to know everything about God. Deuteronomy chapter 29, verse 29 says, *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever”* (Deuteronomy 29:29). That is, a person who has illumination doesn’t know everything. You can go down to the ocean and dig out a bucket of ocean water, and everything in that bucket will be ocean—but the entire ocean won’t be in that bucket. And, dear friend, when you come to God’s Word and you dip into God’s Word, you can come up with a bucket full of truth, but there’s so much that you still will not know. And, there are things perhaps you will never know. And, still you can have illumination.

2. Illumination Does Not Extend to Areas Beyond the Word of God

I want to say that illumination does not extend to areas beyond the Word of God. Now, for example, when you go to a math test, it’s not going to do any good to bow your head and say, “Spirit of God, illumine me.” If you haven’t studied for it, you are going to flunk, unless you are just somehow (I hate to use the word) *lucky*. But listen, folks, you can pray for wisdom, but you study for knowledge—you study for knowledge.

3. Illumination Does Not Mean That You Don’t Have to Study the Word

Now, illumination does not mean that you won’t study the Word of God, either. Listen to

2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 15: it says, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15). If I want God to illumine me, I will study. When I study the Bible, I pour over the Bible. But, when I study it and pour over it, I say, “O God, illumine me.” Time and time again, when I am studying, I’ll stop, I’ll put it aside, I’ll lift my hands to Heaven and say, “God teach me. O God, I want to know.” And then, I’ll go back, and I’ll study, and exegete, and try to find out what it is saying. But, I know now that the Holy Spirit of God is helping me, because the Bible says, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed”* (2 Timothy 2:15). And, the word here literally means—“rightly dividing”—means “to cut it straight.”

4. Illumination Does Not Mean That There Are No Spiritual Requirements

Now, I want to say something else: illumination does not mean that there are no spiritual requirements. You cannot just come to God and say, “God, illumine me,” if you are not walking a clean and a pure life. Listen to what Peter says in 1 Peter chapter 2, verses 1 and 2: he says, *“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:1–2). You want God’s Word to be real to you? Then get the trash out of your life. Lay it aside, and hunger after the Word of God. And, He will illumine you.

5. Illumination Does Mean That the Average Person Who Is Obedient and Diligent Can Understand the Word of God

I’ll tell you what it does mean, however: it does mean that the average man, the average woman, the average boy, the average girl in the pew who is obedient and diligent can understand the words of God. Go back to chapter 1, verse 26: *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are”* (1 Corinthians 1:26–28). What does that mean? It means, dear friend, that God takes ordinary people, and God does extraordinary things through those people. It means that you, John Doe Layman, can get your Bible, and you can pray over it, and you can get your heart right with God, and you can say, “Spirit of God, illumine me.” And, you can *“study to shew [yourself] approved unto God”* (2 Timothy 2:15). And, God will reveal Himself to you supernaturally out of the Bible.

6. Illumination Does Mean That You Can Have a Personal Communion with God

Now, it does mean something else, dear friend—that you can have a personal communion with God. I think of those two disciples as they were walking there on the road to Emmaus after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and Jesus came and walked along beside them. And, here's some precious verses—Luke chapter 24, verse 45: *“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures”* (Luke 24:45). Isn't that wonderful? I mean, here's the Son of God—He is walking along; He is talking with them. You couldn't have a better teacher than that. Now, about seven miles they walked together, and the Bible says, *“He [showed] them in all [of] the scriptures the things concerning himself”* (Luke 24:27). How would you like to have a tape recording of that? Well, evidently, God didn't want us to have it, because we don't have it. He just took the Bible, and He showed them all those Old Testament prophecies concerning Himself. But, the point of the matter is, even with that kind of a teacher—the very Son of God—they didn't understand until He opened their eyes.

Now, you think about it: *“Then opened he their understanding”* (Luke 24:45). You see, this is the illumination. It is so supernatural. You'll never know until God gives you knowledge of Himself. That's the reason we must come so reverently and so prayerfully to the Word of God. In Luke chapter 24, verse 32, they said one to another, *“Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”* (Luke 24:32). Oh, would to God that He would open to you the scripture!

Conclusion

Now folks, I'm finished, but you listen a minute. Everybody wants to be blessed, don't they? There is no blessing without obedience. There is no obedience without trust. There is no trust without love. There is no love without knowledge. There is no knowledge of God without revelation, inspiration, and illumination. And, the illumination is your part, where you come to God, and surrender so to God, and say, *“[O Spirit of God,] open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things [in] thy law”* (Psalm 119:18). And, if you come to God's Word that way, the Bible will burst aflame in your heart and in your mind, and God will teach you the things out of His Word. The reason that many of us don't know God is, folks, we're just playing around at Bible study, and you can't do it that way. May God help us to get into His Word!

Now, let's bow together in prayer.

Superficial or Supernatural?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 12, 1998

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Superficiality of Human Wisdom
 - A. Human Wisdom Is Dangerous
 - B. Human Wisdom Is Deceptive
 - C. Human Wisdom Is Deficient
 - D. Human Wisdom Is Devilish
- II. The Supernaturalness of Heavenly Wisdom
 - A. Supernatural Revelation
 - B. Supernatural Inspiration
 - C. Supernatural Illumination
 1. That Doesn't Mean You Know Everything About God
 2. Illumination Does Not Extend to Other Areas of Life
 3. Illumination Does Not Mean That You're Not to Study
 4. Illumination Does Not Mean That You Are Not Going to Have Some Spiritual Requirements in Your Life
 5. Illumination Does Mean That the Ordinary Child of God Can Know and Understand the Word of God and Can Know God Intimately

Conclusion

Introduction

Find 1 Corinthians chapter 2. And, when you've found it, look up here, if you will. And, we've come to worship tonight. But, in this congregation of those who are saved, there are two categories of persons: there are those who know about God, and there are those who know God. Now, there's no way that you can really be saved and not know God. But, when I'm saying that there are those who know about God—there are many who are saved and on their way to Heaven, but God, to them, is someone in whom they have put their faith and trust, someone whose laws they hear and endeavor to obey, but they do not have that personal, intimate knowledge of God. And so, rather than being supernatural, they are superficial. And, I want to talk to you about how to have that intimate knowledge of God.

Now, you can know God superficially through human wisdom; you can only know God intimately through heavenly wisdom. So, what we're going to be doing tonight is talking about the superficiality of human wisdom. And then, we're going to be talking

about the supernaturalness of heavenly wisdom. And, actually, we're going to be looking at 16 verses here in this second chapter. And, let's just look at them together: Here the Apostle Paul is talking to the church at Corinth, and he said, *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save"*—and that means "except"—*"Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom"*—underscore that—*"but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect"*—and the word *perfect* here is not talking about those who are sinless, but it means "those who are mature"—*"yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew"*—when he says "the princes of this world," he's talking about the big shots, the intellectual top-waters, the high muckety-mucks—*"Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 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. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save"*—or, "except"—*"the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"*—that means "understood"—*"But he that is spiritual judgeth"*—or, "discerneth"—*"all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 2:1–16).

Now, we're talking about wisdom. And, most Americans are more interested in wealth than wisdom. But, the Bible says in Proverbs chapter 3, verses 13 through 15: *"Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it"*—that is, "wisdom"—*"is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She"*—wisdom—*"is more precious than rubies: and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her"* (Proverbs 3:13–15). So, think of anything that you could desire, and God says, "You can't compare it to wisdom." And

so, I want us to think tonight about knowing God not superficially, but knowing God supernaturally and moving from man's wisdom to God's wisdom.

I. The Superficiality of Human Wisdom

Now, let's think about the human wisdom that is superficial, and I want to give you some marks of this human wisdom—I want to give you four or five marks. And, let's let them begin with the letter “D” just as a memory device to help you to see the deficiency of human wisdom—the superficiality of human wisdom.

A. Human Wisdom Is Dangerous

First of all, human wisdom is dangerous. That's our first “D”—it is dangerous. Paul says in these five verses (the first five verses) that he had a fear (1 Corinthians 2:1–5). He was afraid of something. Notice what it is: *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, [except] Jesus Christ, and him crucified”*—now, watch this—*“And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling”*—“Well Paul, what gave you this fear? Paul, why are you trembling when you preach?” Well, he goes on in verse 4 to explain that—*“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”*—now, why did he say that? Look in verse 5—*“That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).

Now, let me say this about Paul: Paul was a man among men. He had all of the accoutrements, all of the abilities, all of the gifts that any man would ever want. He had the equivalency of a triple PhD. He had knowledge. He had opportunity. He had wealth. He had all of these things behind him in his background. He had been praised and petted as a young Pharisee. He studied in the best schools of his day. He learned at the feet of one of the wisest, finest teachers in the world, Gamaliel. He had it all. He had come to the top. He was a world traveler. He was a philosopher. He was proficient in many languages. And, had he wanted to—had he wanted to—the Apostle Paul could have come and stood before those people in Corinth and wowed them with his wisdom—I mean, the wisdom of this world. He could have had them on the edge of their seats. He could have talked them into things. He could have manipulated them. He could have moved them in many ways. And folks, there are some preachers today who can still do that, but it's in the flesh; it's not of God. What Paul was afraid of was that he was going to make followers of Paul, rather than followers of Jesus. He did not want their faith to *“stand in the wisdom of men”* (1 Corinthians 2:5); he wanted their faith to stand in the wisdom of God. And, as I have told you, anything I can talk you into, somebody else can talk you out of. And so, what all of us must do, whether we be a

singer, whether we be a preacher, whether we be a teacher, or whomever we may be, as wise as we may be, as much background as we may have, we must say, “Dear God, let me not depend upon human wisdom—human ingenuity.” Now, human wisdom is dangerous because it can lead people to accept a substitute for the real thing.

B. Human Wisdom Is Deceptive

Now, here’s something else about human wisdom: not only is it dangerous, but it is very deceptive. Look, if you will, in verse 6: *“Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought”* (1 Corinthians 2:6). *Nought* is just an old English word for “nothing.” What he is saying is that “the wisdom of this world is splendid nothing—it comes to nothing.” All the cyclotrons, all of the computers, all of the historians, all of the philosophers, all of the wiseacres, all of the prognosticators—all of it—when it’s all finished, friend—zero: it comes to nothing. Well, not even a zero. Let’s take a zero and trim the edges off of it: it comes to nothing. That’s what he says. He’s talking about the wisdom of this world. The word for “world” there is the word for “age.” Now, he’s not talking about the wisdom of this round globe; he’s talking about the wisdom of this age—everything we talk about, how much we know. And, we come to the place now where knowledge is doubling every few years. Well, are we getting better or worse? That ought to tell us something. What does it come to? It comes to nothing. Not only is it dangerous—it is so deceptive. It offers much, but it pays so little.

C. Human Wisdom Is Deficient

Here’s a third thing about the wisdom of this world: not only is it dangerous, not only is it deceptive, but it’s so deficient. Look in verses 7 through 9 of this same chapter: *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”*—now, look in verse 9—*“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”* (1 Corinthians 2:7–9). Now, he’s talking here about how we gather and accumulate facts. Sometimes we learn through the eye gate: we see things. Sometimes we learn through the ear gate: we hear things. Or, sometimes we learn not objectively with our eyes and our ears, but we learn subjectively: we feel things; we imagine things in our hearts. Now, what he is saying is this—that this man with his eyes, with his ears, and with his emotions, he still cannot know God. The natural man cannot know the supernatural. There are things that you cannot perceive by human wisdom. We’re incapable of perceiving these things.

Look, if you will, in verse 7 of this same chapter: *“But we speak the wisdom of God*

in a mystery” (1 Corinthians 2:7). Now, what is a mystery? Well, a mystery is something that you cannot know or something that you can only know by revelation. You can’t see it with your eyes. You can’t hear it with your ears. You can’t conjure it with your heart. What he’s saying is that the natural cannot—the natural cannot, in-and-of itself—know the supernatural. The finite cannot, apart from revelation, know the infinite. Let me... Put this verse in your margin—Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9: *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth”—now, that’s a big statement. Tell me how high that is—“as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Now, the reason that natural wisdom cannot understand God—it is so deficient. We do not have the proper equipment. Now, that doesn’t mean you cannot know about God. You can study the Bible and learn the facts of God. You could pass a systematic theology test. You can know Greek without knowing God. You can know Hebrew without knowing Him. You can know the kings of Israel without knowing the King of the kings. You can know all of these facts because you get that with your eye, you hear that with your ears, you feel that with your heart, but that is not the equipment to know God. You see, we only know God through the Spirit. To know God—I mean, to know God intimately... Now, there may be nothing wrong with your eyes. They’re fine. God gave you eyes. You need eyes. God gave you ears. You need ears. God gave you a heart (most of you), and you need a heart. But, you see, it’s just the wrong instrument to know God—nothing wrong with it.

But, it’s like music. How do you know music? Do you smell music? Well, some—yes. Do you see music? Do you touch music with your fingertips? No! You know music through the sense—the ears. That’s the organ for hearing and knowing music. Now, how do you know God? Well, God has given an organ to know Him, and that is the Spirit. We know God through the Spirit.

So look, if you will, in verse 14. He says here in verse 14: *“[For] the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). Now, when he uses the word “natural man,” it actually is the *psuchikos* man, or the “soulish” man—the man who operates in the realm of the soul. What is the soul? The mind, the emotion, the will, the eyes, the ears, the heart—that’s natural man. He may be brilliant. He may be a PhD. He may be cunning. He may be crafty. But, he does not have the equipment in his natural state to know and understand God. He cannot know God; he may know about God. *Let me give you an illustration. You may have a cookbook, and know all about bread, and starve to death. And, you can know all about God and still not know God.* Now, knowledge is fine. Knowledge comes through the eyes, the ears. It’s assimilated in the heart. But, you see, knowledge

is learned; wisdom is given. Knowledge comes by looking around; wisdom comes by looking up. Knowledge comes by study; wisdom comes by revelation. Knowledge comes to the soul; wisdom comes to the Spirit. Knowledge is natural; wisdom is supernatural.

Now, what are we saying about human wisdom? We said, first of all, it's dangerous because preachers, and teachers, and others may tend to depend upon it, and people misplace their faith. We said, number two, it is deceptive: it promises much, but actually, it comes to nothing. We said, number three, it is deficient: it does not have the ability to lock us onto God and to help us to know God. This is why Paul preached as he did. Paul said, "I am dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God." Now folks, learn this: only the Holy Spirit of God can impart spiritual truth. Let me give you some Scriptures that teach that, and I want you to put these in your margin. They're not here in 1 Corinthians 2.

But, put down in your margin "John 3, verse 27"—here are the words of Jesus: Jesus said, "*A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from [above]*" (John 3:27). That's a pretty big statement: "*A man can receive nothing, [but] it be given him from [above]*" (John 3:27). You will not go into the Bible and pry truth out of the Bible; God has got to give it to you.

Let me give you another one over here in 1 Corinthians (where we are) chapter 12 and verse 3: Jesus said, "*No man can say that*"—Paul said, rather—"*no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*"—"no man" (1 Corinthians 12:3). Now, that doesn't mean if I walk out of here with a 20 dollar bill to an old drunk on the street and say, "You want 20 dollars? Say, 'Jesus is Lord.'" "Jesus is Lord. Give me the twenty." That's not what Paul is talking about. He is talking about saying Jesus is Lord in the sense that a person actually, literally, really, vitally makes Jesus Christ Lord. He says, "You can't do that apart from the Holy Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 12:3). That's the reason that I, as a preacher, am so dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God. I don't walk out here and preach 'til I've been on my knees. And, the last thing I do before I come to this platform, one more time, is to get on my knees and pray for that anointing because, friend, "*a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from [above]*" (John 3:27). "*No man can say that Jesus is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*" (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Listen to this scripture—1 Thessalonians 1, verses 4 and 5: "*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance*" (1 Thessalonians 1:4–5). That's a frightening passage to me and an encouraging passage to me at the same time. Let me tell you why it is a frightening passage to me: it frightens me to think that sometimes I may stand up and preach in word only, and nothing be wrong with my words. My words could be fine. My words could be true. I could be giving absolute gospel truth. But, Paul said, "Our gospel didn't come in word only, but in demonstration

of power, and of the Holy Ghost” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). You see, human wisdom is so deficient.

D. Human Wisdom Is Devilish

Now, here’s the fourth reason that we’re talking about the dangers of human wisdom, the deficiency of human wisdom, the deceptiveness of human wisdom, the superficiality of human wisdom: not only is it defective, but it is literally devilish—devilish! That’s the fourth “D”: it is devilish. Look, if you will, here in verse 8: he says, speaking of the wisdom of God in verse 7 (1 Corinthians 2:7), he said, concerning that wisdom in verse 8, *“Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”* (1 Corinthians 2:8).

Now, who crucified the Lord of glory? The princes of this world—I mean, the intelligentsia. The intelligentsia of that day crucified Jesus. You don’t get to be the high priest, you don’t get to be in the Sanhedrin, you don’t get to be a Pharisee, you don’t get to be a Sadducee by falling off a load of pumpkins coming to town. These were the intelligentsia. And, they didn’t do it casually; they did it carefully. The Bible says, *“They took counsel together”* (John 11:53). See, these men—they’re bringing their minds together; they’re bringing their thoughts together; they’re bringing their learning together; they’re bringing their scriptures. And, the bottom line is, they said, *“Crucify him”* (Mark 15:13). The wisdom of this world is devilish.

I’ll tell you, one thing you never want to get around is a church fuss or fight when somebody brings in devilish wisdom. That is a terrible thing. I’ve seen it happen in some churches. Thank God I’ve never had to experience it as a pastor. James 3—put this verse down—verses 14 and following: James said, *“But if [you] have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work”* (James 3:14–16). There is a wisdom that is devilish, and that is described here in verse 8 (1 Corinthians 2:8)—because people with devilish wisdom nailed Jesus to the cross. That’s human wisdom for you, folks. You know, sometimes that human wisdom gets in the pulpit. That’s the reason why Paul says, “I was in trembling and fear. I didn’t want that” (1 Corinthians 2:3).

Some years ago, I read about a man who was trying to get folks to attend his church. He was one of these preachers who always had some sort of promotion, Brother Jim. So, he got him a red devil suit, put it on; got him a pitch fork; had horns on his head and so forth. And, he put a placard on his chest and picketed the church, walking up and down in front of the church with a devil suit on, saying, “Do not attend this church. Do not attend this church.” Of course, it was reverse psychology. Everybody was saying, “Well, if the devil doesn’t want me to attend, I’d better go.” Well,

I don't think I'm going to do that—I just don't. It's not my style. But, I want to tell you something even worse than that—and I'm not saying that's altogether bad—I'm not talking or thinking about a preacher putting on a devil's suit; I'm talking about the devil putting on a preacher's suit and standing in the pulpit. "His ministers are transformed as angels of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14). And, when you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit. I'm telling you, these were the religious leaders of that day, full of human wisdom, which James says is devilish, that nailed Jesus up on the cross. And so, what are we talking about today? First of all, we're talking about the superficiality of human wisdom—human wisdom.

II. The Supernaturalness of Heavenly Wisdom

Now, let's talk, secondly, about the supernaturalness of heavenly wisdom—the heavenly wisdom that is supernatural. Now, how do we get this heavenly wisdom? How does it come? Well, there are three mighty acts that God does, that we might understand the things that are given to us of God: number one, there is supernatural revelation; number two, there is supernatural inspiration; number three, there is supernatural illumination. Have you got that? It'll be on the test later. All right.

A. Supernatural Revelation

Number one—listen: There is supernatural revelation. Look, if you will now, beginning in verses 10 and 11. He says in verse 9: "You can't learn it with your eye. You can't get it with your ear. You can't necessarily conjure it up in your heart" (1 Corinthians 2:9). But, notice verse 10: "*But*"—and thank God for the *but*—"But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, except the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:10–11). Now, what's he saying? Well, he's saying, obviously, "I can't see your spirits. You can't see mine. The only thing you know about me is what I choose to reveal to you." There's no other way. I mean, you can't look at my heart, and you can't see me. You can't see in there. You don't know my spirit. And, even in my preaching, I may be holding some things back. I may not be disclosing everything. "*What man [knows] the things of a man, [except] the spirit of man [that's] in him?*" (1 Corinthians 2:11). And, the only way that you can know what's down in there is if I choose to reveal it some way. See, I know things about me that you don't know—thank God—about me.

Now, he says, correspondingly, "Who knows the things of God, but God Himself?" (1 Corinthians 2:11). You see, the only way that you can know God—for the infinite God to reveal Himself to the finite human—is not by that human's eyes, and by that human's ears, and by that human's heart. But God, by revelation—God reveals Himself to us.

The only way you can know God is by God. Revelation is the communication of God's truth to man. If God did not choose to reveal Himself, none of us would know Him. Okay? We could know about Him. We could know there must be a Creator—even that is a revelation. Creation speaks to us of God. Even that is a form of revelation, when we see the creation. It's revelation of a Creator. But, so, number one: We know God by supernatural revelation—that is, the self-disclosure of God. God reveals Himself.

B. Supernatural Inspiration

Now, here's the second way we know God—not only by supernatural revelation, but supernatural inspiration. Now, beginning in verse 12—look at it in 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. Which things also we speak”*—now, when Paul is using the word “we,” he's talking about the apostles. Paul was an apostle. And, Paul is saying now, “God has revealed Himself to us.” That is divine revelation. And now, he says, “We speak these things.” That is divine inspiration. That is, we have a Bible that is inspired. *Inspiration* means the accurate transmission of the revelation. You know, the Bible says that *“all scripture is given by inspiration of God”* (2 Timothy 3:16). And God, when He gave the scriptures, gave the very words. Look, if you will, in verse 13—*“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth”* (1 Corinthians 2:12–13). That is, holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. God gave the very words.

There are some people who say, “Well, I believe that the thoughts of the Bible are inspired, but not the words.” I believe in verbal inspiration, which means God inspired the very words, because you can't have thoughts without words any more than you could have mathematics without numbers. Jesus believed in verbal inspiration. Matthew 4:4: Jesus said, *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* Paul said, “Look, look—there it is. God has revealed it.” That is divine revelation. And then, God has inspired what we say. That is divine, supernatural inspiration.

C. Supernatural Illumination

But now, wait a minute. You still... In spite of divine revelation and in spite of divine and supernatural inspiration, there's one more step—supernatural revelation, supernatural inspiration, and then supernatural illumination. That's very important, because it is the illumination that enables you to know the words of God that He has given by divine revelation and inspiration. You see, you can have a divinely inspired Bible in your hand, but you won't understand it apart from illumination.

Now, Psalm 119, verse 18 says, *“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law”* (Psalm 119:18). You know, when I go to read the Bible, I pray—I

may not use that particular prayer, but I pray some kind of a prayer. “God, give me understanding. Lord, give me illumination so I can understand it.” You see, when you pray that prayer, then a part of you sees that never saw before, a part of you hears that never heard before, a part of you understands that never understood before. You see, a spiritual man is walking with divine illumination; and, therefore, he’s a mystery to those round about him. They can’t figure him out.

Look, if you will, here in verses 15 and 16: *“he that is spiritual [judges] all things”*—now, the word *judge* is the same word that is used for “discern” in this same chapter. And, he’s saying, “He that’s spiritual... A spiritual man sees through things.” He can see things in a skinny minute that others can’t see. I mean, he’s not fooled. He’s not a patsy for the devil—*“he that is spiritual [discerns, sees] all things, yet he himself is judged of no man”* (1 Corinthians 2:15). And again, the word is “discerned” of no man. What he is saying is this—that when God gives the supernatural revelation, and God gives us supernatural inspiration, and then you take that revelation and that inspiration by divine illumination, and God speaks to you in your spirit, you’re going to see things and understand things that other people won’t understand. But friend, they won’t understand you; you will understand them. *“He that is spiritual judgeth all things, [but] he himself is judged of no man”* (1 Corinthians 2:15). They say, “What makes him tick? He’s different.” And, what it is, friend—we’re just marching, as somebody said, to the beat of a different drummer, because we have seen things, we have that illumination that is in our heart, and we know things that they do not know.

And so, when you come to the Word of God, if you want not to be superficial but you want to be supernatural, if you don’t want this humanly wisdom—human wisdom—but you want the heavenly wisdom, then you’ve got to pray and understand that this wisdom is a gift of God—that God makes known not to your soul, which is basically your mind, your emotion, and your will, but to your spirit, which is that innermost part of you in the image of God. Plants have a body; they don’t have a soul. Animals have a body and a soul. But, only man, made in the image of God, has a spirit. And, the Bible says that God speaks to us by His Spirit. Notice again in verse 10: *“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 2:10). And, the things that we know, we know 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”* (1 Corinthians 2:12). It is the Spirit that is the organ of spiritual knowledge. And, God may use your eyes, God will use your ears, God will use your heart, but your eyes, your ears, and your heart only key on and communicate what you know intuitively by divine revelation in the Spirit. Now, having said that—and I’m coming to the close—I want to give about five provisions here, very quickly, about this illumination.

1. That Doesn't Mean You Know Everything About God

When I say that you can know God through illumination, number one, that doesn't mean you can know everything about God. You'll never know everything about God. There are certain mysteries that you will never know 'til you get to Heaven, if you know them then. Deuteronomy 29, verse 29 is a great verse here: *"The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever"* (Deuteronomy 29:29). There are certain secret things that God doesn't reveal. And, you don't have to know them; you're not supposed to know them. And, you can have divine illumination and not know those things. That doesn't mean what you know is wrong.

You can go down to the Atlantic Ocean near where I was born in West Palm Beach, Florida, and get you a bucket, and put that bucket in, and dip out a bucketful of ocean water, and everything in that bucket may be ocean, but not all the ocean is in that bucket. And, you can have some knowledge of God. And, it might be just wonderful, pure knowledge of God, but you do not know everything about God. So, illumination, number one, doesn't mean you're going to know everything about God. Okay?

2. Illumination Does Not Extend to Other Areas of Life

Number two: Illumination does not extend to other areas of life. Now, if you didn't study for a math test, don't pray, "Lord, illumine me." You know, it's not going to help you in these other areas of life. We're talking about knowing God spiritually. You study for these other things.

3. Illumination Does Not Mean That You're Not to Study

And, number three, talking about study—illumination does not mean that you're not to study. When I said that *"eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, [nor hath] it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him"* (1 Corinthians 2:9), that doesn't mean you're not to study—not to use your eyes, your ears, and your heart. To the contrary, 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 15 says, *"Study to shew [yourself] approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"* (2 Timothy 2:15). And, the word "rightly dividing" means "cutting it straight." You study. And, if you're lazy, illumination is not going to be a substitute for your failure to study.

4. Illumination Does Not Mean That You Are Not Going to Have Some Spiritual Requirements in Your Life

Number four: Illumination does not mean that you are not going to have some spiritual requirements in your life. And, illumination is not going to come if you allow sin in your life to cloud your spirit. And, that's the reason that Peter said in 1 Peter chapter 2 and verses 1 and 2: *"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and*

envies, and all evil speakings, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:1–2). As we tried to say in the message this morning, there are some things that you lay aside and there are some other things that you take up. And, if you're a newborn Christian and you want God to open the Bible to you, get your heart right with God. Lay these other things aside—malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, evil speaking (1 Peter 2:1).

5. Illumination Does Mean That the Ordinary Child of God Can Know and Understand the Word of God and Can Know God Intimately

Now, number five: What illumination does mean—and listen to this. Here's what it means, and here's the blessing—illumination does mean that the ordinary child of God—the ordinary Christian, who is obedient and who is diligent—can know and understand the Word of God and can know God intimately—the ordinary Christian. Not the seminary professor—he can do it, but I'm not talking about him. Not the pastor—he can do it, but I'm not talking about him. I am talking about the ordinary Christian who is obedient and who is diligent. He can know the heart and the mind of God.

Well, you say, "No, I just think you've got to be something very special." Well, do you really believe that? Well, let me just show you something here. Go back to chapter 1, verse 26. Look at it. Or, let's go to verse 25 and get the whole thought. This is chapter 1 now: "*Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh*"—now, what does he mean by that? "Not many PhDs," we'd say today—"not many mighty"—what do we say about that? "Not many captains and generals of industry"—"*not many noble*"—"not many kings, and princes, and people born with a silver spoon in their mouth"—"*not many noble are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world*"—and this word *foolish* here is the word we get our English word *moron* from. It means "the person who is not overloaded with an IQ"—"*to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world*"—this word *weak* literally means "physically weak, anemic"—"*to confound the things which are mighty; And base things*"—this means "ennoble, born on the wrong side of the tracks"—"*And base things of the world, and things which are despised*"—those who are looked down upon and shut out—"hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are"—"things that are not": these people didn't make Who's Who; they didn't even make Who's Not—"things which are not, to bring to nought things that are"—now, watch it—"That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom" (1 Corinthians 1:25–29)—talking about ordinary folks.

What am I saying about divine revelation, divine inspiration, divine illumination? I am saying that the average Christian who is not mighty, who is not noble, who is weak, who is despised, who is not recognized by this world, can take this book and pray and say,

as the psalmist, “Lord, illumine me. Help me to understand.” And, you can have a personal knowledge of Almighty God. And, it is a supernatural act, and you won’t be superficial; you’ll be supernatural. And, when that happens to you, and God becomes real to you, your heart is going to begin to burn and you’re going to have joy.

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, He was walking with two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and He gave these disciples illumination. Luke 24, verse 45 says, *“Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures”* (Luke 24:45). O Lord, do that for me. *“Then opened he their understanding, that they [should] understand the scriptures”* (Luke 24:45). And then, in Luke 24, verse 32: *“And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?”* (Luke 24:32)—a burning heart when Jesus opens the scriptures. Say with the psalmist, *“[Lord,] open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in thy law”* (Psalm 119:18). That’s the difference—that’s the difference.

Are you ready for Him to illumine you tonight? You know, when Simon Peter had been in the seminary with Jesus, the seminary had one professor: it was Jesus. And, Jesus had been preaching and teaching. We come to Matthew 16. It’s time for the final exam. Only one question on the final exam—“Who do you say I am?” (Matthew 16:15). That’s a big question—one-question final exam. The master of seminary: “Who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). They said, “Well, some say this, and some say that” (Matthew 16:14). He said, “No, who do you say that I am?” (Matthew 16:15). Simon Peter said, *“[You’re] the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16). And, you know what Jesus said? “That’s right. You get an A+. But, don’t get puffed up about it”—*“flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 16:17). See, *“a man can receive nothing, except it be given him from [above]”* (John 3:27). “You didn’t figure it out, Peter”—*“flesh and blood [did] not reveal it unto [you], but my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 16:17). And, you know what that tells me? It tells me if you’re sitting here waiting ’til you get it all figured out, you’re going to die and go to Hell and not have it all figured out. But, it also tells me that if you’ll humble in your heart and say, “Lord, teach me,” the same God that revealed it to Simon Peter will reveal it unto you. You can be saved tonight. Amen.

Conclusion

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Begin to pray for those around about you, because in just a moment, I’m going to lead us in a little prayer and invite people to open their hearts and receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. And, I know that the Holy Spirit is here tonight, and I know that He wants to speak to you. So, would you just lay your intellectual pride in the dust? Lay your

intellectual pride in the dust and say, “God, I need You. Open my heart. I want to receive Jesus tonight.”

Pray this way: “Lord Jesus, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for doing that. And now, because You died for me, Lord Jesus, because my sin has been paid for, Lord Jesus, I now receive You as my Lord, my Savior. I count upon what You did for me on that cross for the forgiveness of my sin. Come into my heart and my life. I don’t want mere forgiveness; I want You. You come into me. Take control of me. Live in me and make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, I will follow You the rest of my life, wherever You lead me, if You’ll just help me. I have become a follower of the Lamb. I belong to You. I’m weak, but You’re strong, so begin now to make me the person that You want me to be. And, help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Supernatural or Superficial?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 31, 1983

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Deficiency of Man's Wisdom
 - A. It's Deceptive
 - B. It's Transitory
 - C. It's Ungodly
 - D. It's Plain Stupid
 - E. It's Limited
- II. The Sufficiency of Divine Wisdom
 - A. Revelation
 - B. Inspiration
 - C. Illumination
- III. Applications
 - A. Illumination Does Not Mean That You Can Know Everything There Is to Know About God
 - B. Illumination Does Not Apply to Every Area of Life
 - C. Illumination Does Not Mean That We're Not to Study the Bible
 - D. There Are Spiritual Requirements
 - E. Bible Study Becomes Personal Communion with God

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles now and open, if you will please, to 1 Corinthians chapter 2—1 Corinthians chapter 2. The title of our message: "Supernatural or Superficial?" We're going to be talking to you about how to have a real knowledge of God. You see, in the congregation this morning there are two categories of persons: There are those who are supernatural, and there are those who are superficial. There are those who know God, and they're supernatural. There are those who know *about* God, and they're superficial. You see, it's not enough to have a knowledge *of* God. You can be orthodox; you can know all of the facts of the gospel, and die and go to Hell, because you do not know God. You're just superficial; you have a superficial knowledge of the things of God.

I want to read to you, here, in the first five verses: "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of*

God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Corinthians 2:1–5)

Now there are two kinds of wisdom: There's human wisdom and heavenly wisdom. And today, I want to use a very simple outline—a two-point outline—and I want to speak to you about the deficiency of human wisdom, and the sufficiency of heavenly wisdom. Okay? I think we can all understand the outline, though the message itself may be a little convoluted. At least we'll get the outline, which is the deficiency of man's wisdom and the sufficiency of heavenly wisdom.

I. The Deficiency of Man's Wisdom

Now Paul just jumps right in, and he tells us what is wrong with human wisdom.

A. It's Deceptive

He says—as a matter of fact, in the scripture that I just read—he said, “When I came to speak to you, I didn't try to be a great orator. I didn't try to be a great logician. I didn't try to come with swelling words of persuasiveness.” He said, “As a matter of fact, I was scared to death. I was frightened. I was with you in weakness, and trembling, and fear” (1 Corinthians 2:1–3). You say, “What on Earth scared Paul?” Well, Paul was afraid that those who were listening to him might have their faith not in the Lord, but in Paul, and in Paul's message.

You see, it would be possible for you, today, to understand the message I preach and still not know the Lord. It would be possible for me, perhaps, to persuade you to a certain course of action, and yet, you not be saved. Now it's not that I don't want to persuade you; I do want to persuade you. Paul said, “*Knowing...the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*” (2 Corinthians 5:11). But I want to persuade you in the power of the Holy Spirit. You see, here is what Paul is saying—look—he says, in verse 4: “*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power:*”—he's not saying there was no appeal there; there was a great appeal there, but it was the appeal of the Holy Spirit and of power. And the reason for this was—“*that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:4–5).

Now Paul was a double PhD. I mean, he was of the intelligentsia. He was a man of the upper crust, a Pharisee of the Pharisees—a blueblood, as it were; he was a man who had been to all of the fine schools, and he was world-traveled.

B. It's Transitory

Now there's another weakness in human wisdom, another deficiency in human wisdom: It is so transient; it is so superficial. Notice in verse 6—he says, *“Howbeit we speak wisdom”*—that is, true wisdom—*“among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world,”*—now, that word *world* may be translated “age,” not the normal word for *world*. What Paul is saying is, “We’re not speaking the wisdom of this age. That is, our philosophy is not transitory; our wisdom is not temporary. It is eternal. It is not superficial; it is supernatural.” He goes on to say—*“nor of the princes of this world,”*—that is, the high muckety mucks of this age—*“that come to nought”* (1 Corinthians 2:6)—that’s going to come to nothing. I mean, after a while, it’s going to be gone. What he is saying is that, what’s in today is out tomorrow, and what’s in tomorrow will be out after that tomorrow. And the philosophies of men come and go, but he’s saying there is a wisdom, there is a knowledge, that is steadfast, that transcends the ages. Look in verse 7: *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory”* (1 Corinthians 2:7).

Now friend, what I’m talking to you about is not superficial; it is not temporary. It is not transitory; it is eternal. What is wrong with human wisdom? Number one: It may be dangerous because it’s so deceptive. Number two: It’s so transitory; it’s so superficial. Do you know what Dr. Lee called philosophy? He called philosophy “a chunk of cloudbank cluttered with the night wind.” And that’s exactly what it is. I mean, it’s here today, and it’s gone tomorrow; it’s transitory. If there was any man who had the power to speak with enticing words of men’s wisdom it was Paul, but Paul said, “I don’t want to do that. As a matter of fact, I’m just absolutely frightened of man’s wisdom.” And concerning all of this—all of this: the accoutrements of his learning—he said, “I count these things but dung.” He said, “I just lay them in the refuse pile, that I might present the Lord Jesus Christ” (Philippians 3:8).

Every now and then, we see some young man around the church, and he really has a good personality and a persuasive manner, and we say, “Hey boy, you’d really make a good preacher.” Well, he might make a good preacher, but it’ll take more than that to make him a good preacher. And you know, there are a lot of people who have the idea that, you know, if a man has a gift of gab, or if he’s persuasive, then he’d be a preacher. He may be dangerous; he may be dangerous, because he will be drawing people to his own logic—his own persuasion—and he would have followers after him, rather than followers after the Lord.

And so Paul said, “I was trembling when I thought about this.” I heard Billy Graham say, one time, “I stay scared”; that’s what he said: “I stay scared.” He said, “You know, I just don’t want God to take His hand off of me.” And that’s the way I feel. I don’t want God to take His hand off of me.

Now what is Paul saying about the deficiency of human wisdom? Well, I've already given you the first thing: He's saying it's dangerous—it's dangerous. It may make disciples to do the wrong thing. He says that your faith might be in the wisdom of men, not in the power of God. You see, friends, anything *I can talk you into*, somebody else *can talk you out of*. *But anything that God gives you is yours forever*. Now there's another weakness in human wisdom, another deficiency in human wisdom. It is so transient; it is so superficial. Notice in verse 6. He says, "However we speak the wisdom"—we speak wisdom that is true wisdom—"among you that are perfect, yet not the wisdom of this world."

C. It's Ungodly

And then, another thing about this wisdom: It is so ungodly. Look if, if you will, in verse 7, about this wisdom. He says that, "*We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory*" (1 Corinthians 2:7). Now when the Bible uses the word *mystery*, it doesn't use the word *mystery* like a mystery in a television program—an Agatha Christie type of thing—that's not what the word *mystery* means in the Bible. In the Bible, the word *mystery* means "something that you cannot know unless God shows you." That's all it means: "something that you cannot know unless God shows you; something that you'd never figure out." If you put all of the mathematicians, and all of the philosophers, and everybody else in the world—if you put them together and let them think, think, think, think—they'd never know it. It's a mystery. The only way that you can know it is for God to show you.

Now the best thing that you can say about human wisdom is that it can't know God. I mean, it just can't; it's a mystery. And no matter how intelligent you are, you may know certain things about God; you may know about God; you may be able to take certain intellectual concepts, precepts about God, and say, "Yes, I agree with that," or, "I don't agree with that," but you cannot know the deep things of God. They're a mystery, and you cannot know—you will not know—them until God reveals them to you. So human wisdom is ungodly.

D. It's Plain Stupid

And then, on top of that, human wisdom is plain stupid. Look, if you will, in verse 8. He says, "*Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*" (1 Corinthians 2:8). Now can you imagine anything more ignorant than to crucify Jesus? And yet, who crucified Jesus? The princes of this world. I'm not talking about the lower class. Do you know who crucified Jesus? The distilled wisdom of His day. Do you know who clamored for His crucifixion? The Jewish leaders. Now how do you get to be a leader of the Sanhedrin? How do you

get to be a high priest? How do you get to be one of the chief cogs in the synagogue? Well, you've got to be smart; you've got to be intelligent. Those kinds of people just percolated to the top. I mean, these were the best minds. And who collaborated with them? The Roman government—the Roman government. And what part of the Roman government? The very top part of the Roman government.

“Now never,” you say, about how some real thinkers, some real intellects, and the politicians, and the rest of them who connived, and thought up the crucifixion of Jesus. And not just a few of them did it—they got together to do it. And they didn't do it just haphazardly. The Bible says, *“They took counsel together”* (John 11:53). Now if this world's wisdom is so great, you tell me how they crucified Jesus. You see, that's what he's saying: that this world's wisdom is so deficient; it is plain stupid.

E. It's Limited

Now not only that, but it is limited. Now why is it limited? Well, look, if you will, in verse 9 of this same chapter: *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Do you see that verse, right there?

Now he tells us the way the world gets knowledge. First of all, through the eye gate and the ear gate. The eye sees things, and the ear hears things. This is what we call objective data—that is, what I can see with my eye; what I can hear with my ear. So I say, “I see this,” and I write down this; and, “I hear this,” and I write down that. And that's one way the world tries to know.

Well, that's fine. You can see a lot of things with your eyes, and you can hear a lot of things with your ears; but you can't see God and hear God that way. I mean, you'll never know God that way. You see, the Bible says, “Can a man by reason find out God?” You can't put God in a test tube. You can't weigh God on your scales. You can't measure God with a yardstick. You just can't do it. *“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard.”*

Do you remember that first Russian astronaut, who went out into outer space, you know, and he came back? He said a stupid thing. He was an atheist. He said, “Well, I want you to know, I went out into the heavens, and I didn't see God.” That was stupid. If he wanted to see God, all he had to do is step outside that capsule. He'd have seen Him right away.

Now what I'm trying to say is, *“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,”*—you see, that is, by objective data, you cannot know God; but wait a minute—*“neither have entered into the heart of man...”*—that's subjective data. You see, by philosophy, by feelings, by intuition, you can't know God either. You cannot know God by objective fact, nor can you know God by subjective feeling—*“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.”

You see, the reason that a man can't know God with his eyes, with his ear, and with his heart—that is, with human wisdom and human observation—is that those are the wrong organs for knowing God. You see, the organ of spiritual knowledge is the spirit. *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him”—how?—“in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). And when we get saved, God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we're children of God. Now the organ of spiritual knowledge is the human spirit. Plants have a body, but they don't have soul. Animals have a body and a soul, but they don't have a spirit. Only man has a spirit, and *“the spirit of man is the candle of the LORD”* (Psalm 18:28)—that's what the Bible says. When God wants to illumine you, He does it through the spirit.

Now look down in verse 14, and it will make it clear in this same chapter here: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are”—what?—“spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14).

Now here, he mentions the natural man and the spiritual man. Do you know what the word *natural* is in the Greek language? The *psuchikos* man, and the word *psuche*—it's the word we get *psyche* from: the *psuchikos* man, the man in his psyche and his mind. Another word, another way of saying it, would be the *soulish* man. What is your soul, your mind? It is your intellect, your emotion, and your will. That's the natural man.

There are a lot of people around here just perfectly natural. They have mind, emotion, and will; but with your mind, and your emotion, and your will, you'll never know God. As a matter of fact, he says, *“The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.”* Do you know what that means? The word *receive*? He doesn't welcome the things of the Spirit of God. He has no real appreciation for things of the Spirit of God. And that's where you have to watch it, ladies and gentleman, because a person can come to a church, and, if it's a really nice service, they say, “Hey, that was a great service. I really enjoyed that”; but, he didn't enjoy the things of God. He enjoyed the service. You say, “There's a difference?” That's right.

I mean, when J. J. sang, friend, if you didn't enjoy that, saved or lost, something is wrong with you. I mean, that's just a great singer; she's a great singer. So you can enjoy that. You come into a beautiful building—whether you're saved or lost, you can enjoy good architecture. That chandelier is just as pretty to an unsaved man as it is to a saved man, you see. You enjoy that. You can even hear a preacher preach, and if the preacher's, you know, a pretty good speaker, say, “Yeah, I like a good talk. That guy made a good talk. I really enjoyed that.” You know, the unsaved man—he can enjoy church. And a lot of unsaved people are lonely. Man, they get in a service like this, and

people are shaking hands and saying, “How do you do? We welcome you. Have a seat.” “Hey, boy, I enjoy that.” We want you to enjoy that—nothing wrong with that. But you see, those are not necessarily the things of God; those are all external—see, all external.

There’s nothing wrong with those things—don’t get me wrong. God gave us a soul, and God gave us an eye for beauty; and, God gave us a mind that appreciates logic, and God gave us ears that appreciate music. But those are things of the soul, and you have to go beyond that in order to know God. So what I’m saying is this: “*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God.*” That word *receiveth* means he really doesn’t welcome them. He has no real inclination, no real desire, no real hunger for those things; and, on top of that, the Bible says, “*Neither can he know them.*” Why can’t he know them? I’ll tell you why he can’t know them. He is spiritually mad. I mean, his receiver has blown a tube, and he cannot—oh, I mean the transistor. I want to be up to date—the reason that he cannot know is that that he’s limited. He’s spiritually dead.

The Bible says, of our Lord, in John 1, verse 4: “*In him was life; and the life was the light of men*” (John 1:4). Now when the Lord goes out of a man, then the life goes out. And when the life goes out, the light goes out. “*In him*”—the Lord—“*was life; and the life was the light.*” And so here’s a man without the Lord; and then, he’s without the life, and he’s without the light. He is spiritually dead. He cannot receive. He cannot understand. And don’t scold him for not seeing it. Jesus said, “*Except a man be born again, he cannot see*” (John 3:3). I mean, he doesn’t have the capacity; he is spiritually crippled. He cannot understand the things of God. “*The natural man*”—the *soulish* man—“*receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*”—he doesn’t welcome them—that’s what that word *receiveth* means, and—“*...neither can he know them.*” His eye can see; his ear can hear; his heart can feel; but he can’t know God. You see, his organ of spiritual knowledge is zilch. He can’t know—he cannot understand—the things of God.

Now we say, “People just really don’t really believe that.” They say, “You know, I can understand everything you’re saying, Mr. Rogers.” Friend, you will not know God until the Holy Spirit reveals God to you. I don’t care who is preaching. That’s the reason, when I preach, before I come out there, I breathe a prayer, and say, “O God, anoint me—anooint me.” That’s the reason why you ought to pray, and say, “Lord, open my heart, open my mind, to understand Your truth”—because it takes a supernatural miracle.

I want to give you some Scripture now. For example, 2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 15, talks about the Jewish nation, and here’s what it says— and, don’t look these up, right now; just jot them down, because I’m going to be moving so fast, because I’ve got so much to say. Just jot this down; but Paul said: “*Even unto this day, when Moses is read, the vail is upon their heart*” (2 Corinthians 3:15). Paul said, “You can take the Old

Testament...”—that’s what the word *Moses* means—“you can take the Old Testament and read it, but it doesn’t penetrate. There is a veil that just keeps the Word out.” You talk about the Iron Curtain, friend—there’s an iron curtain of sin; there’s a veil before the eyes of some people.

But now, go on to 2 Corinthians 4:4, and there, you’re going to read this: “*The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ...should shine unto them.*” Now you think about it: In front of every unsaved man, there’s a veil. You take away the veil, and behind the veil is a blind man. I mean, he—even if you were to move the veil, he’s blind. “*The god of this world*”—the devil—“*hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.*” You see, the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God: neither can he know them. It’s absolutely, totally impossible for a man with worldly wisdom to know God.

Now there’s an answer to this. Thank God there is. But you’d better understand how limited we are. That’s the reason that Paul said—listen now—go back to the first few verses, when he says in verse 2: “*For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*” (1 Corinthians 2:2–4). Paul knew that, unless the Holy Spirit of God breathed upon the message, his words would just go out. They might fall upon deaf ears. People would see; they might feel; but they would never, ever really understand God, unless the Holy Spirit performed a miracle.

Did you know the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 3, “*that no man can say that Jesus Christ is Lord, but by the Holy Ghost?*” (1 Corinthians 12:3)—no man. You say, “Well, I’ll decide to be a Christian today.” If you decide to be a Christian, it’ll be because the dear, sweet Holy Spirit of God enabled you to say, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” Oh, you can say the words. I’m not talking about saying the words. Anybody can say the words. I can take a blasphemer and say, “Say, ‘Jesus Christ is Lord,’” and he can say, “Jesus Christ is Lord.” That’s not what the Bible says. He means that no man can *confess* Christ as Lord, *have* Christ as Lord, or *know* Christ as Lord—“*No man can say Jesus Christ is Lord but by the Holy Ghost.*”

Again, John chapter 3, verse 27: “*John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven*” (John 3:27)—nothing. You can’t get one thing out of this message today, unless God gives you a gift from Heaven. I can preach. I can tear my heart out. I can entertain you. I can persuade you. I can do anything. But unless God breathes upon you, no man, John said, can receive anything, except it be given him of Heaven. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul said, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 4: “*Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel*

came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost” (1 Thessalonians 1:4–5).

Do you know what’s wrong in the world today? There’s too much *word-only preaching*, too much *word-only preaching*. I mean, the man may be right, but it is worldly. The words may be all right. You can take the same message and put it in the mouth of two different preachers, and it’ll have a different effect. “*Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but in [demonstration of] power, and in the Holy Ghost”* (1 Thessalonians 1:5). And frankly, people, that frightens me—as it frightened Paul. And I tell you, sometimes I say, “Adrian, are you worthy to preach? Are you ready to preach? Is God anointing your life?”

You see, it’s the difference between the superficial and the supernatural. I tell you, what we need today is something that God does in the hearts, and minds, and lives of people. You see, I am so dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God to open the hearts and minds of those who believe not and perform a miracle, so that they might be born again. And then, as we see, in a moment, even those who are born again—they need another miracle, so that they can understand the Word of God. Oh, what a difference it makes!

Have you ever thought about the day of Pentecost? On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they were baptized and filled with the Holy Ghost. And then, Peter stood up and preached. And you know what happened? Three thousand souls were saved in a day. Now I want to ask you a question: What did Peter preach? He preached the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now was Jesus Christ any more resurrected before Pentecost than after Pentecost? Not at all. The facts were just as true before as after. What’s the difference? The Holy Spirit brought those facts home to the hearts of people—the same facts. I mean, it was the same message, but now—just think about it—now, that message being preached in the power of the Holy Spirit makes a tremendous difference. Thank God—thank God—for that anointing.

Now that’s the deficiency of human wisdom. It’s dangerous; it’s superficial; it’s limited; it’s stupid—all of the things that we could say about human wisdom. I mean, the best of human wisdom ended up crucifying the Lord of glory—that’s the deficiency of human wisdom.

II. The Sufficiency of Divine Wisdom

Now I want you to see, secondly, the sufficiency of divine wisdom. Here’s a wonderful, wonderful thing, and what a wonderful lesson it is for us today. God, in order to reveal Himself to us, has done three mighty acts; and, I want you to get these words down in your heart, in your mind, and in your soul. I pray the Holy Spirit will put them there. The first word is the word *revelation*; the second word is the word *inspiration*; and, the third word is the word *illumination*. And then, you’re going to understand how God speaks to

you: revelation, inspiration, and illumination.

A. Revelation

Now let's just continue to read, as we're going through this chapter. First of all, I want you to see the word *revelation*. "*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit...*"—this is verse 10—"*But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*" (1 Corinthians 2:10–11).

Now what is *revelation*? *Revelation* is the way that the Holy Spirit of God makes known the unknowable. This is the way the Infinite reveals Himself to the finite; the self-disclosure of God, when God condescends to make Himself known to us—the Bible calls that *revelation*. Now who is the agent in this revelation? The Holy Spirit. Why the Holy Spirit? Because, only the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God. You see, the Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God. You can't know Him; but the Spirit of God, who is God, knows Him.

Paul goes on to explain that in verse 11. He says, "What man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man that's in him?" I mean, how do you know what's in me? You don't really know me. I know me. You don't know me. The only thing you know really about me... I'm talking about the deep things about me or the things that I care to share with you, you see, and vice versa. I mean, even on a human plane, unless we reveal ourselves to one another, we can't know one another.

As his pickup truck backed up to the back door of the kitchen, he had a stove on the pickup truck, and the stove was half in the kitchen door. And the man was wrestling with the stove. His neighbor jumped up in the bed of the truck and said, "Here, I'll help you." And they wrestled, and wrestled, and wrestled; and, after a while, the neighbor said, "I don't think we'll ever get this stove in the kitchen." He said, "Get it in the kitchen? I've been trying to put it on the truck."

Now we can't even know what's in the other one's heart, unless we reveal it, unless we speak, and unless we disclose what's in our hearts. And that's the reason there's so much misunderstanding among people. "For what man knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man that's in him?" How much less can we know God? And the difference between us and God is such a tremendous, unbelievable, unfathomable difference. You see, Isaiah chapter 55, verse 8: "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts*" (Isaiah 55:8–9). So the difference between my thoughts and God's thoughts are the difference between sea level and the end of the universe. "As the heavens are high

above the earth”—how high is that? Limitless. So the only way—the only way, the only way—that man will ever know God is for God to reveal Himself.

Thank God He’s done it—that God, He’s done it. *“God hath revealed [Himself]”* is what verse 10 says. Praise God for that—hallelujah! Thank You, Lord—that the great God of glory would make Himself known. So the very first word I want you to get in your heart and in your mind, as we think about the sufficiency of heavenly wisdom, is there is a supernatural revelation.

B. Inspiration

Ah, but wait a minute—that’s not enough. There must also be supernatural inspiration. Now continue to read here, in 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. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual”* (1 Corinthians 2:12–13).

Now this speaks of not only God revealing Himself, but the accurate transmission and the recording of what God has said. Theologians call this *inspiration*. *“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God”* (2 Timothy 3:16). *“Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (2 Peter 1:21). Now the *we*, here, refers to the apostle. God revealed Himself, but as God revealed Himself to these who freely receive the things of God, it enabled them to write it down faithfully, so that not one word was lost and not any word is missed. As a matter of fact, God gave it by words. He goes on to—he mentions to us—in verse 13: *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but in which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”* God teaches words.

You say, “What’s so important about that?” Well, the more liberal theologians tell us that God inspired the thoughts, not the words. But Jesus said, in Matthew 4:4, that *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by”—what?—“every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”* And the writer of the Book of Proverbs said, *“Every word of God is pure”* (Proverbs 30:5). You can’t have thoughts without words anymore than you can have mathematics without numbers, you see. And so you change the words, you change the thoughts. And so not a jot, not a tittle, shall fail from the law till all be fulfilled (Matthew 5:18).

And so there is inspiration, as God takes His revelation by the Holy Spirit; and God discloses Himself, and God shows Himself to us in ways that we could never know it. And then, God inspires the writers, so that what we have here is the inspired Word of God. Amen? The Gideons are getting it out—thank God for that. So there is supernatural inspiration.

C. Illumination

Now thirdly, there must be—if you would know this book divinely revealed and divinely inspired—then there must be supernatural illumination, and that’s where our part comes in. Continue to read. I’ve already referred to verse 14, but let’s read it again: *“But the natural man”—the soulish man, that is—“receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). Now that is illumination—as the Spirit illumines you, as the Holy Spirit turns the light on in the human spirit, so that you can know the things that are given us of God, that is, unto you.

You might want to write down in your margin this verse, right here—Psalm 119, verse 18—a wonderful, wonderful verse to pray, when you go to study the Word of God. It says this: *“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in thy law”* (Psalm 119:18). Have you ever prayed that? Have you ever thought, “Well, I can just go to the Bible, and I can pull the truth out of the Bible”? Let me tell you, friend: You cannot. You may know Greek and not know God; you may know Hebrew and not know Him. I don’t care who you are in that seminary, or any other Sunday School class—unless you lay that intellectual pride in the dust and pray this prayer—*“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in thy law”*—you’ll not know the God of this book.

I want to tell you, my friend: It took a supernatural miracle to reveal it; it took a supernatural miracle to write it; and, it’ll take a supernatural miracle for you to understand it. Do you believe that? Do you believe that? Listen. Most of us don’t believe it. If we really believed it, we would agonize before the Lord; we would pray before the Lord; and, we would be saying, “Lord, open Thou mine eyes.” *“The natural man”—the soulish man; the mind, the emotion, and the will—“receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* God is the God who will give you wisdom to understand this—hallelujah! Thank God for that!

But when you do understand it, when God does show it to you, then I’m going to tell you what’s going to happen: Everybody else is going to think you jumped the tracks. Everybody else is going to think you’re nuts. I’m a nut, but I’m fastened to a good bolt. Listen to this—listen: *“He that is spiritual judgeth all things”* (1 Corinthians 2:15). Now he’s using that word, actually: *discern*. Again, he just changes the word, but it means the same thing. He—I mean, the *King James*—changes the word. “He that is spiritual *discerns* all things.” I mean, he can look into the Word of God; he can know what God is doing, what God is up to. “He that is spiritual discerns all things, but he himself is judged of no man.” (1 Corinthians 2:15). People don’t understand him. They think he’s a few bricks shy of a full load. They don’t understand him. He’s not understood of anybody.

Do you know why they don't understand us? Do you know why the world will never understand a Christian—I mean, a real Christian? Because the world doesn't understand Christ. Look at it, huh? *“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 2:16). So if they can't understand Him, then how are they going to understand us, when we have His mind? They will not understand us, but we'll understand them, because we have the wisdom of God.

So have you got those words? Revelation, inspiration, illumination—this is the sufficiency of Heaven's wisdom.

III. Applications

Now let me just make a few applications, and this message will be over today. But I want to make some real wonderful applications, I trust, to your heart and to your lives.

A. Illumination Does Not Mean That You Can Know Everything There Is to Know About God

First of all, when I'm talking about divine illumination, that doesn't mean that you can know everything there is to know about God. Nobody knows everything there is to know about God. I want you to put this down in your margin—Deuteronomy chapter 29, verse 29: *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law”* (Deuteronomy 29:29).

Now there are certain things that are not revealed. People ask me, “Brother Rogers, what about *so and so*, and *so and so*, and *so and so*?” A lot of times, I just have a perfect answer: “I don't know.” And I'm ashamed for not knowing. There are certain things I don't know, you don't know, and nobody knows. They belong to God.

So you can go down to the ocean, and take a bucket, and dip out a bucket-full of water, and everything in the bucket is ocean, but not all the ocean is in the bucket. Amen? And you, with your bucket-sized mind, are not going to know all there is about God; and, I'm not, and nobody else is.

It's impossible that we would ever comprehend all there is know about God. *“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God.”* And so illumination does not mean that you know everything there is to know about God.

B. Illumination Does Not Apply to Every Area of Life

Secondly, illumination does not apply to every area of life. It's not going to help you on a math test. It's not going to do you any good tomorrow in school—or, when school starts again—to pray, “O God, illumine me now.” He won't do it. God will give you wisdom, and that wisdom will tell you to study, right? But God's not going to give you

illumination. I mean, it applies to the Word of God, and the things of God; and, don't try to make it apply in areas where it doesn't apply. I can promise you, it doesn't work in school. I've already tried it.

C. Illumination Does Not Mean That We're Not to Study the Bible

All right now, look—thirdly: Illumination also does not mean that we're not to study the Bible. God is not going to zap you with knowledge. How does illumination work? As you study the Bible. Now the Bible says here, in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 15: *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15). That means “cutting it straight”—that's literally what it means. You can divide it wrongly, because you do not study.

When I said you can know Hebrew and not know God, that's right. When I said you can know Greek and not know God, that's right. But that doesn't mean that, if you have an opportunity, you shouldn't learn Hebrew and Greek; or, it doesn't mean that you're not going to study. Thank God for those who study. It doesn't mean that we don't need human teachers. That's what I'm trying to do, today, is teach you; and, we teach one another. And the Bible says—Paul says, *“The things that you have learned of me, teach other men”* (Philippians 4:9). You see, we're to teach—that's not what he's talking about here. I'm not against studying. You ought to study. But what I'm saying, dear friend, is that upon that study there must come that divine anointing, that knowledge of Him; or, it's just splendid ignorance—that's all it is. And you may know all of that and still not know Him.

I love that phrase “the sword of the Word and Gideon”—“the sword of Lord and Gideon.” Gideon could not have done it without the Lord. The Lord would not have done it without Gideon. “The sword of the Lord and Adrian”—It is God's Word; but, as you study it, the Holy Spirit, then, will turn the light on in your soul. And many of us are not diligent in our Bible study, and, therefore, the Holy Spirit of God does not illumine us. The fruit of the Spirit is discipline, the study of the Word of God. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed.”* So illumination is not a license for laziness, okay?

D. There Are Spiritual Requirements

Now the next thing I want to say about this is this: that there are spiritual requirements. Your heart must be clean before God will illumine you. First Peter chapter 2, verses 1 and 2: *“Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby”* (1 Peter 2:1–2). Put these things aside; and then, desire the Word of God.

You see, a carnal Christian can't understand the deep things of God either, and all he'll get is milk, and Pablum, and strained beets—that's what he says in the third chapter. You go home and read it, that Paul said, "You're carnal, and I couldn't feed you with meat" (Hebrews 5:11–14). But just so, if you want the meat of the Word, get your heart right. Begin to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

But think of this; think of this, just think of this—here's what this means: It means that the average man or woman, boy or girl, who will be faithful and diligent, can know what this book says. Isn't that wonderful? You see, so many times, you say, "Oh boy, God just chooses certain ones, and they're His favorites; and, they know, but I'll never know." Listen. Go back to chapter 1, verse 26: "*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not any wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*" (1 Corinthians 1:26–27). That's us—"*the foolish things of the world.*" Isn't that wonderful? This word *foolish* here is the word we get our word *moron* from. It really is. And God takes people like us, and God delights to do it. God hath "*hid these things from the wise and the prudent, and [God hath] revealed them unto babes*" (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21). Hallelujah! Thank God for that—that we can know.

E. Bible Study Becomes Personal Communion with God

Now that brings me to the final thing I want to say today, and I'll be finished. If this is true—and, it is true—that we know God when the Holy Spirit of God moves upon our heart, and He helps us to understand these things, then Bible study becomes personal communion with God. You see, you don't read the Bible like any other book. You are having fellowship with God, because the Holy Spirit of God is teaching you.

Do you remember those disciples on the road to Emmaus? They said, "Did not our hearts burn within us, as He opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke 24:32). And your heart will burn within you with joy, as the Lord opens to you the Scriptures. You know, the Bible says, "*Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures*" (Luke 24:45). Isn't that wonderful when God does that, and you're having that communion and that fellowship with God, and God is becoming real? Hallelujah for this book, given unto us by revelation, inspiration, and then personal decision, as we depend upon Him to teach us the truth of God's Word.

There's not anything wrong with having human teachers. There was a Christian who had a man named Harry who always explained verses to him. Harry was discipling him. He'd come to a verse that he couldn't understand, so he'd go ask Harry, go ask Harry, go ask Harry. One day, the Holy Spirit said, "I'm the one who taught Harry. Why don't you ask me?" And oh, dear friend, listen. He will teach you.

Conclusion

Has the Bible been a closed book to you? If you have an acquaintance with the Author, you can say to the One who wrote it, "Lord, what do You mean by that?" Wouldn't that be wonderful? Oh, you can know Him today.

Knowing God

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 02, 1984

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:1–5

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Bankruptcy of Human Wisdom
 - A. It Is Dangerous
 - B. It Is Transitory
 - C. It Is Limited
 - D. It Is Demonic
- II. The Blessedness of Heavenly Wisdom
 - A. The Miracle of It
 - B. The Method of It
 - C. The Means of It
 1. Supernatural Revelation
 2. Supernatural Inspiration
 3. Supernatural Illumination
 - a. Don't Think People Will Honor You If You Have Illumination
 - b. If You Have Illumination, That Doesn't Mean That You'll Know All About God
 - c. Illumination Does Not Give You Knowledge in Other Areas
 - d. Illumination Does Not Mean That You're Not Supposed to Study

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's precious Word and turn with me, please, to 1 Corinthians chapter 2? I want to speak to you today on the subject of "Knowing God." Let's read the first five verses: *"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom"—that is, "I did not come as an orator; I did not come as a philosopher"—"declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).

One of the tragedies of the 20th Century is that people come to church and learn about God, but they do not know God. You can know about God without knowing God.

And, if all you do is know about God, then, indeed, you're going to be lost—you're going to die; you're going to perish. But, if you know God, then you're going to love God, because no one can truly know Him without loving Him, because God is love. And, if you love God, you're going to trust God, because when you see how much He loves you, how easy it will be for you then to trust Him! And, when you trust Him, you're going to obey Him, for we cannot fully obey someone we do not trust. And, when we obey Him, we're going to be blessed, for the Bible says, *"If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them"* (John 13:17).

Trust and obey,
For there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus,
But to trust and obey (John H. Sammis).

So, do you want to be blessed? Then you have to obey. Do you want to obey? Then you have to trust. Do you want to trust? Then you need to love. Do you want to love? You need to know—you need to know—God.

Now, do you know Him? Do you really down in your hearts know God? What Paul is doing here in the second chapter of 1 Corinthians is that he is distinguishing between human wisdom and heavenly wisdom. And, that's what we're going to do in our message today: we're going to talk a little bit about the bankruptcy of human wisdom, and then we're going to talk a little bit about the blessedness of heavenly wisdom, because heavenly wisdom is knowing God—and knowing God intimately and knowing God personally. Dear friend, it will be the difference between the superficial and the supernatural.

I. **The Bankruptcy of Human Wisdom**

Now, look with me here at the bankruptcy of human wisdom. The Apostle Paul, in the first five verses, says, "I didn't come as an orator, and I didn't come as a philosopher to you Corinthians. But," he said, "I came as a preacher, and I came preaching Christ and Him crucified. And," he said, "The reason I did that is I did not want your faith to be in the wisdom of man. I wanted your faith to be in the power of God."

A. **It Is Dangerous**

You see, there was a danger there. The danger was that Paul himself was highly educated and indescribably brilliant. He had the equivalency of a double PhD. He was a man who was fluent in many languages. He was a world traveler and an intellectual, and he was speaking and preaching to the very center of philosophical and intellectual knowledge. Paul said, "I did not want to use these things, because," he said, "if I did, you might get carried away with me and not see Jesus." That's what Paul meant when

he said, “*I was with you in weakness, and...fear, and...much trembling*” (1 Corinthians 2:3). He wasn’t afraid of them, neither did he have stage fright. If you think that’s what he meant, you misunderstand the whole thing. What he meant was this: “I am afraid that rather than seeing Jesus, they might see me—and rather than knowing God, they just merely might know about God.”

We had the blessed privilege of spending the day in prayer with Dr. Billy Graham and some other brothers. And, Billy Graham said something I think I shall never forget: he said, “You know, I stay frightened—I stay frightened. I live that way.” What he meant by that is, “I’m just afraid that the people may get their eyes upon Billy Graham and not upon the Lord Jesus Christ and that I might fail to voice the message of the Lord Jesus.” That’s what the Apostle Paul was talking about here: “I’m in weakness, and fear, and much trembling” (1 Corinthians 2:3).

Oh, I don’t want your faith to be in the wisdom of man. I don’t want it to be superficial. I want it to be supernatural. You see, the bankruptcy of man’s wisdom in verses 1 through 5 is just dangerous—dangerous not primarily because of what it says, but dangerous primarily because of the fact that there is but one gospel. And, one man may say, “If he doesn’t preach that gospel—Christ and Him crucified—it is all splendid ignorance. It is all superficial.”

B. It Is Transitory

But, not only is it dangerous—it’s also transitory. Look, if you will, in verse 6: he says, “*Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought*”—that come to nothing (1 Corinthians 2:6). The word *world* there may be translated—and should be translated—“age” or “a limited period of time.” What he’s saying is that all of the vaunted wisdom of this world is for a limited period of time, and, after a while, it’s going to come to nothing. I mean, after a while, it’s not going to amount to anything. A thousand million years from now, a lot of things that they’re studying about in the great centers of learning and the universities—it’s going to be nothing. You know what nothing is? That’s a zero with the edges trimmed off—nothing. It’s just going to come to nothing. Do you know what it’s going to be? Trivial pursuits—trivial pursuits. It will just come to nothing. The intellectual top waters, the high muckety-mucks, the princes of this age are saying, “Well, no matter how impressive it is, when you get to the end, the end result—a thousand years from now—what difference will it make?” So many things that people exercise their minds about—God will be saying, “So what? So what?” You see, it’s dangerous because it’s a substitute for the real thing; it is transitory because it is passing away and it is so limited.”

C. It Is Limited

Look, if you will, in verse 7: he goes on to say, *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory”* (1 Corinthians 2:7). The Bible is a mystery book to those who do not know the Lord. The Bible is filled with mysteries. Now, you need to understand the way that the Bible uses the word *mystery*. The Greek word for *mystery* here does not mean mystery as we use mystery, like in a detective novel, or Agatha Christie, where you’re trying to figure out who did it: “Did the butler do it, or did the maid do it?” or whatever. And, you’re trying to figure that out. That’s a mystery as we know a mystery. And, if you had a mind like Sherlock Holmes, if you were cunning enough, if you were a real sleuth, you could go in there, and look at all the facts, and figure it out—but not with a Bible mystery. A Bible mystery is a sacred secret that you will never know until God shows you. That’s what the word *mystery* means in the Bible. It means something that nobody, no matter how brilliant, can understand it, and it must be shown to him by a revelation of God. We’ll see more about that later on, but human wisdom is limited because the things that are known of God are mysteries that only come by divine revelation. They’re sacred secrets, and you’ll never know they ’till God whispers them in your ear.

D. It Is Demonic

Now, the fourth bankruptcy of human wisdom—not only is it dangerous, not only is it a transitory and trivial pursuit, not only is human wisdom limited to unpick the divine mysteries, but the fourth thing about it is it absolutely demonic—demonic. Look, if you will, in verse 8: it speaks of the wisdom of Heaven, and he says, *“Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”* (1 Corinthians 2:8). Now, who are the princes of this world? To what is Paul referring? Of whom is he speaking when he says, “the princes of this world”? In Ephesians chapter 6, Paul says, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness”* (Ephesians 6:12). And, when he says here, “the princes of this age,” I believe he’s talking about demonic spirits. I believe that the devil engineered the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. The devil was behind it all. He was the driving force—the motivating force. And, what Paul was saying is, “How silly—how foolish—of the demon spirits, the princes of this age, to do that.” Why? Because it was in the death of Christ on the cross that Satan’s kingdom came tumbling down. Before Jesus Christ went to the cross, He made a prophecy. He said, *“Now shall the prince of this world be cast out”* (John 12:31). This was the end of Satan’s dominion by the death of Christ, because the Bible says, *“Through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil”* (Hebrews 2:14).

Folks, you talk about a blunder! While Calvary seemed like a tragedy for God, it was

the greatest victory for Satan—and it was his ultimate defeat. Had the devil known that, he would not have been so encouraged about Calvary. You see, that's what he's saying: had the princes of this age known that, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. Folks, you might as well learn that the devil is a knucklehead. I mean, really, he is a knucklehead. You see, the devil has the idea that he can overcome God. Now, that's unmitigated stupidity—I mean, stupidity at its essence, that he could actually, literally, overcome God. And, this shows you the bankruptcy of human wisdom, which is, in this case, really hellish wisdom.

Now, you say, “But, it wasn't the demons that put him on the cross; men did it.” Yes, of course, but men did it using the wisdom that comes from beneath, which the Bible says is sensual and devilish (James 3:15). I want to say that the very minds of Jesus's day crucified Him—the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Sanhedrin. These were the best minds. The Roman government—these were the best minds. You don't get to be a Roman governor unless you've got something upstairs. You didn't get in the Sanhedrin unless you were brilliant. You see, this was not done by stupid men; this was the best the world had to offer. And, they didn't just do it without thinking about it. The Bible says, “*They took counsel together*” (John 11:53). That is, they plotted; they thought about it. They put their minds together, and they did it knowingly, wittingly, with their eyes wide open. Yet, what a blunder, motivated by the devil! Their wisdom was really demonic. God forbid that we will ever think that human wisdom is the answer to this world's problems.

II. The Blessedness of Heavenly Wisdom

I want you to think with me a few moments about the blessedness of heavenly wisdom and how really to know God.

A. The Miracle of It

When you know God, the very first thing I want to say is that it is miraculous that you know God. We need to understand this. If anybody here knows God, it is because of a divine miracle—it is because God takes the initiative and God will disclose Himself to you. This wisdom of God is the self-disclosure of God. Look, if you will again, in chapter 2, verse 4: Paul says, “*My speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*” (1 Corinthians 2:4). Then, look in 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*” (1 Corinthians 2:12).

What do those verses mean, when Paul talks about demonstration of the Spirit and of power? Paul said, “I didn't want to come as an orator. I didn't want to come as a

philosopher, and I did not want to come as a logician.” He said, “I am coming to you not with an explanation; I’m coming to you with a demonstration.” Paul realized that he was totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God to do his works. Now, we need to learn that, and I need to keep understanding that. Friend, there is nobody here today or any other place who’s going to be able to explain you or argue into the Kingdom of Heaven. I may preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit of God can impart truth. And, *anything I can talk you into somebody else might be able to talk you out of*. But, dear friend, anything God gives you is yours forever.

Now, I want to give you some verses. I want you to pay attention to these verses, and I pray that all of these verses will help you to see that you cannot know God by yourself and apart from the Holy Spirit. For example, Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 4: *I know nothing by myself*” (1 Corinthians 4:4). That is, “There’s nothing that I figured out, that I know, because I’m Paul. I know nothing of myself.” The Lord Jesus Christ Himself reiterated this truth in John chapter 3 and verse 27, when he said, *“A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven”* (John 3:27). Boy, you talk about a verse that pulls the rug out from underneath our intellectual pride! *“A man can [know] nothing, except it be given him from heaven”* (John 3:27). The same apostle said in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 3: *“no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost”* (1 Corinthians 12:3)—no one.

Now, if I were to get up here and give you a lecture on comparative religions, I would say over here is old Buddha, and over here is Confucius, and over here is Mohammed, and over here is Jesus Christ. And, I could tell you all the good and bad things about all the others and then explain to you about Jesus. And then, you say, “Oh, okay. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. He’s my Lord, and I’m now saved.” Oh, no—oh, no—you would never know because you figured it out. The only way that you would know is not because somebody logically, or cunningly, or persuasively pointed out that Jesus Christ is better. As a matter of fact, there’s too much of that kind of evangelism that depends upon the power of human persuasion. It just makes my skin crawl when somebody calls me “a salesman for Jesus.” I’m not that. Dear friend, I want to tell you, I’m a preacher of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, but I am absolutely, totally dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God to bring home what I say. Again, I want to say I can preach truth, but only Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit can impart truth. This is what the Apostle Paul said in 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 5: he said, *“For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance”* (1 Thessalonians 1:5). Boy, I love that. *“Our [Word] came not [to] you in word only”* (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

Do you know the problem in America today? We’ve got too much word-only preaching—too much word-only preaching. I mean, sometimes they’re saying the right

things; sometimes it's not that they're not preaching the truth, but it is word only. That's the reason I pray when I preach, "O God, don't let me preach without that anointing." And, that's the reason you ought to pray for me: because you have to listen to it. And, that's the reason you ought to pray for you and say, "God help me to understand, and Lord, bring the truth home," because, you see, dear friend, that when a man understands spiritual truth, there is a supernatural miracle—there is a demonstration of power and of the Holy Ghost. So, we can't just come and act like other people. As we sing that song, "All is vain unless the Spirit / Of the Holy One comes down" (author unknown).

Do you remember when Jesus Christ had those disciples and He trained them for three years? They were in three years of seminary, as it were. Now, they're coming to the finals, and Jesus says, "Now, I want to ask you the big question: Who do you say that I am?" Remember Simon Peter lifted his hand. Well, I don't know whether he lifted his hand. We used to in school: "Please, teacher, call on me; I've got the answer." Simon Peter, ready with the answer...and he said, "*Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God*"—and Jesus said, "That's right. You get A+"—"*Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona*"—but then, He said, "Don't get puffed up about it"—"*flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 12:16–17). "Simon Peter, your flesh, your blood, your intellect, and your ability did not help you to understand that I am the Christ, the Son of the living God, even though I've been the teacher, even though you've been with Me for three years and you've heard Me, the master model teacher, teach. My teaching and your perception did not help you to see this or the very fact that you live with Me. God had to reveal it to you—God had to reveal to you—that I'm the Christ, the Son of the living God."

You see, it makes a difference when God does the work. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. For 50 days the disciples were in bewilderment. One the 50th day, the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit induced them with power. They were baptized with the Holy Spirit, filled with Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And, on that day, 3,000 souls were saved. Now, I want to ask you a question: Was Jesus Christ any less raised before Pentecost than He was raised after Pentecost? The Resurrection was just as real, just as true, just as valid before Pentecost as after Pentecost, but the power of the Holy Spirit anointed that preacher's preaching and brought the message home. And, that's the reason on the day of Pentecost there was a dramatic transformation and a change—because now the Holy Spirit of God is performing a miracle work.

Now, here's what I'm saying. You listen to me. I'm talking to you about the blessedness of heavenly wisdom, and I'm saying that it is miraculous. It takes a supernatural act of God, and it is a demonstration of power and of the Holy Ghost. No

man can receive anything except it be given him of Heaven (John 3:27). Paul said, “Of myself, I know nothing.”

B. The Method of It

Now, I want you to think with me not only about the miracle of it, but I want you to think with me about the method of it. How does this miracle take place? How does the Spirit of God, who is the agent of truth, communicate that truth to us? Well, He communicates that truth in our spirit. Now, continue to read here in the Word of God. We left off with verse 8. Look, if you will, in verse 9: *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:9–12). Now, here’s what Paul is saying: Paul is saying, “The method of God is teaching us about Himself; the method of God’s imparting of this wisdom is the Holy Spirit in the human spirit.”

Now, I want to explain that. Notice in verse 9, where he says, *“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, [nor hath] entered [in] the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9). What does he mean by that? He means that you’re not going to learn it with your eyes, you’re not going to learn it with your ears, and you’re not going to learn it with your heart. The eyes and the ears speak of objective knowledge. With my eyes I can read; with my ears I can hear. And, I can accumulate facts—and I may have facts about God—but I’ll not know God. I will not learn about God with my eyes or my ears.

Well, you say, “You learn about God with your heart.” Oh, no—you may know God with your heart later on, but you’ll not learn about God with your heart. Your heart is your emotions. Remember what J. Sidlow Baxter said: “Your emotions are the shallowest part of your life; salvation is the deepest work of God.” How can He do His deepest work in the shallowest part? Your heart is not going to understand these things—you’re not going to learn with your heart. You can react with your heart what you know about God, but the heart is not the organ of knowledge. It is not by objective facts—it is not by the eye, not by the ear, not by subjective feelings. *“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 2:10). God has given us His Spirit, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God.

You see, if we try to use the eye, and the ear, and the heart to know God, we’re just simply using the wrong instruments. There is nothing necessarily wrong with your eyes,

and your ears, and your heart. They all ought to be given to God, but now we have these beautiful flowers here and we have the beautiful music. Now, suppose I want to smell the flowers. I can't smell the flowers with my ears, and I cannot hear the choir with my nose. Now, there may be nothing wrong with my ears because I can't smell the flowers. That doesn't have anything to do with it. I am using the wrong instrument to smell the flowers. You see, dear friend, the mind, the eyes, the ears, the heart—these are not the instruments of knowing God.

God is known by the spirit—not only the Holy Spirit who reveals God to us, but also the human spirit that receives what the Holy Spirit says. You see, these 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. The soul is the psychological part of you—the mind, the emotion, the will, the eyes, the ear, and the heart—but you don't know God that way. Animals can't know God; animals can't worship God. Only man has a spirit. *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24).

Now, how does God communicate truth to us? Well, He asks a question. Let me just get another scripture here—verse 10. Look—look at it: *“for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God”*—verse 11—*“For what man knows the things of a man, [except] the spirit of man which is in him?”* (1 Corinthians 2:10–11). That is, who knows Adrian Rogers—who in this building knows Adrian Rogers? I'll tell you who: Adrian does. That's the only person. You say, “I know you.” No, you don't know me. You might think you know me, but you don't know me. I know me. Who knows you? You know you. *“What man knows a man except the spirit of man, which is in him?”* (1 Corinthians 2:11). There is no one who fully, completely, and sometimes even generally understands another person. We know ourselves because of the spirit that's in us.

And then, he asks another question: If we can't even know one another, how are we going to know God? Look in verse 11 again: he says, *“Even so the [thoughts] of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:11). Now listen, if I, being finite, can't know another finite being, how can I, being finite, know an infinite being? How can I, with my natural abilities, know the supernatural? It's just impossible. Isaiah says in Isaiah 55, verses 8 and 9: *“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts”* (Isaiah 55:8–9).

Say, I want to ask you a question: How much higher than the Earth are the Heavens? I mean, if you could project a light beam and travel 186,000 miles a second and go straight that way for as long as your mind can conceive—a hundred billion, million, trillion, whatever else is left, just keep on going—when would you come to the end of it? Fathomless, infinite. And, you think you're going to understand God? *“As the heavens are [high above] the earth...are my ways [above] your ways...my thoughts*

[above] your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). If I can’t even know Tommy and Tommy can’t even know me, but Tommy knows what’s in Tommy and I know what’s in me, then how can I know Tommy and how can Tommy know me? Well, there’s one way: if I could get inside Tommy and blend my spirit with Tommy’s spirit, then I would know Tommy and Tommy would know me. That’s exactly what God has done: God has sent His Spirit. And, when a person gets saved, he becomes a partaker of the divine nature.

Now, it is an inside job, and the very Spirit of God becomes comingled with our spirit. And, we might know the things that are given us of God, because it is an inside job. God’s Spirit in the human spirit performs a miracle, and He knows me and I know Him by communion in the Spirit. *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). I must receive this knowledge this way. The natural man, the soulish man, cannot know the things of God. The word *natural* means “soulish—mind, emotion, and will.” You may know about God—you may get an “A” on your systematic theology dissertation—but you can’t know God. Did you know a man can know all about bread and starve to death—right? You can know all about God and not be saved. What am I saying? Pay attention: this knowledge of God—the miracle of it—the Holy Spirit of God disclosed the method of it. The Spirit of God speaks to the human spirit. There is comingling of our spirits, and, therefore, we can know God.

C. The Means of It

But now, the means of it—the means of it. You say, “What’s the difference between the method and the means?” Well, pay attention. God does three supernatural things, that He might communicate with your spirit. Now, here they are:

1. Supernatural Revelation

First of all, there is supernatural revelation. Look again in verse 11: *“For what man [knows] the things of man, [except] the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things [which] are...given to us of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:11–12). And, verse 10: *“God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 2:10). Supernatural revelation—God just simply reveals Himself to us by His Spirit. He discloses Himself; He takes the initiative. It is not because we love Him that He first loved us and He has disclosed Himself to us. He has, in His graciousness, revealed Himself supernaturally.

2. Supernatural Inspiration

But now, wait a minute—not only supernatural revelation, but supernatural inspiration, because you see, dear friend, what God revealed was recorded. And, the recording of what God revealed we call “the Bible.” And, the Bible is given to us as a record of what God revealed, and it is given to us by supernatural inspiration. Look again in verse 13:

Paul says, *“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual”* (1 Corinthians 2:13). Now, Paul was an apostle, and when he used the word *we*, he was speaking of the apostles. And, what Paul is saying is the things that we teach with the authority of an apostle we teach with words that the Holy Ghost taught us. Every word in the Bible is inspired of God. *“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God”* (Matthew 4:4). This is what we call “verbal inspiration.” God gave us His words, and He put His words in a book.

Now, there is supernatural revelation. God takes the initiative, and He reveals Himself to us. There is supernatural inspiration: that Word is recorded. We have the words of the apostles, which are the Words of God. All scripture is given by inspiration of God. *“Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost”* (2 Peter 1:21). And so, we have God’s Word—infallible, inerrant, trustworthy, and true—the Word of God.

3. Supernatural Illumination

But, wait a minute—you can hold in your hand the inspired Word of God and still not know God. You can know Bible facts and not know God. You can know the names of the apostles, you can rattle off the books, and you can tell me systematic theology and still not know God. There’s one other thing is necessary. Are you ready? Look—supernatural revelation, supernatural inspiration, and now supernatural illumination. Continue to read here now in these verses. He says in verse 14: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). The word *natural* means a “soulish” man.

He comes into a place like this; he doesn’t understand what I’m talking about. Now, he can enjoy the service. Who wouldn’t enjoy hearing this choir? He can enjoy the Christmas decorations. He could say, “Boy, you know, that looks like a well-organized place down there. I just enjoy being with a lot of friendly people.” Who doesn’t want to get a warm handshake? And, there’s nothing wrong with all of that. That’s fine; that’s good. *“But the natural man [receives] not the things of the Spirit of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). It goes right over his head. He doesn’t even understand what we’re talking about. It’s all Chinese to him, or Japanese, or Russian; he just doesn’t understand it. It goes right over his head. He hears the words, but he doesn’t know the music. He hears about God, but he doesn’t know God. And, he has no ability; he doesn’t receive these things. And, the Bible says, “He can’t know them, for they’re spiritually discerned, and, therefore, the Holy Spirit of God must help him to understand” (1 Corinthians 2:14). That’s what the word “spiritually discerned” means—that they are spiritually understood. It is the Holy Spirit of God that turns the light on in your soul.

See, there is supernatural revelation, supernatural inspiration, and then supernatural

illumination. When you begin to study the Bible, when you read the Bible, here's a prayer that you ought to pray—Psalm 119 and verse 18: *“Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law”* (Psalm 119:18). When God opens your eyes, you're going to see things you never saw before, you're going to hear things you never heard before, you're going to know things you never knew before, because God the Holy Spirit is going to teach you.

Now remember, no man can receive anything, except it be given him of Heaven. That's the reason I prayed before the service, “O God, speak to me today. God, help me to understand today. Lord, let something supernatural illumine my heart and help me to know, dear God.” And, He will—He will, dear friend. As a matter of fact, the last part of this verse says, *“But we have the mind of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 2:16). When a man is walking in the Spirit, he thinks Jesus's thoughts after Him, and that is wisdom to have the mind of Christ. Oh glory hallelujah!

I've got to close right here, but let me just say five things about this illumination quickly.

a. Don't Think People Will Honor You If You Have Illumination

Number one: Don't think people will honor you if you have it. Don't think they'll say, “What a wise person you are.” As a matter of fact, they won't think you're wise. They'll think you're few bricks short of a full load—they really will. They won't think you're wise. The Bible says, “He that's spiritual—he understands all things, but nobody understands him.” They're going to think you've jumped the tracks. They really will, because you're marching to the beat of a different drummer.

b. If You Have Illumination, That Doesn't Mean That You'll Know All About God

Secondly, this does not mean, if you have illumination and you know God, that doesn't mean you'll know all about God. Thank God you can know God without knowing all about God. Did you know that if a little boy or girl comes down here this morning, gives his or her heart to Jesus, they'll know God without knowing all about God? See, isn't that wonderful? You don't have to know all about God.

I knew my daddy before I knew all about my daddy—and still don't know all about my daddy. I didn't even know where he worked before I loved him. See, I loved him and trusted him because he's my daddy. I didn't know what—I had no idea when he went off to work what he did. You probably have no idea what God is doing, you know, running the universe. You can know Him. You can go down to the ocean with a bucket and dip out a bucket of water, and everything in that bucket will be ocean, but all the ocean won't be in that bucket. And, dear friend, I want to tell you that you can have a bucket full of God and it all be all God. What I mean—and I don't mean to talk about God as though you can divide him up that way—but I'm just simply saying to you, precious

friend, how wonderful that you can know God without having to know all the facts of theology! You know God by divine revelation in the spirit, and there's a sweet mysticism to it. And, praise God for it.

c. Illumination Does Not Give You Knowledge in Other Areas

Now, I want to say something else—I want to say something else—that this matter of illumination does not give you knowledge in other areas. For example, you say to God, “Dear God, I want to know You,” and you know Him, and then you come to a math test and you haven't studied, and you say, “Spirit of God, illumine me,” it won't work—I'll guarantee you, dear friend. Those are the things that you get with your eyes; those are the things you get with your ears. And, you have to hit the books; you have to burn them in that oil to get that. You're not going to get it by praying for it, unless God, in His infinite mercy, performs a miracle that He's not promised to perform. You're just going to have to be diligent in your study.

d. Illumination Does Not Mean That You're Not Supposed to Study

Another thing I want to say about this illumination that is so wonderful and so thrilling to me is that it does not mean that you're not supposed to study, when I say that you don't get it with your eye and your ear and everything. Everybody says, “Oh boy, that's good. I'm just going to pray and no longer study.” No, the Bible says very clearly, “*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth*” (2 Timothy 2:15). And, that word “rightly dividing” means “cutting it straight.” You see, dear friend, when I apply myself to Bible study and I say, “[Dear God,] open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things [in] thy law” (Psalm 119:18). God sees my sincerity, and God does open my eyes; and God does show me the things in His Word.

Conclusion

Oh, there are so many precious truths. I wish I had more time. But, let's bow our heads in prayer.

A Road Map to Maturity

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: Septembetr 3, 1989

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:6–3:4

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Natural Man
 - A. He Is Born to the Natural World
 - B. He Is Blind to the Spiritual World
 - C. He Is Bound to the Material World
- II. The Spiritual Man
 - A. He Lives by the Spirit
 - B. He Learns from the Spirit
 - C. He Is Liberated Through the Spirit
- III. The Carnal Man
 - A. He Is a Very Dependent Person
 - B. He Is a Very Deformed Person
 - C. He Is a Very Divisive Person

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word, and turn with me this morning to 1 Corinthians chapter 2. And, when you have found it, I want you to look up here at me. I want to tell you something that happened here in Bellevue Church many years ago. Our former pastor of this church, Dr. Robert G. Lee, was a great of man of God. But, he was never known to flinch; he was never known to back up or water down the Word of God. On a particular occasion, he preached an excoriating message against sin. There was a lady in the church who was, well, her fur was rubbed the wrong way. She did not like the message. As a matter of fact, she was angry with Dr. Lee when he finished preaching. And, Dr. Lee was at the door, and she came out. And, she said to him, "Dr. Lee, I didn't like that sermon one little bit." He said without a pause, "Madam, neither did the devil, so classify yourself." Now, that's what I want to help you to do today: I want to help you classify yourself. I want to help you to find out what class and category you're in. This passage of scripture mentions three categories of persons. When I used to teach a Sunday School class here, I taught a class called "the Discovery Class." And, in that Discovery Class, I taught what I'm going to teach you this morning over and over again. But, many of you have not heard it and need to hear it. I want to teach you what it means to be a mature Christian. The title of our message is this: "A Road Map to

Maturity.”

Now, in order for you to get to where you need to be, you need to know where you are. No map on earth will do you any good if you don't know where you are—you'll not be able to get to where you need to be. *If you're in a big building—a complex of some kind—they'll have a little map on the wall of that particular building. And, generally, it will have a red dot when you're looking at the map, and it'll say, "You are here." And then, you'll say, "Well, if I'm here, then I can get over there." But, if don't know where you are, then that doesn't do you any good at all.* Now, what I want you to do today is to find out where you are. I want you to do what Dr. Lee told that woman to do—I want you to classify yourself. Now, there are three classes or three categories of human beings in the world. Of all of the five billion people on earth they all fall into one of three categories. Let's see what they are.

First Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14 says, *"But the natural man..."* (1 Corinthians 2:14). Do you see that? Underscore that phrase *"the natural man"* (1 Corinthians 2:14) That's one category of people—the natural people, the natural man. Okay? And then, chapter 2, verse 15 says, *"But he that is spiritual..."* (1 Corinthians 2:15). Underscore that. That's the second category of people. There are natural people, and then are spiritual people. Now, skip on down to chapter 3 and verse 1: *"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal"* (1 Corinthians 3:1). Underscore that. That's the third category of persons: there's the carnal person. There are three kinds of people in the world today. And, I'll promise you on the authority of the Word of God that you're one of those three. You are either a natural person, a spiritual person, or you are a carnal person.

Now, I pray God the Holy Spirit will give me the ability to help you to categorize yourself—to find out and to classify yourself—to see where you are so you can see where you need to be and to help you to get to be what I would call a "mature Christian." Chapter 2, verse 6 says, *"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect"* (1 Corinthians 2:6). You see that? And, the word *perfect* here means "mature." So, what the Apostle Paul is trying to do here is to help these people become mature, grown-up Christians, not to be little baby Christians. Now, let's see what we would tell our Discovery Class.

I. The Natural Man

First of all, let's look at what we call "the natural man." Verse 14 speaks of the natural man. Now, why is he a natural man?

A. He Is Born to the Natural World

Well, first of all, because he is born into the natural world. He just comes out of the

hospital. He's just a little natural baby—a little natural boy, a little natural girl. They're just natural. That's the way they are born. And, because they're natural, they just do what comes naturally. They're not born again; they're just born one time. They don't have the new birth; they just have the first birth.

Now remember, there's a first birth and a second birth. And, the Lord Jesus Christ told Nicodemus, a natural man, that he had to be born again. Now, Governor Nelson Rockefeller was asked when Jimmy Carter said that he was born again. Somebody asked Nelson Rockefeller, "Have you been born again?" Do you know what he said? I heard him say it with my own ears. It sent a chill over me when he said it. He said, "I certainly can't say that I've been born twice." He said, "I was lucky to have been born the first time." I thought to myself, "What ignorance—what ignorance." Now, you know, the Apostle Paul speaks of the princes of this world. Notice what he says here in chapter 2, verse 6: *"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought"* (1 Corinthians 2:6). Here's one of the princes of this world who says, "I can't say I was born twice. I was lucky to have been born once."

Do you know what Jesus said to a man who was only once born? He said, "It'd been better for that man that he had not been born." Listen, if you're born but once, you die twice. The first death is only the natural death, but the second death is eternal death in the lake of fire. If you're born once, you die twice. If you're born twice, you can only die once. Your body can die, but that's all. Your spirit goes to be with the Lord Jesus Christ in Heaven. And so, a natural man is born into the natural world—he's just born into the natural world. He's a natural man.

B. He Is Blind to the Spiritual World

And, because he is born into the natural world, he is blind to the spiritual world. He doesn't understand spiritual things. Notice in verse 14: *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (2 Corinthians 2:14). He's just blind to the spiritual world. There's a spiritual world all around him, but he doesn't understand it. Do you see in verse 14 where it says, *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:14)? Look at the word *receiveth*, and the word *receiveth* there is a very interesting word. It literally means "to welcome the things of God." A natural man has no appreciation for spiritual things.

Now, that doesn't mean he can't appreciate church. Oh, an unsaved man can appreciate a service like this. An unsaved can enjoy a church like Bellevue Church. I mean, he can come, and he can say, "Well, that sure was good music." You don't have to be saved to enjoy gospel music. Did you know that? I mean, Betty Stalnecker—she

can sing. Anybody with ears can tell that's good music. Chris Alsup, this choir, this orchestra—that's good music. Why, they sometimes take gospel music and take it into the honky-tonk, take it into the bar room, and take it anywhere, and they say, "Now, we're going to do a gospel number." And then, the people sit there, and they applaud; they enjoy it.

You don't have to be saved to enjoy good architecture. Natural people can be impressed with the building we're building out there. It's a natural building made out of natural brick, and they say, "Hey, good-looking building—I like that." A natural man—he can look at a church, if the church has a Sunday School contest, and they have the number of people present—he says, "Man, I like that." Just as much as he enjoys winning a football game—he wins a Sunday School contest. A natural man comes to church, and he meets friends and associates with people. He enjoys that just like he would going to a Kiwanis club. He just naturally enjoys all of that. Why, if a church is meeting its budget, he looks at that just like he looks at his spreadsheet and says, "Good, real good—doing good." That gives him a good feeling.

You see, the natural man can come to church, and if it's all fine, he says, "Yeah, I like going over there. It's okay." But, my dear friend, the things that count he doesn't understand. He has no appreciation for the things that really count. You see, the cross of the Lord Jesus he doesn't understand. You see, the Apostle Paul says in chapter 2, verse 2: *"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified"* (1 Corinthians 2:2). He said, "The princes of this world don't know that. They don't understand that." *"The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness"* (1 Corinthians 1:18). They'll be in a church like this, and they can enjoy everything; and yet, they never really know the things that really count.

You see, dear friend, he has no appreciation for it, and he has no comprehension of it. He can't understand it. Look in verse 14: the Bible says, *"Neither can he know them"* (1 Corinthians 2:14). I mean, it's not that he just doesn't choose to know it; he can't know it. He can't see because he is blind to the spiritual world. He doesn't have the apparatus. What did Jesus tell one of the princes of this world, Nicodemus? Remember that—in John chapter 3? Now, Nicodemus was a very intelligent man; he was a religious leader. But, he had never been saved; he was a natural man. And, Jesus told Nicodemus, *"Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"* (John 3:3).

Have you ever talked to an unsaved man about spiritual things, and he says, "I just don't see that"? Hey, he's not lying. Don't scold him. He doesn't see it. **And, to scold him for not seeing it would be like scolding a blind man for not seeing a sunset.** The Bible says, "He cannot know it." He just doesn't have the apparatus. **In this room today, there's music, drama, news, and there are sports. All of this is in the room today. You**

say, “Well, I don’t see it.” No, because you don’t have a television tuner. But, had you had a television tuner sitting right there and if you tuned it in, it’s all here, isn’t it? Right? It’s all here. You know it’s here. Now, your great grandfather wouldn’t have been able to understand that, but you understand it. It’s all in this room right now, but you have to have a tuner to tune it in. You see, the unsaved man doesn’t know how to tune in to W-O-R-D. He does not get what really counts. He does not have the apparatus. He cannot tune in almighty God. He cannot understand. That’s what the verse says: “He doesn’t welcome the Word; he doesn’t receive it, and he cannot understand it. He has no appreciation and he has no comprehension of the Word of God” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

C. He Is Bound to the Material World

Now, let me show you something else about this man: because he’s born to the natural world—because he’s blind to the spiritual world—he is bound to the material world, because that’s the only world he knows. He is a materialist. And, this is the world the natural man lives in; it is the natural world, and he’s simply bound to it. He has no capacity for spiritual fellowship.

Now, let me show you something. Take your Bible, and turn with me to Jude. And, I want to show you a verse. Now remember, we’re talking about people who are bound to the material world. Jude verse 19: “*These be they who separate themselves*”—that is, they’re troublemakers. And then, notice how he describes them—“*sensual*” (Jude 1:19). That’s what the King James says. I looked it up, Bob, in your Bible just a few moments ago, and I think King James has you beat right now. He’s got one of those things called a “translation” over there, but the King James Version calls “*these be they who separate themselves sensual*” (Jude 1:19). Now, the word *sensual* here is the same word that’s translated natural over in 2 Corinthians 2. They are people who live by their five senses. They are sensual—the five senses. They live by what they can see, smell, touch, hear, and feel. That is how they live because they don’t have the Spirit; they are bound to the material world.

And then, notice, in Jude verse 10, what he calls them: “*brute beasts*” (Jude 1:10). He says, “*Naturally, as brute beasts*” (Jude 1:10). They’re like animals. Now, let me tell you, now, what will make your dog happy. You know, if you had a dog—a brute beast—let me tell you what would make your dog happy. First of all, make certain he gets food to eat. Dogs are unhappy if they don’t get enough to eat. All right. Then, secondly, make certain that he has a good, nice, and warm place to sleep. He likes that. And then, thirdly, make certain that he gets some affection. You know, scratch him behind the ears and so forth. He likes that. Pat him so he wags his tail. And then, last of all, let him have a sense of achievement. Give him a cat to chase every now and then. And, if he can do that, that’s all it takes to make a dog happy. What does it take to make a natural

man happy? A natural man wants the same four things. All the natural man wants is a good dog's life. Give him something to eat, nice place to live, some affection, and a sense of achievement—that's the good life; that's what most of the people want. They want to have no more than a dog, like natural brute beasts: "*sensual, having not the Spirit*" (Jude 1:19).

You see what he's talking about? They are born into the natural world. They are blind to the spiritual world. And, therefore, they are bound to the material world. That's the natural man. Do you know any people like that? Hey, folks, the world is full of them. And, if you put a natural man on a church committee, he'd run the church committee just like he would run things in the world. He doesn't know—he hasn't got the foggiest idea about—what's going on in church. He's just a natural man.

II. The Spiritual Man

All right. Now, there's a second category of persons—not only the natural man, but there is the spiritual man. Look, if you will, in verse 15: "*But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man*" (1 Corinthians 2:15). Now, who is the spiritual man?

A. He Lives by the Spirit

Well, first of all, he lives by the Spirit. This is what we would teach in our Discovery Class: he lives by the Spirit. Notice, if you will, in verse 12: "*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God*" (1 Corinthians 2:12). Now, what happens when a man receives the Spirit, which is of God? He is saved. Receiving the Spirit is being saved. You see, Christians are not just nice people; they're new creatures. They have received the Spirit of God. The new birth is when God's Spirit comes into the human spirit and gives you new life. At that moment, you are made a partaker of the divine nature. And, to have the Spirit is to have life, because we have life by the Spirit of God. That's what the Bible calls being "born again." First time he's born a natural man. The second time he's born a spiritual man, and he lives by the Spirit of God. Actually, when Jesus told Nicodemus, "Nicodemus, you must be born again," the Greek word for "born again" is actually "born from above." That is, the Spirit comes down into you. That's exactly what he's talking about here. We have received the Spirit of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.

So, first of all, he lives by the Spirit. Without the Spirit of God he's spiritually dead. The Holy Spirit is to your human spirit what blood is to your body. Without the Holy Spirit in you, you are spiritually dead. He lives by the Spirit.

B. He Learns from the Spirit

I'll tell you what else he does: he learns from the Spirit. Now, this is very, very

interesting. Watch it—what the Apostle Paul is talking about here is wisdom. And, he says in verse 7: *“But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery”—*that is, it’s an enigma to the unsaved—*“even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes”—*the high muckety-mucks—*“of this world knew: for had they known it”—*if they’re so smart, why did they crucify Jesus? If they’d known it—*“they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”—*but now, watch verse 9—*“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen”—*that is, the natural man with the natural eye can’t see it—*“nor ear heard”—*that is, the natural man with the natural ear can’t hear it—*“neither have entered into the heart of man”—*that is, the natural man with natural emotions can’t feel it—*“the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”* (1 Corinthians 2:7–9).

Now, so many times we use this verse at a funeral. We say, “Eye has not seen, ear hadn’t heard, heart hadn’t felt the things that God has prepared” (1 Corinthians 2:9). But, our dear beloved brother who’s in Heaven—he’s seeing these things, hearing these things, and feeling these things.” That isn’t what this verse says—not at all. He’s not saying, “This is something we’re supposed to know when we get to Heaven.” He’s saying, “This is something, folks, we’re supposed to know right here, but we’re not going to know it by the natural eye, the natural ear, and the natural heart.” Watch it: *“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”—*but watch this—*“But God hath revealed them unto us”—*not when you get to Heaven some day. No, God has revealed them unto us. How?—*“by his Spirit”—*do you see it? Not the natural ear, not the natural eye, not the natural heart, but with the eye of faith, the ear of faith, and the heart of the Spirit—*“But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:9–10). Verse 12 says, *“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”—*we receive the Spirit, that we might know—*“Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth”* (1 Corinthians 2:12–13). Do you know what that means? The Apostle Paul said, *“And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:1). The Apostle Paul said, “Listen, I didn’t come trying to out-argue you. I didn’t come with philosophy. I didn’t come with great oratory. That’s not how I came.” He said, “I came dependent upon the Holy Spirit of God.”

Listen, my friend—you can come here today and understand everything I say and still not know what I’m saying. You say, “What do you mean?” I am saying to you that you can take notes and give my sermon back to me word for word. If you’re an intelligent person, you could do it. And, you can say everything that I said, and still you

wouldn't understand. You see, I can preach truth, but only the Holy Spirit can impart truth. What I'm trying to say to you is that when you learn these things, dear friend, you're going to learn them supernaturally. You are given the Spirit of God, that we might know. That's what the Apostle Paul says, and he says in verse 13: *"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:13–14). My friend, they'll go off your back just like water off a duck's back. You'll sit here. Somebody says, "You understand?" You say, "Uh-huh," but you didn't get it. You heard the words, but you didn't get the music. My dear friend, you did not understand the truth of God's Word if you're a natural man. A spiritual man lives by the Spirit, and he learns from the Spirit. It is the Spirit of God that teaches him these things.

C. He Is Liberated Through the Spirit

Now, not only that, but thirdly, because he lives by the Spirit and learns from the Spirit, he is liberated through the Spirit. Look, if you will, in verses 15 and following: *"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man"* (1 Corinthians 2:15). Now, what does that mean? *"He that is spiritual [judges] all things"* (1 Corinthians 2:15). Does that mean he's supposed to go around saying, "This man's saved, and that man's lost and all"? No, no—that's not what he's talking about. The word here is the word *discern*: "He discerns all things" (2 Corinthians 2:15). And, the word here is a legal word; it means "to make an evaluation" and, as a result of that evaluation, to discriminate between that which is moral and immoral, that which is good and that which is evil. He has the ability to discriminate, and he has the ability to discern. He has the ability to see through this world. And, because he has the ability to see through it, it doesn't have a hold on him. He sees right through it.

Remember we said that the natural man is what? He is bound to the material world—but not the spiritual man. Why? Because the spiritual man—he discerns all things (2 Corinthians 2:15). He sees right through it. His value system is working correctly, and this world doesn't squeeze him into its mold. He sees right through it. He understands. He is liberated. He knows the truth, and the truth has set him free. And, what binds other people doesn't bind him. He's marching to the beat of a different drummer.

But now, wait a minute. It says, *"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man"* (2 Corinthians 2:15). Well, does that mean if you get saved, people are not going to speak evil of you? No. Does it mean that if you get saved, people are not going to say judgment? No, that isn't what it means at all. What it means is simply this—that he that is spiritual, nobody understands him. They don't understand

him. He is discerned of no man. They don't understand him. Why, they say, "What's gotten into him? Why doesn't he do what everybody else does? Why isn't he like everybody else?" I'll tell you why—because he's born from above. He sees things that they don't see, dear friend, and he's headed in a different direction. He's a twice-born man in a world of once-born men, and he's going against the tide all the time. And, they don't understand him. They say, "What makes him tick? What's gotten into my son? What's gotten into my husband? What's gotten into my wife? What? Why, he's a religious nut." Sure. "*He...is judged of no man*" (1 Corinthians 2:15). He is discerned of no man.

But, he's set free. Their opinion doesn't change him. And, the values of this world don't conform him. He's not conformed by this world, because he has been transformed. He has a new mind. You see, listen—look at the last part of verse 16: "*but we have the mind of Christ*" (1 Corinthians 2:16). Well, how did you get the mind of Christ? Well, I'll tell you how you got the mind of Christ: you received the Spirit of God, and He is the Spirit sent from the Holy Spirit, unseen from the Lord Jesus. And, Jesus said, "He will teach you the things of Mine. He will show them unto you." And, you learn from the Spirit. And, therefore, you have the mind of Christ. And, as you're walking in the Spirit, you're thinking God's thoughts after Him. And, the world doesn't understand you, but, dear friend, you understand the world—you understand the world 'cause you see right through it. You discern all things. And, this world that people are trying to have so they can live a good dog's life—you see the futility of that, you see the stupidity of that, you see the end of that, and you see right through all the way to the end. You see what eyes can't see. You hear what ears can't hear. You feel what hearts can't feel. And, how? Because you have received the Spirit that is of God. Now, my dear friend, that is a spiritual man.

III. The Carnal Man

All right. Now, there's a third kind of person. I hate to mention this, but most of the people I know and associate with in churches are in the third category. There is the natural man—he's lost. There is the spiritual man—he's saved, walking in the Spirit and growing on to maturity. But then, there is the carnal man. Look at this—oh, I hate to even say this, but it's in the Word of God. Chapter 3, verse 1 says, "*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*" (1 Corinthians 3:1). Now, notice—evidently, they're saved people, because he calls them what? "*Brethren*" (1 Corinthians 3:1). And, certainly, they're saved, because he says they're "*in Christ*" (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Do you know what the word *carnal* means, though? The word *carnal* means "fleshly." Now, it's not talking about having gained too much weight or having too much avoirdupois

voir. But, what he is speaking about is the word *flesh*. The Bible word *carnal*, *carnas*, our English word—it's the word like a carnivorous animal, a flesh-eating animal or carnivore, which means "farewell to the flesh." Well, what is this? He's a person who, though he has been saved, his flesh and his old nature seems to have predominance. And so, he's what we call a "carnal Christian." It's almost a contradiction in terms. It's like talking about a heavenly devil—a carnal Christian. He's neither fish nor fowl. He is saved, but you'd never know it. He ought to be mature, but he's like a little baby. Now, let me give you three marks of a carnal Christian, and let's see if you fit in.

A. He Is a Very Dependent Person

First of all, he is a very dependent person—a very dependent person. He has to be propped up, helped, and followed up all the time. Look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2: "*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*"—now, what is the one characteristic of a baby? Helplessness, isn't it? Look—"I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye"—underscore this next phrase—"were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able" (1 Corinthians 3:1–2). Inability is the mark of immaturity. You're not able—you're not able; you're not able. A baby Christian, a carnal Christian, is one who is dependent upon other people—he is one who is dependent.

B. He Is a Very Deformed Person

And, because he is dependent, he is deformed. I mean, he ought to be grown, but he's not grown. He's a baby. Now, all of us enjoy having babies. And, thank God for these little babies. When a little baby comes, you just hold it just like that in your hands, and that's so precious. **But, suppose you had a baby that stayed a baby all of its life. Have you ever seen children whose physical growth is impeded for some reason? Or, have you ever seen someone whose mental growth is impeded? Now, God has a special love for those people like that, and He protects them. If you know someone... But, you know, the parents' hearts just hurt when the little baby doesn't develop. How do you think God feels when He looks over a congregation and sees some gray-headed babies? I mean, people spiritually who are supposed to grow up but they haven't grown up? I mean, they have been members of this church or some other church for ten, 15, or 20 years, and they're still babies.** They are dependent, but they're dependent because they're deformed. And, he says here, "*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual*"—mature people—"but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Now, what do you do with a little baby? Well, you have to feed it. Paul said, "I couldn't give you meat; I had to give you milk. I had to feed you" (1 Corinthians 3:2). Do you know what milk is? It's just pre-digested food. The mother eats the food, digests it,

and gives it back to the baby. Do you know what the pastor is, in many churches? Just a spiritual nursemaid. Do you know what a sermon is? A sermon is pre-digested food. I take the Word of God, and I read it, I absorb it, I think about it, I pray over it, I organize it, I illustrate it, I apply it, and I give it to you. Well, that's fine. But friend, that's milk. And, what the pastor is in the average church is a nursemaid. He gives people a bottle of milk on Sunday and burps them on the way out, and that's about all they get. I mean, that is about all they get. Paul said, "I wanted to give you some meat; I couldn't give you any meat." He said, "I'll give you strained beets and pabulum because you are a little baby. And, all you can have is pre-digested food. You can't enjoy a steak" (1 Corinthians 3:2).

Let me tell you something, folks. I'm going to get a little mean right now. I hope you'll forgive me. But, I want you to turn with me to Hebrews chapter 5 and look in verse 12. Before we read it, let me say this: the average Christian I know is not a normal Christian, but I'm sorry to say he is an average Christian. He thinks he does God a wild favor if he comes to church on Sunday morning, hears a sermon, and even stays awake: "Well, I went to church Sunday, and I listened." So, listen to what the writer of Hebrews said in chapter 5, verse 12: *"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God"—you, when you ought to be teaching, you have need to go back to kindergarten and learn the ABCs, the 1-2-3's—"and become such as have need of milk and not strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil"* (Hebrews 5:12–14).

Remember, the spiritual man—he discerns, and he sees through all things. There are folks who've been members of this church for ten, 15, 20, 30, and 40 years, and you're still babies. You ought to be teachers. A child goes through this stage: first of all, he has to be fed; then, he grows a little bit, and then he can feed himself. Wonderful—but he's not finished yet. He is to go on to maturity, where he can feed others. And, the writer of the Book of Hebrews said, *"For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you"* (Hebrews 5:12). And, the average member of the average congregation—and you know it is so—knows so pitiful little about the Word of God. Many of you have been members for five, ten, and 15 years and couldn't even name the books of the Bible. If I'd say, "Turn to the Book of Hezekiah," you'd start looking. Some would turn for Philip 66. You wouldn't know how to lead anybody to Christ. You don't have a working knowledge of Bible theology. You say, "Well, maybe my preacher is not teaching me good enough." No, that's not it. My dear friend, preaching is simply pre-digested food. There is reason of use. You're going to have to get serious about this thing and get into the Word of God. And, the reason we have so many carnal Christians today, my dear friend—they are dependent because they're

deformed.

C. He Is a Very Divisive Person

And, because they're dependent and deformed, let me say one other thing about them: they are divisive. Go back, if you will, to 1 Corinthians, and look with me here in chapter 3, verse 3: *"For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?"* (1 Corinthians 3:3–4). Do you know what was happening here? The church was getting all divided. Do you know what they were divided over? They were divided over pastors. One said, "Oh, I like Paul. He's so much doctrine." Another says, "Oh, I like Apollos. He's such an orator." Another one said, "I like Simon Peter. He tells it like it is." And, the most sticky crowd of all said, "We're of Jesus." They were a bunch of pious pigs is what they were. And, the Apostle Paul said, "You're like little children."

Have you ever watched little children argue over trifles? Have you ever been in a church filled with carnal people and filled with division? God deliver me—God deliver me from it. There are little children arguing over tweedle-de-dee and tweedle-de-dum. It's a mark of carnality, dear friend. Let me tell what is a mighty force in the hand of a holy God—a church where people are growing Christians, where they are feeding others the Word of God and they're spiritual.

Conclusion

Now, I must close. If you're a natural man, then get saved, because if you haven't been born twice, you're going to wish you never were born at all. If you are a carnal person, then turn from your childishness, enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ, and grow up. If you're a spiritual person, then don't get cocky about it; thank God for it. But, you haven't reached maturity yet. You just keep on growing.

Let's pray. Father God, I thank You for Your Word today. And, Lord God, I pray that You will seal the truth of it to our hearts. In Jesus' name.

The Road Map to Maturity

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 26, 1993

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:11–3:6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Natural Man
 - A. He Is Born into the Natural World
 - B. He Is Blind to the Spiritual World
 - C. He Is Bound to the Material World
- II. The Spiritual Man
 - A. He Lives by the Spirit
 - B. He Learns by the Spirit
 - C. He Is Liberated Through the Spirit
- III. The Carnal Man
 - A. He Is Defeated
 - B. He Is Dependent
 - C. He Is Divisive

Conclusion

Introduction

First Corinthians—find it please—and chapter 2—1 Corinthians chapter 2. I already told you I want to be speaking to you this morning on this subject: “The Road Map to Maturity.” The former pastor of this church—one of the former pastors—was Dr. Robert G. Lee, and you never really got one up on Dr. Lee. Dr. Lee preached a sermon, and it was straightforward, to say the least. It was an excoriating sermon against sin. And, a lady met him at the door, and he had ruffled her feathers some. And, she said to him, “Dr. Lee, I didn’t appreciate that sermon one little bit.” He said, “Neither did the devil, so,” he said, “classify yourself.” Well, today, we’re going to let you classify yourself. Everybody here is in one of three categories—one of three classes—and I want to point them out in chapter 2, verse 14.

Look at the first part of verse 14: “*But the natural man...*” (1 Corinthians 2:14). Do you see it? All right. I won’t read the rest of that verse. All I want to show you is the category. There are some here in the category of the natural man or the natural woman. Now, let’s try and go down to verse 15, and look in verse 15: “*But he that is spiritual*”—that’s the second category of persons here today—“*he that is spiritual...*” (1 Corinthians 2:15). All right. Now, go right on through chapter 3 to verse 1: “*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal*” (1 Corinthians 3:1). Underscore the

word—the phrase—carnal. There you have the three categories of person: there is the natural man; there is the spiritual man; there is the carnal man. And, I'm going to have to say before this service comes to a close that you will have categorized yourself, because every mother's child is in one of these three categories. Either you're a natural man, a spiritual man, or a carnal man—you're a natural woman, a spiritual woman, or a carnal woman.

Now, we divide people into different categories. We say, "There's upper class, middle class, lower class; there's this or that." But, it's not the blue book of society or the bank book of finance, but it is God's book, the Bible, that puts us into these categories. Now, you say, "Why do you want me to categorize myself?" Well, obviously, I want you to be a spiritual person. But, you see, the Bible is like a road map to guide you to get you to where you need to be. Now, there's one thing important about any map, no matter what map it is. A map is not of much value to you unless you know one thing—where you are now. Now, if you don't know where you are now, what good is the map? But, if you know where you are now, you can say, "I'm here, and this is where I need to get to." **You've been to big buildings, and they will have a schematic of that building. And then, there will be a little red dot, and it'll say, "You are here." So, what I want you to do is to find out where you are in order to help you to get where you need to be.**

The first question asked of the man in the Garden of Eden was this: "Adam, where are you? Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). Now, God was not asking for information. God knew where Adam was. God wanted Adam to know where Adam was and to know the predicament that Adam was in. So, here's what I want us to do. I want us to ask three questions.

I. The Natural Man

The first question I want to ask—and I want you to answer it: Are you a natural man, doing what comes naturally? "Well," you say, "yes, that sounds pretty good to me—to do what comes naturally." Well, the Bible says in Ephesians chapter 2 and verse 3: you are "*by nature the children of wrath*" (Ephesians 2:3). Now, let me tell you about the natural man—what he's like. I want to give you three marks of the natural man.

A. He Is Born into the Natural World

First of all, he is born into the natural world. He is born, just like anybody else. He has a natural birth, and he's born once: he's born into the natural world. **We had a former Vice President of the United States who said this, when he heard that one of the other Presidents said he'd been born again. This Vice President said this—and I couldn't believe he could say this—but he said it openly and publicly. They asked him, "Have you been born twice?" He said, "No, I haven't been born twice." He said, "I count myself**

lucky to have been born once, but,” he said, “I certainly haven’t been born twice.” Well friend, the day will come when he’ll not count himself lucky to be born once, if he hasn’t been born twice, because, you see, if you’re born once, you die twice. The first death is the physical death. The second death is eternal death. But, if you’re born twice, you can only die once. You may die physically, but that which is born again goes on and on and on and on.

You see, the problem with man is what he received by his birth. He is born into the natural world. I have reminded you before that if you have an apple and see a wormhole in that apple, don’t worry about the worm having come in through that hole. He didn’t come in through that hole; he went out through that hole. The wormhole didn’t let the hole in; it let the worm out. You say, “Well, how did the worm get in the apple?” He was born in the blossom; he was hatched in the blossom. The egg was laid in the blossom, and that worm came out of the heart of that apple—and it came out of the heart of that apple to the outer extremity of that apple. And, Jesus says that all of the sins that are in mankind come out of the heart.

You take a little baby and say, “Isn’t he sweet?” I looked at a precious little baby here on my right-hand side of this auditorium—a wonderful little baby, just a few months old, just a few weeks old, I really believe. I was there just minutes ago, looking at that beautiful, beautiful child. Well, I hate to tell that mama this—she’s here right now. In the heart of that child are lies, and hatred, and variance, and all of that. You say, “My precious baby?” Yes, my precious baby. You never have to teach a baby to steal. You have to teach a baby not to steal. Isn’t that true? You never have to teach a baby to be selfish. You have to teach a baby not to be selfish. You never have to teach a baby to tell lies. You have to teach a baby not to tell lies. The Bible says, “*The wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray [speaking lies] as soon as they [are] born*” (Psalm 58:3). The natural man—he is born into the natural world. He’s only had one birth. I want to say this—that if... there are what, 5 ½ billion people now on Planet Earth, give or take a few? If you were to take those 5 ½ billion people and somehow extract from each of those 5 ½ billion people the very best quality—the very best quality—in every individual and then somehow combine all of those qualities into one individual, there would not be enough goodness in that one individual to save his one soul. He would have to bow at the cross and receive Jesus Christ. The Bible says in our own nature there is nothing good: we are, “*by nature...children of wrath*” (Ephesians 2:3).

B. He Is Blind to the Spiritual World

The natural man is born into the natural world, and, therefore, he is blind to the spiritual world. Look in verse 14: “*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them...because they are*

spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14)—that is, they’re spiritually understood. Now, look at the word receive. Do you see it there in verse 14? *“The natural man receiveth not”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). That word receive literally means “to welcome.” He does not welcome spiritual things. He has no appreciation for spiritual things.

Now, you can put a natural man in a church service like this. There are a lot of things that a natural man could appreciate. If he doesn’t know Jesus, he just has to appreciate that music when the Parkers sang. Whether you know Jesus or not, that’s just good music. I mean, you know, there were melody, and rhythm, and power, and a natural man could enjoy that. A natural man could enjoy this choir. A natural man could enjoy handshaking around. He’d say, “I like that. Those are friendly folks. I like that.” A natural man could enjoy hearing a message. He’d say, “Yes, that that makes sense. I can understand what that fellow’s saying.” A natural man can get excited about a Sunday School attendance campaign, meeting a budget, building a building—all that. The natural man can understand those things, but he does not understand the things of the Spirit of God.

Now, go back to chapter 1, and look in verse 18: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). Do you see that? It’s foolishness. Look again in verse 14: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: [they’re] foolishness unto him”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). He doesn’t understand what we were talking about when we were saying, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lamb”—that Jesus died for our sins. *“Behold the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). He doesn’t understand that. Say, why are these folks so excited? You see, he’s born in the natural world. He is blind to the spiritual world. He doesn’t enjoy the true things of God. Oh, he can enjoy it externally. You know, you can put a natural man in Heaven—did you know what? He’d be miserable—he’d be miserable—unless he gets born again. There are people who think they want to live forever. They don’t even know what to do on a rainy afternoon. What will they do in eternity—for all eternity—not being able to say, “Hallelujah! Praise the Lamb”? That’s what they’re going to do through all eternity—is worship and praise the Lord Jesus Christ.

The natural man is born into the natural world. He, my friend, is blind to the spiritual world. You see, he has no appreciation; he has no understanding. Look in verse 14 again: it says, *“Neither can he know them”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). He couldn’t figure it out if he wanted to. Don’t get the idea, friend, that you can bring your intellect to this book and say, “I’m going to rip proof out of this book.” You can’t do it. Until you get born again, you’ll never understand this book. You’ll know the words, but you’ll never get the music. You will never understand. The Bible says, *“Neither can he know them...they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). They are spiritually understood.

You say, “Well, why can’t I?” Well, let me give you a modern-day illustration. In this

room right now, there are all kinds of television signals. If you had a little monitor, you could pick up maybe *Gilligan's Island*. You could pick up some news broadcast. You could pick up a replay of yesterday's sports. You could get this thing or that thing. All of those things are there, but you'd have to have a tuner to pull that, to bring that out of the air into your receiver, so you could see it and receive it. Now, your great, great grandfather would not believe that, if you told him that all those things were in the air, if you were to bring him out of that generation and jam him into this generation. But, we know that's true. Now, so it is with us. There's an unseen world; there's a spiritual world, broadcasting on station W-O-R-D, the Word of God. But, unless you have the receiver... The problem with a natural man is he has no antenna—he has no antenna. The Bible says he does not welcome the things of God, and *“neither can he know them, [for] they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). They are spiritually understood.

Nicodemus was a master in Israel, but Jesus said, “Aren't you a master in Israel? And, you don't understand these things?” You see, he had all of this education, but he could not understand. When you talk to an unsaved man about Jesus, he may remonstrate with you, and he may say, “I just don't see it.” Don't argue with him, friend—he doesn't see it. He is telling the truth. He just doesn't see it.

C. **He Is Bound to the Material World**

He is born to the natural world. He is blind to the spiritual world. And, therefore, he is bound to the material world. I'm talking about the natural man. He's born in the natural world, blind to the spiritual world, and, therefore, he is bound to the material world. This world is the only world that he knows. He is a materialist, pure and simple. He has no capacity for spiritual things. The Bible speaks of these in Jude verse 19 as *“sensual, having not the Spirit”* (Jude 1:19). And, the word *sensual* is the same word that's translated here as “natural.” It's the same word in the Greek language—“natural” or “sensual.” He lives by senses.

Not very long ago, I had the privilege to go to Moscow, and in Moscow, I was invited into the mayor's office—the mayor of Moscow. And, Brother Sorrell was with me. We went in through that door, up those marble stairs, over that red carpet, into the office of the mayor of Moscow, and into that boardroom, and sat there with the people who administrate that great city. And, I said several things to them. I wanted them to understand who we are and what we believe—who evangelical Christians are. But, I said to them, “I hope, in this revolution and this renaissance, that, as you look toward the West, you don't try to emulate everything in the West and that you don't think that the secret of the West is capitalism.” Now, I said, “Very frankly, I believe capitalism—I believe it's far better than communism. But,” I said, “I want you to learn this—that capitalism and communism are two forms of materialism—both of them, both capitalism

and communism.” And then, I said to those men: “Let me tell you what capitalism can provide for you: the very best it can provide for you is what I would call a good dog’s life.” I said, “If you give a dog a warm place to sleep, give a dog adequate food to eat, give a dog some affection, rub his head, scratch him behind the ears, pat him a little, and give a dog a sense of achievement, maybe a Frisbee to catch”—one time I said, “a cat to chase,” and a lady wrote me a message like I was in favor of dogs chasing cats, and she was very irate—so “a Frisbee to catch”—all right. I don’t want you to miss the point—“give that dog those four things—creature comforts, affection, a sense of achievement—and he’ll be a happy dog.” But, I said to those men what I want to say to you: “man is more than an animal. He has a capacity for God, and if all he has is just those four things—a place to sleep, something to eat, some love and affection, and a sense of achievement—all he has is what a dog could expect. He’s more than that. He’s a spiritual creature.” And, I told those men what I want to tell you—that the crisis in the world today is a spiritual crisis, and the deep longing, the hunger of man’s heart, is for God. Augustine said, “There’s a God-shaped vacuum in every man’s heart, and man will never be satisfied until he knows the Lord.”

But, what about the natural man? Are you a natural man? He’s born into the natural world, he is blind to the spiritual world, and he is bound to the material world. He’s just bound to it. He cannot know God. He cannot fellowship with God. He must be born again in order for that to happen.

II. The Spiritual Man

Now, that’s the first category. Let’s move to the second category of persons. The first category of is the natural man. Now, the second category—there’s the spiritual man. Verse 15: *“But he that is spiritual...”* (1 Corinthians 2:15). Now, the natural man does what is natural. He does what comes naturally. The spiritual man does what comes supernaturally. The spiritual man has not been born only once; he has been born twice. Look, if you will, in verses 11 and 12: *“For what man knows the things of a man, save”—*or, “except”—*“the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God”—*now, notice verse 12—*“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:11–12). Now, let me give you the three marks of the spiritual man.

A. He Lives by the Spirit

The spiritual man lives by the Spirit—he lives by the Spirit. Verse 12 says he has received the Spirit of God—he has received the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:12). That is, this man has been born twice. He’s been born of the Spirit. What is salvation?

Salvation is not merely getting man out of earth into Heaven; it is getting God out of Heaven into man. He receives the Spirit of God. He has been born again. Learn this

about Christians: Christians are not just natural people who decide to do better. Christians have been radically, dramatically, supernaturally changed by something called a “new birth.” He receives the Spirit of God. God moves into him. God inhabits his humanity.

Now, don't get the idea that a Christian is like a tadpole that becomes a frog. You see, there is a frog in every tadpole, and if he just keeps maturing, he'll become a frog. Now, that's the kind of Christianity some people believe in. They think, “Well, I'll go to church and learn to do better. I'll grow up and be the frog I ought to be.” No, a Christian is not like a tadpole that has become a frog; a Christian is like a frog that has become a prince by the kiss of grace. It is a miracle—it is a miracle. It is not just simply a change, a gradual change, becoming more of what we are by nature. It is becoming what we could never be by nature.

B. He Learns by the Spirit

He is a person, number one, who lives by the Spirit. He has received a new life, and because he lives by the Spirit, he learns from the Spirit. Now, look in verse 12: “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God*”—now, watch it—“*that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:12). When you receive the Spirit, you receive the organ of spiritual knowledge, that you might know God.

Now, remember the natural man—verse 14—he doesn't receive the things of the Spirit of God, “*for they are foolishness unto him*” (1 Corinthians 2:14). He can't know them because they're spiritually discerned—they're spiritually understood. So, when a man receives God, when he's born again, he receives life from the Spirit. He lives by the Spirit, and he learns by the Spirit. When you get saved, even if you're a little child, God turns the light on in your soul. The Bible says, “*The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD*” (Proverbs 20:27). What does that mean? When God wants to illuminate you, He takes your human spirit, He puts the oil of His Holy Spirit in that human lamp, and God illumines you from the inside. Oh, we could say so much more, but we'll never get finished if I don't rush.

C. He Is Liberated Through the Spirit

The spiritual man lives by the Spirit, he learns from the Spirit, and he is liberated through the Spirit. Let me show you this. Look, now, in verse 15—look at it—verse 15: “*But he that is spiritual [judges] all things, yet he himself is judged of no man*” (1 Corinthians 2:15). Now, what does that mean—“*[judges] all things*” (1 Corinthians 2:15)? Does that mean he sits on a bench, and he says, “This is right, and this is wrong”? No, no, no. He's talking about inward discernment. Actually, some translations give it this way: “the spiritual man discerns all things.” He has a different value system.

He sees things through a different lens. Actually, this world *discern* is a legal word, and what it means is this: it means to make an examination and, on the basis of that examination, make moral and spiritual judgment. He that is spiritual makes an examination, and on the basis of that examination, he makes moral and spiritual judgment.

But, what is the difference between the natural man who tries to do that and the spiritual man? Well, the spiritual man—he sees with the mind of Christ. Look, if you will, in the last verse in chapter 2: “*but we have the mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:16). When a man receives the Spirit of God, he learns through the Spirit, he lives through the Spirit, he is liberated through the Spirit, because this world system doesn’t squeeze him into its mold. He sees through things. He sees what is happening in today’s world. He’s not like the marching millions that are going on to oblivion and going on to Hell. He has a value system that is completely different. He sees things from God’s viewpoint. He has the mind of Christ, and he sees through this world. He’s not bound to the material world. He is liberated—he is liberated—by the Spirit of God. He sees through things.

Now, the Bible says, “He discerns all things”—“he judges all things”—“but no man judges him” (1 Corinthians 2:15). What does that mean? It means he understands the unsaved man, but the unsaved man doesn’t understand him. They say, “What makes him tick? Boy, is he weird.” Hey, folks, might as well face it—those folks out there think we are loony toons. They really do. I mean, they think that somehow we have jumped the track. The Bible says, “They think it strange that we don’t run with them in their excessive riot” (1 Peter 4:4). They think that we are the funny ones. *They’re like that woman who went to the psychiatrist, had the fried egg on their head and two strips of bacon over each year. She said, “I came to see you about my brother.” They really think that we are the funny ones.* “He who is spiritual discerns all things”—“he judges all things”—“but no man judges him” (1 Corinthians 2:15). They don’t understand him; they don’t know what makes him tick.

I had a preacher friend down in Florida. He was a drummer in a nightclub band. And, the Spirit of God got hold of Hugh Beasley, and he knew he was in the wrong place; he knew he was doing the wrong things. He became a mighty pastor and an evangelist, but he took his drumsticks one night and just rammed them through his drum. Somebody said to him, “Hugh, what’s wrong with you? Are you sick?” He said, “No, I just got well—I just got well.” Now, everybody else thought he was crazy. You see, he discerns all things, but he cannot be understood. No one understands him.

So, what are the marks of a spiritual man? He lives by the Spirit. He learns by the Spirit. He is liberated by the Spirit.

III. The Carnal Man

Now, let's move on to the third category. Have you found yourself yet? Maybe you have; maybe you haven't. Maybe you're a natural man—born into the natural world, blind to the spiritual world, bound to the material world. Maybe you're a spiritual man—you live by the Spirit; you learn from the Spirit; you're liberated by the Spirit. Or, maybe you're a carnal man. Now, the natural man does what comes naturally. The spiritual man does what comes supernaturally. The carnal man does what comes unnaturally. The carnal man is sort of a spiritual monstrosity. He's neither fish nor fowl. He's one of these persons who's been saved, but yet he is a very strange person. Look, if you will, in chapter 3: *“And, I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual”*—now, he calls them “brethren”; they were in the church—*“but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. [And] I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto [you] were not able to bear it, neither now yet now are ye able”* (1 Corinthians 3:1–2). Let me give you the three marks of a carnal man.

A. He Is Defeated

First of all, the carnal man is a Christian, but he is defeated. You know any defeated Christians? He is defeated. Verse 1 speaks and verse 2 speaks of his inability. He doesn't have victory; he doesn't have the ability to do a thing that a mature man ought to do. He cannot walk spiritually. He cannot war spiritually. He cannot work spiritually. He just is marked by his inability. He is a baby. And, he says, *“I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:1). Now, he's not talking about little physical babies; he's talking about spiritual babies. Did you know that in this church we've got a lot of spiritual babies, and some of them have been babies for 40 years—babies for 40 years? Now, there's a legitimate childhood.

Again, I want to go back to that little baby sitting over there. That is a beautiful baby, and that mama's holding that baby right now. That's legitimate. We've had babies in our home, and we love them. And, my sons are grown now. It was a thrill the first time one of my sons said to me, “Dada.” But, if one of them were to say to me, “Dada,” today, I think I'd swat him. Now, it's all right for a baby to be a baby. But, the problem is that we have folks who have never grown up.

Paul said, “I couldn't speak unto you as spiritual. You haven't been liberated through the Spirit. I had to speak to you like little babies. You are defeated.” A carnal Christian is really kind of a contradiction in terms. It's like speaking of a heavenly devil. Now, I want to say this—that I believe, in the Christian world today, the average Christian is carnal. I didn't say the normal Christian, because the average Christian is not normal. I think it was Dr. Vance Havner who said that “the church today is so subnormal that when a

person becomes normal, to the rest of the people he seems abnormal.” You see, when I talk about a carnal Christian, I must say that I believe that the average Christian is carnal, but not a normal Christian. A normal Christian is a spiritual Christian—that’s normal. Don’t think that you have attained something if you become a spiritual Christian, like you’ve done something wonderful. Everybody ought to be a spiritual Christian. It is the carnal Christian who is doing that which is unnatural.

B. He Is Dependent

He is defeated and dependent. Look, if you will, in verse 2: Paul said, *“I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto [you] were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able”* (1 Corinthians 3:2). And, Paul is saying, “I have become to you a spiritual nursemaid. You come to hear me preach, and I give you a bottle.” Did you know that carnal Christians, if they grow at all, they’re dependent upon spoon-fed sermons? They’re dependent upon some teacher, some pastor, to teach them.

Put this verse in your margin—Hebrews chapter 5, verses 11 and 12: Paul says, *“We have”—the writer of Hebrews, whoever it was, said—“we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing [you] are dull of hearing. For when for the time [you] ought to be teachers, [you] have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not...strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat”—beefsteak—“[belongs] to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Hebrews 5:11–13).

What is Paul saying? Or whoever wrote this—what’s he saying? He’s saying, “I’d like to give you a steak today, but I can’t give you a steak. If I gave it to you, you couldn’t chew it. If you could chew it, you couldn’t swallow it. If you could swallow it, you couldn’t digest it. You’re a little baby. So today, I’m going to give you some Pablum, and I’m going to give you some strained beets, and I’m going to give you some formula. I’m going to give you some milk, but I can’t give you strong meat because you’re not able to digest it. And,” he said, “some of you ought to be teachers, but you have need that somebody teach you again the first principles.” There are some of you who are members of this church—you’ve been members of this church since Hector was a pup, and you’ve never taught anybody anything. You just say, “Feed me.” They want to come to church on Sunday, let the pastor give them a Bible, and burp them on the way out. I mean, that’s it—they are defeated, and they are dependent.

C. He Is Divisive

But, I’ll tell you the third mark of a carnal person: not only is he defeated and not only is he dependent, but he is divisive—he is divisive. Continue to read here. He says in verse

3: *“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”*—that is, “as other men”—*“For while one saith, I am of Paul”*—oh, I love Brother Paul; he’s my favorite preacher and teacher. He’s so full of doctrine—*“another [says], I am of Apollos”*—oh, I love old Brother Apollos; he’s such a wonderful orator. Paul says—*“are [you] not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I...planted; Apollos watered...God gave the increase”* (1 Corinthians 3:3–6).

What happened to this church? They were dividing up over trifles like little babies. Paul said, “You’re like little babies.” Have you ever noticed how babies and children get upset over trifles? I took the family fortune—our family fortune—about all 150 dollars of it, and decided we were going to go in 1962 to a Southern Baptist Convention. We rented a travel trailer so we could take our children with us. We went all the way out to San Francisco. I’d never been anywhere that far from home. This was our big trip. Then we got there to Fisherman’s Wharf. I’d always heard of Fisherman’s Wharf, and there were the restaurants—I mean, pricey restaurants. I think a meal was maybe seven dollars, and that was a lot. And, I said, “Joyce, let’s eat at Fisherman’s Wharf. Let’s bring our family in there.” We got a table by the window. They brought that food in there. I thought, “Man, here we are at San Francisco’s Fisherman’s Wharf—nice menu. Let my son order from the menu.” We were getting ready to have a big time, and I looked over there. And, his chin was quivering, big old tears coming down his cheeks. I mean, this is our big moment, and there’s that ankle-biter. I said to him, “Son, what’s wrong?” He said, “They’ve got beet juice on my food.” He’d ordered beets, and the beet juice had run across the plate. And, I want to tell you, folks, I mean, here we are—and some beet juice. It’s a wonder I didn’t beat the juice out of him.

Babies, children, immature—you watch them in the churches. These are the people who are divisive, who can’t get along. They have their favorite preachers; they have their favorite teachers. They have this; they have that. And, they will split a church over the difference between tweedle-de-dee and tweedle-de-dum—they will. I’ve had far more difficulty in churches with carnal—so-called “carnal”—people than I have with drunkards—than I have with anyone else. They’re babies. They are defeated. They’re dependent, and they’re divisive.

Conclusion

Everybody here is in one of those three categories: either you’re a natural man—lost and on the road to Hell, or you’re a spiritual man living in victory, or you are a carnal person—you’re saved, but no one would ever know it. You’re like the little boy—somebody asked him, “What kind of dog is your dog?” Said, “He’s a police dog.” He was

just a mongrel. They said, “Well, he doesn’t look like a police dog.” He said, “He’s in the Secret Service.” I know a lot of folks—I mean, if you were to look at them outwardly, you’d never know they’re saved. They really are saved—I mean, they have given themselves to Christ. They have been saved. They have been born again. But, they’re defeated. They’re dependent. They’re divisive. There are three categories of persons: the natural man—he does what comes naturally; the spiritual man—he does what comes naturally; the carnal man—he does what comes unnaturally.

Let’s bow in prayer. Father God, I pray today that You would just bring the message home to our hearts, and I pray, God, that You would help us as a congregation; that those who are babies, who have passed the legitimate time for childhood, would grow up, and take their place of service, and be what they could be, and ought to be, for Jesus. Lord, I pray for people here today who are lost. They’ve only had one birth. They’ve never been born again. I pray, God, that they might say, “yes,” to Jesus and be saved. And, I pray, Lord, for those who might categorize themselves as spiritual, that they might realize that even though they can be instantly spiritual, they cannot be instantly mature, that they might go on and on into maturity in Christ. For I pray in His wonderful name. Amen.

Are You Spiritual, Natural, or Carnal?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 12, 1976

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:12–3:4

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Natural Man
 - A. He Is Born into a Natural World
 - B. He Is Blind to a Spiritual World
- II. The Spiritual Man
 - A. He Lives by the Spirit
 - B. He Learns from the Spirit
 - C. He Is Liberated by the Spirit of God
- III. The Carnal Man
 - A. He Is Deformed
 - B. He Is Dependent
 - C. He Is Divisive

Conclusion

Introduction

Now I want you to take your Bibles, please, and turn to 1 Corinthians. You know, the devil doesn't like a Bible-carrying Christian, and he especially doesn't like a Bible-believing Christian. *You know, there are several places that are good places for the Bible. The home is a good place for the Bible. The hand is a better place for the Bible. The head is a better place for the Bible. The heart is the best place for the Bible.* I hope you have yours in all of these places, and you bring your Bibles to church.

Now I don't know whether you're used to going to church where we just take the Bible and go right on through, verse by verse; but we enjoy doing it here, and you'll always get more from the message if you'll bring a Bible with you. We're studying, now, the book of 1 Corinthians, and we are now into chapter 2, beginning in verse 14: *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 2:14–16). And then, chapter 3, verse 1: *"And I, brethren, could not speak*

unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with solid food;”—or “not with meat,” as some have it—“for to this time ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (2 Corinthians 3:1–3).

Now ladies and gentlemen, there are three classes of people present, this morning. They are described in these verses. You may be a natural man; you may be a spiritual man; or, you may be a carnal man. Or, for the ladies' sake, we may say you may be a natural person; or, you may be a spiritual person; or, you may be a carnal person. But you are one of these three.

Now go back with me. Look in verse 14. Underline the words *natural man*. “*But the natural man...*” (1 Corinthians 2:14). And then, chapter 2, verse 15: “*he that is spiritual...*”—underline *he that is spiritual* (1 Corinthians 2:15). And then, chapter 3, verse 1: “*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal*” (1 Corinthians 3:1). And there you have it: the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man.

Now it's very important that you know which you are, because I want you to classify yourself, this morning. I want you to take an end-of-the-year inventory. *Somebody told me, and I don't know whether it's true or not—I believe it is, and I think maybe Dr. Lee was the one who told me; and if he told me, I know it's true. But someone else may have told this on Dr. Lee—but it is said that, one time, Dr. Lee preached a very strong, excoriating sermon against sin, and a lady met him at the door, and she was quite persnickety about it. And she said, “Dr. Lee, I want you to know, I didn't appreciate that sermon one little bit.” And he said, “And lady, neither did the devil; so classify yourself.*

Now I want you to classify yourself, this morning. You're going to find that you're in one of three classes. You're in one of three categories of persons: Everybody here today is either a natural person, a spiritual person, or a carnal person. And if in this message I have at least brought you to identify yourself, that will be a great help, because I think most of us know what we want to be. But friend, you can never really become what you want to be until you, first of all, understand what you are.

The other day I was over at Baptist Hospital making some visits, and I stopped there by the hostess station; and out there at the hostess station was a little map of Baptist Hospital. You know, that's a very big place, and there are a lot of labyrinthine ways all around there, and you can get very confused, and so, here's a little map showing you how to get to where you need to go. The important thing is that, right there, was an arrow that pointed to a circle, and it says, “You are here.” Well, that was a big help. At least I knew where I was.

Now look, folks, you can't get to where you need to be until, first of all, you find out

where you are, you see. That's very important. There is no map on Earth that will do you any good if you don't know where you are before you start to use the map. You see, you cannot get to where you need to be until, first of all, you know where you are. And so it is the purpose of this message, this morning, to help you to classify yourself, or, at least, to pinpoint yourself on God's map to find out where you are. The first question that was asked of man in the Garden of Eden is: "*Where art thou?*" (Genesis 3:9).

Now I want you, this morning, to classify yourself, and I want you to at least come out of this place saying, "I'm a natural man, I am spiritual man, or I am a carnal man." At least, I'd like for you to know what you are. All right. Now let's look at the three. The first of all: the natural man; he's the fellow that we described as the man who is doing what comes naturally. And then, we're going to look at the spiritual man; he's the man that's doing what comes supernaturally. And then, the carnal man; he's doing what comes unnaturally. And so we'll look at these three.

I. The Natural Man

First of all, the natural man, the man who is doing what comes naturally. Look again at verse 14: "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

A. He Is Born into a Natural World

Why is he a natural man? Well, first of all, he is born into a natural world. He has only one birth—that is, the first birth. He has not experienced the second birth. He is just simply a man as he is by nature. And nature not only formed him, but nature deformed him. And schools may inform him, and man may reform him, but only Christ can transform him. And he has not yet been transformed. He is just simply a natural man. He's just like he is. He may be a professor; he may be a policeman; he may be a butcher, a banker, or an Indian chief. He may be a good natural man, a bad natural man, a smart natural man, a dumb natural man, a fat natural man, or an unfat natural man, but he is a natural man. So he does what comes naturally.

I read, the other day, where Nelson Rockefeller was talking about President Jimmy Carter, who said that he was born again. They asked Rockefeller about it, and he said, "Well, Mr. Carter and I are of the same religion. But," he said, "I certainly haven't born again." He said, "I count myself lucky to have been born the first time." Well, I have news for our vice president. If he doesn't get born twice, he won't count himself lucky to have been born the first time. He will rue the day that he was born at all.

Jesus said of Judas, "It was better for that man that he'd never been born" (Mark 14:21). And it is better for the natural man without the new birth that he'd never been

born at all, because, if you're born once, you die twice. But you see, a natural man has the first birth, but he doesn't have the second birth. And so he's born into a natural world.

B. He Is Blind to a Spiritual World

Now secondly, he is blind to a spiritual world. You see, there are two worlds, but he's blind to the spiritual world. He has not appreciation for spiritual things. Look in verse 14: *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:14). These words *receiveth not* mean "he welcomes not." Just like you receive a person into your house, you welcome them into your house. This man has no appreciation of spiritual things. He does not welcome spiritual things. He does not appreciate spiritual things.

Now this doesn't mean that he doesn't have some appreciation of some things. He does appreciate some things, and he even appreciates church things. For example, if he's a natural man, this morning, he'll enjoy these poinsettias. He'll say, "Oh, that's beautiful." You see, the natural man can appreciate some things. You know, he, the natural man, appreciates it when you meet your budget. The natural man can come to church, and he can appreciate a big love offering. The natural man can appreciate good preaching; that is, he says, "I like to hear a man who can express himself." You see? He appreciates good music. He says, "That's a glorious instrument. I like the way that choir performs." He can appreciate meetings, and Sunday school, and certain things, but he does not appreciate the true things of God. He does not hear what others are hearing. He does not sense what others are sensing. He comes, and he's operating on one wavelength, and others are on another, because he is perishing.

Now he has no spiritual appreciation. He cannot appreciate spiritual things; he cannot apprehend spiritual things. Look in verse 14, again: *"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God"*—that means he has no appreciation for them—*"for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them"* (1 Corinthians 2:14). He has no apprehension of them. He can't know them. I don't care how smart he is; he cannot figure it out. Now he may have good eyes, but look at verse 9: *"But as it is written, Eye hath not seen"*—he may have good ears—*"nor ear heard ... God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 2:9–10). And the natural man does not have the Spirit of God. And so his eye cannot perceive it, his ear cannot hear it, his heart cannot comprehend it, because he has no spiritual apprehension.

And a spiritual message rolls off his back like water rolls from a duck's back. He does not apprehend spiritual things. You just keep one finger there in 1 Corinthians. Go to John chapter 8, for a moment, and see what Jesus Christ said to some in his day. In John chapter 8, and verse 47, Jesus said: *"He that is of God heareth God's words; ye,*

therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47). Oh, you can hear the sound; you may even take the outline of the message. You may be able to walk out and talk about the natural man, the spiritual man, and the carnal man. You hear the words; but, friend, you don't hear the music. You do not understand. The natural man has no spiritual appreciation; the natural man has no spiritual apprehension. He does not have the apparatus to tune in.

Right here, in this room now, there's music, and perhaps cowboys and Indians, and football, and commentary, and all of this; but you can't tune it in, because you don't have a TV receiver with you. But it's here. But you don't have the apparatus to tune it in.

Now my dear friend, I want to tell you: God's Spirit is here, and to the child of God, God's Spirit bears witness with his spirit; but *"the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God"* (1 Corinthians 2:14). He does not welcome them; they don't make sense to him. He cannot apprehend them; he cannot understand them—*"neither can he know them"* (1 Corinthians 2:14). They are spiritually discerned.

He is born into a natural world; he is blind to the spiritual world; and, therefore, he is bound to the material world. He is bound to the material world. He just has no capacity for fellowship with God and, therefore, his motto is, "Get all you can, and can all you get," because this world is the only world he knows anything about, and he is bound to it. And so his motto is, "You only go through once in life; grab all the gusto you can get." And that's what he is living for: gusto, satisfaction. He lives a good dog's life.

I've got a dog. Do you know what my dog is satisfied with? Food, something to eat, a warm place to sleep, some affection, and, every now and then, achievement—catch a cat—and that's it, which is what I mean. He just is comfortable if he's got something to eat, a nice warm place to sleep, somebody to pet him, and then, a sense of achievement, you know, kill a squirrel, catch a cat, do something like that, then, he's just happy. And you know, he doesn't really mind dying. He never thinks of it, because he really doesn't know what living is, you see. He just lives a dog's life. And that's the way the natural man is.

I mean, he is just living for the same things that an animal lives for: self-gratification, self-propagation, and self-preservation. He is a natural man, and he does what comes naturally. He has no appreciation for spiritual things; he has not comprehension of spiritual things. He is born into the natural world; he is blind to the spiritual world; and he is bound to the material world—the natural man, doing what comes naturally.

II. The Spiritual Man

The second man: the spiritual man. Now he's the man who does what comes supernaturally. Look in verse 15: *"But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man"* (1 Corinthians 2:15). What are the marks of the spiritual

man? First of all, he lives by the Spirit. Verse 12: “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:12).

A. He Lives by the Spirit

All right, a spiritual man is one who has received the Spirit of God. He has been born from above. He has been invaded by the Holy Spirit. You see, *Christianity is not believing some thing; it is receiving Someone*. It is a new life, a divine invasion. Oh, it will be a great day when people learn that *Christianity is not a creed, it is not a code, it is not a cause, it is not a church; it is Christ in you*. We have received the Spirit of our dear Savior. He lives in us. He abides with us, and, as we’ve said before, *Christianity is not just simply getting man out of Earth into Heaven; it is getting God out of Heaven into man*. You see, a spiritual man—number one—lives by the Spirit. Verse 12: We have received the Spirit from God. Look: “*We have received ... the Spirit who is of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:12). And so **when you get saved, you don’t become just a nice character, you become a new creature.**

B. He Learns from the Spirit

All right now, number two: Not only does the spiritual man live by the Spirit of God, he learns from the Spirit of God. Notice, beginning in verse 12 and following: “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Spirit teacheth, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual discerneth*”—and, it’s the same word; I don’t know why it’s translated differently, but exactly the same word in verse 14 and verse 15—“*he that is spiritual discerneth all things, yet he himself is discerned of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 12–16).

Now a spiritual man not only lives by the Spirit of God, but he learns from the Spirit of God. The spiritual man knows things that cannot be taught in school. Now I am not against education, but you’ve heard me say before, *I’d rather be in Heaven saying my ABCs than be in Hell spouting philosophy, any day*. To know Jesus Christ. I am not against education, but I want to tell you, dear friend, that *you do not come to God headfirst, you come to God heart-first*. God hath “*hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes*” (Luke 10:21). He learns from the Spirit.

The natural man, with all of his wisdom, with all of his erudition, with all of his philosophical accoutrements, can never figure out God. Can a man by reasoning find out God? The answer is no, he cannot. “*But God hath revealed them unto us by his*

Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:10). They are spiritually discerned. He learns from the Spirit of God. Therefore, *I’d rather follow an ignorant man on fire than a scholar on ice*, somebody who knows Jesus Christ.

Now let me tell you something about learning from the Spirit of God: This does not mean that we sit around and do nothing. This is not a substitute for the command that says: *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed”* (2 Timothy 2:15). There’s a wonderful balance here; and, you need to learn that there is a difference between spirituality and maturity. You may be instantly spiritual, but you are not instantly mature.

Look in Hebrews chapter 5 for a moment—a wonderful commentary. We’ll compare spiritual things with spiritual, right now. In Hebrews chapter 5, beginning in verse 11. It could apply to some in the choir this morning. It could apply to some of our deacons this morning. Listen to it: *“Of whom we have many things to say”*—Paul said, “Oh, I’ve got so much to say.” (If Paul wrote this book, or whoever wrote it, we don’t know for certain.) *“I have many things to say”—“and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing”*—now there’s nothing wrong with the preaching, but there was something wrong with the hearing—*“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers”*—and, I’m looking at a congregation of people, and I would say some of you have been in church so long that you ought to be fine Bible teachers, but look—*“For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God”*—that is, you’ve got to go back to kindergarten, and the first grade, and learn your ABCs, and you’ve got to learn the multiplication table—*“and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For everyone that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe”*—you can’t feed upon the meat of the Word, you have to have to have the milk of the Word, because you’re a great big baby. Now listen—verse 14: *“But solid food”*—meat—*“belongeth to them that are of full age”*—that word means “mature”—*“even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Hebrews 5:11–14). Now what does that mean? It means, dear friend, that there are certain things that you can never develop until you use them: *“who by reason of use have their senses exercised”* (Hebrews 11:14).

Now what am I saying? I am saying that the only way that you will ever really be able to discern with the Holy Spirit is by use, by use. You will never be instantly mature. You must use the spiritual wisdom that God gives you; you must walk in the Spirit until you become mature, so you can teach.

Now the Bible warns against this idea of instant maturity. You know, the Bible says, when we get a preacher, he’s not to be a novice. The Bible says, *“Don’t lay hands suddenly on any man”* (1 Timothy 5:22). Don’t just ordain the first guy that comes along,

and don't just make a deacon out of man right away. He may be the most zealous man in your church. He may come down the aisle, give his heart to Jesus Christ, jump in the Bible, start to study, be filled with the Spirit, start to pray, win souls. Everybody says, "He's a wonderful man; let's make a preacher out of him. He's a wonderful man; let's make a deacon out of him." God says, "Hold off." I don't care how much he loves God. He has not yet had that reason of use that has enabled him to have his senses exercised to discern good and evil. And the Bible says that a man is not to be "*a novice, lest he be lifted up with pride, and fall into the condemnation of the devil*" (1 Timothy 3:6). I've seen it so many times. You let somebody come down the aisle and get saved, and have a dramatic conversion; and the first thing you know, they put him on the road giving his testimony all over, and they load him down with responsibilities that he's not able to bear. And he becomes a seven-day wonder. And he goes up like a rocket and comes down like a rock.

No, dear friend. You can't be instantly spiritual. You can get right with God, and be filled with the Spirit, be a babe in Christ, and you're not a natural man, you're not a carnal man. You are a spiritual man, but you're not a mature man. And so even those who are spiritual, some of them are immature, though they're spiritual; and some are mature. But oh, it is the mature person that is to be our goal, our aim. There are no short cuts to maturity. *When God wants to grow a squash, He takes forty days; when He wants to grow an oak, He takes forty years.* We need to walk with the Lord. And when I say that the Holy Spirit reveals things to us, I'm not putting a premium upon laziness or thinking that you're going to get it by osmosis. Brother, you're going to get it when you submit yourself to the discipline of the Holy Spirit and get in the Word of God. The Spirit of God will be doing it, however, and you're not going to be doing it in the natural way.

C. He Is Liberated by the Spirit of God

Now listen. What is a spiritual man? He lives by the Spirit of God. Number two: He learns from the Spirit of God. Number three: He is liberated by the Spirit of God. Notice verse 15 of this same chapter: "*But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man*" (1 Corinthians 2:15). Now what does that mean? Well, you see, he is free to make proper judgment. This word *judge* means "discern," and it's really a legal term. It's like a lawyer, who takes the evidence. He examines the evidence, and then, after he examines the evidence, he makes certain judgments.

Now the Christian is free. Now he is a citizen of two worlds. And for the first time, he can see things in proper perspective. He can look past the minute to eternity, and he can judge in the light of eternity. That's the reason Moses esteemed the riches of Christ greater than all the riches of Egypt. Because, some would have taken the immediate

riches, and God's man, Moses, had the riches of Egypt, first of all, and he said, "Let me look at them—oh, that's something." But then, he took God's Word, and he said, "Now let me look at the riches of Christ—oh," he said, "that's greater than this" (Hebrews 11:26). You see, Moses discerned. He had an ability that freed him from being bound up by the material, so he could live in the spiritual. When a man is a spiritual man, he is liberated by the Spirit of Christ. He knows the truth, and the truth sets him free. And he is able to make proper judgments, and he doesn't get all upset if he thinks he's going to be wiped out financially. "Because," he says, "this world is not my home; I'm just passing through." And so he judges all things—he sees things—in the proper perspective. But notice the rest of that verse: *"he himself is judged of no man"* (1 Corinthians 2:15). Now what does that mean? It doesn't mean people won't criticize him, because they'll criticize the daylights out of him. It means just the opposite. It means they will criticize him. He himself is understood of no man—that's what this means. There's the same word *discerned*: *"He himself is discerned of no man"* (1 Corinthians 2:15).

The unsaved world cannot understand what makes a Christian tick. They cannot understand what makes a Christian operate. They cannot understand what motivates a Christian. This man who is able to make proper discernment—this man who properly understands all things—is not understood by the world. They look at him, and they say, "I don't understand that man." Of course they don't, because they're a natural man, and he's a spiritual man. And he's on a different wavelength, and he marches to the beat of a different drummer. And *"he himself is discerned of no man"* (1 Corinthians 2:15).

Don't ever expect this world to understand you. You're a twice-born man in a world of once-born men, and you'll be going against the tide all the time. That's all right, though, because you've discerned all things, and you know where you're going. God's Spirit has revealed it to you. *"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 2:9–10).

You let some ol' boy get saved—some boy been giving his daddy all kinds of trouble: drinking liquor, disobeying his dad, stealing, fighting, smoking dope—that ol' boy will get saved and say, "Dad, God has saved me. I love Jesus. I believe I'm going to be a preacher." He'll say, "What? Well, son, I wanted you to be a lawyer." "Oh, no. God's called me to preach." "Man, I just don't understand that kid; I don't know what's gotten into him." No, he won't; dad won't understand him. Many times, he will not understand someone who's sold out for God. Sometimes, a husband will not understand a wife. Sometimes, a child will not understand his parents. *"He himself is discerned of no man"* (1 Corinthians 2:15).

III. The Carnal Man

All right. Let's go on. Finally, now, look: There is the natural man; he does what comes naturally. There is the spiritual man; he does what comes supernaturally. But now, I want you to notice the carnal man; he does what comes unnaturally. Boy, this guy is a mess. Look at him. Chapter 3, verse 1: *"And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with solid food; for to this time ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal"* (1 Corinthians 3:1–3).

A. He Is Deformed

What are the three marks of the carnal man, now? Number one: He is deformed. He is sort of a monstrosity. He is saved, but he is defeated. He has too much of the supernatural in him to be natural; he has too much of the natural in him to be supernatural. And so he's just unnatural.

Now but let me say he's average. Let me tell you something, friend: If I had to say what I believe the average church member is, and the average church—we'll just leave this one out to keep it from being personal—I would say the average church member, and the average Bible-preaching church, is a carnal Christian. But never make the mistake of thinking that the average is normal. There's a vast difference between the average and the normal. What we are by average is not what we are to be normal.

The normal Christian is the Spirit-filled man. The carnal Christian is abnormal, subnormal, unnatural. Don't settle down and say, "Well, I'm like everybody else." Because, *the average Baptist is in such sad shape that you have to backslide to be in fellowship.*

Vance Havner said, and said it well, "The average Christian is so subnormal that, if anybody ever becomes normal, he'll look abnormal." But we are to be spiritual. When somebody is not a spiritual person—when somebody is a carnal person—that means something has gone wrong, something is haywire. He is doing what comes unnaturally, because he is a saved person. But if you were to look at him, he looks and acts like an unsaved person. So he is deformed; he has not matured; and he's a grey-headed baby.

I have some precious friends. One has a son, and that son has never matured—a grown man, and yet, that son uses the language of a little child and can hardly even recognize his own name. Those parents love that child, and they take care of that child, but, you know, their hearts are grieved. How much more must our Heavenly Father be grieved when we, who are His children—He loves us, He takes care of us—when we die, we're going to Heaven, we're a part of the family of God; but look at it. Look at the tragedy. Look what Paul is saying: *"I have fed you with milk, and not with solid food; for to this time ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able"* (1 Corinthians 3:2).

And when he says “*neither yet now are ye able,*” he means you should be (1 Corinthians 3:2).

Some of you are grey-headed babies. I am talking to some folks, here; I mean, honest to goodness, some of you have heard enough preaching to save the world. Some of you have been here under the ministry of Dr. Lee, Dr. Pollard, and myself; and, you haven’t grown that much. You come to church on Sunday morning, and get your predigested food—your Pablum, your strained beets, and your warm milk—and want somebody to shake your hand, and burp you, as you go out the door. And that’s about it. You have not grown in the Lord. You are spiritually deformed. You are doing what comes unnaturally, because, you’re saved, but you haven’t grown up; you haven’t opened up; and you haven’t surrendered yourself to the will of the Lord. There is a legitimate childhood, and we all thank God for little children. That’s fine. But if my big sixteen-year-old son comes to me and says, “Da Da,” I’d like to swat him.

B. He Is Dependent

Now what I’m trying to say is this: It’s all right to be a baby, if you’re a baby. We don’t expect much out of these who first get saved; they’ve got to grow on into maturity. But a carnal Christian—number one—is one who is deformed (verses 1 and 2); number two: He is dependent.

Look in verse 2; Paul said, “*I have fed you with milk*” (1 Corinthians 3:2). There are three classes, three stages. First of all, you have to be fed; secondly, you can feed yourself; thirdly, you’re able to feed others. But Paul says, “I still have to feed you. I have to give you your Pablum. I have to give you your strained beets and carrots. I can’t give you a beefsteak. You can’t go into the Word of God and dig it out for yourself. And above all things, we couldn’t give you a class; we couldn’t let you teach somebody else.” And all of the energy that the church ought to have going out and reaching the lost is sapped when the pastor and the leadership have to become spiritual nursemaids, taking care of big babies.

Carnal, carnal. Some of you have been saved long enough, had enough opportunities, heard enough, but you haven’t grown. And you’re dependent, dependent upon others. Rather than coming to visitation, you say, “I’ve been a member a long time; ain’t nobody been to see me.”

C. He Is Divisive

Okay, now. Look: Not only is he deformed, and not only is he dependent, he is divisive. Notice verses 3 and 4: “*For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?*” (1 Corinthians 3:3–4).

Now there were three—and, we find in another place, in this context—there were three who had preached there. There were Peter, and Paul, and Apollos. And do you know what they had done? They had divided up into little groups in the church, and they had their favorite preachers, all the carnal people. Someone said, “Well, I like brother Paul, and I’ll tell you why I like brother Paul: because, when he preaches, he gives us a lot of doctrine. Paul is a good teacher.” Somebody else said, “I like Peter, because when Peter preaches, he tells it like it is.” Somebody else says, “Oh, I like Apollos. He’s got a silver tongue; he’s such an orator. The way he puts words together—it’s just wonderful.” You’d be surprised how many people say, “Well, so-and-so is my preacher.”

A mark of carnality, brother: A true Christian does not gather around any preacher; he gathers around Jesus Christ, and he puts his eyes upon Jesus Christ. But carnality... Little children are fussy over trifles. You’d be surprised what will get some folks upset. Oh, they wouldn’t get upset about the things that ought to upset them. They’re the kind of folks who get upset on which side of the platform you put the organ and the piano. That’s what upsets some folks, you know, like little children. “You cut my toast the wrong way; you’re supposed to cut it from corner to corner, so it will look like a little sailboat.” Now that’s what a child is like. You see, it’s the little things. And a carnal person is a childish person who gets upset over the difference between *twiddle dee dee* and *twiddle dee dum*. Strife, envy, division—when that comes, it is because people have not focused their attention upon Jesus Christ. They “*are yet carnal*” (1 Corinthians 3:3).

You want to test whether you’re carnal or spiritual? Never test a person by his actions. All of these things that Paul is mentioning here are reactions, not actions. Look at them. Verse 3: “*For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal?*” (1 Corinthians 3:3). These are reactions. You see, I can plan my actions. I’ve already planned what I was going to say, this morning, in the sermon. I can plan my actions. I can say, “Now I’m going to be up there on the platform, act nice, sit nice, smile, and all that. See, because you’re watching me. See, that’s my actions. I plan my actions. But if you want to know what I really am, you watch my reactions; you jostle me, and see what spills out.

Now whatever spills out is what I’m full of. Amen? Oh, you can plan your actions; but, brother, it is your reaction that tells whether you’re natural, carnal, or spiritual. And oh, we have so many carnal people. They come to church; they look so pious; and they sing so nice. But you let somebody cross them, you let somebody jiggle them, or you let somebody jab them, and you’ll see what spills out: childishness, immaturity, envy, strife, and divisions. I don’t believe there’s ever been a church fuss but what it’s been led by Mr. and Mrs. Carnal. Carnality, carnality.

Conclusion

Well, our time has come and gone. I hope, at least, you see where you are, so you can know where you need to be. And as Dr. Lee said, “I hope you’ve classified yourself.”

Now are you a natural man—never been born at all? Are you blind to the spiritual world, born in the natural world, and bound by the material world? Are you? Be honest enough to admit it, because, friend, until you admit it, you’ll never get saved. Number two: Are you a spiritual man with life from the Spirit, led by the Spirit, and liberated by the Spirit? Or, are you a carnal person—deformed, dependent, and divisive? Which are you?

How to Be a Growing Christian

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 30, 2003

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:12–3:4

Outline

Introduction

- I. For the Natural Man, Growth Is Impossible
 - A. No Spiritual Animation
 - B. No Spiritual Appreciation
 - C. No Spiritual Apparatus
- II. For the Carnal Man, Growth Is Retarded
 - A. Restricted Development
 - B. Restricted Diet
 - C. Repeated Divisions
- III. For the Spiritual Man, Growth Is Enhanced
 - A. Lives by the Spirit
 - B. Learns by the Spirit
 1. It Doesn't Mean That You're Going to Know Everything About God
 2. It Doesn't Mean That You Shouldn't Study
 - C. Liberated by the Spirit

Conclusion

Introduction

Thank you, ladies. We can make a world of difference, if we would. And really, the only thing in the world that can make a difference is the love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Find 1 Corinthians chapter 2. We begin in verse 14 in just a moment. I want to ask you this question, and I want you to answer it—not out loud, but answer it sincerely: Are you a growing Christian? Are you? Now, don't answer out loud, but are you? Are you a better Christian this year than you were last year? I've often said *to cease to be better is to cease to be good*. If you're not a growing Christian, you are a backslidden Christian. Now, one of the greatest problems in this church is we have a lot of immature Christians. Some of them have gray hair, but they're babies. They have never, ever grown up spiritually.

Now, the text that I have before you delineates three kinds of people; and I'm going to call the roll, and you're going to answer in your own heart. One time, Dr. Lee preached a message, and there was a lady who was a little huffy at him at the door. And, she said to him, "I didn't appreciate that message one little bit." He said, "Neither did the devil, so classify yourself." Now, I want you to classify yourself. In order to get to

where you need to be, the first question you ask is, “Where am I now?” If you’re in the mall and trying to find a particular store, you will go to the marquee there—or the display there—and it will have all of the stores delineated; but there will be a red dot, and that red dot says, “You are here.” Now, if you don’t know where you are, that whole map makes no sense to you—none whatsoever. If someone wants to come to your house, and they call you on the phone, and they said, “We’ve just come to Memphis. We want to come by and see you. How do we get to your house?” you ask this question: “Where are you now? If you’ll tell me where you are now, I’ll tell you how to get to where you need to be.” The first question that God asked man after man sinned is this: “Adam, where are you?” (Genesis 3:9).

Now, there are three categories of persons listed here in the scripture that I’m going to read, and let’s find out just where you are. First Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 2:14–16). Now, chapter 3, verse 1: *“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal”—“as unto carnal”—“even as unto babes in Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:1).

Now, if you were listening carefully, you saw there were three kinds of mankind listed in this passage of scripture. First of all, there’s the natural man in verse 14 (1 Corinthians 2:14). In verse 15, there’s the spiritual man (1 Corinthians 2:15). And, in verse—chapter 3, verse 1, there is the carnal man (1 Corinthians 3:1). Now, you’re one of these three. You’re natural, or you’re spiritual, or you’re carnal. Now, we’re going to look at these three tonight and help you to find out which of these three you really are and find out whether or not you are growing.

I. For the Natural Man, Growth Is Impossible

If you are a natural man—a natural woman—for you, growth is impossible. And, here’s why growth is impossible:

A. No Spiritual Animation

You have nothing to animate you; you have no life. There is no spiritual animation. To be animated is to be motivated with life. *Animus* means “living.” And, if you are a natural man, you are devoid of the Spirit of God. You have no spiritual life in you.

When I came to Bellevue Baptist Church many years ago, we had a Sunday School contest—or at least, an experiment. We gave all the boys and girls plants to keep in their Sunday School classes. And, they were given instructions as to what to do with

those plants. Some plants were to be given light, and water, and fertilizer; and each week, they would bring their plants to the platform, and we would look at them. Other classes were given a beautiful plant, but they were told to give that plant light and water but no fertilizer. Other plants were brought—they were told to give fertilizer and water but no light. And, others were given water and light but no fertilizer. All kinds of combinations—it was interesting to watch the plants, to see some of them that were growing but kind of had yellow leaves. Some were stunted in their growth. Some were growing profusely. But, we gave some classes a dead stick and said, “Give that dead stick light, water, and fertilizer, and do it regularly.” Do you know what? The stick never grew—not at all.

Now, a man without Jesus Christ spiritually is a dead stick. He’s what is called the *natural man*, and Jude 1:19 describes him as “*having not the Spirit.*” He has never been born of the Spirit. He has no spiritual life in him, and it is absolutely impossible for him to grow spiritually. He has no spiritual animation because he does not have the Spirit. And, the Spirit in us is the life that Jesus gives us.

B. No Spiritual Appreciation

Now, not only does he have no spiritual animation, but secondly, he has no spiritual appreciation. Look again in verse 14: “*the natural man receiveth not the things of...God*” (1 Corinthians 2:14). The word *receive* here—the Greek word—means that he does not “welcome” the things of God—he does not appreciate spiritual things.

Now, an unsaved man can come to Bellevue Baptist Church and appreciate a lot of things. Later on, Ken’s going to play the trombone. If he’s a musician, saved or lost, he will appreciate it. If he’s an architect, he may appreciate this building. One came in here and said, “How did they span this ceiling? There must be some incredible girders in this ceiling to be able to span this ceiling,” or whatever. He may appreciate the organization. He may appreciate the way that Bellevue Baptist Church runs. We have many people in the secular world who come to study the church—not because they want to learn spiritual things; they just want to learn how things are organized. An unsaved man can appreciate a lot of things. He can appreciate the music. He can marvel at the budget. He can appreciate high attendance. He can appreciate all of these things, but he cannot—it is impossible for him to—appreciate the things of the Spirit. He does not understand what excites so many of us. You might as well expect your dog to appreciate opera—or my wife, ice hockey. Now, it doesn’t mean that he may not like gospel music. Friend, they do gospel music in nightclubs. But, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:18: “*For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness.*” To them it is absolutely foolish, because he has no spiritual appreciation.

C. No Spiritual Apparatus

Now thirdly, he has no spiritual apparatus. The reason that he cannot understand spiritual things—he does not have the tool to understand spiritual things. Look again in verse 14: *“they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). He couldn’t understand them if he tried to understand them. John 8, verse 47: *“He that is of God heareth God’s words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God”* (John 8:47). You just—he just—can’t understand it. When you talk to an unsaved man about the gospel and he says, “I just don’t see it,” he’s not lying. He doesn’t see it; he cannot see it. Jesus said, *“Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of [Heaven]”* (John 3:3). He’s telling the truth when he says, “I can’t see it.”

Now, in this room tonight is drama—cowboys and Indians, perhaps; race cars; basketball games; newscasters; symphonic music. It’s all in this room tonight, but you’re not hearing it and you’re not seeing it because you don’t have a tuner with you, unless you’ve got one secretly stuffed in your ear. It’s here. Now, your great grandfather would have said it’s not here. He would not have understood the principle at all. But, we know that all of these things are here, but it takes a receiver that is working to tune all of this in. Now, a child of God understands because he has his antenna up, and he is tuned to station WORD. He understands these things, but the natural man does not understand them. He cannot grow. He does not understand spiritual things; and therefore, for him, growth is impossible. He’s a stick stuck in the ground. He has no life.

Now, maybe you’re a natural person here. Maybe you’ve been coming to Bellevue for a long time. But, if you would be Judgment Day-honest, you would have to say, “Pastor, I have never really truly given my heart to Jesus Christ, trusted Him as my Lord and Savior, had a divine change, where Jesus Christ is a bright, living reality to me.”

II. For the Carnal Man, Growth Is Retarded

Now, here’s the second category of person that I’m going to mention, and this is the carnal man. Chapter 3, verse 1—Paul says, *“And I...could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:1). Now, the word *carnal* means “fleshly.” Rather than being motivated by the Spirit, he is carnal. Now, he is saved because he is a babe in Christ, but what is his problem?

A. Restricted Development

His problem is retarded development. The word for *babe* here is a word that means “a person who has failed to grow in his life.” This carnal person with this retarded development, who is not growing—he is not spiritual, and he is not natural; he is unnatural. The spiritual man is supernatural; the carnal man is natural—excuse me, the

natural man, of course, is natural; the spiritual man is supernatural. But, the carnal man is unnatural. He's saved, but he may appear like an unsaved person. He's neither fish nor fowl. He's never grown up.

Now, there's a time for legitimate childhood. I met a young lady today who was just baptized this past week. What a beautiful young lady she was—so full of excitement in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, I would not expect as much out of her as I would some of you, who've been members of this church three, four, five, ten, 15, 20 years; but I'm telling you, we have some of our Bellevue seniors who are spiritual babes. Paul said, *"I...could not speak unto you [brethren] as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ"* (1 Corinthians 3:1).

I love babies; but if a baby never grows, it's a sad thing. *I remember when my son said to me, "Da-Da." That was wonderful. But, if that 40-something-year-old were to say, "Da-Da" to me today, I'd swat him. He's got to grow.* Now, here's the sad thing: when people come into Bellevue Baptist Church, they look around and they become like the average. The average convert is going to become like the average member. But, the average member is not a normal Christian. The average Christian is so subnormal—if he ever became normal, he would seem abnormal. Don't think that carnal Christianity is one of the acceptable choices that you have. A carnal Christian is an oxymoron; it's like saying "a heavenly devil."

B. Restricted Diet

Now, not only does this man have restricted development, but he has a restricted diet. He does not grow. He has a retarded development, and he has a restricted diet. Look, if you will, in chapter 3 and verse 2: Paul said, *"[And] I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able"* (1 Corinthians 3:2).

Do you know what the average pastor is in the average church? He is a spiritual nursemaid, and he is going around giving prepared bottles and strained food to his people. Hebrews chapter 5, verses 11 through 14: the writer of Hebrews says, speaking of Jesus, *"Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God"*—now, I could embarrass you tonight by asking, "How many of you have been a member of Bellevue over ten years?" And, honesty would compel you to lift your hand. Then, I would ask you, "How many of you are teachers in Bellevue Baptist Church?" And, you would not be able to lift your hand. Anybody—anybody—who's been a member of this church for ten years ought to be some kind of a teacher—somewhere teaching. But, he says—*"[you] have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of*

God”—what he is saying is, “When you ought to be doing calculus, you have need for somebody teach you the multiplication tables. When you ought to be writing essays, you need somebody to teach you the ABCs”—“and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:11–14).

Many cannot tell good from evil. A baby will put anything in its mouth, whether it be a cigarette butt or a roach. He cannot tell the difference between good or evil. And, a baby can’t take strong meat. Have you ever watched babies eat? You know what they eat? Pablum—strained beets. Did you ever try strained beets? I’m glad I grew up. And, you know what? A sermon is primarily pre-digested food. That’s what a bottle is. Milk is just pre-digested food.

C. Repeated Divisions

Well, listen—either—you are in one of these categories—either you need to be fed, or you can feed yourself, or you’re feeding others. Now, Paul says that there is a retarded development; there is a restricted diet, and then there are repeated divisions among these carnal people. Look in verses 3 and 4: “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” (1 Corinthians 3:3). Baby Christians fuss and fight over small things.

Now, if you’re going to cause a battle—cause a fight—have it be over something big. You know, I’ve been a pastor long enough to see that most of the problems in churches are not caused by major things; they’re caused by carnal people who debate this thing or that thing. So many times, it’s over personalities. Look, if you will, in verse 4: “For...one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?” (1 Corinthians 3:4). It’s time for big babies to grow up.

Now, some are natural; they will never grow. Some are carnal; they have retarded development, and they need to grow. And, shame on them if they do not grow, and shame on you if you’re not a growing Christian.

III. For the Spiritual Man, Growth Is Enhanced

Now, here’s the third category. Hopefully you’re in this category. With the first one, growth is impossible. With the second, growth is retarded. In the third category, growth is normal and natural. This is the spiritual man. With the spiritual man, growth is enhanced. Now, let me delineate the spiritual man for you.

A. Lives by the Spirit

First of all, the spiritual man lives by the Spirit. Look in chapter 2, verse 11: “For what

man knoweth the things of a man, save—or, “except”—“*the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*”—now, watch this—“*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:11–12). A Christian is someone who, when he received Jesus, received the Holy Spirit of God.

Now, the Bible says clearly that if you don’t have the Holy Spirit, you’re not saved. Some people erroneously teach that you get saved and later on you receive the Holy Spirit. That’s heresy. “*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*” (Romans 8:9), the Bible says. If you’re devoid of the Spirit, you’re a natural man, not a spiritual man. *Salvation is not getting man out of earth into Heaven; it is getting God out of Heaven into man.* When God comes in, you live by the Spirit. And so, a Christian is not just a nicer person; he is a new creature. He’s not a tadpole that has turned into a frog; he’s a frog that’s turned into a prince by the kiss of grace and the impartation of the Holy Spirit into his life. Romans 8:9: “*But ye are not of 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.*”

B. Learns by the Spirit

So, what is the mark of a spiritual person? Number one: He lives by the Spirit. Number two: He learns from the Spirit. Look again in chapter 2, beginning now in verses 12 through 14: “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God*”—now, watch it—“*that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual*”—now, it’s very clear here that the spiritual man learns. But now, notice, in contrast, verse 14—“*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (1 Corinthians 2:12–14). Do you see? Do you see? The man who lives by the Spirit learns from the Spirit. It is the Spirit that is the teacher on the inside of this man. That’s the reason I frequently say, “I pray before I preach.” And, you need to pray, because I can preach truth but only the Holy Spirit of God can impart truth.

Let me give you two scriptures. One—John 3, verse 27: “*John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven*” (John 3:27). I wonder if we really believe that: “*A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven*” (John 3:27). And then, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 3: “*Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost*” (1 Corinthians 12:3). There is no way possible that I can convince you to give your heart to Jesus Christ,

apart from the Holy Spirit of God speaking to you. *“No man can say that Jesus Christ is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost”* (1 Corinthians 12:3).

When Jesus asked Simon Peter, “Peter, whom do men say that I am?” Peter said, “Some say one thing; some say another thing” (Matthew 16:13–14). “Who do you say I am, Peter?” (Matthew 16:15). Peter said, “You’re the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). And Jesus said, *“Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee”* (Matthew 16:17).

Now, this is an interesting thing. For three years, Peter had been with the Lord Jesus Christ, who had a flesh and blood body—the master teacher. And yet, Jesus said, “Peter, the only way that you could understand this is for God to reveal it to you”: *“Flesh and blood hath not revealed [this] unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 16:17). If we only understood, friend—that we learn from the Spirit.

Now, how do we learn from the Spirit? How does the Spirit of God teach us and help us to grow? What is the means? The miracle of this learning is in verse 4—that it is indeed a miracle. Look, if you will, back in chapter 2, verse 4: Paul said, *“And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”* (1 Corinthians 2:4). That’s what I long for in my own life. I don’t want just to be cute, or logical, or oratorical. I want in my life and in this pulpit a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that that’s where your faith might be.

Now, he says, *“[In] my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power”* (1 Corinthians 2:4). Now, how does the Holy Spirit of God do this? Well, look, if you will now, in chapter 2, verses 10 and 11: the Bible says—well, let’s go back to verse 9: *“But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man [that] is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God”* (1 Corinthians 2:9–12). Now, what’s he saying here? Only the Holy Spirit knows the mind of God. Would you agree with that? I hope you would. As a matter of fact, what he’s saying is, we, on a human level, don’t really know one another. Look in verse 11: *“For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man [that’s] in him?”* (1 Corinthians 2:11).

Now, you’re looking at me right now; you’re hearing me right now, but you don’t really know me. Nobody knows me but me. Listen to it: *“what man knoweth the things of a man, [except] the spirit of man [that] is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no*

man, but the Spirit of God" (1 Corinthians 2:11–12). Just as I know me in a way that you cannot know me, God knows Himself in ways that you cannot know God. Now, that means that you can have a divinely inspired Bible in your hand and you cannot understand it apart from divine illumination. You can believe the Bible is verbally inspired, inerrantly inspired, infallible, and you can pour over it and study it; but I'm telling you, unless the Spirit of God teaches you, you will not understand it. That's the reason the psalmist prayed in Psalm 119, verse 18: *"Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law"* (Psalm 119:18). When you do that, a part of you will know that never knew, and a part of you will see that never see.

1. It Doesn't Mean That You're Going to Know Everything About God

Now, what does this mean? Well, let me just tell you quickly three things it doesn't mean. It doesn't mean that you're going to know everything about God. Deuteronomy 29, verse 29 says there's some "secret things that belong to God alone" (Deuteronomy 29:29), and you will never know them. Maybe in Heaven we'll know them, but I doubt that we'll know them all when we get to Heaven. God is so vast and so great. **You could go down to the seashore and dip a bucket in the Atlantic Ocean, and everything in the bucket would be ocean; but not all the ocean would be in the bucket.** But, God will give you some things. It doesn't mean that you're going to know everything about God.

2. It Doesn't Mean That You Shouldn't Study

It doesn't mean that you should not study. There's nothing mystical about this. Second Timothy chapter 2, verse 15 says, *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that [need] not to be ashamed"* (2 Timothy 2:15). It doesn't mean that the Holy Spirit's going to teach you in areas apart from the things of the Spirit. You can pray all you want; but if you're taking a math test, you'd better study mathematics. And, if you're taking a history test, you better study history. But, it does mean—it does mean—that you, ma'am; you, sir; you, teenager; you, choir member, can, with an open Bible and an open heart, walking in the Spirit, can understand the things of God. You don't have to be a seminary graduate. You don't have to be an intellectual top-water to understand.

Look in chapter 1 now, and look in verse 26: *"For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 1:26–31). What does this mean in plain English? That means that plain, ordinary people walking in the Spirit, who live by

the Spirit, who learn from the Spirit, can take a Bible and say, “[God,] *open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things [in] thy law*” (Psalm 119:18).

C. Liberated by the Spirit

Now, here’s the final thing I want to say—that a spiritual Christian lives by the Spirit, learns from the Spirit, and therefore, he is liberated by the Spirit. Look now, beginning in verses 15 and 16 of chapter 2: “*But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? but we have the mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:15–16). Now, what does that mean? It means that a person who is walking in the Spirit, who’s a growing Christian, sees through this material world. It says he “*judgeth all things*” (1 Corinthians 2:15). It literally means, “He discerns all things.”

When I read the newspaper, whether I have my reading glasses on or not, I have my Bible glasses on. When I listen to the news, when I’m in a conversation, I can run everything through the grid of God’s Word and through the Holy Spirit that is in me. And, God gives me inner light, and God gives you that, that you can make an examination on the basis of God’s Word and the teaching of the Holy Spirit. And, you can make moral and spiritual judgments. “*He that is spiritual judgeth all things*” (1 Corinthians 2:15). Your value system is operating rightly, and I’ll tell you, conversely, the people of this world will not understand you—they will not understand you. They will not make you... They can’t understand it. “*He himself is [discerned] of no man*”—or, “*judged of no man*” (1 Corinthians 2:15). That means they just don’t know what makes you tick, because you’re marching to the beat of a different drummer.

I got saved as a teen. I’d given my parents and my teachers a lot of difficulty. I met Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came into my life—radically, dramatically saved me. The teachers were talking. They said—here was the subject of conversation: “What has happened to Adrian? What has happened to Adrian? He’s different.” They did not understand what made me different. I can tell you it is Jesus Christ that makes you different. When you are a spiritual person, you live by the Spirit, you learn from the Spirit, you’re liberated by the Spirit. Others will not be able to understand you, but you’ll understand them. And, you are free, because you’re not a slave to the opinions of men.

Now, if you are a carnal person—excuse me, if you’re a natural person, never been saved; you may be a member of this church—you need, as quickly as possible, to get genuinely saved so you can begin to grow. I don’t care how much preaching you hear. I don’t care how much singing you hear. I don’t care how much Bible reading you do. You’re like that stick stuck in the ground. You are not going to grow. If you are a carnal person with retarded development, and restricted diet, and repeated divisions, you need to say, “God, have mercy upon me. I repent of my carnality as a sin. I do not accept it as

a legitimate position in my life, and I turn from it and enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ. And Lord, fill me with the Holy Spirit.” If you are a spiritual person, do not settle down. I don’t care who you are or where you are. *If you cease to be better, you cease to be good.* You need to continue to grow in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Let’s pray together.

A Road Map to Maturity

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 21, 1985

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:14–3:3

“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.”

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Natural Man
 - A. He Is Born into the Natural World
 - B. He Is Blind to the Spiritual World
 - C. He Is Bound to the Material World
- II. The Spiritual Man
 - A. He Lives by the Spirit
 - B. He Learns from the Spirit
 - C. He Is Liberated Through the Spirit
- III. The Carnal Man
 - A. He Is Deformed
 - B. He Is Dependent
 - C. He Is Divisive

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 2, 1 Corinthians chapter 2. We're going to have a Bible study tonight on three categories of men. And, actually, we're going to entitle the message, "A Road Map to Maturity." One of the great problems in the modern church is that the modern church is filled with immature people, babies, fifty and sixty years of age. Look, if you will, now in 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14: "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God..." If you have your Bibles, by the way, hold your Bible up if you have a Bible with you. Let me just see them. Isn't that pretty, Phil? Look at that. Praise God. Just take them down. Did you know that you go to a lot of churches, and I've done it, and asked people to hold up your Bibles and a lot of folks don't even have one with them. It's an amazement to me that people sometimes would not have a Bible. Now I have gone to services without a

Bible, I have to confess. Forgot mine or, or just didn't have the presence of mind to bring it. But as a normal thing, you ought to bring a Bible to church. And, by the way, if you don't have a Bible with you tonight, look in the pew rack there. There would be one for you. And find 1 Corinthians chapter 2 and in verse 14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God..." Just put a circle around that phrase, "...natural man..." Okay. And then look, if you will, in verse 15: He that is spiritual judgeth all things..." Put a circle around that phrase, "he that is spiritual..." And then look, if you will, in chapter 3 and verse 1: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." Put a circle around the phrase "...carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." And then mark them 1, 2, 3. And there you have the three categories of people. Everybody in the congregation tonight is in one of those three classifications. Either you are a natural man, a spiritual man, or a carnal man. You are a natural woman, a spiritual woman, or a carnal woman. You're in one of those three categories. And before I get finished tonight, if nothing else happens, I trust that you at least will have classified yourself. Dr. Robert G. Lee one time was preaching a message, and he preached an excoriating message on sin. And a lady who had her fur rubbed the wrong way met him at the door, and she was in a huff. And she said, "Dr. Lee, I didn't appreciate that message one little bit." He said, "Neither did the devil, lady, so classify yourself." So, now what I want you to do tonight is to classify yourself. I want you to find out what category you're in, because some people here tonight are what we call natural. Some people here tonight are what we call spiritual. And some people here tonight are carnal. Now it's very, very important that you classify yourself. You will never, ever become what you ought to be until you know where you are. Have you ever read a map, and, and you looked at the map, and the map was a perfectly map, but the only problem with it – you didn't know where you were? So what good is a map if you don't have a starting place? Have you ever gone to a big building, and they'll have a layout of the building. And if they, if they really do it right, to be very helpful they'll have a little arrow there and it'll point to a particular place, and it will say, "You are here?" And you say, "Aha. Now if I am here, now I know how to get there." But if they don't tell you you're here, you will have more of a difficult time getting there, isn't that right? Now I want you to find out where you are to begin with on this road map to maturity. And if you see where you are, if you can say, "Well, here's where I am," then it'll be much easier for you to get to where you need to be. Now the very first question that God asks in the Garden of Eden to Adam was, "Adam, where are you?" And that's the question I want to ask tonight. "Where are you?" Which of these three types of people are you tonight?

I. The Natural Man

Now let's look, first of all, at the natural man and see what a natural man is and see if,

indeed, you are a natural man. Go back to chapter 2:14. He says, “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Now I want to give you three marks of a natural man. Why do we call him a natural man?

A. He Is Born into the Natural World

Well, number one: He is born into the natural world. He has had but one birth. He has been naturally born, but he has not been supernaturally born. He had never been born again. He’s just like the average person you see in the average city. He has been born but once. He is born into the natural world. Therefore, he is a natural man.

B. He Is Blind to the Spiritual World

But not only is he born into the natural world; he is blind to the spiritual world. Because he has not been born twice, he does not understand the things of God. Look again in verse 14: “But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” Now look at the word receive, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...” Do you know what that word literally means? It is a word that means he does not welcome the things of the Spirit of God. It means that he does not appreciate the things of the Spirit of God. Now you have to understand that a natural man can enjoy a church service. Don’t think that a natural man may not enjoy being here. He can enj...listen, folks. Whether you’re saved or lost, you’d have to enjoy that choir. That’s just good music. And good music is good music, whether you’re saved or whether you’re lost. When you hear a choir sing like our choir sang, you can enjoy I t. You don’t have to be saved. You can be a natural man and enjoy a sermon. If the preacher is logical, if he thinks about what he’s going to say, if he’s half-way pleasing in his presentation...he may be entertaining, he may be somewhat witty, he may challenge your thinking, and you might come away saying, “Hey, that fellow made a good talk. I really enjoyed that.” A natural man can get excited about claiming Canaan. I, wh, he can say, “That’s a beautiful building. I like to be a part of a organization that’s doing things. I just believe that it’s very wonderful. Let’s, let’s see how much money we can raise.” He can get excited about that. Listen. A natural man can come to church and enjoy the music. A natural man can come to church and enjoy the sermon. A natural man can come to church and appreciate the program. If he’s a businessman doing a business report, if, if you’re saying that we made our budget and went over the budget, he’ll smile and he’ll check that. That’s good. He likes that. We made the budget. And all of those things he can understand. But he does not understand the things of the Spirit of God. It just blows right past him. He doesn’t understand the things that we understand. Look again. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...” He doesn’t

welcome them. He doesn't appreciate them. The message of the cross is foolishness unto him. The apostle Paul has already said that in chapter 1 and verse 18: "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness..." To a natural man who's perishing, when I talk about dying to self, when I talk about receiving what Jim and the choir sang about tonight, the blood of Jesus Christ, when I talk about the new birth, when I talk about God's Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we're children of God, when I talk about loving the Lord Jesus Christ with all of our heart, mind, soul, and being, when I talk about dying to self, he doesn't understand these things. He would be miserable if he got to heaven. He thinks he wants to live for all eternity. He doesn't even know what to do on a rainy afternoon. He would be miserable in heaven where they're praising God, loving God, giving glory to the Lamb. Listen. He does not appreciate the things of God, and he cannot appropriate the things of God. Look again in verse 14. Look at it very carefully here. "...they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." Now suppose he says, "All right, Mr. Rogers. You've said that I'm interested not in spiritual things. Well, I'm going to be interested. I'm going to learn tonight. I'm going to be all ears." It doesn't make any difference. You still can't know. You don't have the equipment to know. You don't have what it takes to learn if you're a natural man. There's no way. You don't welcome these things. And even if you did welcome them, you couldn't understand them. You have no appreciation. You have no appropriation for the things of God. He receives not the things of the Spirit of God, and neither can he know them. I don't care how brilliant he is. He may have a Ph.D., but I want to tell you the janitor sweeping off the steps of the library where that man studies and teaches will know about God than he will know on the inside if he has never been born again. You talk to an unsaved man about the things of God and he'll say, "Well, I just don't see it." He's not lying to you. He doesn't see it. The Bible says, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see...." Now keep your bookmarks there and turn to John 8:47 and let me just underscore this in the Gospel of John. Here's a verse, I think, that points out what I'm trying to say. Jesus was talking to the learned people of His day. I'm talking about the religious leaders of His day. But they had never been born again. These were the doctors, the scholars, the lawyers, and here's what Jesus said to them. I'm talking about the, the leaders, the bluebloods, those who were the religious higherarchy. He said to them, "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye, therefore, hear them not because ye are not of God." Now a person who is not of God cannot hear God's words. One of the marks that a man has been born again, Jesus said, is this: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Now what I'm trying to say is this: That a natural man is blind to spiritual things. He may hear the words, but he never gets the music. He may get the facts, but he never gets the meaning. He is born into the natural world. He is blind to the spiritual world. A third thing about him – well,

well, let me just, before I go to the third thing. Did you know that in this room tonight there is music and drama, maybe cowboys and Indians, maybe there's an automobile being driven through here, maybe there's a chase with gunshots and all of these things? But, you know, you're not aware of it because you don't have a television set. But if you were to bring a television set in here and plug it in and put up the antennas and dial it to a certain channel, all of those things that are in the air would start to appear on that television set. They're in here right now. They, they're in here. All of those programs are in this room right now. They're here right now, aren't they? You don't see them. You don't hear them, but, but you know they're here. All I'd have to do is get the television set and plug it in and turn, and, and they're here. You see, but you don't have a receiver so, therefore, you can't understand them. You can't see them. Now, friend, the Holy Spirit of God is the receiver in the child of God that enables him to know the things of God when he's turned to station JESUS.

C. **He Is Bound to the Material World**

Now, listen, listen. The, the natural man is born into the natural world. The natural man is blind to the spiritual world. And, therefore, the natural man is bound to the material world. I want you to see something else if you will here in the word of God. Look, if you will, in this passage of Scripture. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." Now he does not know the things of the Spirit of God and, therefore, all he knows are material things. Do you remember in the book of Jude when Jude was talking about the apostates? In verse 19 Jude said something about them. He said they are "sensual, having not the Spirit." Now the word sensual that Jude used is the same word that is translated here natural. That is, a natural man lives by his senses. He is sensual. He is a spirit, he, he, he is a creature of the five senses and, therefore, he is bound to that world. Jude called them "natural brute beasts." Do you know, do you know what kind of a life a natural man has? Ron Dunn says he lives a good dog's life. Do...do you know what makes a dog happy? All right. If you'll give a dog a warm place to sleep, if you'll give a dog something good to eat, if you will give a dog affection and give a dog a sense of conquest, a cat to chase every now and then and catch, he's happy. I mean, what more could a dog want? I mean, if he, if he's got a good place to sleep, he's got something good to eat, he's got a master to pat him on the head and frolic with him, and every now and then he can chase a cat, hey, that, that, that's the top of the line for a dog. It can't get any better than that for a dog. That's a good dog's life. Did you know that the average man today, that's all, that's all he ever hopes for? He's looking for creature comforts, a nice home to live in. He's looking for creature comforts, something nice to eat. He's looking for someone to approve him and say, "Hey, you are the First Vice President for the Society of the Prevention of Cruelty to Grandmothers

with Athlete's Foot, and you have arrived." And besides that, he has conquest. He builds a business or he builds a house or he sails a boat or he climbs a mountain. All that is, folks, is just a good dog's life. That's all it takes to make a dog happy. Natural brute beasts. Sensual, having not the Spirit. What is a natural man? He is born into the natural world. He is blind to the spiritual world. He is bound to the material world. He's a natural man. The world is filled with them, amen?

II. The Spiritual Man

Second kind of man. All right, now here's the spiritual man. Let's look at him and see what he is like. And, and thank God, there is a difference. Look in verses 11 and 12: "For what man knows the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but with, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual." Now let me give you the three marks of a spiritual man.

A. He Lives by the Spirit

The very first thing is he lives by the Spirit. Look in verse 12. Verse 12 says, "For we have received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God..." Now in order to become a spiritual man, you have to receive God's Spirit. You have to receive the Spirit which is of God. When do you receive the Spirit of God? When you are born again. When you receive Christ as your personal Savior, at that moment you receive the Spirit of God. God's Holy Spirit comes into you. At that moment, the coming in of the Holy Spirit is what the Bible calls being a partaker of the divine nature. It is what the Bible calls being born again. And it is the coming of the Spirit into you that gives you life. You are born again. You are born of the Spirit. You are born again. So you live by the Spirit. You see, a Christian is somebody who has received Christ through the Spirit into his heart. The aim of Christianity is not to get men out of earth into heaven; it is to get God out of heaven into man, see. You live by the Spirit. That's the first thing a spiritual man does. He lives by the Spirit.

B. He Learns from the Spirit

Secondly, not only does he live by the Spirit, but he learns from the Spirit. Look again now in verses 13-14: "Which things we also speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit) teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, for they are what? spiritually discerned." Now the word spiritual discerned means they are spiritual understood. How

do you, how are you going to learn the things of God? The Holy Spirit of God is going to teach you. There are some things that no pastor can teach you, no educator can teach you. Only God can teach you these things. John said it over in, in the epistle of John, where he said, “You have no need that any man teach you. You have an unction from the Holy One.” Now what he means is that, “Adrian Rogers, though he is your preacher, and seemingly your teacher, all he can do is speak the truth. I am the One who imparts the truth.” And that’s the reason that someone, when the same preacher will preach, someone will be learning and others will not be learning, because the natural man doesn’t have the Holy Spirit in him to teach him, even when the preacher’s preaching. But the spiritual man has the Holy Spirit in him to say, “Hey, what he’s saying is right. Listen to him. That’s right.” And he says amen to your heart. And he’s the one, not even the preacher that’s up here tonight, who is teaching you.

C. He Is Liberated Through the Spirit

Now watch it. A spiritual man is someone who, therefore, lives by the Spirit. He learns from the Spirit. And, thirdly, he is liberated through the Spirit. Look in verse 15 now. “He that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.” Now the word judged is the same word that we’ve already read. It means discern. It’s just translated differently. “He, he that is spiritual discerns all things, yet he himself is discerned (or understood) of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.” Now a, a person who has received life from the Holy Spirit, a person who has received learning from the Holy Spirit, at that time he received liberty from the Holy Spirit because he has the mind of Christ. A spiritual man has the mind of Christ. He knows how to think God’s thoughts after Him. He sees life from God’s viewpoint. Now what Paul is talking about here is wisdom. And do you know what wisdom is? Just the mind of Christ, just being able to discern all things, to see life from God’s viewpoint. That’s what he means when he says, “He that is spiritual judges all things...” That means, he discerns all things. He sees through things. You know, Madison Avenue and the people of this world will come and massage him and work on him, and tell him this and this and this and this. He doesn’t buy it. He can see through this world’s system. He’s not conformed to this world. He’s not squeezed in by this world. He is marching to the beat of a different drummer. He has been set free from the perverted value system of this world. This word discern is a legal word. It means to examine the evidence. And of the basis of the evidence to make a correct moral judgment. That is, a person who is walking in the Spirit, you can’t fool him. You’re not going to sucker him. You’re not going to lay, lead him down some primrose path following the devil. He discerns all things. But notice what else it says. “...he himself is judged of no man.” What does that mean? It means he’s understands everything, and nobody understands him.

You can't find out what makes a real Christian tick. They'll think you're crazy. When he says, "no man," he's talking about no natural man, no unsaved man. He can't understand you. He doesn't understand why you would give as much as you've given to Victory in Jesus. Did you know that if some people were to hear what some of you people gave to Victory in Jesus. I'm looking at some of you now. I'm looking at some of you right now who've given to, to Victory in Jesus enough money to build a beautiful home paid for lavishly. And you just, you just gave it. If you were to tell that to some of your business associates, they'd say, "You are crazy to give that kind of money. Why, even, even a little widow who is on a pension, maybe she receives \$250.00 a month. And every month she gives 10% of what she receives to the work of Christ. And over and above that, someone would say, "Hey, I don't understand you. That's silly. Do you know what you could buy with that money? Do you know what you could have with that money?" They don't understand. They don't understand why you're here tonight in church, why you're sitting there fanning. They don't understand that. They say, "Man, you could be out doing something else." They just don't understand the way you're wired. They don't understand what motivates you. And they never will. Friend, you're twice born in a world of once-born people. And what you have starts at a different source, it follows a different course, it ends at a different conclusion. You're going to be going against the tide all the time. But you're not going to be bound like these folks. You're the ones who are free. You're free in the Lord Jesus. You discern all things. You judge all things. But you yourself are judged of no man. They don't understand you and they never will until they become like you. That's a spiritual man. He lives by the Spirit. He learns from the Spirit. He is liberated through the Spirit. And if the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

III. The Carnal Man

Now the third category of persons. The natural man, the spiritual man, and now the carnal man. Look in chapter 3:1-2: "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. And I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Now what are the marks of a carnal man? Well, a carnal person is a person who has been saved, but he's not spiritual.

A. He Is Deformed

The first mark of a carnal man is this: he's deformed. And I've thought about the word, and I've, I've tried to get a, a word that would, would characterize this man. Why do I say he's deformed? Well, he, he's, he's, he's not that.....the natural man is natural. The

spiritual man is supernatural. This man is unnatural. I mean, he, he's, folks, he's strange, a carnal man. You see, to say a carnal Christian really is almost a contradiction in terms. It's like saying a heavenly devil. You see, a carnal person is a person who has been saved, but he seems so much like an unsaved person that when you look at him you might think he is unsaved. He is a babe in Christ. Now we're not talking about a legitimate baby. We're not talking about a baby....let me rephrase that. We're not talking about a baby who has only been saved a short time. There is a legitimate babyhood that all of us go through when we get saved. Here he's talking about people who ought to be eating strong meat. They're still on milk. They are full grown. I think one of the saddest things, and, and many of us know people like this, precious children who have developed physically, but they have never developed mentally. I think all of us....we, we're starting, by the way, a very wonderful ministry to these kind of people in our church to mildly retarded adults, and I'm so grateful that we have.....and if you didn't hear the miracles last Wednesday night, you missed a real blessing. But, but these were people, the miracle singing, precious people who have developed physically, and some of them had tremendous voices, great musical ability, but they had not yet developed mentally. Now, dear friend, in the spiritual realm there are some people just like that. They have been saved for a long time, but they have not grown. They are defeated. They are deformed. They, they have not grown. Look. "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ." I believe that the average member of our church, and I hate to say this, but I want to be honest, folks. I believe the average member of this church is carnal. I believe that. And, frankly, that breaks my heart. I don't know that the average person here tonight is carnal. You see, the average member isn't even here, see. Maybe that the average person here tonight is carnal. I don't know. But I am convinced that the average member of our church is carnal. They are babes in Christ. They are, they, they, they are neither fish nor fowl. They're saved, but they don't act saved. They don't look saved. But not only, not only is the carnal Christian defeated.

B. He Is Dependent

The carnal Christian is so dependent. Look, if you will, in verse 2: "And I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither now are ye able." Now Paul had to become a spiritual nursemaid to them. He had to spoon feed them. He had to give them milk and Pabulum and strained beets, as it were.

That's....did you know that a carnal Christian is dependent upon human teachers?

There are three categories of Christians. I'm talking about saved people. There are those who need to be fed. There are those who feed themselves. And then there are those who feed others. A carnal Christian is one who needs to be fed himself. And Paul said over in Hebrews, if Paul indeed wrote Hebrews, chapter 5, "You have, when you

ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again the first principles.” There are some of you who’ve been members of Bellevue Baptist Church for twenty or thirty years who really could not take a Bible and lead someone to Jesus Christ. There are some of you who really don’t even know the books of the Bible. You’ve been saved for years. There are some of you who do not have a working knowledge of theology. And if a Mormon or Jehovah’s Witness were to knock on your door, they would have you tied up in knots in fifteen minutes. You’d be petrified. You are a big baby, big baby. Been a member of this church. You say, “Well, pastor, I just can’t learn.” I don’t buy that, folks. You learn what you’re interested in, what you want to know. If you got a thousand dollars for every verse you memorized, you’d turn into a memory machine. Now let me tell you something, folks. Don’t tell me you can’t. It is all a matter of motivation. It is all a matter of wanting to know. And Paul said, “I wanted to give you meat, but I couldn’t give you meat because you’re babies. I had to feed you with milk.” That’s what happens on the average service in the average church. The people come on the weekend. The pastor gives them five gallons of milk because he’s not there every day to feed them. Then burps them on the way out. And that’s it!

C. **He Is Divisive**

And, and, listen. A carnal Christian is defeated. A carnal Christian is dependent. And I’ll tell you something else about a carnal Christian. He is divisive. Look, if you will, now in verse 4, or verse 3: “For ye are yet carnal: wherein there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” One of the great marks of carnality is that they are like little children, babes. They haven’t grown up. Have you ever noticed that babies get upset about trivels? Last summer, I believe it was, I took my family on a vacation. And I wanted to have everybody present, so I, I really strained the family budged. And I rented some lovely condominium places down in Florida on the west coast of Florida, and I got my grandbabies there because I wanted them to be around me, little Renae and little Angela. And I said, “Well, boy, they’re going to enjoy this. We’re going to have a wonderful time.” And they did. But we had a problem with Renae and Angela. Do you know what it was? Oh, they got, they, they went to tears. I mean, it was awful. It was, they were at one another’s throats almost. They were, a great competition. Two little girls. Can you imagine? Let me tell you what it was that brought this great strife, this great contention. Who was going to get to push the button on the elevator? And each time we would get in the elevator there would be a, a battle royal, whether Renae would push the button or Angela would push the button. And Renae pushed the button the first time. “Now, Angela, it’s your turn. Renae, let Angela push the button this time.” You know, little babies, you kind of expect that with little babies, don’t you? Folks, when you get in a church and people get all upset on which side of the auditorium the organ goes on and the piano goes on, and people get all

upset about color the carpet is going to be, or when they get upset about little things that don't make a piddling worth of difference....piddling, is that a good word? Doesn't make any difference whatever, watch the carnal person. He will get his feelings hurt very easily. But when he does, it's never over things like the deity of Christ. It's never over things like the authority of the word of God. It is never over the great issues of life. It is some little, trifling, small thing. God pity the church where the carnal people are in charge. And there are some of you who are sitting here tonight and you have got in your heart ought against somebody else. You weren't consulted, or you didn't serve on a committee, or somebody didn't thank you, or it wasn't done the way you like, or you weren't in favor of that, or you don't think this ought to have been spent. Folks, you listen to your pastor. You forget that junk and get your heart right with God! I'll tell you a hundred million years from now when souls are lost and broiling in a devil's hell because we were not together, what difference will it make? These little things. Never, never, never let some minor, insignificant thing cause division among brethren, never!

Conclusion

You say, "Oh my goodness, pastor, what has happened?" I want to tell you what has happened, folks. Absolutely nothing that I can think of! That's the reason why I'm preaching with such liberty. I don't have anybody in mind. I'm just talking to whom it may concern. Okay. I don't know about anything. I'm not picking on anybody. I'm just saying I'm enough of a student of human nature to know what I'm talking about, okay. By and large, I thank God for what is happening in our church. But I am telling you that the mark of carnality is this: Number one: A carnal person is defeated, deformed. A carnal person is dependent. A carnal person is divisive. And so, what should we do? The message has come to a close. If you are a natural man, you need to be born again. If you are a carnal man, you need to dethrone self and enthrone Christ. If you are a spiritual person, you need to go on to maturity because, listen to me, you may be instantly spiritual, but there's no such thing as instant maturity. And even though you're a spiritual person, you need to go on in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let's pray. Father, we thank You tonight for Your word. Lord, how it speaks to our hearts. And, Lord God, I want to live by the Spirit, learn from the Spirit, be liberated through the Spirit. And, Lord, to walk with the mind of Christ. Lord, I pray tonight for those that are carnal, that they might see their carnality not as weakness, but as wickedness, that they might repent of that carnality, and that they might, dear Lord, tonight enthrone Jesus in all of His beauty. And, Lord God, I pray tonight for those that are lost, that they might come to know Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name, amen.

It's Time to Grow Up

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 14, 1997

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 2:14–15

Outline

Introduction

- I. With the Natural Man, Growth Is Impossible
 - A. The Natural Man Has No Spiritual Activation
 - B. The Natural Man Has No Spiritual Appreciation
 - C. The Natural Man Has No Spiritual Appropriation
 1. The Wisdom of This World Is Dangerous
 2. The Wisdom of This World Is Deceptive
 3. The Wisdom of This World Comes to Nothing
 4. The Wisdom of This World Is Demonic
- II. With the Carnal Man, Growth Is Impaired
 - A. There Is Retarded Development
 - B. There Is a Restricted Diet
 - C. There Are Repeated Divisions
- III. With the Spiritual Man, Growth Is Empowered
 - A. He Lives by the Spirit
 - B. He Learned from the Spirit
 1. You Won't Learn Everything About God
 2. The Holy Spirit Isn't Going to Zap You with Knowledge
 3. You Won't Have Knowledge in Every Area
 4. You Can Pick Up the Bible and Let the Spirit Teach You
 - C. He Is Liberated by the Spirit

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you be finding 1 Corinthians chapter 2? If you didn't bring a Bible, I think there's one in the rack there in front of you—1 Corinthians chapter 2. And, I want to talk to you a little bit about growing up, learning to be mature. We have so many people in our churches today who are immature. They're saved; they're on the road to Heaven, but frankly, folks, they have not grown up. Somebody has wisely said, "You can be young only once, but you can be mature for a long, long time." That's true—that's true spiritually, as well as physically. There are some who have been saved for years, and yet they are grey-headed babies. They have never yet grown up. Well, I want us to find out today what it takes to grow, and I want to help you to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now look, if you will, in chapter 2, verse 14—there’s one phrase in verse 14 I want you to mark: *“But the natural man”*—just underscore that phrase—*“natural man”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). And then, go down to verse 15: *“he that is spiritual”* (1 Corinthians 2:15). Underscore that phrase. And then, go to chapter 3 and verse 1: *“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal”*—underscore that phrase—*“carnal”* (1 Corinthians 3:1). And, there you have the three categories of persons, and everybody in this building is in one of those three categories.

Now, we divide men horizontally—you know, upper class, middle class, lower class. We divide them politically—left and right. We divide them economically—rich or poor. We divide them intellectually—literate and illiterate. But, these are the categories that God puts us in. We’re either spiritual, or we are carnal, or we are natural. You’re in one of those categories. And, I want to help you to find out where you are and help you to get to where you need to be.

Now, it’s very important, first of all, that you find out where you are. *Have you ever had anybody call you at night and say, “Well, we’re in town. We want to come by and see you. How do we get to your house?” What’s the first question you ask them? “Where are you now?”—“Where are you now?” because, if you don’t know where they are, you can’t tell them to get to where they need to be. Or, if you’re in the mall and you’re trying to find a particular store, you go and they’ll have a map of the mall; and they’ll have all the stores on there. But, that doesn’t do you much good, except for that little dot. Remember that little red dot? It says, “You are here.” Now, if you say, “If I’m here, then I need to go from here to there to get to, from here to there.” But, if you don’t know where you are now, you don’t know where you need to go. Isn’t that right? So, what we want to do is to help you to find out where you are to help you to get to where you need to be.*

The first question in the Bible that God asked Adam was, “Adam, where are you?” (Genesis 3:9). And, that’s what I want to ask you today: Are you a natural man? Are you a carnal man? Are you a spiritual man? Are you a natural woman? Are you a carnal woman? Are you a spiritual woman? Of course, what we want you to be is spiritual. So, we’re going to look at all of these three as they relate to growth and to help you to grow up, because, again, folks, most of the problem in churches today is caused, in my estimation, most are caused by immaturity. And so, let’s look at these.

I. With the Natural Man, Growth Is Impossible

Now, with the natural man—with the natural man—growth is impossible. Say that—impossible. All right. Now listen—if you’re a natural man, you cannot grow spiritually. Why?

A. The Natural Man Has No Spiritual Activation

Because the natural man has no spiritual activation. It is the Spirit that activates growth. Without the Spirit of God in your heart, you are spiritually dead. And, dead things just don't grow.

Years ago at Bellevue, we had a thing for our children to teach spiritual growth. Really, I wanted to teach the adults. I found a long time ago, if you'll talk to children, adults just might learn. And so, what we did is to get some beautiful little plants from the nursery, and we gave them to various Sunday School classes and various Sunday School departments. And, we said, "You're to nurture these plants. Take care of them." And, to some departments, we said, "Take this plant and give it all this week sunlight, water, and plant food, and fertilizer." Then, we gave another department a plant and said, "Give this one fertilizer and water but no sunlight." Then, another class—"Give this one sunlight and water but no fertilizer," and so forth. There were a number of different variations, but one had everything, some had one thing, some had two, and so forth. And so, infinite variations of different kinds of taking care of these plants. And then, week by week during that campaign, the children would bring their plants to the platform. It was amazing to see the plant, for example, that was getting sunlight, water, and fertilizer. Boy, it's just growing! The ones that were getting fertilizer and water but no sunlight—they were growing, but they were kind of a little yellow, and so forth. It was just interesting to see all of these various plants. But now, here's what we did also: we took a stick—a dead stick—put it in a pot, and gave it to one class, and said, "Give this one water, sunlight, and fertilizer." You know, they kept each week. They'd give it water, sunlight, and fertilizer, but do you know what? It never grew—it never grew one inch. Why? Obvious! It's dead, and dead things don't grow. And, without the Lord Jesus Christ, the natural man is dead and he cannot grow.

You cannot expect the natural man to grow. He has no spiritual activation. The Bible describes him in the Book of Jude as sensual—the word *sensual* means "of the flesh": "*sensual, having not the Spirit*" (Jude 1:19). And, Paul said in Romans chapter 8: "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*" (Romans 8:9). And so, a natural man has no spiritual activation. He does not have the life of God. A spiritual man is a man who has God in him to activate and to help him to grow spiritually.

B. The Natural Man Has No Spiritual Appreciation

But, not only does he have no spiritual activation—as a result, he has no spiritual appreciation. He doesn't appreciate spiritual things. Look in verse 14: "*But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Now, the word *receiveth* there is a Greek word, which means, "to welcome, to appreciate." The natural man does not appreciate the things of God. He just doesn't do it. You might as well

expect your dog to appreciate opera. He just doesn't do it. He does... Now, it doesn't mean that he cannot appreciate a lot of things. You may be here today, unsaved, and appreciate things. You might appreciate the song that Cal sang, whether you're saved or lost. That's good music. You could appreciate what the choir did today, when they sang. That's if you like choral music. Did you know unsaved people have gospel in the bar rooms—did you know that?—because they just like gospel music? But, they don't appreciate; it they don't know the message. They don't know how to really understand it.

Look, if you will, in chapter 1, verse 18: *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness”* (1 Corinthians 1:18). Now, the song that Cal sang about the grace of God was an incredible blessing to my heart. To other people, it was just music sung by a man who has a good voice, because to the natural man, those who are perishing—to them the preaching of the cross, the singing of God's grace—it's all foolishness. Now, you can come in here and you can appreciate the architecture. You can appreciate the music. You can appreciate the crowd. Or, you may say, “Well, the preacher is... That was a good talk,” or whatever, and you say, “I got something out of that.” But, you will not really welcome the things of God. What turns other people on—what excites other people—it just does not excite you, because, you see, you have no spiritual activation—you have no spiritual appreciation (verse 14): you receive not—you welcome not—the things of God (1 Corinthians 2:14).

C. The Natural Man Has No Spiritual Appropriation

And then, you have no spiritual appropriation. Now, here's something a lot of you don't understand. And, the Bible says in verse 14: *“[and] neither can he know them, [for] they are spiritually discerned”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). There are certain things, folks, you will never know until you get saved. You say, “Well, I just don't get it.” That's right. You just don't get it. Now, you may know all about God. **But friend, you can know all about bread and starve to death.** You do not know—you do not get—what we're talking about. You miss it. The natural man welcomes not—he receives not—*“the things of the Spirit of God...[and] neither can he know them”* (1 Corinthians 2:14). The reason that you can't know them is that you don't have the spiritual apparatus to know them. You see, these are the things that we learn, as we're going to see, from the Holy Spirit of God, who is the teacher, who teaches us on the inside.

I think today, in this generation, we have a lot of illustrations that people in Bible times did not have. For example, in this room right now, there are cowboys and Indians, there is news, sports, weather, music. It's all in the room, right now. You say, “Well, why don't I see it or hear it?” Because you don't have a television tuner with you right now to tune it in, but it's here. And today, we'd be foolish to say it's not in this room. It's here.

But, in order to receive it, you have to have a receiver. You have to have the apparatus to receive it. And, the truth of the matter is, you could even have a receiver; but if it's not plugged in or if it's broken, you still can't get it—right?—even though you have the receiver? That's the human spirit dead without God. The tuner is broken. The receiver is broken. Do you know why God's people understand things that other people don't understand? Friend, their antenna is up, their power is on, and they're tuned in to Station WORD. They are getting things that other people are not getting.

And so, don't scold an unsaved man when he says, "I don't see it." He's not lying. He doesn't see it. Jesus told Nicodemus, who was a brilliant man, a religious man, a cultured man, "*Except a man be born again*"—what?—"he cannot see"—"he cannot see"—"the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). He's not lying. You might as well scold a blind man for not seeing a sunset, as for not seeing. You see, the apparatus is just not working. "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God...neither can he know them, [for] they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Corinthians 2:14). So, that's the natural man. He has no spiritual activation. He has no spiritual appreciation. He has no spiritual appropriation.

Now, that doesn't mean he's dumb; it doesn't mean he's stupid. He may be very wise in this world. Look, for example, in the first five verses of this chapter, and you're going to see something about this wisdom of this world. And, a lot of people have this kind of wisdom.

1. The Wisdom of This World Is Dangerous

Paul says, "*And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God*"—now, what did he mean by that? He meant that, "When I came preaching, I did not come depending upon oratory and philosophy"—"*For I determined not to know any thing among you, [except]*"—or, "save"—"*Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling*" (1 Corinthians 2:1–3). Does that mean he was afraid of them? No, he was afraid of human wisdom, you're going to see. You see, Paul may have had a tendency to rely upon his learning, upon his scholarship. He had the equivalency of a triple Ph.D. He was a brilliant man, a world traveler. He had the best education that money could afford. He studied at the feet of Gamaliel. And so, Paul always had to keep away from depending upon that.

He said, "*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God*" (1 Corinthians 2:4–5). Paul said, "I don't want to just mesmerize you. I don't want to just logically talk you into something. I don't want you to intellectually comprehend something. But then, you don't truly know God." We have churches today that are filled with people who have believed propositions and

who have joined organizations, who have never had a vital relationship with Jesus Christ. Is that not true? And, they think they know it all. You see, it is dangerous.

2. The Wisdom of This World Is Deceptive

And, I'll tell you what else it is: it's deceptive. Notice in verse 6: *"Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect"* (1 Corinthians 2:6). Now, look at the word *perfect*. That word *perfect* doesn't mean "sinless"; it means, "mature." Perfection—it has come to perfection, maturity. *You look at a rose, and you say, "That's a perfect rose." You don't mean, "That's a sinless rose." You mean, "It has fulfilled its purpose."* The Bible says, "Jesus, the captain of our salvation, was made perfect through suffering" (Hebrews 2:10). Do you think He'd been imperfect before? Do you think He'd been sinful? No. It just means that He had come to the maturity of His purpose. And so, what he's saying is, "We speak wisdom among you that are perfect, mature" (1 Corinthians 2:6).

3. The Wisdom of This World Comes to Nothing

"Yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to naught" (1 Corinthians 2:6). Now, what is he talking about—*"the princes of this world"* (1 Corinthians 2:6)? He's talking about the shakers, the movers, the intellectuals, the high muckety-mucks, these people who think that they know everything. These are the people today that...the thinkers, the scientists, the educators. Well, he says, "It all comes to naught." Folks, it all comes to nothing—it comes to nothing.

Question: If we're so smart, why are we in the mess we're in? Do you think we're making progress? I mean, the technology of our day was the science-fiction of yesterday. I get in my car, and it's all computerized. The dashboard talks to me: "You've got to shut the door, stupid." It's bad enough having a wife tell you how to drive; now you've got a dashboard that tells you how to drive. You drive up to your house—the garage door opens. You go in the house and heat your tea in a microwave, sit down with a remote, and suck news out of the air. I mean, you see things happening overseas instantaneously. It's an incredible age in which we're living, but we are sinking lower, and lower, and lower, and lower. I'm talking about the quality of life; I'm not talking about creature possessions. I'm not talking about pleasures and fun; I'm talking about the things that really count. Are we making progress? No! Friend, you look at the political scene—these people who are trying to lead us. We went from a New Deal to a Fair Deal to a Great Society, to Camelot, to Camp David, to Reaganomics, to Détente, to Glasnos, Points of Light, and God help us, a New Covenant. And, he says, "It all comes to naught" (1 Corinthians 2:6).

4. The Wisdom of This World Is Demonic

But now, look in verse 7, if you will: and he says, *"But we speak the wisdom of God in a*

mystery, even the hidden wisdom—now, what does he mean—a mystery? That doesn't mean like a murder mystery, something you could figure out if you were Sherlock Holmes. It is a sacred secret that you can only understand by the Holy Spirit—*“which God ordained before the world unto our glory”*—now, here, human wisdom is dangerous, it is deceptive, and it is demonic. Look in verse 8. Here's the classic proof—*“Which none of the princes of this world knew”*—talking about the hidden wisdom—*“for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory”* (1 Corinthians 2:7–8). Now, he doesn't say that the ignoramus crucified the Lord of Glory. He said, *“the princes of this world”* (1 Corinthians 2:8). He's talking about the shakers, the movers, the thinkers, the intellectuals. They were the ones that were behind the crucifixion of Jesus.

Do you know who crucified Jesus? The best minds of that day crucified Jesus. I'm talking about the Roman leadership. You don't get to be a Roman general or a Roman governor—you don't get to be a leader in Rome—by falling off a load of turnips. You don't get in the Sanhedrin of the Jewish council by being an ignoramus. These were the intellectual top-waters; these were the princes of this world. And, they didn't do it casually. The Bible says, *“[They] took counsel”* (Matthew 27:1)—not a few of them, but many of them. And, they nailed up the Son of God upon a cross. That's the wisdom of this world. That's the natural man. Friend, it's absolutely demonic. “The wisdom that descends from beneath is sensual, devilish” (James 3:15). That's what the Bible says.

So, the natural man—the natural man—listen, the natural man—he's a natural-born sinner. The Bible says in Ephesians 2, verse 3: *“[We are] by nature the children of wrath”* (Ephesians 2:3). He has no spiritual activation. He has no spiritual appreciation. He has no spiritual appropriation. He cannot know the things of God. He'll hear the words; he'll never hear the music until he gets saved. All right. That's the natural man. Now, if you're a natural man here, natural woman here today, you need to get saved. Now, here's the point—“Get the point. Get the point”—with the natural man, growth is impossible. That's the point.

II. With the Carnal Man, Growth Is Impaired

Now, here's the second point: with the carnal man, growth is impaired. Look at the carnal man. Begin in chapter 3, verse 1: *“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal”*—the word *carnal* means, “fleshly.” You know what *chili con carne* is? It's chili with meat. Do you know what carnivorous is? It's a flesh-eating animal. He says, “You're just fleshy, fleshy”—*“I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:1). Now, here's another category of people. He calls them *brothers*. He calls them *in Christ*. But, they are babes in Christ. Well, there's nothing wrong with being a baby for a while—for

a while. Let me give you three marks of a carnal Christian.

A. There Is Retarded Development

Number one: There is retarded development—retarded development. These have been babies too long. Now, it's wonderful to have a little baby. Babies are cute, and babies are beautiful, and there's a legitimate babyhood, a legitimate childhood. That's wonderful. But oh, the tragedy of grey-headed babies! Sometimes parents have children who don't develop physically, and that's a grief to the parents' heart. Sometimes parents have children who don't develop mentally. And, some of the sweetest little children are children who don't develop mentally, but they're precious children and precious to the parents; but that's a grief to the parent's heart. What a grief it must be to God's heart, when His children have retarded development, when they could do something about it if they would. Retarded development—they just don't grow. Babies are wonderful. I remember when my first son said, "Da-da." Boy, that's something to have a little tyke call you, "Da-da." I just talked to him this week on the phone. If that big, old boy were to call me, "Da-da" today, I'd swat him. I mean, there's a legitimate—a legitimate—childhood.

But, you don't want a person just to stay in that place. And, we have, in churches today, people who have never grown. They are just—they're just—retarded in their development. And, we say, "Well, I'm just a carnal Christian," like that's one of the choices. No, to be a carnal Christian is an abomination. It would be like talking about a heavenly devil. It's a contradiction in terms. You see, you need to learn the difference between a normal Christian and an average Christian. The average Christian is not a normal Christian. Don't get the idea that a Spirit-filled Christian is a supernormal Christian; he is a normal Christian. The spiritual man is normal; the carnal man is abnormal. You see, there's the natural man; he's natural. There's the spiritual man; he's supernatural. There's the carnal man; he's unnatural. He's neither fish nor fowl. There's something wrong. He has retarded development. It's a grief to the Heavenly Father.

B. There Is a Restricted Diet

But, not only does he have a retarded development; he has a restricted diet. Look, if you will, in verse 2: and he says, "*I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able*" (1 Corinthians 3:2). The carnal person—you have to spoon-feed him. Did you know that about all that the carnal Christian gets is that if he comes on Sunday morning, hears the pastor preach, he thinks he's done God a wild favor? Do you know what a sermon is? A sermon is just milk; it's just pre-digested food. Folks, do you know why in our churches about all we can give is strained beets, and pabulum, and a little milk? You say, "Open the garage, ta-da-da-da, so we can put it in there and then burp them on the way out of church,

because they're babies." They have a restricted diet. They do not understand the deep things of God. Paul said, "I had to give you milk—not meat. You were not able to bear it. You have not grown enough. Your digestive tract is not developed enough." If he gave you a steak, you couldn't chew it. If you could chew it, you couldn't swallow it. If you could swallow it, you couldn't digest it. So, there you are, on pabulum, strained beets, and milk.

C. There Are Repeated Divisions

Retarded development, restricted diet, and then, repeated divisions. Look, if you will, in verse 3: *"For are ye yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?"* (1 Corinthians 3:3). O God, deliver us from the pettiness that comes when little children get in squabbles and fights! Have you ever noticed the things that upset little children? Have you ever noticed how easily little children will get in fights and divisions? It's because... And sometimes, they're big children who do the same thing. Pettiness, squabbles, divisions—that's a mark of carnality.

Now, I'm against the liquor industry with all of my heart and soul, but I've had far more problems in churches with carnal Christians than I have with drunks. Carnal people... A child will get upset over the smallest things and always find something to get upset about. In 1962, Joyce and I took a trip to San Francisco. Now, we were a very young family, and we had a very limited budget; but we wanted to go. And, the Southern Baptist Convention was in San Francisco, so we had the idea that we could take a little vacation if we would rent a travel trailer. And, we rented a travel trailer, and put it behind our car, and pulled it from South Florida to San Francisco. Now friend, I want to tell you—number one, it takes ten billion years to cross Texas. We went, and we went, and we went. And, we cooked on the road, and scrimped, and saved, and everything, so we could get out there and enjoy to see that part of the world. We'd never—we'd never—been west of the Mississippi. So, we went out there. And finally, we arrived in San Francisco. And, our first-born son was with us, who was just a little guy back in 1962.

And so, when we got out there, we said, "Well, we're going to do some sightseeing." And, one of the things we wanted to see, beside the Golden Gate Bridge, and Knob Hill, and so forth—we wanted to see Fisherman's Wharf. So, we went to Fisherman's Wharf. And, there is was—the pictures that we'd seen in the books and the things we'd read about. And then, we wanted to eat at Fisherman's Wharf, because they had some restaurants there. Now folks, we had been eating things like beanie-weenies and things like that. Now, we wanted to eat at Fisherman's Wharf. And so, we looked up there and gulped a couple of times—said, "Well, we'll only be here one time. Let's do it." We walked into a restaurant, sat down, opened the menu; and friend, I tried to read it from

right to left. And, it was pricey. And, we said, “Well, we’re here. Let’s do it.” And so, we sat down and ordered. And, there were the boats out there, and there was the wharf and everything. We said, “Boy, this is it. This is the apex. We’ve finally gotten here. This is it. This is where we’ve been traveling all this time.”

And so, we all ordered—let the children order from the big menu. And then, I heard a sniffing, a crying. I looked over at my son, and his chin was quivering; and great big tears were coming down his cheeks, and his food was sitting right there in front of him. I said, “Son, what’s wrong?” He said, “Beet juice.” I said, “What?” He said, “Beet juice. They have gotten beet juice on my potatoes.” And, some of the beet juice from the beets had run over on his potatoes, and his day was ruined. And frankly, he ruined ours. I wanted to say, “To the moon! Here I’ve ordered that meal for you, and there’s some beet juice on your potato?”

Folks, I’ve seen the same thing in churches—same thing in churches. I have seen big babies come in church. You can have a service like we had last Sunday night—none ever been greater. But, I’ll guarantee you there’s some baby somewhere who’ll find some beet juice somehow—I mean, something he doesn’t like, some way that somebody said something, did something, whatever. Look folks, that’s the sign of being a baby—a baby! A big old baby—you’re carnal; you haven’t grown up. Retarded development. Restricted diet. Repeated divisions.

III. With the Spiritual Man, Growth Is Empowered

Now, with the natural man, growth is what? Impossible. With the carnal man, growth is impaired. Now, with the spiritual man, growth is empowered. Now, I want us to see, now, what the spiritual man is. Look at it, if you will, here—chapter 2, if you will now—and we’re going to find out some things about the spiritual man.

A. He Lives by the Spirit

First of all, he lives by the Spirit. Look, if you will, in verse 11: “*For what man knoweth the things of a man, save*”—or, “*except*”—“*the spirit of man which is in him?*”—only Adrian knows Adrian—“*what man knows the things of a man, [except] the spirit of man [that’s] in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God*”—only God knows God. And, the only way the finite can understand the infinite would be for the infinite to disclose Himself to the finite—“*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God*” (1 Corinthians 2:11–12). A spiritual man has received the Spirit. You receive the Spirit at the new birth.

Now, when you receive the Spirit, you have spiritual life. You see, Jesus said to people whose hearts were already beating, “I’ve come that you might have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Christians are not just smarter people, just not nicer

people; they are new creatures. They have been born from above. They're not like a tadpole who finally becomes a frog; they're like a frog that's turned into a prince by the kiss of grace. It's a miracle. There's a transformation. He becomes a brand new creature—not just a developed *what he used to be*. And so, he lives from the Spirit. He says, "We have received the Spirit."

B. He Learned from the Spirit

Now watch—he lives by the Spirit, and, therefore, he learned from the Spirit. Look again in verse 11: "For what"—verse 12—"*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God*"—now, watch this—"*that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God*" (1 Corinthians 2:12). The only way that you can know these things is for God to give it to you. Jesus said in John chapter 3 and verse 27—listen to this: "*A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven*" (John 3:27). That's the reason I get on my knees and pray before I preach. I can preach truth; only He can impart truth.

Remember when Jesus asked Simon Peter, "*Whom do men say that I...am?*" (Matthew 16:13). And Simon, you know, they said, "Well, some say You're Elias, and others say You're John the Baptist. Some say You're one of the prophets" (Matthew 16:14). And, Jesus said, "Whom say you that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). And, Simon Peter said, "You're the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). Remember what Jesus told him? Jesus said, "*Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto [you], but my Father which is in heaven*" (Matthew 16:17). "You get an A+ on the examination, but don't get puffed up. You didn't figure it out; it was given you—it was given you. You did not discover this by your own intellect, your own intuition."

You see, a man can receive nothing, except it be given him of God. That's the reason when you come to the Bible, you have to lay your intellectual pride in the dust. It is a miracle. Just as you know your own mind, the Spirit knows the mind of God. So, you can have an inspired Bible in your hand and not understand it apart from spiritual illumination. That's the reason you need to pray as in Psalm 119, verse 18: "*Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law*" (Psalm 119:18). Then, a part of you will see that never saw before, and a part of you will know that never, that never, that never knew before.

1. You Won't Learn Everything About God

Now, let me just say parenthetically here about learning from the Spirit—that doesn't mean that you'll know everything about God. Deuteronomy 29:29 says, "*The secret things belong unto the LORD our God.*" Other things that He reveals belong to His prophets. You'll never know all about God. You couldn't. *I wouldn't have any*

confidence in a God that you or I could understand. Now, you can know some things about God. You can go down to the Atlantic Ocean with a bucket and dip out a bucketful of water. And, everything in that bucket will be ocean, but all the ocean won't be in that bucket, right? Now folks, you just have a bucketful. That's all you've got. There's an ocean out there. And so, therefore, you can learn, and learn, and learn, and learn, and learn, and learn. You'll never go beyond Jesus, but you can always go deeper into Jesus.

2. The Holy Spirit Isn't Going to Zap You with Knowledge

Now, also, it doesn't mean that, when you learn from the Spirit, that He's going to zap you with knowledge. The Bible says Paul told Timothy, "*Study to shew [yourself] approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing*"—that means, "cutting it straight"—"*rightly dividing the word of truth*" (2 Timothy 2:15). Now, if you want the Holy Spirit to teach you, He's going to teach you through the Bible. But, the Bible says we're to love the Lord our God with all of our mind, right? (Matthew 22:37). We have the mind of Christ. What did God give you the mind of Christ for? To think with.

3. You Won't Have Knowledge in Every Area

I'll tell you something else it doesn't mean: it doesn't mean that you're going to have knowledge in every area just because you learn from the Spirit. You're still going to have to study for a math test.

4. You Can Pick Up the Bible and Let the Spirit Teach You

What it does mean, however, is that the average Christian who doesn't know Greek, who doesn't know Hebrew, but who knows God, can pick up this book and let the Holy Spirit of God teach him. And, you don't have to be a high muckety-muck. Look, if you will, over in chapter 1, verse 26: "*For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of this world*" (1 Corinthians 1:26–27). He just takes ordinary people. And, when they are, they learn from the Spirit.

C. He Is Liberated by the Spirit

Now look, what am I saying? The spiritual man—he lives by the Spirit. He's born again. He's become a partaker of the divine nature. God the Holy Spirit comes into him, and the Holy Spirit and the human spirit begins to illumine his mind. And, therefore, he learns from the Spirit; and, therefore, he is liberated by the Spirit. That's the third and final thing.

Look, if you will, in verse 15: "*But he that is spiritual judgeth all things*"—now, the word *judge* there is the same word translated "discern" in this passage and other places, and what it means is that a spiritual man is able to discern; he's able to make a

proper evaluation. The word here is a legal word. It means, “to study, and to look into, and to evaluate, and to choose.” And, a spiritual person can do that. A spiritual person discerns all things. But notice—“*yet he himself is judged of no man*” (1 Corinthians 2:15). Look at it again there in verse 15: “*he himself is [discerned] of no man*” (1 Corinthians 2:15). What does that mean? It means that we understand them; they don’t understand us. We see right through them, but they don’t understand us. They think we’re crazy; they really do—they think we’re crazy. They will call us fools, nuts, freaks, fanatics. *Well, we are nuts, but we’re fastened to a good bolt.* They will call us everything. They don’t understand us. Folks, it would blow their mind to know what some of you just give to the work of Jesus. They’d say, “Good night! You just take that down there and waste it?” You say, “I’m not wasting it. Number one, I enjoy spending it on Jesus; and number two, I’m investing it. The only thing I take to Heaven is what I’ve given away.” But, they don’t understand that.

You know, the Bible says they think it’s strange that we don’t run with them to all kinds of riot (1 Peter 4:4). They just don’t understand. And, they don’t understand how we enjoy what we enjoy. They think this is boring. They don’t understand the music. And, what about these poor people? What about the natural man, if he ever were to get to Heaven? Poor, pitiful thing—he doesn’t even know what to do on a rainy afternoon. What would he do in all eternity when they’re praising the Lord Jesus? He has no appreciation for spiritual things. You see, we see through them; they do not see through us. “He is that is spiritual judges all things, but he himself is judged of no man” (1 Corinthians 2:15).

Well, you say, “Pastor, what does that mean—that you’re liberated by the Spirit?” It means, folks, that this world is not able to squeeze you into its mold. You are marching to the beat of a different drummer. You see things that other people don’t see. You know things that other people don’t know. You love things that other people don’t love. And, you have an insight that sets you free in the Lord Jesus Christ, because you are a spiritual person.

Conclusion

Now, with the natural man, growth is impossible. With the carnal man, growth is impaired. With the spiritual man, growth is empowered, because it is the Holy Spirit of God that empowers that growth and helps you to grow.

So, if you’re a natural man, what do you need to do? You need to get born again. You need to be saved, because the natural man is a child of wrath. He’s going to die; he’s going to go to Hell. He can never know the things of God. He can never enjoy spiritual things. If you’re a carnal man, what do you need to do? Repent of your carnality, yield to the Holy Spirit, enthrone the Lord Jesus Christ, and let the Holy Spirit

have His way to bring you to maturity.

If you are a spiritual man, what do you do? Say, “Well, I’ve got it made.” Of course not—of course not! The most spiritual person in this building today has room to grow. And, the Apostle Paul, who’s the most spiritual Christian that ever lived, at the end of his ministry said, “O, that I may know Him!” He died climbing, wanting to know more and more about the Lord Jesus. That’s the reason why I told you that if you don’t love Jesus more than you did yesterday, you’re backslidden. You’ve got to keep on growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—grow, and grow, and grow. There’s more and more that you can learn about the Lord Jesus. And then, you get mature, and you’re able to serve. And, Paul said, “I had to feed you with milk and not with meat” (1 Corinthians 3:2). You see, there are some people who have to be fed. There are some people who finally can feed themselves. But, thank God, there are others who begin to feed others.

I’m looking at a congregation of people. God wants you to be servants—not to be served, but to be servants to be able to break the bread of life, to share the Lord Jesus Christ. Aren’t you tired of being a big old baby? Why don’t you say, “By the grace of God, today, I’m going to grow up. I’m going to be spiritual. I’m going to live by the Spirit, learn from the Spirit, and be liberated through the Spirit of God”?

The Judgment Seat of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 12, 2003

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:8–16

Outline

Introduction

- A. God Judges Us as Sinners
 - B. God Judges Us as Sons and Daughters
 - C. God Judges Us as Servants
 - I. A Time of Revelation
 - A. Judged According to Attitude
 - B. Judged According to Authority
 - C. Judged According to Ability
 - II. A Time of Reward
 - III. A Time of Regret
- Conclusion

Introduction

That's just wonderful. You're loved, and I'm proud of you. And, I know that these folks out here appreciate what you've done—and those who listen to you sing tonight through radio. Take your Bibles and turn, please, if you would, to 1 Corinthians chapter 3. And, when you've found it, look up here and let me tell you that everyone in this audience tonight is going to come into judgment. Not one mother's child is excepted. You are going to come to judgment.

Now, there are three judgments that all of us must face: God judges us—listen very carefully—God judges us as sinners; then, God judges us as sons and daughters; and then, God judges us as servants. Now, we've been talking and thinking about ministry, and serving God, and being shaped for serving God.

A. God Judges Us as Sinners

How does God judge us as sinners? Well, if we're sinners, we stand before the Great White Throne to be judged according to our works. And, *"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 [surely] die"* (Ezekiel 18:20). And, sinners that stand there before the Great White Throne at the end of time are judged and cast into Hell. You say, "Pastor Rogers, are you telling me that I'm going to be judged and cast into Hell?" Not if you're saved, because if you're saved, for you that judgment is already passed. When did that judgment take place? When Christ died in your place—Christ

died in your place. And, because that Jesus suffered, bled, and died on the cross, He took your judgment for you; and, therefore, the Bible says in Romans chapter 8, verse 1: *“There is therefore now no condemnation to [those who] are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1)—no judgment for you because you settled out of court. You have a Savior who has paid for your sin. But, all sin will be pardoned in Christ or punished in Hell. No sin will go un-judged. Now, there’s the judgment as sinners. If you’re saved, that judgment is behind you.

B. God Judges Us as Sons and Daughters

Then, there is the judgment as sons. If you’re a son of God, a daughter of God, and you’re saved and secure, but yet you willfully, deliberately sin, God has to chastise you. Now, it’s not a judgment to see whether you’re saved or lost. That’s settled. You can never, ever again be a lost soul, but *“whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he [receives]”* (Hebrews 12:6). And so, if God deals with you as a son, if you disobey Him—you live in sin, openly, willingly, deliberately—do you know what God will do to you? He’ll carry you to the woodshed; that’s what He’ll do—not because He doesn’t love you, but because He does love you. God judges us as sinners; that’s at Calvary. God judges us as sons; that’s chastisement.

C. God Judges Us as Servants

And then, one day, God is going to judge us as servants. One day, the way we have served the Lord is going to be brought into review. Now, that’s what I’m going to talk with you about tonight: that judgment as servants is called the Judgment Seat of Christ. You know, there are many Christians who think, “Well, I’m saved. Judgment is behind me.” Oh, no. Listen, church—one of these days, you—you, yes, madam, you; yes, sir, you—are going to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, and the way you have served is going to come into review. And, don’t think that it will not make any difference. It will.

Now, let me read to you some scripture. Let’s look in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Let’s begin reading at verse 11: *“For”—the apostle says—“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones”—that’s three kinds of building materials—“wood, hay, [and] stubble”—three other kinds—“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try”—that means “test”—“every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”* (1 Corinthians 3:11–16).

Now, let’s think about what the Apostle Paul is talking about right now. He’s using a wonderful illustration. He is saying that the Church is a temple—not a temple made with

stones, not an earthly building. It is a spiritual temple. And, we are a temple of God—not a temple of flesh and blood...excuse me, not a temple of stone, but a temple of flesh and blood. Bellevue Baptist Church is a temple, and your body is a temple. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, God has a people for His temple. God lives in us by His Holy Spirit.

Now, this spiritual temple has a foundation. Look in verse 11: *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11). The foundation of this spiritual temple is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our lives are to be built upon that foundation. We are living stones in that temple. Look in verse 12: *“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, [and] stubble”* (1 Corinthians 3:12). Now, right there, the Apostle Paul says there are folks who get saved; they come to Jesus Christ. He is the foundation. And then, they begin to build their lives. Some build out of gold, and silver, and precious stones. That must be a beautiful temple—a spiritual temple. Others build what? Wood, hay, and stubble. It kind of sounds like the three little pigs, doesn't it? They build of wood, hay, and stubble.

Now, what's the difference between gold, and silver, and precious stones? Well, you have to dig for gold, silver, and precious stones. Wood, hay, and stubble—it just grows on the ground. Gold, silver, and precious stones have been through the fire. That's what makes them gold, silver, and precious stones. They don't burn. Wood, hay, and stubble are highly combustible and not all that expensive. Now, that's the two kinds of builders we have. This auditorium has those kinds of builders.

Now, I don't know, but God knows—some of you out there are gold, silver, and precious stone builders. Some of you are wood, hay, and stubble builders. I don't know; you don't know, but there's coming a day when it's going to be revealed because God is going to give a test. He's going to give a torch test. There's going to be a day when it's going to be revealed. Look, if you will, in verse 13 of this chapter—look at it: *“Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). Now, you can fool your pastor. You can fool your wife. But, you'll not fool God. One of these days, it's going to be made manifest, precious, sweet, dear brother, sister in Christ, whether your life is wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, and silver, and precious stones. What he's talking about now is the difference between spiritual people and carnal people.

Most of the people in the average church are carnal, fleshly. Most of the people are wood, hay, and stubble Christians. They are not gold, and silver, and precious stones Christians. The Judgment Day of Christ is going to come. Christ is the foundation. God is the building inspector, and He's going to put my life and your life to the test, one day. And, by the way, don't think it's way out yonder. It may be just a heartbeat away. We're all much closer to eternity than we realize, and we don't like to think about it. But, if I last

for 20 more years and come back and preach in 20 more years, a great number of people in this auditorium will already be in Heaven—a great number. If we were... We could not assemble this group next year, even if you were all willing to come, because some will already be gone. By next month, some in this building may already have been gone. Now, you say, “That’s right, preacher. Tell ’em.” No, I’m telling you. There is but a step between me and death. You say, “Well, I’m in good health.” Yeah, but you may get hit by a truck. You don’t know how soon it’s going to be before you’re going to report in. And, we’re going to stand, ultimately—all of us—at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is very, very important, therefore, that we learn the lesson—what is going to happen when we are judged as servants.

I. A Time of Revelation

Now, let me mention some things about the Judgment Seat of Christ. First of all, the Judgment Seat of Christ will be a time of revelation—revelation. Look in verse 13 again: *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be”*—here’s the operative word—*“revealed by fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). Now, God is going to show what kind of a life we have lived, and we’re going to see it in that day from God’s point of view.

Now, a lot of things that people think are important today God is not impressed with. I remember when Samuel was going looking for a son, a king, the next king of Israel, and he called out the sons of Jesse; and they all stood up in front of Samuel. And, there was one man—he just looked like a king. He was head and shoulders above the others. He was handsome as he could be. He just had a kingly look about him. And, God said to Samuel, “Don’t look at him. Look not upon his height or his countenance, for I have refused him” (1 Samuel 16:7). And then, God says, “I don’t see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Aren’t you glad that God looks on the heart rather than the outward appearance? Some of us wouldn’t do too well if all God measured us by was how handsome or how beautiful or how stately we are. You see, what men applaud and what men look up to doesn’t impress God. Beauty, and brains, and bucks, and brawn—that doesn’t impress God. Now, it impresses one another. You may become a movie star. You may become a beauty queen. But, God says, “I’m not impressed with that.”

You see, again, in Luke chapter 16, verse 15—put this down, and these are the words of Jesus: He said, *“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination...[to the Lord]”* (Luke 16:15). You see, God looks into the heart. And, one of these days, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, our hearts are going to be made manifest. Now, the Bible says—look at it again, if you will—in verse 13: *“the fire shall*

try”—or, “test”—“*every man’s work of what sort it is*” (1 Corinthians 3:13). Now, notice he doesn’t say what size it is, but what sort it is. What he is saying is that quality is more important than quantity. Now, we, as Americans, put a great deal of emphasis upon size, but be reasonable. I want to ask you a question: Which would you rather have—a truckload of hay or a handful of diamonds? That’s what he’s saying. Wood, hay, and stubble—that’s hay. Gold, silver, and precious stones... He’s talking here about quality.

I heard about a girl who was dating a Texan. She was hoping he was a rich Texan, and she was trying to find out just exactly what he did have. She said, “Do you have any cattle?” He said, “Yes, I’ve got some cattle.” She said, “Well, how much?” He said, “Well, about 50 head of cattle.” She said, “Well, do you have any oil wells?” He said, “Well, I have two.” That didn’t really satisfy her. She said, “Do you have any land?” He said, “About a hundred acres.” Well, that wasn’t too impressive, until he said, “Downtown Dallas.” It is quality that counts. God is not looking for quantity. We Baptists are so busy sometimes; we’re running around knocking things over and think we’re impressing God. Dr. Vance Havner said, “If Baptists had a patron saint, he’d be St. Vitus.” We’re that busy.

Now, how is God going to find out the difference, or how is God going to judge the difference between sort and size—“*of what sort it is*” (1 Corinthians 3:13)? Let me tell you three things God is going to use as a standard.

A. **Judged According to Attitude**

Number one: God is going to judge us, when we come to the Judgment Seat of Christ, God is going to judge us by our attitude—not only what we did, but why we did it. Let me give you a key verse here. Put this in your margin: 1 Corinthians 9, verses 16 and 17: Paul says, “*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of*”—now, listen to this—“*for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*”—now, if God has called you to preach, you can’t do anything else but preach. Now, you may do it under a different venue, but if you’re called of God, you cannot escape. Sometimes I wonder, “What would I do if I didn’t preach?” I can’t consider it; I can’t think about it. It doesn’t make sense to me. It doesn’t compute—“*woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*”—but now, notice what he says—“*For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me*” (1 Corinthians 9:16–17). Now, what’s he saying? He said, “God has called me to preach. I can’t get out of it.” But, he said, “I want to do what I do willingly, not grudgingly, not of necessity, not because I have to.” You see, God is going to judge us at the Judgment Seat of Christ for our ministry, our service—not only for what we did, but did we do it willingly, gladly, from a free heart?

Sometimes people are forced into service to preach or to sing, to be in the choir, to

work in the nursery, to work on the grounds because somebody has to, and that's why we do it, rather than doing it with a joy and a gladness of saying, "Lord Jesus, thank You for the privilege—thank You for the privilege of serving You." I hear some preachers talk about how they fought the call to preach like they're great heroes now for preaching. Friend, I'm infinitely glad that God called me to preach. And, I don't want you to tell the Finance Committee, but I'd pay for the privilege to preach. I don't have to get paid to preach; I'd pay for the privilege. I mean that with all of my heart. And, I have preached, and do preach, just out of my heart, willingly, not of necessity. I am glad that God has called me for the service that He has given me.

Now, you know, sometimes people serve to be seen of people. You know, Jesus talked about those who stood on the street corner and prayed to be seen of men, and you know what He said? "*Verily...They have their reward*" (Matthew 6:5). What is their reward? They're seen of men. That's it; that's as far as it goes. Jesus said, "Sometimes people go; and when they make a gift, they blow the trumpet and then make their gift" (Matthew 6:2). "Hey, everybody, look what I'm giving." God says, "*Verily...They have their reward*" (Matthew 6:5). What is their reward? They're seen of men. You see, God is going to look at us when we come to the Judgment Seat of Christ. And, I want to make it abundantly clear: the Judgment Seat of Christ has nothing to do with whether we're saved or lost. Once you're saved, you're going to Heaven. That is settled. But, He's going to judge us according, first of all, to our attitude—not only what we did, but why we did it.

B. Judged According to Authority

Now secondly, He's going to judge us not only about attitude but about authority. Did you have authority from Heaven to do what you did? That is, are you serving God according to the Word of God? Does your ministry have Heaven's authority behind it? Some people are doing things that God never commissioned, God never asked, and God never wanted. Listen to this scripture—put it down: 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5: "*if [any] man...strive for [the] masteries, yet*"—"And if a man strive for [the] masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully" (2 Timothy 2:5). Now, what does that mean? The masteries—he's talking about an athletic contest. *If you were running in the Olympics in this day and you wanted to get a laurel, you wanted to get a crown, you wanted a reward, a recognition, you can't cut across the track—you can't cut across the field. You have to stay on the track, and you have to stay in your lane. You can't break the rules.*

Now, God has given us a rulebook, and you have to ask yourself this question: Does my ministry have the authority of God behind it? Let me give you an example of this: there was a man in the Old Testament whose name was Saul. Saul was a king over

Israel, and God said to Saul, “Saul, I want you to go to battle against a people.” The name of the people was the Amalekites; they were unspeakably immoral. God said, “I want you to destroy them, and I want you to destroy all of their flocks and all of their herds. Put them to death.” Samuel came to Saul, and he said, “Saul, did you do what I told you to do?” He said, “Oh, yes—I did exactly what you told me to do.” Samuel said, “Did you kill all the animals?” “Yes, I did.” And then, he said, “Well, then what is the lowing of the sheep that I hear—and the lowing of the oxen and the bleating of the sheep?” “Oh, well, those, yeah, hmm... Well, no, I didn’t do exactly that. I saved the best of these to sacrifice to the Lord.” Samuel said to Saul, “*To obey is better than [to] sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams*” (1 Samuel 15:22). That is, “Saul, I don’t want your service unless it has My authority behind it.” That’s what God is saying.

So, when we come to the Judgment Seat of Christ, how are we going to be judged? First of all, because of our attitude—not only what we did but why we did it. Number two: our authority. Did we have the authority of Almighty God behind it, or are we serving to the Word of God?

C. Judged According to Ability

Number three: We’re going to be judged according to our ability. Now, God is going to require more from some people than He does other people because other people have more ability than others. Here’s the operative verse—Luke chapter 12, verse 48: “*But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes*”—now, listen to this—“*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more*” (Luke 12:48). If you’ve been given much, God requires much. God is going to test you not according to someone else’s ability but according to your own ability.

You know, we have a way of measuring ourselves by other people. For example, some can give more than others. God doesn’t measure a gift primarily by the amount on the face of the check but by the balance on the stub. Jesus went to the worship service one day, and Jesus stood by; and He watched what people were putting into the treasury. By the way, that’s interesting. Every time the offering is taken, Jesus knows what we give, doesn’t He? And, Jesus saw there a little widow. Now, she didn’t have any Social Security, any means of inurnment, people taking care of her. And, Jesus watched that little widow as she came and perhaps unwrapped her handkerchief and got out the widow’s mite (less than a penny). That’s all she had between her and starvation, and she put it in the offering—perhaps ashamed, a little shawl there, maybe she had a little widow’s Dowager’s hump there on her back, maybe a little osteoporosis, and she’s walking—just a little widow. She put her offering in. Do you know what Jesus said? Now, listen to this: Jesus said, “*She [gave] more than they all*” (Luke 21:3). Now

listen, He didn't say, "She gave more than any of them." He said, "She gave more than all of them" (Luke 21:3). Now, what did she do? She gave according to her ability.

Do you remember the other day when I asked you, "Is there anybody here who can't do what you can do?" You know, God is not asking you what you can't do; God is asking what you can do. When Mary took that alabaster box of ointment, and broke it, and lavished the feet of Jesus with that sweet perfume—took her long, black, silken hair and wiped His feet—there were those who criticized. Jesus said, "Let her alone. '*She hath done what she could*'" (Mark 14:8). Now, you see, God is not asking you to do what someone else can do. That wouldn't be fair. God is asking you to do what you can do. "*She hath done what she could*" (Mark 14:8). Now, if she can, she can.

And so, don't tell me you can't serve the Lord. Is there anybody here who can't do what you can do? Lift your hand—I want to laugh at you. Of course not. If you can, you can. And, that's all Jesus asks of you, young people—to do what you can. He doesn't ask you to do what somebody else can do. He doesn't ask you to sing like somebody else can sing or give like somebody else can give. That's the reason that we're going to be tested. We're going to be rewarded according to our ability.

That's the reason we've talked about a thing called SHAPE. Every one of us has a SHAPE. What does the "S" stand for—you remember? Spiritual gifts. What does the "H" stand for? Your heart's ambition—your motive. S, H, A...what does "A" stand for? Your ability. What abilities do you have? "P" stands for your personality, and "E" stands for your experience in life. You are unique; you are wonderful. And, when God brings you to the Judgment Seat of Christ, He's just going to ask, "Are you using what you have?" Don't go around comparing yourself for somebody else—to somebody else. Don't lord it over somebody else because you think you're hot. You're not hot. What do you have that you haven't received? Nor...don't you go around with an inferiority complex, saying, "I can't do anything." Don't you insult Almighty God. Our Lord appreciates you doing what you can do.

I read one time, years ago, about a mother who was sick and in the hospital. They had a little Down syndrome child, limited in intellectual ability—precious little girl that they loved very much. The other children made high grades in school. This girl, of course, was limited and challenged. The time came when they were all going to see mother in the hospital. The other children thoughtfully had bought some flowers in the lobby to take to mother, and somehow they overlooked the little girl. She saw that they all had flowers. And, out there in the front of the hospital there was just some grass growing and—almost like weeds—and she got a handful of weeds and brought them into the hospital room. And, the other children presented their flowers, and this precious little girl went up and hugged her mother and gave her mother that handful of weeds. Now, I want to ask every mother here today: What do you think that mother did? Do you

think that mother said, “Darling, those are just weeds. Momma doesn’t want those”? You don’t know a mother’s heart. She took that precious baby, wrapped her arms around her, and said, “Darling, thank you—thank you for the wonderful gift you brought to Mommy. Mommy loves you.” Now friend, I’m going to tell you—you may not have all the ability; you may come to God, as it were, with a handful of weeds, but God is going to look at your heart.

God is not going to compare you to somebody else. God is going to test your work “*of what sort it is*” (1 Corinthians 3:13), not how big it is. And, God’s going to look at your attitude—not only what you did, but why you did it. God is going to look at your authority. Were you obeying Him and doing what He told you to do, because “*to obey is better than [to] sacrifice*” (1 Samuel 15:22)? And, God is going to look at your ability. Did you serve Him according to what He gave you? One of these days, I’m going to give an account for the ability that God has given me—good or bad.

I’m going to tell you—there are so-called “little” people out there in Heaven, who are going to receive a greater reward than some of the big shots. It’ll take another world to show some who some of the big preachers are. They’ll say, “Well, So-and-so—he’s got a big church.” In my estimation, some of God’s greatest preachers are in crossroads country towns, overworked and underpaid, and God knows their names. And, one of these days, some of those who were in the limelight and so forth, maybe way down the line behind some of these who have been serving God, unknown, unsung, unwept, un-honored, in a small place, but they have been faithful to the Lord... And, you see, things are going to look different in the white light of eternity. God doesn’t see as man sees. “*Man [looks] on the outward appearance...[God looks] on the heart*” (1 Samuel 16:7).

I was thinking as I was preparing this message... How many of you know a man named Fred Holloway? Don’t lift your hand because you don’t. Mr. Holloway was a house painter in West Palm Beach, Florida. Mr. Holloway was a big, tall man about 6’3” or 4”. He had a hooked nose, kind of stooped shouldered. He’d been an alcoholic. And, God saved Mr. Holloway, and God saved him good. God delivered him from alcohol. And, he literally devoured the Word of God; he loved it. He loved me as a preacher boy. When I was just a kid in high school, he would say, “Adrian, I’m praying for you. I love you, son. Preach the Word. Let me show you this. Let me show you that.” And, he talked to me about Bible prophecy. He talked to me about soul winning. He talked to me about faithfulness. And, he put that long bony finger, and pointed it at me, and said, “Don’t you ever become a liberal—don’t you ever become a liberal. Don’t you ever, ever, ever, ever, ever doubt the Word of God. I’m praying for you.” Now, you don’t know him, but he had a great influence on my life—just an old ex-alcoholic house painter. There are a lot of folks like that, friend—when we get to Heaven, going to be way, way up there above and beyond some of the so-called “big shots” in this world. You see, the

Judgment Seat of Christ will be a time of revelation.

II. A Time of Reward

Number two: The Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be a time of reward. Look, if you will, in verse 14: *“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon”*—thereupon what? Thereupon Jesus—*“he shall receive a reward”* (1 Corinthians 3:14). Now, wood, hay, and stubble are not going to abide. When the torch test comes, wood, hay, and stubble are going up in flames. Gold, and silver, and precious stones have already been through the fire, and they will abide. If any man’s work lasts—if it abides—he’s going to receive a reward. Look again in verse 14, if you will. Excuse me, go back to verse 8. Let’s go back to verse 8 and look at that: *“Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour”* (1 Corinthians 3:8). And then, verse 14: *“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward”* (1 Corinthians 3:14).

Now, did you know there are going to be rewards in Heaven? Some people just think, “Well, we’re all just going to be the same up in Heaven,” and that God is an equal-opportunity employer, and God will be all un-American if He didn’t pay us all the same. Friend, there are rewards in Heaven. Heaven will not be the same for everybody. Now, I know that gets the hackles of some people up, especially carnal people, because they just love to sing songs like, “Well, just build me a cabin in the corner of Glory-land.” In other words, “It’ll all be fine up there, Preacher, any way you slice it. I just want to get into Heaven.” Friend, let me tell you something: this matter of rewards is taught in the Bible right here in these passages I just read to you—verse 8 and verse 14 (1 Corinthians 3:8; 1 Corinthians 3:14).

But, let me give you some ancillary verses. Revelation 14, verse 13: *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”* (Revelation 14:13). Works never bring you to Heaven. You’re not saved by good works—not at all. It’s *“not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:9). Works do not bring us to Heaven; works follow us to Heaven. When you go to Heaven, what you have done will follow you to Heaven. Revelation chapter 22 and verse 12—put it down: Jesus is saying, *“Behold, I come quickly”*—now, listen to this—*“and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be”* (Revelation 22:12).

Now, we Baptists have preached salvation by grace through faith so much that we’ve denigrated the idea of works. And, we say, “Well, you can’t work your way to Heaven,” and we almost make it seem as if good works are not important. *“Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me”*—Jesus said—*“to give to every man according*

as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12).

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).

Let me give you a verse that talks about rewards in Heaven—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 20: “Lay not up for yourselves treasure”—*“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through [and] steal”* (Matthew 6:20). Jesus said, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20). Now friend, that makes absolutely no sense—none whatsoever—if we all have the same amount of treasure in Heaven. “Lay up for [yourself] treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20). It’s going to be a time of reward.

III. A Time of Regret

Now thirdly, not only is the Judgment Seat of Christ a time of revelation—the day is going to declare it—not only is it going to be a time of reward, but I want to tell you—and listen very carefully, church—for some, it will be a time of regret—regret. Look in verse 15: “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss”—L-O-S-S—*“he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet...as by fire”*—“yet...as by fire” (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Now, what does that mean? “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss” (1 Corinthians 3:15). All right, here’s a Christian—now, he gives his heart to Jesus. He’s truly saved. He has the foundation. “Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). And, this man has come and put his faith in Jesus, and he’s trusted Jesus. But, he lives a selfish life, a casual life, a prideful life, a self-centered life. He’s out for himself and self alone. His life is characterized by wood, hay, and stubble. Then comes the Judgment Seat. There comes the fire, the tests, the trials, and the wood, the hay, the stubble—it goes up in flames. Is he going to Heaven? Yes, he’s going to Heaven. Why? Because of the foundation—the foundation remains; the foundation doesn’t burn. “If any man’s work shall be burned”—*“which he hath built thereupon”* (1 Corinthians 3:14)—*“he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:15). He is saved, but signed. He gets into Heaven with his coattails smoking. All of his life goes up in flames, and he faces a tragic loss.

Let me give you some scriptures that point that out. First John chapter 2, verse 28: “And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, [ye] may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming” (1 John 2:28). These are what he calls *little children*. Now, he doesn’t mean “boys and girls”; he means “children of God.” “Abide in him” (1 John 2:28). If Jesus Christ were to come right now—listen to

me—if Jesus Christ were to come right now, church—the trumpet were to sound, and we hear a voice, *“Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him”* (Matthew 25:6)—would you be ready? Would you really be ready? Would you say, “Oh, thank God, Lord Jesus”? Or, would you say, “Oh, no—oh, no. I’m not ready to meet the Lord. I’m saved, but I’m not ready to meet Him”?

Back in World War II, I was a little boy. My dad was in the Coast Guard. He was stationed at Hope Sound, fairly close to our house, about 40 miles north of West Palm Beach. Gasoline was very hard to get in the war, so my dad bought a Model A Ford. I learned how to drive a Model A Ford. Bought a black Model A Ford—and he would drive that Model A Ford home when he would get away from the base—a Model A Ford, you men who are older and know the sound of a Model A Ford engine. And, it’s a beautiful sound if you love automobiles and engines. Back in that day, Model A Fords had—and well, they still do, if you have one—it has a thing called a *running board*. It’s a step that you step on to get in the car. It’s about *that* wide and runs the length of the car below the doors—two doors or four doors, if it’s a four-door automobile. And, you could go stand on that running board and ride just holding on to the car.

When I would be out there playing, and I would hear that Model A Ford, and I would know it was my dad, I would do one of two things: either I would head toward the Model A Ford—my dad would slow down, and I would jump on that running board, stick my head in the window, hug his neck and kiss him, and ride all the way home; or else I would head somewhere off to the bushes and didn’t want to see him. It would all depend—all depend—on what my behavior had been. It would all depend on what Momma was going to tell him when he got home. It would all depend on whether I’d done the yard work. It would all depend on whether I’d done the things that my daddy had told me to do. Friend, when Jesus comes, don’t you want to hop on the running board, stick your head in the window, and say, “Lord Jesus, I’m glad to see You”? That’s what he’s talking about. Listen—*“abide in him”*—listen to the scripture; listen to it—*“abide in him; that, when he shall appear, [you] may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming”* (1 John 2:28). I don’t want to get the booby prize when I get to Heaven.

Listen to this scripture—Matthew 5, verse 19: Jesus said, *“Whosoever...shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so...shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven”*—He’s not saying you’re not going; He’s just saying you’re going to be the least—*“but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:19). Second John verse 8 says, *“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward”* (2 John 1:8). Do you want a full reward when Jesus comes? Revelation 3, verse 11: *“Behold, I come quickly: hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy*

crown” (Revelation 3:11).

So, there’s coming a day, as surely as I’m standing here. I don’t understand all about it—I don’t understand all about it. You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, I thought my sins were all under the blood.” They are. If God were to judge you for your sin, you would not stand. God is not going to judge you according to your sin; God’s going to judge you according to your service. It’s not a judgment to see whether you’re saved or lost. The Bible calls the Judgment Seat of Christ the *Bema*—B-E-M-A. In the middle of the Olympic field was a raised platform. If a runner ran and he didn’t win the race or he broke the rules, they didn’t execute him; they didn’t put him in prison. He just received no reward. Now, that’s the word that is used for the Judgment Seat of Christ. We have been judged as sinners. Thank God, Jesus, on the cross, paid our sin debt. Day by day, we’re being judged as sons and daughters. If we disobey, He chastises us. But, one of these days, we’re going to stand before the Lord and we’re going to be judged as servants. *“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward”* (1 Corinthians 3:14).

Now, I’ve been preaching long enough—I know what you’re thinking. I’ve often used this illustration, and perhaps you’ve heard me use it. I know what you’re thinking. You’re saying, “Well now, Pastor Rogers, I may not be gold, and silver, and precious stones. I may only be wood, hay, and stubble. But hey, it’s bound to be all good up here; I mean, if I just get there—man, that’s all right for me. I’m not... I don’t necessarily have to have all these rewards because, my goodness, the worst place in Heaven would be anything better than anything I’ve ever known. So, just so long as I get there...” I’m telling you, I know that I know that’s the way a lot of people think, and that’s the way some of you are thinking, right now. You say, “Well, if I just get to Heaven, if I’ve got the foundation, if I’ve been saved, hey, it’s all right with me.” Well, I can’t explain it. Maybe I’ll understand some day. But, I can read the Bible, which says, *“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss”* (1 Corinthians 3:15). Did you hear that?

Let me illustrate it. I don’t know how you’re going to suffer loss; I don’t know what God is going to do. But, here’s the way I’ve often illustrated it: suppose there’s a man. He doesn’t have a belief in banks, so he has all of his securities, his stocks, his bonds, all of his cash, all of his jewelry, all of his household goods, everything that he values he keeps in his house, and he has his family in his house. One night, he wakes up coughing, choking. He opens his eyes and the room is filled with smoke, and flames are dancing on the walls. The timbers in the roof are creaking, and groaning, and caving in. The walls are caving in. The entire house is engulfed in flames. This man has no time to go to the dresser and retrieve his valuables, his stocks, his bonds, his securities, his money. He has no time even to waken his children and get them out. He has no time even to get his wife. The house is caving in right now. He just runs and leaps through

the wall. The embers are on his clothes.

And, as he leaps out through the burning wall, the house just caves in. And, he hears the anguished cries—the screams—of his children as they perish in the flames. He hears his wife screaming for help, but he can do nothing. He stands there, and he watches his life's work go up in smoke. And, he brushes the embers from his pajamas, and he says to a neighbor who's come to stand there, "Well, hallelujah! I got out. I'm saved. I'm safe. How wonderful! Let's go downtown, and buy a steak, and celebrate." You say, "No, Pastor. He wouldn't do that." I'm going to tell you something, friend: you may be saved, but if you see your loved ones die and go to Hell because of your carnal life—if you see all that you lived for, dreamed for, schemed for, worked for go up in flames—I can't explain it altogether, but I'm going to tell you it will be sad; it will be tragic. *"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss"* (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Now, we've been talking in 40 days of purpose about your finding a ministry. If you haven't been to the Mission Fair, you need to go. I mean, it is incredibly fantastic. As soon as this service is over, you make a beeline to the Fellowship Hall. You will be blown away with a capital "B" and a capital "A," I can promise. I want you to go. And, I want you to pray, "Lord, take my life right now. Put me on track. And Lord, start building into my life some gold, and some silver, and some precious stones because, Lord, I don't want to meet You at the Judgment Seat of Christ with a life made out of wood, hay, and stubble."

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Would you pray right now that the Lord would show you a ministry and that God would help you that you'll not live a carnal life and a self-centered life? "Lord, show me what You want me to do. Show me, Lord, how You want me to serve. Lord, help me to stop comparing myself to other people. Lord, help me to recognize the shape that You made me and to realize, Lord, I can do what I can do. And Lord, it will be joyful. Your commandments are not grievous, but joyful. Help me, Lord." Would you pray that God would make you a soul winner, as we spoke this morning—that God would teach you how to share your faith? And, would you pray, since you're a member of Bellevue, that God would give you a ministry in the church? You say, "Well, I don't know what to do." Go to the Ministry Fair. Prayerfully go to the Ministry Fair, and you're going to find your ministry there, I believe. Would you pray that God would lead you there?

Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, how many would say, "Pastor Rogers, I am not all that I ought to be—I know that. But, I know by the grace of God that I am saved. I have repented of my sin. I have trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. He has changed my life. And, God's Spirit bears witness with my spirit that I'm a

child of God. I know if I died tonight, I'd go straight to Heaven"? If you can give me that testimony, would you just lift up your hand and hold it up high? All right. Now, take it down.

Now, if you couldn't lift your hand just a moment ago—maybe you're not certain that you're saved, or maybe you're certain that you're not saved—I want to pray for you. I believe you're interested in spiritual things or you wouldn't be here. You might say, "Pastor, you know, I don't know for certain; but if you can know, I want to know. I'm not in rebellion against God. I need to know. I want to know how to be saved." Well friend, it's a matter of trusting Jesus. That sounds so simple that sometimes people miss it. He's not asking you to do something big and great. He's done it all. He's asking you to receive what He has done. The Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you'll] be saved*" (Acts 16:31). That word *believe* means "trust"—not just intellectual belief, but *trust* Him—trust Him. Trust Him to forgive your sin. Trust Him to give you a new heart and a new life. Trust Him to bring you to Heaven, and He will do it. He cannot lie.

May I lead you in a prayer? Pray this way: "Dear God, I need You, and I want You. Jesus, You died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, right now, like a little child. I open my heart. I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus"—pray it; pray it from your heart—"Save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Then, thank Him for doing it. By sheer faith, say, "Thank You for saving me. Thank You. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. I'm so weak, Lord, and I've got so far to go; but now, I'm in the family. Begin now, Lord, to make me the person You want me to be, because I need a lot of help. And Lord, give me the courage to make it public what I've done. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer, here's what I'm going to ask: when we stand and sing in a moment, I want you to signify that you've done that by coming forward. Standing at the head of each of these aisles all the way across the front will be a minister of our church. I want you to come and say, "I am trusting Jesus." Oh, it'll sound good in your mouth and feel good in your heart when you do that. And, we'll just rejoice with you, give you some scripture to stand on, answer any questions we can answer, and seal it in prayer. It'll be one of the greatest things you've ever done. Wherever you are, as soon as we begin to sing, you prayed that prayer, or you need some more help in praying that prayer, you come and say to the minister, "I'm trusting Jesus."

Others of you need a church home. Now, we talked about serving the Lord. Step number one is to give your heart to Jesus. Step number two: Get active in a local church. That's where you're going to find your gift of service—through the church. If you

don't have a church home and you know you're saved, I invite you, as soon as we stand and sing, to step out, come down one of these aisles, and tell one of the ministers, "I want to place my membership here." And, he'll tell you how you may become a member.

Father God, I pray that you'll give us obedience during the invitation and draw the lost to Jesus. Help those who prayed and asked Christ into their hearts to make it public. And, bring those, dear Lord, who need to put their fellowship and their membership here. In Your name I pray. Amen. Let's stand together. You step out and come.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 04, 2001

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:8, 11–17

Outline

Introduction

- A. As a Believer, You Have Three Judgments
 - 1. You Are Judged as a Sinner
 - 2. You Are Judged as a Son or as a Daughter
 - 3. You Are Judged as a Servant
 - B. Your Works Are Going to Be Judged by Fire
 - I. A Time of Revelation
 - A. Tested According to Attitude
 - B. Tested According to Authority
 - C. Tested According to Ability
 - D. Tested According to Aspiration
 - II. A Time of Reward
 - III. A Time of Regret
- Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and find 1 Corinthians chapter 3? We're talking tonight about the Judgment Seat of Christ—1 Corinthians chapter 3. In a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 11. But, may I remind you that the Church is a temple. But, the Church is not a temple made with hands; this building tonight is not the Church. This building is where the Church meets. You are the temple of God. This Church, corporately, is a holy temple. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, He has a people for His temple. And, what we're going to read tonight is about that temple. We're going to read how that temple is built, what the foundation of it is, and so forth.

So, let's begin to read, and I begin now in verse 11 of this chapter: *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"*—that's obvious. If you're going to build, you start with the foundation—*"Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones"*—that's one category—*"wood, hay, stubble"*—that's the other category—*"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try"*—that word *try* literally means "test"—*"every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be*

burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy”—that means, “Church-wreckers God will wreck”—“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Corinthians 3:11–17).

Now, you are the Church. This building is not the Church; the Church is a temple. And, verse 11 tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of that temple (1 Corinthians 3:11). Now, there are some people who want to tell us that the Church is built upon Simon Peter. The Church is not built upon Simon Peter; the Church is built upon Jesus Christ.

On Christ the solid Rock I stand,
All other ground in sinking sand (Edward Mote).

Our lives are to be built upon that foundation. Verse 12 talks about that: *“Now if any man build upon this foundation”* (1 Corinthians 3:12). And, he talks about two classes of builders: those who are carnal, who build out of wood, hay, and stubble; and those who are spiritual, who build out of gold, silver, and precious stones.

Now, some of you tonight are saved, but you’re building a shabby building. Your building’s made of wood, hay, and stubble. And, others are saved, but you’re not building with wood, hay, and stubble; you’re building with gold, silver, and precious stones. Gold, silver, and precious stones have been through the fire; wood, hay, and stubble cannot stand the fire. Gold, silver, and precious stones represent that which comes through industry. You have to dig for gold. And so, there are two kinds of builders. And then, what he says in verse 13 is there’s coming a day of declaration, there’s coming a day of discovery, there’s coming a day of testing. Notice verse 13: *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest”* (1 Corinthians 3:13).

Now, this morning, I talked to you about how, when the Holy Spirit of God speaks, the Holy Spirit of God is going to teach you concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment. How many of you remember the sermon? Let me see your hand. Did it last that long? Great! Now, I was telling you that you’re not saved by works. Works don’t save. Works don’t help save. Works add not one scintilla of an iota to your salvation—not at all. It is *“not of works, lest any man should boast”* (Ephesians 2:9). Now, you may get the idea, therefore, that it makes no difference how you live after you get saved. Wrong! *“Every man’s work [will] be made manifest”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). There’s a day of accounting.

A. As a Believer, You Have Three Judgments

You, as a believer, have three judgments. Now, I want you to learn about these three judgments: you are judged as a sinner, you are judged as a son or a daughter, and

you're judged as a servant.

1. You Are Judged as a Sinner

Now, when is your judgment as a sinner? Well, at the cross. Your judgment is already passed. I mean, Jesus took your judgment for you. Jesus stood in your stead. Jesus took your place; and, therefore, the Bible says in the Book of Romans, "*There is therefore now no condemnation to [those who] are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). You have... That judgment is finished. Praise God! You'll never have to stand before the Great White Throne. Sometimes I hear people pray a prayer like this: "And Lord, grant that one day we might stand before Thy Great White Throne." Don't pray that for me, please. Don't pray that for you, if you've got one modicum of sense. No! Our judgment as a sinner—that's Calvary, and that's already passed.

2. You Are Judged as a Son or as a Daughter

Now, we're also judged as sons: "*whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he [receives]*" (Hebrews 12:6). Now, that judgment is not to see whether we're saved or lost; it is a corrective judgment. And, God will carry us to the woodshed. Has God ever carried you to the woodshed? Let me see your hand. Well, if He has, thank God for it. You know, that's not proof He doesn't love you; that's proof that He does love you. "*For what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*" (Hebrews 12:7). That is a judgment of sons. And, God loves us too much to let us get by with sin. That's what my dad used to tell me; that's what I tell my children when I would have to chastise them: "I do this because I love you." And, it is, indeed, true. So, we're judged as sinners—that's Calvary, that's past. We're judged as sons. Day by day, when God has to correct us, then He judges us.

3. You Are Judged as a Servant

One of these days, we're going to be judged as His servants. One of these days, we're going to stand before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and our lives are going to pass by. The Judgment Seat is the word *bema*. And, I've been to Corinth. Some of you have been to Corinth—Ancient Corinth. And, there in the ruins of Ancient Corinth is a judgment seat, and they call it today the *bema*. And, it was a place... For example, in the Olympic Games, the *bema* would be in the middle of the field. And, after a runner would run, if he had won a laurel, if he'd won a prize, if he'd won a medal, if he'd won recognition, he could come to the judgment seat. If he didn't come in first place, they didn't kill him—they didn't put him in jail—but there's no reward. Or, if he came in fairly well, he's rewarded according to his works. That is the word that is used there. It's not *thronus*—not the word for the Great White Throne Judgment—not that word. It's *bema*; it means "a place of recognition." One of these days, you and I are going to stand before the Lord. Our lives are going to pass by in dress review, and we're going to be judged

according to our works.

B. Your Works Are Going to Be Judged by Fire

Now, how is God going to judge? Well, God says that His judgment is going to be like a fire: *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest...[for] it [will] be revealed by fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). There’s going to be a torch test. All He’s going to do is to say, “Now, there’s the foundation. Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. You’ve been saved. You’ve built upon Jesus. You gave your heart—your life—to Jesus. Now, let’s see whether it’s wood, hay, or stubble; gold, silver, or precious stones.” Very easily told—all we have to do is put the torch there. And, He says, *“If any man’s work shall be burned, [he’ll] suffer loss”* (1 Corinthians 3:15). *“If any man’s work abide which he hath built [upon], he shall receive a reward”* (1 Corinthians 3:16). Now, the point of the whole matter is this: that you don’t want your life’s work to go up in smoke, because there’s coming a day in which it will be judged.

Now, having said that by way of introduction, I want to mention three things about the Judgment Seat of Christ, and I pray God He’ll write these upon your heart.

I. A Time of Revelation

Number one: the Judgment Seat of Christ will be a time of revelation—a time of revelation. Look in verse 13: *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire”—“it shall be revealed by fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). Now, you can fool me, you can fool your wife, you can fool your neighbor; but friend, the torch test is coming. It’s going to be revealed by fire. And, in the white light of eternity, things will look very different than they do now.

The Bible says in 1 Samuel, for example, chapter 16 and verse 7... When Samuel was going to look for a king for Israel, Jesse’s sons were there, and there was a man named Eliab. And, Eliab looked like a king; he was big, tall, handsome, kind of like Steve Gaines. And, God said to Samuel, *“Look not [upon] his countenance, or on the height of his stature; [for] I have refused him: for [God sees] not as man [sees]...man [looks] on the outward appearance, but [God looks] on the heart”—“[God looks] on the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7). There’s a difference. You see, we see things from a human point of view. But, how are we going to see things from God’s point of view? At the Judgment Seat of Christ there’s going to be a revelation. We’re going to see things from God’s point of view.

Let me give you another verse—Luke 16 and verse 15: *“And he said unto them, [You] are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is [an] abomination in the sight of God”* (Luke 16:15). Now, men may say, “Oh, this is wonderful. This is good. This is fine. You

certainly are important.” But, God says, “I’m not impressed.” Look again, if you will, in verse 13: *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what”—* what’s that next word?—*“what sort it is”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). Not what size it is—what *sort* it is. What kind of a work is it? Is it wood, hay, or stubble; or is it gold, silver, and precious stones? You see, a sort is very important—more important than size. Which would you rather have—a sack full of diamonds or a truckload of hay? Wood, hay, and stubble; or gold and silver and precious stones? Some people work themselves into a frenzy doing “church work,” but it’s nothing but wood, hay, and stubble in the sight of God.

Now, what determines the sort? May I mention some things? And, I want you to examine your own life now, because before long—as a matter of fact, maybe in 15 seconds—you’ll be at the Judgment Seat of Christ. If Jesus were to come tonight—trumpet sound—we’d be caught up. And, there we’ll stand before Him, and our life will pass by. Don’t get the idea that eternity is way out there. Eternity is *that* close—*that* close. You’ll stand before God, and your life will pass by in dress parade and what sort it is. Well, what’s going to determine what sort it is?

A. Tested According to Attitude

Well, let me say, first of all, you’re going to be tested by attitude. Write down the word *attitude*—not only what you did, but why you did it. What is your attitude? Here’s the verse also in 1 Corinthians chapter 9—listen to it—beginning in verse 16: Paul is talking about himself as a preacher of the gospel, and he says, *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Now, I know how he feels. God called me to preach as a teen. I have never doubted my call to preach. I have never looked back on it. From the time God called me as a teen, I know that God has His hand upon me. God has selected me. God has called me to preach. Sometimes, maybe on a Monday, I might get to thinking, “What would I do if I didn’t preach?” But, I can’t even entertain the thought. I cannot even conceive of myself as not preaching the gospel. *“Necessity is laid upon me”* (1 Corinthians 9:16). I must preach the gospel. I don’t have a choice. I can say with the Apostle Paul, *“Woe is...me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16). But now, notice what he says: *“For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me”* (1 Corinthians 9:17). Now, Paul says, “I’ve got to preach. If I do it with the right attitude, then I’ll have a reward.”

Now, I’m here tonight preaching. Why am I here tonight preaching? Am I here preaching tonight because I’m the pastor and I have to? Am I here preaching tonight

because you pay me? Now, you do pay me, and I thank you. That's not why I preach. I'm not a hireling. "*The hireling [flees]*" (John 10:13). "*The good shepherd [gives] his life for the sheep*" (John 10:11). Don't tell the Finance Committee, but I'd preach if you didn't pay me. Don't let that word get out. I don't preach for money. God has called me to preach. That's who I am; that's what I am. I mean, I don't come down here because I have to, rather than be home watching the World Series. I... Should I have said that? Is it tonight? Thank you for being here tonight, folks. No, I don't thank you. You are where you ought to be.

Why do you do what you do? Why do you work in the nursery? "Well, somebody's got to." Why do you sing in the choir? "Well, somebody's got to." Why do you teach that Sunday School class? "Well, somebody's got to." No! You do it for Jesus. You do it willingly, gladly, and then you receive a reward—then you receive a reward. What is—what is—your attitude? It's going to be tested according to attitude. Some people give to be seen of men. Jesus said they have their reward. What is it? They're seen of men. Some people pray to be heard of men. Jesus said they have their reward. What is it? They're heard of men. That's it. You see, it's not simply what you do, but why you do it. So, say the word *attitude*—attitude.

B. Tested According to Authority

All right now, here's something else going to determine what sort it is—not only attitude, but authority. It's going to be tested according to authority. That is, do you do what you do with the authority of the Word of God? Do you have Heaven's authority behind it?

Now, listen to this verse of Scripture—2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 5: "*And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully*" (2 Timothy 2:5). Let me put that in plain English: if you're playing sports—the masteries, that's what he's talking about; the field of athletic endeavor—if you strive in the masteries—you want to come to the *bema*; you want to get a laurel, a crown—well, if you break the rules, you're not going to do it. I mean, if you're running in the Olympic Games and rather than staying on the track, you cut across the field, you're not going to get a reward. You see, I have to do what I do with the authority of the Word of God. I cannot write my own rules.

Now, there's a lot said today about women in the ministry. And, we who are Baptists, who believe the Bible, are taken to task. We're made to look like we're anti-women. Dear friend, if there's anybody that's not anti-women, it's Adrian. I love them, especially one special one. Thank God for the women. This church could not operate without the dear ladies who serve God so gloriously and magnificently through Bellevue Baptist Church. And, we have some of the finest women in the world. Thank God for them. But, the Bible says that a pastor—a minister—is to be "*the husband of one wife*" (1 Timothy

3:2). Now, you know any woman who can do that—be the husband of one wife? No—no. God says, *“I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over...man”* (1 Timothy 2:12). Listen, don’t hold me accountable for the Word of God. If you don’t like it, take it up with God. You know, we’re not trying to be politically correct. We simply say, “That’s what God says.” Now, if we’re wrong—if God didn’t say that—come show us where we’re wrong and we’ll change. But, if God says it, then we don’t have any choice.

Now, what God says is this: “if you strive for the mastery, you do it lawfully” (2 Timothy 2:5). You do what God says. You don’t make up the rules; God makes the rules. And, if you want a crown, you strive lawfully. You say, “But, I work so hard.” God says, *“To obey is better than [to] sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”* (1 Samuel 15:22). Going to be tested according to authority.

C. Tested According to Ability

Also, you’re going to be tested according to ability—not only attitude and authority, but ability. Let me give you another verse: Luke chapter 12, verse 48. Our Lord is talking about a person who failed to do what he ought to do, but he didn’t have much knowledge. Listen to this: *“But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required: and to whom men have committed much, of him will they ask the more”* (Luke 12:48).

Now, think of this: *“unto whosoever much is given, of him shall much be required”* (Luke 12:48). I look at these men on the platform: David Smith, Jim Whitmire, Mark Dougharty. I want to tell you these are quality men—these are quality men. They are men who have a background. They are men who know the Scripture. They are men who are well educated. They are men with high intelligence and good health. I’ll tell you, God expects a lot out of these guys. They have been given much. *“Unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same shall much be] required”* (Luke 12:48).

Now, the big question is not what somebody else is going to do with their “much”; the big question is what are you going to do with whatever you have. Jesus told about a time when an offering was being taken, and Jesus stood over and watched. Now, I don’t know what you give; I don’t know what anybody in this church gives. You say, “You don’t—honestly?” I do not know. I’ve never wanted to know. I don’t know. But, I’ll tell you, there’s somebody who does know, and His name is Jesus. Jesus was watching when the offering was received, and Jesus saw a little widow who came up. And, she gave the widow’s mite, and Bible scholars tell us it was one quarter of a cent—not much, but it was her whole living. It was all that there was that stood between her and poverty. And, Jesus said one of the most remarkable things, because the Bible says there were many rich men who came and were giving. And, friend, if you’re rich, give

it—give it! “[To] whomsoever much is given, of [the same shall much be] required” (Luke 12:48). Give it! God has been good to you. Learn to give.

But, what about the person who has little to give? Give it—give it. You see, folks, God looks at the gift not so much by the amount on the check but by the balance on the stub. And, Jesus stepped back and looked at what that little widow gave. And, here’s what Jesus said: Jesus said, “She gave more than they all” (Mark 12:43). Now, He didn’t say, “She gave more than anybody else here today.” She gave more than everybody that day, and it was so small. So, when she comes to the Judgment Seat of Christ, her gift is going to be measured by what she had.

When Mary of Bethany came to anoint the feet of Jesus, she had an alabaster box of ointment, spikenard—very precious, but it was probably her most precious possession. And, others were there adulating and marveling at Jesus. Mary left the room, went out, and came back with this alabaster box of ointment. She didn’t take the lid off, but she broke it so it couldn’t be gathered up again, poured that out on Jesus’s head, let that sweet perfume run down, and then she took some and rubbed His feet with it—took her long silken black hair and began to wipe and massage His feet. There were those who criticized her, looked at her as if they were horrified at what she’d done by her extravagance. Old Judas said, “Why, this money could have been given to the poor” (Matthew 26:9). That hypocrite! If I had to trust anybody to feed the poor, I’d a whole lot rather trust Mary than trust Judas to feed the poor. Sometimes you build a building for Jesus, and somebody says, “This could be given for the poor.” Friend, I’d rather give it to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ and help the poor by helping them to know the Lord Jesus Christ and to lift them. Sure, we help the poor; but oh, I’m always a little nervous about those who talk about taking somebody else’s money and giving it to feed the poor when they don’t do it themselves.

Now, what did Jesus say concerning Mary? Jesus said—listen to this now—Jesus said, “You leave her alone” (Matthew 26:10). Isn’t it good when Jesus defends you? “You leave her alone. She hath done what she could...and wherever the gospel is preached, what she’s done will be a memorial to her” (Matthew 26:10–13). That’s 2,000 years ago, and here I am talking about it. “Wherever the gospel is preached, what she’s done will be spoken of as a memorial to her” (Matthew 26:13). That little widow, who gave that widow’s mite, has been the source of multiplied millions and billions of dollars to be given to the cause of Christ because of her attitude—because of her influence. God alone knows how much money has been given to the cause of Christ because that woman gave that widow’s mite. She did what she could. Mary of Bethany didn’t do what she couldn’t do—she did what she could do.

Now, you say, “Oh, if I only had this... If I only had that... If I had a million dollars...” Listen friend, that’s not the question—what you’d do if you had a million dollars. What

do you do with the 50 bucks you've got? *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much"* (Luke 16:10). And, if you're not faithful with 50, you wouldn't be faithful with a million. That's the test. What do you have? *"She [had] done what she could"* (Mark 14:8).

I want to ask you a question. It may sound like a silly question, but I want you to think about it: is there anybody here who can't do what you can do? See—do you see, do you see—what I'm talking about? God is not asking you to do what you can't do; God is asking you to do what you can do. *"She hath done what she could"* (Mark 14:8). Now, is there anybody who can't do what you can? Do you see what I'm talking about? Don't compare yourself to somebody else. *"Unto whosoever much is given, [the same] shall [much be] required"* (Luke 12:48). To whom little is given... God knows what you have.

There's an old story about two boys sitting on the front porch. One was a little scrawny guy; the other was a great big muscular brute. And, the little guy said to the big guy, "Do you know what I'd do if I was big, strong, muscular, as you are?" He said, "What?" He said, "I'd go out in the woods and find the biggest bear I could find, and I'd wrestle him right to the ground." He said, "Is that right?" He said, "That's right." He said, "Did you ever think about the fact that there are a lot of little bears out in the woods? You go out and find a little bear, and see if you can wrestle him to the ground." Whatever you have, you see.

What's God going to test us? What is the test? It's going to be a test according to attitude. What is the test? The test is going to be to authority. Do we have the authority of God behind it? What is the test? The test is going to be according to ability. God knows what ability you have.

Years ago, I heard about a family who had a little—a girl, a little retarded girl in the family. Some other children were in the family, and the other children were gifted with good, fine minds. This little girl, retarded, was a precious little girl. And, you know how these children are—they receive an overabundance of love, and they should. But, the mother was in the hospital, and the family was going to visit the mother. And, they brought some flowers—some beautiful flowers—to give to mother. And, they hadn't thought about really explaining it too much to the little girl who was mentally retarded. But, she noticed them going in with their flowers, and she stopped just before they went into the hospital, and reached down into the yard, and got a handful of weeds, and took them. And, when they saw what happened, they just smiled and said, "We'll watch." And so, the other children brought their flowers and gave them to mother, and that precious little girl took that handful of weeds and gave them to her mother. And, the big tears came down that mother's eyes, as she picked up that little child, and put that child in her arms, and said, "Thank you, my precious baby, for this gift of love." Friend, I want to tell

you, it may surprise you what'll please God. People in this world may say, "That's a handful of weeds," but God knows your heart—God knows your heart. You do what you can. Mary of Bethany did what she could. There's the widow who did what she could. "*Unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same] shall [much be] required*" (Luke 12:48).

D. Tested According to Aspiration

I'll tell you what else God is going to find out what sort it is: God is not only going to look at attitude, and authority, and ability, but God is going to look at aspiration. What did you aspire to do? Not what did you achieve, but what did you aspire to do?

David wanted to build a temple, but God would not let David build a temple because David was a man of war. First Kings chapter 8, verses 17 and 18: "*And it was in the heart of David my father*"—this is what Solomon is saying—"it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said unto David my father"—now, Solomon is talking about his father—"Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart" (1 Kings 8:17–18). You see, God doesn't judge us just simply for what we achieve but also what we aspire to do.

Jim Elliot—some of you don't remember, but many years ago there was a man named Jim Elliot. Jim Elliot and some other men went down to Ecuador to take the gospel to the Auca Indians. They had a little airplane. I've seen the ruins of that little airplane. They have gotten it out of that river there in Ecuador and brought back the shell of that little airplane, where those godly men flew in there. They landed on a beach called Palm Beach. And, the Auca Indians, not understanding, came out and speared and butchered those men. They meant to take the gospel to the Aucas. They didn't do it. That same Jim Elliot was the man who wrote, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep"—that's his life—"to gain what he cannot lose"—that's a reward in Heaven. "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Now, those five men went down there to take the gospel to the Auca Indians. Do you think when they stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, God is going to say, "No reward for you. You didn't get the job done"? Oh, oh, no—oh, no, because it was in their heart to take the gospel.

You know the worst thing about many of us? It's not that we're not soul winners—that's not the worst thing. The worst thing is that we don't aspire to be. We don't have a desire to be. It's not in our heart to do it. What is the burning ambition of your heart? I'll tell you, when you come to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ at the *bema*—at the Judgment Seat of Christ—He's not going to say, "What did you achieve?" He's going to say, "What did you aspire to do—to be? Where's your goal? Where's your heart?" God knew David's heart. David wanted to build a temple. God said, "No, you can't do it. But

David, I know what was in your heart” (1 Kings 8:18). And, God’s going to... That’s going to be a part of the reward.

Now, *“the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). It’s going to be a day of revelation, and it’s going to be revealed by fire.

II. A Time of Reward

Number two: the Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be a time of reward—not only a time of revelation, but a time of reward. Look, if you will, in chapter 3 and verse 8: *“Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour”* (1 Corinthians 3:8). Now, that’s very clear. You’re not saved by works, but you’re going to receive a reward according to your own labor. Now, look again in verse 14: *“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward”* (1 Corinthians 3:14). Now, works do not bring us to Heaven, but works do follow us to Heaven.

Here’s a text that I often use at funerals—Revelation chapter 14 and verse 13: *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”* (Revelation 14:13). Your works don’t bring you to Heaven; your works follow you to Heaven.

Now, there are some people who don’t believe in rewards. They say, “Oh, I just don’t believe in rewards in Heaven. I just believe everybody’s going to be the same in Heaven.” There’s one thing wrong with that—and it’s not so. That’s what’s wrong with it. The Bible speaks of rewards. Let me just rattle off a few Scriptures for you:

Revelation chapter 22, verse 12: Jesus said, *“Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be”* (Revelation 22:12). Another Scripture that I’ve mentioned already tonight—Matthew 6, verse 20: “But lay not up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither”—*“lay up for yourselves”*—rather—*“treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through [and] steal”* (Matthew 6:20). You know, the reward’s going to be an interesting time, because there are a lot of people we think might be at the head of the line when the rewards are handed out, and they may not be. There are a lot of little, precious, obscure saints, who nobody knows about. They don’t preach from platforms like I do. Their name never gets in the bulletin. They’re never praised, even as I had the sincere praise for Scott Sturtevant tonight. They’re God’s little nobodies, who are really God’s somebodies. God said, *“Many that are first shall be last”* (Matthew 19:30; Mark 10:31), when we see things in the white light of eternity.

Steve Gaines—faithful pastor, well-known all over the Southern Baptist Convention... But I’ll tell you, some of God’s greatest pastors are in little, small

crossroads country churches—overworked, underpaid, nobody knows about them, but God knows about them—God knows about them. There are people, folks, that nobody ever hears their name. They don't even get to lead in silent prayer, but God knows these people. And, there's coming a time of reward. And, it just may be, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, some of us will be way back in the line. Somebody said, "Well, I want to be there when Billy Graham gets his reward. I want to be there when James Dobson gets his reward. I want to be there..." Listen folks, there are a lot of little nobodies who will be somebody up in that day. They'll be up there at the head of the line because they took what they had and they did what they did with what they had, like Mary of Bethany. And, our Lord is going to say to them, "*Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make [you] ruler over many*" (Matthew 25:21). I have so many people praying for me and helping me. Sometimes I wonder if I'll even have a reward when I get to Heaven because of these dear people.

I've shared with you this story before, but one of the first revival meetings I ever had the privilege of participating in—just a 19-year-old kid. I was in college—I preached at Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida. It was one of those meetings where Heaven came down. By the way, I found those sermon notes awhile back. I was so ashamed of them I tore them up. I didn't want anybody to see them. Joyce got angry at me. She said—not really angry, she scolded the naughty lad—she said, "Adrian, you shouldn't have torn those." I said, "I didn't want anybody to see that." Now folks, not a' one of them was a homiletical masterpiece, I'll tell you; but God was in it. And, God blessed in that crusade.

I had a friend that was working with me. His name was Ernie Harvey—a big, tall, sun-crowned, muscular guy. He and I were buddies. We were in the crusade together; and I'd preach at night, and he'd preach in the morning. Ernie was from Jacksonville. He said, "Adrian, I want you to go see my mama." I said, "Okay." And, we went to that side of town—not where the rich people live. We went up to a little apartment—an upstairs apartment over a store, as I remember, up some creaky stairs (and a very threadbare apartment). Ernie's mother had been married to a merchant seaman, and he was gone. She was eking out a living. I, because Ernie was so big and strong, I expected to see a very handsome woman—a very lively, strong woman—but I saw this little woman, bent over like this. And, her hands were so arthritic that they were puffy. Have you ever seen people like that? You just hate to even touch the hand. You don't shake the hand; you just kind of hold it like that—softly. And, every joint was swollen with arthritis.

Mrs. Harvey—they called her *Mom Harvey*—she came to the door, and she said, "Boys, how did the revival meeting go last night?" I said, "Mrs. Harvey, it was wonderful. Oh, it was wonderful! God just blessed." And, I began to tell her about the souls that

were saved and how God moved in the revival meeting. And, when I did, the tears burst out of her eyes. She said, “I knew it—I knew it.” I said, “How did you know it?” She said, “Adrian, the whole time you were preaching I was down on my knees by the bathtub, praying for you.” And, I looked at my strong virile body (at that time), and I looked at this little gnarled, emaciated form. And friend, I know when the credit is given for that revival meeting, I’ll be somewhere back in the shadows, and there’ll be little Mom Harvey up there who was praying, interceding. You see, the Judgment Seat of Christ is a time of revelation; it’s a time of reward.

III. A Time of Regret

One last thing: the Judgment Seat of Christ will be a time of regret—regret. Look in verse 15: *“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:15). Literally, the word is “through fire.” That...what does that mean? It means he’ll be saved but singed. It’s the idea of a person escaping a burning building—leaping out through a burning, collapsing building—and his work—his life—goes up in smoke because it was all wood, hay, and stubble. There’s no gold, no silver, no precious stones. The only thing that will get him into Heaven is the foundation; that won’t burn. Jesus is the foundation. And, this house burns from the roof to the foundation, and it goes up in smoke; and *“he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Now, I’ve been preaching long enough. I know what’s in the mind of the average carnal Christian at this point. You’re beginning to hedge a little bit. You say, “Well, yeah, I may be wood, hay, and stubble; but man, if I just get to Heaven, that will be good enough for me. Man, just build me a cabin in the corner of Gloryland. That will satisfy me.” Friend, I can’t explain it, but that’s not the way you feel when you see Jesus at the Judgment Seat of Christ and watch everything go up in smoke.

I heard myself preach this on the radio last week, so I want to share it with you. Maybe you were listening to Love Worth Finding. But, I want you to imagine a man. He doesn’t have banks, so he keeps all of his money and his stock certificates, his bonds, all of his cash—he keeps it at home in his dresser or stored somewhere in the closets. All that he has—his furniture, everything—is represented in this house. His house is his investment. His life saving is there. He’s asleep one night. He begins to cough, and he wakes up. His eyes are burning. The room is filled with smoke. He looks around, and his house is on fire. I mean, the curtains are going up in flames; the timbers are on fire, and they’re groaning and creaking. The walls are beginning to collapse. The flames are everywhere; the thick smoke is everywhere. He doesn’t have time to awaken his wife. He doesn’t have time to get the children. He can’t go to the dresser and get his stocks, and bonds, and securities, and cash. He has time to do one thing—and that is to leap

through a burning wall to safety.

And, as he leaps out of that building, the building collapses. He hears the screams of his children as they perish in the flames. He hears the agonizing cry of his wife, who has been by his side, as she dies in those flames. Everything he has goes up in smoke—not one shred of insurance to cover anything. He’s standing there; and a neighbor comes up by his side, and the neighbor says, “What a tragedy.” The man says, “Yes, but let’s look on the bright side: I saved my life. I saved my neck. I didn’t die in the flames. Look, I escaped. Neighbor, let’s go buy a steak and celebrate.” Do you think you’d say that? I don’t think so.

And friend, you think you’re going to get to Heaven and say, “Aha, I made it! My children went to Hell. My wife was lost. My life was carnal—wood, hay, and stubble. It all went up in flames. Aha—aha—but here I am in Heaven”? Friend, I can’t explain how it’s going to work out, but I can read black print on white paper; and I can read, “*If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss*” (1 Corinthians 3:15). He’s going to suffer loss.

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 C. Luther).

Conclusion

The Judgment Seat of Christ will be a time of revelation. It will be a time of reward for some, and it will be a time of regret for others. So, brother deacons, “deac” well. Sisters, serve well. Do it with the right attitude. Do it with the right authority. Do it with the ability that God has given you—whatever it is: little or much. And, aspire to do even more. And, when you meet the Lord Jesus, He will say, “*Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be*” (Revelation 22:12).

One last, last word. Listen to me—we’re not talking about something way out yonder. The Judgment Seat of Christ may occur in your life before you get home from church tonight, if the Rapture comes. And, all you’re going to do for Jesus you’re going to do in this world. All the soul-winning you’re ever going to do you’re going to do in this age. All the giving you’re ever going to do you’re going to give now. Some of you are going to be caught up into Heaven with money that you wished you had given, a witness that you wished you shared, sacrifices you wished you would have made, but you didn’t. And, your life is going to be an array of wood, hay, and stubble. Poof! Go up in flames. Don’t let that happen to you.

When You Are Judged by Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 14, 1995

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:8–15

Outline

Introduction

- A. Judgment as Sinner
 - B. Judgment as Son
 - C. Judgment as Servant
 - I. A Day of Revelation
 - A. According to Attitude
 - B. According to Authority
 - C. According to Ability
 - D. According to Aspirations
 - II. A Time of Reward
 - III. A Time of Regret
- Conclusion

Introduction

One of the most blessed and yet one of the most sobering thoughts that I can think of is this thought—that one day, and perhaps very much sooner than we realized, we will stand face-to-face with Jesus Christ. Now, it could be that He is coming, or it could be that we are going, right? I mean, this could be the last sermon I'll ever preach. This could be the last one you'll ever hear before I die or before Jesus comes—before you die or before Jesus comes. Now, think about that time; think about being face-to-face with the Savior. It will be a time of joy, but it will also be a time of giving an account for the way that we've lived, not to determine whether or not we're going to Heaven—that's determined the very moment you receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord—but there will be, nonetheless, a day of accounting.

Now, there are three kinds of judgment, and you, as a believer, will experience all of them: you are judged as a sinner, you're judged as a son, and you're judged as a servant.

A. Judgment as Sinner

When is your judgment as a sinner? Well, thank God—for you, that's already passed. When you receive the Lord Jesus, your judgment is forever in the grave of God's forgetfulness. Romans 8, verse 1 says, "*There is therefore now no condemnation*"—no judgment—"*to [those who] are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). Why? Because Jesus

Christ took our judgment for us, and our judgment as a sinner was at Calvary. When He died, we died. And, God judged Him, that He might set us free. He was judged for us and in our place. So, our judgment as a sinner, our judicial judgment, that's in the past. That's 2,000 years ago. And, thank God, I am forever justified by His precious blood.

B. Judgment as Son

But then, there's also the judgment as a son. God looks at me, and He judges me as His son. That means that when I sin... I didn't say, "if," but "when." That may be a shock to you to know that your pastor is not perfect. I know you always thought I was. When I sin or when you sin, God does not judge our sins judicially as to cast us into Hell, but He does judge us. He chastises us. You know, the Bible teaches in Hebrews chapter 12: *"Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he [receives]"* (Hebrews 12:6). Now, if you're God's son or God's daughter, when you sin, He's not going to disown you, but He is going to chastise you. "Whom I love, I chasten"—that's what the Lord says. And so, I don't know whether you've had that discipline, that judgment, but I have. God has carried me to His woodshed, as it were, and dealt with me—not in order to get even with me, but to correct me and to help me to grow. And, *"no chastening for the present [time seems] to be joyous, but grievous: [but] nevertheless"*—the Bible says—*"it [exercises] the...fruit of [those who are judged]"* (Hebrews 12:11). The fruit of righteousness is a result of that chastisement.

C. Judgment as Servant

But now, there's a third way that we're going to be judged, and that is as servants—how we serve the Lord. And, this judgment also does not deal with salvation (whether or not we're saved), but it does deal with rewards. Now, don't get the idea that everybody is going to have the same reward in Heaven. There are degrees of reward in Heaven. Heaven will not be the same for everyone, contrary to popular opinion. If that is so, why did Jesus say, *"Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven"* (Matthew 6:20). That makes absolutely no sense if all are going to have the same reward in Heaven. There will be degrees of reward in Heaven. Jesus said, *"Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be"* (Revelation 22:12). We're saved by grace; we're rewarded by works. Don't forget. So, don't get the idea that you can be an indolent, worldly, careless Christian, go sailing into Heaven, meet the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ, and have Him say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant. You've been faithful over a few things. I'll make you ruler over many," if you've not been faithful.

Now look, if you will, at how Paul described that in verse 9: *"For we are labourers together with God"*—how many laborers here tonight? A lot of you are. Some are drones and not laborers. Paul is speaking of those who are workers—*"we are labourers*

together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building"—so, we are workers. We are a vineyard. We are a building. And then, he says in verse 10—*"According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder"*—he said, "I'm also a contractor"—*"a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another [man] buildeth thereon"*—he was talking about the Corinthian church. Paul said, "I laid the foundation of this church, and others have come along and built upon the foundation that I've laid"—*"But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon"* (1 Corinthians 3:9–10). He's talking to the pastors, and the teachers, and the church leaders that would follow this pioneer missionary.

And then, he goes on to tell about the foundation that he laid. He said, *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"*—and the foundation of any true church is Christ, the Solid Rock and the Cornerstone. Now, look in verse 12—*"Now if any man build upon this foundation"*—what? upon Jesus—*"gold, silver, precious stones"*—well, I'll tell you one thing: that would be some kind of a building. If you saw a building built upon Jesus Christ, as the foundation, and erected entirely of gold, and silver, and precious stones, just think about what it would look like. It would be an incredibly beautiful building. But, wait a minute. He mentions another kind of building also—*"wood, hay, stubble"* (1 Corinthians 3:11–12). Two buildings—one foundation. One building—gold, and silver, and precious stones; another building—wood, hay, and stubble. Kind of reminds you of the story of the three little pigs, doesn't it?

All right. Now, look in verse 13—here's the key: *"Every man's work shall be made manifest"*—look up here, and let me ask you a question: Do you think that includes you? If it does, lift your hand. Okay, so pay attention. One of these days, the way you live is going to be made manifest—*"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it"*—now, what day is he talking about? He's talking about the day when we appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ—*"for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try"*—that is, "test"—*"every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire"* (1 Corinthians 3:13–15). Now, let's look at that verse, because it's so very important, as we talk about when you are judged not for salvation, but when you're judged as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, to determine what kind of reward that you're going to be or are going to receive.

Now, he mentions here two kinds of builders for literally two kinds of Christians—the carnal and the spiritual. The carnal is the wood, hay, and stubble category. The spiritual man is the gold, and silver, and precious stones. Now, wood, hay, and, stubble are cheap and combustible. Gold, silver, precious stones—they are precious and permanent. The fire doesn't bother the gold, and the silver, and the precious stones.

They've already been through the fire. That's the way the gold and silver were taken out of the ore, and that's the way the precious stones were created. They've already been through the fire. But, the wood, the hay, and the stubble, obviously, will go up in smoke. What God is saying is this—that we may be the contractor, but God is the building inspector. And so, we have come along. We've received Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. We have been truly saved because we have the foundation of God that remains sure. But now, God, the building inspector, comes along at the Judgment Seat of Christ and says, "Let's see what kind of a building you have." He says, "I'm going to give it a test, and the test is the torch test." God says, "Let's see if it'll burn—let's see if it will burn," and God puts a torch to it. And, the Bible says, *"[It] will be revealed by fire"* (1 Corinthians 3:13). And, after God puts His torch to your building, then, if the gold, and silver, and precious stones remain, you'll receive a reward. If the wood, hay, and stubble is all that is there to be consumed, you'll suffer loss. But, you, yourself, will be saved. That's what it says.

Now, let's look at this, and I want to look at it under several headings. Just think about this time now. The Rapture has come. You and I are face-to-face with Jesus—or we have died and the time for the Judgment Seat of Christ has come—and we're standing face-to-face with the One who died for us.

I. A Day of Revelation

The first thing I want to say is that day will be a day of revelation. Now, what I mean by that is this: we're going to see things differently than we see them today. Look in verse 13: *"Every man's work [will] be made manifest"* (1 Corinthians 3:13). May I submit to you that many things that look important to us today will not be important then? And, many things that the world today counts as unimportant will be of vital importance. And, what will be the difference? Well, the difference will be, in eternity, we will see things from God's viewpoint, not from our viewpoint.

When God told Samuel to go find a king to anoint over Israel, He said, "Get one of the sons of Jesse" (1 Samuel 16:1). And so, Jesse brought his sons out there, and there was a big, old strapping boy who came out, handsome as he could be, the All-American look—broad shoulders, fine countenance. And, Samuel thought, "Boy, if there is ever a man that ought to be a king over Israel, that man has the kingly statute—he has the kingly countenance. I believe he's God's appointed king." But, here's what God said to Samuel—listen: *"Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance...[God looks] on the heart"* (1 Samuel 16:7).

Now, you and I will look at some folks today, and we'll say, "Boy, he'll be first in line at the Judgment Seat of Christ," but he may not be. Let me give you another verse—this

time from the New Testament—Luke chapter 16 and verse 15. Jesus was talking to people who were pretty proud of themselves. They swaggered. And, this is what Jesus said to them: *“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God”* (Luke 16:15). What a reversal there may be at the Judgment Seat of Christ! No wonder our Lord said, *“Many that are first shall be last; and [many that are] last [shall be] first”* (Matthew 19:30; Mark 10:31).

Notice the Bible teaches that when we are judged, God is going to judge us according to the sort of our work, not on the size of our work. Look at it in verse 13: *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest”—the last part of it—“for the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). Now, sort is more important than size. We’re talking about gold, and silver, and precious stones—wood, hay, and stubble. Which would you rather have—a handful of diamonds or a truckload of hay? Think about it. See, God looks for quality, not necessary quantity. We have people who are very busy, but that doesn’t mean they’re necessarily going to be rewarded. You, as in carnal energy, may come down here to the church, work yourself into a frenzy doing church work, but you do it in the energy of the flesh. Everybody says, “What a wonderful job you did!” But, at the Judgment Seat, it may be wood, hay, and stubble.

Now, what is it, literally, that will determine whether or not it is wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, and silver, and precious stones? I want to mention some things. We’re talking now about how God reveals your work of what sort it is.

A. According to Attitude

Number one: God is going to look at your attitude. He’s going to look at your attitude when you did something. Just fast-forward to 1 Corinthians 9, and look with me in verse 16. Paul is talking about his own ministry, and Paul says this: *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16). Well, I believe in a God-called ministry. And, Paul said, “I don’t have a choice about this thing. God has told me that I must preach.”

Very frankly, I feel the same way. Sometimes I’ve thought of what I would do if I were not a pastor, but I can’t think about it long because it’s so much a part of me that I cannot even imagine not doing what God has called me to do. I would feel like an absolute traitor to do anything else than preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, I say this, and I don’t say it in a prideful sense or any other sense—and not that there’s any chance of it—but I would have to step down to be the President of the United States. I mean that with all of my heart. Not that anybody is clamoring for me to be the President of the United States—that’s not the point. I’m just simply saying that I don’t have a lot of

choice about it. I do believe in a God-called ministry. Paul was called, and he says this: *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Now, wait a minute. Does that mean he’s going to get a reward? Not necessarily. Look in verse 17: *“For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me”* (1 Corinthians 9:17). That is, Paul says, “I’m going to preach willingly or unwillingly,” but he said, “I want to do it willingly because I want a reward.”

You see, you may be doing the right thing for the wrong reason. You may be doing it because you have to. I wonder if you went to your Sunday School class this morning and taught your Sunday School because somebody had to. I wonder if you sing in the choir because Brother Jim will get you if you don’t. You do get ’em, don’t ya? Yeah, all right. And, he says necessity is laid upon you. You’re going to do it. You signed up. Well, I mean, I wonder—did you really get a blessing. Did it count for eternity? Did you do it because you had to? Did you preach, or sing, or work on the parking lot because you had to, or did you do it willingly? You know, we do a lot of things that are good, but they won’t receive a reward in Heaven. Jesus spoke of people who prayed to be seen of men, and you know what He said? He said, *“They have their reward”* (Matthew 6:5). He wasn’t talking about the Judgment Seat of Christ. *“They [had] their reward”* (Matthew 6:5). What was their reward? They were seen of men. That was it! He talked about people who give to be seen of men. He said, *“They have their reward”* (Matthew 6:5). There’s no reward in Heaven. That’s it! They were seen of men. And so, when you come to stand before the Lord Jesus Christ and He comes to look at your work and to find out of what sort it is, one of the things He’s going to ask is about your attitude.

B. According to Authority

Here’s the second way that He’s going to test it—not only according to attitude, but according to authority. Was it done with the authority of Jesus Christ, according to the Word of God? You don’t merely conjure up something to do, and sally forth to do it, and think that God is going to reward you for doing it. Your service is going to have to be compatible with and in keeping with the authority of the Word of God. Let me give you a verse—2 Timothy chapter 2 and verse 5: *“And if a man also strive for the masteries, yet is he not crowned, [unless] he strive lawfully”* (2 Timothy 2:5).

Now, here are the Olympics. A man has been training to run in the Olympics. He gets at the starting gate. The signal is given, and he goes running around that track. Everybody else is running around the track. But, he says, “Why should I stay on the track? If I just cut across the field this way, I can get ahead of the pack.” Is he going to get the crown at the end? Will they put a laurel on his brow? Of course not! He is not

crowned if he disobeys the rules. He can't be. He has to strive lawfully.

And so, *"to obey is better than [to] sacrifice"* (1 Samuel 15:22). Don't get the idea that, for example, you can come down here on Sunday morning and give a whopping big offering in the church and think somehow you'll bribe God and you can live however you want. No! You're *"not crowned, except [you] strive lawfully"* (2 Timothy 2:5). *"To obey is better than [to] sacrifice"* (1 Samuel 15:22).

C. According to Ability

Here's the third thing He's going to use when He looks at you to define whether or not you're wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, and silver, precious stones: He's going to look, first of all, at your attitude; He's going to look, secondly, at the authority behind your actions; and the third thing He's going to look at is your ability—at your ability. Put this verse down—Luke chapter 12 and verse 48: *"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required"* (Luke 12:48). You see, someone may do less than you and get more reward than you because they did not have the ability that you have.

One day, the Lord Jesus was there when people were making their offerings, and He watched what people put in the offering. You know, He does that every Sunday. Did you know that? He was watching what people put in the offering. And, He told that a little widow was there, and she put in the widow's mite. What they say—Bible scholars say, the ones that I've read of, after—what she dropped in the offering plate was a quarter of a cent. Now, I don't know what inflation has done to that. It used to be when I was a boy, a penny was some kind of money. You could buy a liquorish stick that long with a penny. But anyway, she put in a quarter of a cent. And, Jesus said that she put in more. Now, watch it—he said there were many rich men there that day. Jesus said she gave more than all of them—not than each of them, all of them; not that she gave more than this man, she gave more than the whole total—one little lady (Luke 21:3). Now, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, a man will come up and say, "Yes, Lord, that Sunday in church I gave \$500." The Lord says, "Back of the line. Little widow, come up here." You see, God judges according to ability. God doesn't measure your gift primarily by the amount on the face of the check but the balance on the stub. Think about it—what ability we have.

Remember Mary of Bethany? She took that alabaster ointment, that precious jar of ointment, and she broke it and anointed the head and feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, there were some who criticized her. But, Jesus said in Mark 14, verse 6: *"Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me"* (Mark 14:6). *"She hath done what she could"* (Mark 14:8).

I want to ask you a question: Is there anybody here who can't do what they can do? Would you lift your hand? You see, the question today is not whether or not you can do

what you can't do. That's not the question. God never holds you accountable for what you can't do. All God holds you accountable for is what you can do. And, everybody can do what they can do. Does that make sense? All right.

Now, what she did—she simply did what she could do! When you come to stand before the Lord, the Lord is not going to compare you to Billy Graham, or Francis Schaeffer, or somebody like that. He's just going to look at you, and He's going to ask, "Did you do what you could do?" There are a lot of people who cannot sing like some folks can sing, or teach like some people can teach, or give like some people can give, or preach like some people can give. That doesn't mean that they're going to be second-class people at the Judgment Seat of Christ. They may be far ahead of some of these others, just like that little widow was. The idea is to do what you can do. So many times we want to compare ourselves to other people.

You remember that story of those two mountaineers—one of them a big, brawny, strapping guy about 250 lbs., and ribs like a barrel, and hands like hams, and the little fellow and the big fellow sitting there. The little fellow was not very big at all. And, he looked at the big guy, and he said, "You know, you're so big and strong." He said, "You know what I would do if I were you? If I were as big and strong as you are, I'd go out there in the woods, and I'd find the biggest bear out in those woods, and I'd wrestle him right down to the ground, if I was big and strong like you are." The big man looked at the little man. He said, "Oh?" He said—I want you to think about this—he said, "There are plenty of little bears out in the woods, and you go find a little bear and wrestle that one." You know, don't say, "Oh, what I would do if I had a lot of money...is what I would do. Oh, what I would do if I had a big education! What I would do if I had a voice like that! What I would do if I had a mind like that!" That's not the question. The question is, what are you doing with what you have? All God requires of you is to do what you can. That is the question, and that is the answer. So, you're going to be tested according to your ability.

D. According to Aspirations

Now, here's another way that He's going to decide what sort your work is—not only according to your attitude, and your authority, and your ability, but He's going to test you according to your aspirations. What did you desire to do? What did you want to do?

King David wanted to build a temple, but God didn't want him to build a temple, because he was a man of war. And, God had rather his son, Solomon, build the temple. But, David wanted to build the temple. And, God knew that he aspired to build a temple, and so this is what God said in 1 Kings chapter 8, verses 17 and 18: "*And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house*

unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart" (1 Kings 8:17–18). You see, again, the question, when you come to the Judgment Seat of Christ, is not only what you did, but what you wanted to do—what you aspired to do.

Do you know one of the worst things about most Baptists? It's not primarily that they're not soul winners. It is they don't even desire and aspire to be. I mean, they're not trying. It's not that they say, "Oh, I tried to win somebody, but I failed." They don't try! They don't aspire! It's not in their heart. What is the burning ambition of your heart? God sees that.

Some years ago, there were five noble young men who went down to South America to take the gospel to the Auca Indians. They were killed on a beach down there. Do you think God's going to say to them at the Judgment Seat, "Shame on you! You were going down there to take the gospel to the Auca Indians, and you didn't get the job done"? No! God said, "It was in your heart to take the gospel to those Auca Indians, and you were martyrs. You died for My cause. But, you aspired to do it. It was in your heart."

What motivates you? God knows that. And, at the Judgment Seat, when King David will stand there, God will say, "David, you didn't build the temple, but you wanted to—and that's in the record." So, the Judgment Seat of Christ, number one, will be a time of revelation. Many things that seem big now will be little then. Many things that seem little now will be big then.

II. A Time of Reward

Here's the second thing: not only will it be a time of revelation, but it'll be a time of reward—it'll be a time of reward. Look, if you will, in verse 14 again. Go back to our scripture, 1 Corinthians 3, and look now in verse 14: "*If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward*" (1 Corinthians 3:14). Does the Bible teach rewards in Heaven? Absolutely! You say, "I thought we were saved by grace." We are saved by grace. Works do not bring us to Heaven, but works do follow us to Heaven. "*Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them*" (Revelation 14:13). Your works follow you to Heaven.

Let me give you some scriptures about rewards. Revelation chapter 14, verse 13—I just read it: "*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them*" (Revelation 14:13).

Here's another one from Revelation—Revelation chapter 22, and verse 12: Jesus said, "*Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give [to] every man according as his work shall be*" (Revelation 22:12).

I cannot work my soul to save;
That work my Lord has done.
But I work like any slave
For the love of God's dear Son (author unknown).

"I am coming," Jesus said, "and to give to every man"—*"my reward is with me, to give [to] every man according as his work shall be"* (Revelation 22:12).

And, again, the scripture that I mentioned in the introduction, in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 20, where our Lord gives this injunction: *"lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven"* (Matthew 6:20).

And then, the verse that we're looking at tonight—1 Corinthians 3, verse 8: *"[for] every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour"* (1 Corinthians 3:8). Verse 14: *"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward"* (1 Corinthians 3:14).

And, see, things are going to look so different there. Did you know that some of the best preachers in America are in some of the smallest churches? And, they're in those small churches by choice—not that they couldn't be in a big church, but they felt that's where God has put them. And, do you know what the highest place is? God's will. There's no higher place than that—wherever God has put you. And, there is going to be a time of reward, when some people that we think are inconsequential... We don't get the idea that it's necessarily the Billy Grahams, and the Charles Swindolls, and these others who are going to be so richly rewarded. They may be; I hope they are. I have a pastor friend who's here with me tonight, Brother Don Welman, a dear man of God. And, he and I just had a wonderful dinner last night, and we spent time talking about Dr. Billy Graham. And, this afternoon we talked about him and our deep respect for him. And, I believe he'll have a great reward. But folks, there may be some little missionary somewhere that you've never heard of who will be light years ahead of a lot of people. You see, God looks not at what we achieve, but what we aspire to do—not at our ability, but what we did with the ability that we already have. It's going to be a time of reward.

III. A Time of Regret

And, I want to say one final thing, and we'll be finished: not only will it be a time of revelation, and review, and reward, but it will be a time, for many people, of regret. Now, this is very important. Don't miss what I'm about to say. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire"* (1 Corinthians 3:15)—literally, through fire. I'll just give it to you in the vernacular: "he'll be saved, but singed. He'll get to Heaven with his coattails smoking."

Now, what happens is this—that he will be saved. Any man, any woman, any boy, any girl, in my estimation, who comes to Jesus Christ, receives Jesus Christ as their

Lord and Savior in repentance and faith, is truly saved, truly born from above, has become a partaker of the divine nature, is building upon that foundation. And, therefore, because of the foundation, when the torch comes, the wood, hay, and stubble will go, but the foundation of God remains sure. The Lord knows those that are His. And, it is only because of that foundation that he's saved, but the wood, hay, and the stubble—the carnality of his life—goes up in smoke, and he loses his reward.

Let me give you some sobering scriptures. First John chapter 2, verse 28: *“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming”* (1 John 2:28). Did you know that if the trumpet were to sound right now and the angel would say, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him”—I mean, if this were the moment, there would be some of you who would be frightened and some of you who would rejoice. If Jesus Christ were to come right now, some would want to get under the seat—say, “Oh, no! I wanted to make it right with So-and-so. I wanted to be faithful with my money. I wanted to be a soul winner. I wanted to do this. I wanted to do that. I'm so sorry He came and found those magazines in my house, and that beer in my refrigerator, and that hate in my heart...God's tithe in my pocket. I'm so ashamed. I have no confidence.” Others would say, “Oh, Lord Jesus, hallelujah! This is the time that I've been living for—to meet You face-to-face.” Listen to it again—1 John 2, verse 28: *“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming”* (1 John 2:28).

You say, “Does that mean that we won't get to Heaven?” No, you'll get to Heaven. Matthew 5, verse 19—listen to what Jesus said: *“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven”—he's in there, but he's way down there—“but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”* (Matthew 5:19). Do you want to be least? When you get to Heaven, do you want to be the least? As we used to say, “Do you want to win the booby prize?”

Listen to this scripture—2 John verse 8: *“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward”* (2 John 1:8). Implication: If you're not careful, you won't have a full reward.

Did you know that you could have a reward and then lose it? Here's a verse—Revelation chapter 3, verse 11: *“Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast [that] thou hast, that no man take thy crown”* (Revelation 3:11). You know, there are people who have lived a wonderful life, and then, at the end, they've just blown it.

Remember when Joe Stowell was here, President of Moody Bible Institute? He preached a sermon, and he talked about the torch race. Remember the torch race? He said in the Olympiad, they had a race back in ancient Greece. And, the one who won

the race and received the laurel, the crown, was not necessarily the one who finished the race first; he was the one who finished the race first with the torch still burning. You know what I want to do, Miss Buna? I want to finish well. I want to finish well, brother. I want to get across that finish line with the torch still burning. What he says is this: “Hold fast what you have. Don’t let any man take your crown” (Revelation 3:11). Ashley, I don’t care how far ahead you are in the race, if you stop running, you’ll lose. It doesn’t matter how far ahead you are. I mean, we need to finish well. We don’t let—we don’t need to let—anybody take our crown from us. For many people it will be a time of regret.

Conclusion

And, I’ve been preaching long enough to know what most folks are thinking. I know what Baptists think. Here’s what you’re thinking: you’re saying, “Now Pastor, I really enjoyed the message tonight on rewards, and that’s interesting. But, I’ll tell you, Pastor, from what I understand, every place up in Heaven is pretty good. So, I mean, you know, man, if I just get there, it’ll be fine with me. Just build me a cabin in the corner of Gloryland. I mean, you know, just anything up there—I mean, it’ll all be good comparatively. And, yeah, I’ll admit I’ve been carnal. I’ve been wood, hay, and stubble. But, you know, so what? I mean, I’m in Heaven. I mean, I may be singed. I may have a little smoke in my clothes, but I’m going. Hallelujah! All of it will be good, so what difference does it make?” Folks, let me tell you a lot of folks think just that way—did you know that? And so, a message like this just kind of rolls off their back like water from a duck’s back.

Let me give you a scenario. Here’s a man who doesn’t believe in banks. So, he has all of his cash, his important papers, all of his life savings, all of his possessions inside of his house. Then one night, in the middle of the night, he begins to cough violently. He opens his eyes. His eyes begin to burn. He takes a breath, and he realizes the room is filled with smoke. He looks through the smoke, and he sees flames on every wall. The drapes are going up in flames. While he’s been asleep, his house has caught on fire. Already it’s burning in such a way that the smoke is so thick that he cannot breathe. The timbers of the roof are beginning to sag and to cave in. The entire house is going up in flames. He doesn’t have time to get his children. He doesn’t have time to rescue his wife. He doesn’t have time to go to the dresser and get his securities. He doesn’t have time to go to the vault and get his money. He has no time to gather anything else. He can’t even get his clothes from the closet. All he does is take a leap, and he jumps through a burning wall to safety.

Inside that house he hears the screams of his children as they perish in the flames. Inside the house his wife screams and begs for help, but she dies in the flames. And,

everything he has worked for—all of his life savings in that house, and there's no insurance whatsoever—and it all goes up just like that. He's standing there. He's alive. He's safe. He watches his life's work go up in flames, and he watches his loved ones perish. Now, what do you think he's going to say to the man standing next to him? You think he's going to say, "Boy am I blessed! You see what happened to me—I got out! I was saved through fire! Wonderful! Let's go get a steak and celebrate that I was saved"?

What's going to happen when you stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ and see your entire life go up in smoke, and people that you could have won to Jesus Christ had you lived as you ought to live die and perish in the flames of Hell? *"If any man's work shall be burned, [he'll] suffer loss"* (1 Corinthians 3:15). And, don't get the idea... I don't know how that's going to work out. If you come to me after this message and say, "Pastor, how? What kind of loss? What's it going to be?" and all. I don't know, so don't waste your time by asking me, because I'd give you a dumb answer if I tried to answer. I don't know. But, I can read black print on white paper. *"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire"* (1 Corinthians 3:15).

And, again, I want to tell you, folks, that time is closer than you think. All the soul winning you're ever going to do you're going to do in this world. All the sacrificial giving you're going to do—all of that—you're going to do now. Work for the night is coming. *"[And] if any man's work shall be burned, [he'll] suffer loss"* (1 Corinthians 3:15). *"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward"* (1 Corinthians 3:14). It's worth thinking about, isn't it?

Let's bow in prayer. Now, let me say this: I've not been teaching tonight salvation by works. Salvation is a gift of God. You receive it by faith when you trust Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, when you repent of your sin and trust Him. And, you can do that right now where you are this moment. I'm telling you upon the authority of the Word of God that if you will, this moment—this very moment—open your heart and receive Jesus Christ into your heart as your Lord and Savior, you will be saved instantaneously and forever. Every sin will be forgiven. God, through His Spirit, will come into you to indwell you and to begin to make you what He wants you to be. When Jesus comes or when you die, you'll be caught up into His presence.

Now, if you're not certain that you're saved and you want to be absolutely certain, I invite you to pray like this: "Dear God"—that's right. Just speak to Him—"Dear God, I know that You love me"—and He does love you, precious friend—"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"—would you tell Him that?—"I do trust You, Lord Jesus"—and would you trust Him right now? Just trust Him. Say—"I trust You, Lord. I believe on You.

I receive You. I trust You to forgive me, to save me right now.”

And then, pray this way: “thank You for saving me, Lord Jesus. I receive it by faith like a child. I’ll never deserve it. I can’t earn it. I just receive it by faith as the gift of God. I don’t look for a sign. I don’t ask for a feeling. I stand upon Your Word. You died for me. You cannot lie. I trust You now to save me. Thank You for doing it. And now, Lord Jesus, begin now to make me the kind of a person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. And, give me the strength and the obedience now to make it public that I have trusted You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Now, look up here. If you prayed that prayer tonight and asked Jesus Christ to come into your heart—you may have already been a church member of this church or some other church, but you’ve never had the assurance that it’s settled—I’m going to ask you to do something now that will help settle it and seal it. And, that is to make public your decision. The Bible says, “*Let the redeemed of the LORD say so*” (Psalm 107:2). And so, I’m going to ask the ministers of our church to stand at the head of each of these aisles. And, if you’re here tonight and you prayed that prayer, or you still want to pray that prayer and you need a little more help, I’m going to ask you to leave your seat and come forward and just tell the minister that you’re trusting Christ or you want to trust Christ. We want to give you some scripture to stand on, seal your decision in prayer, and Jesus will save you if you’ve not been saved. And, if you have been saved, it’ll give Him the glory when you make it public.

Now, *the faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to Heaven*. Jesus said very plainly, “If you’re ashamed of Me, I’ll be ashamed of you” (Mark 8:38). “You confess Me before men; I’ll confess you before My Father in Heaven” (Matthew 10:32). So, don’t look around to see what someone else is going to do. You come forward tonight if you’re the only one who needs to. You come if all of us do. You do what God would have you to do.

Others of you tonight may know that you’re saved, but you’re not a member of Bellevue. Now, we’re not looking for just joiners. This is a church, not a club. But, if you believe in Jesus, and you love Him, and you’re in sympathy with the fellowship and the doctrines of this church, we’d love to have you as a brother or sister in Christ in the Bellevue family. And, I want to invite you to leave your seat, and come down the aisle, and tell one of the ministers that you’d like to place your membership here.

Some are coming, saying, “I’m trusting Jesus.” Others are coming, saying, “I want to be saved. Guide me.” Others, perhaps, are coming, saying, “I want to place my membership here.” “Lord, I Believe”—the words are on the screen. Let’s stand together as we sing.

Don't Go to Heaven Empty-Handed

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 19, 1980

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:9–15

“If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”

1 CORINTHIANS 3:14–15

Outline

Introduction

- A. God Wants to Live in Us Individually
 - B. God Wants to Live in Us Corporately
 - I. A Day of Declaration
 - II. A Day of Revelation
 - A. You Will Be Tested According to Attitude
 - B. You Will Be Tested According to Authority
 - C. You Will Be Tested According to Ability
 - D. You Will Be Tested According to Aspiration
 - III. A Day of Reward
- Conclusion

Introduction

I want to speak to you tonight on this subject: “Don't Go To Heaven Empty-Handed.” I'd like for you to find in your Bibles, please, 1 Corinthians, the third chapter—1 Corinthians, the third chapter—and we'll commence our reading in verse 9. Jim, the music tonight was especially good, and I appreciated—and I appreciate—your Spirit-filled solo. All right, are you ready?

First Corinthians chapter 3, verse 9: *“For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the*

fire shall [test]—or, “try”—“every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Corinthians 3:9–15).

A. **God Wants to Live in Us Individually**

Now, there are many figures for the Bible or for the Church, rather. The Church is described in the Bible as a Bride; the Church is also described in the Bible as a Body. But here, in this passage of scripture, Paul uses the figure of a building. And, he says, *“Ye are God’s building”* (1 Corinthians 3:9). All of us together are a building, or a temple of God, and God wants to inhabit His people.

B. **God Wants to Live in Us Corporately**

Not only does God want to live in us individually, but God wants to live in us corporately. Where two or three are gathered there He is in his midst (Matthew 18:20). And so, we are the temple of God. I hope you’ll understand that. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, God had a people for His temple. We are the building of God; we are God’s temple.

Now, every building—every temple—must have a foundation, and the foundation of this holy temple is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Look in verse 11: *“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11). Do you remember a while back we preached on the Church and we said that the Church is not built upon Simon Peter—the Church is built upon Jesus Christ? The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord. And so, we’re on a solid rock, because we’re on the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the foundation of this holy temple of God.

Now, our lives, as individual Christians, are to be built upon that foundation after we receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. Look at verse 12: *“Now if any man build upon this foundation”—that is, Jesus Christ. And, you don’t lay—you don’t build—from the roof down; remember, you build from the foundation up. You have to be saved before you can build—“if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, [or] stubble”* (1 Corinthians 3:12). Now, there are two kinds of builders. There are carnal builders, and there are spiritual builders. Carnal builders build of wood, hay, and stubble. That is, they build of cheap material, combustible materials, materials that are not worth much, and materials that do not last long. And, there are a lot of carnal builders who are saved but their lives are characterized as wood, hay, and stubble. And then, there are spiritual builders—Spirit-filled people. Their lives are depicted and characterized as gold, and silver, and precious stones.

Now, everybody who is here tonight, who is saved, is a builder. I don’t know whether

you're wood, hay, and stubble builder. Almost sounds like the story of the three little pigs, doesn't it? I don't know whether you're a wood, hay, and stubble builder, or whether you're a gold, and silver, and precious stone builder, but everybody is a builder who is saved tonight.

Somebody asked me how many deacons I had, and I told them, "Several hundred." And, they said, "Are they all active?" I said, "Yes, some of them building and some of them tearing down—they're all active." Well, I was somewhat facetious. They're all building, but some of them are building gold, and silver, and precious stones and some are building wood, hay, and stubble. But, everybody who is a believer is a builder. Everybody who is in the temple is building upon that foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ. Either you are building wood, hay, and stubble, or you're building gold, and silver, and precious stones.

I. A Day of Declaration

"Well," you say, "How can I know what kind of building I'm building?" Well, there's coming a day of declaration. Now, notice, say, in verse 13—excuse me, in verse 13, yes: *"Every man's work shall be made manifest"*—one of these days, it's going to be manifest what kind of building you work for—*"the day shall declare it"* (1 Corinthians 3:13). The Christian is going to have a declaration day, and that day is going to declare, Christian brother, Christian sister, whether you are a wood, hay, and stubble builder or whether you are a gold, and silver, and precious stone builder. It's not going to declare whether you're saved or lost; that's already decided by what you do with the Lord Jesus Christ. But, the day is going to reveal what you are.

And, notice, the Bible says in verse 13: it's going to be revealed by fire (1 Corinthians 3:13). One of these days, as a Christian, you're going to face fire; and one of these days, as a Christian, your life is going to be tested by what I call the torch test. Now, God is going to put the torch to your life; and if your life is of wood, hay, and stubble, of course, those are combustible materials and they're going to burn. Gold, and silver, and precious stones can't burn; incidentally, they've already been through the fire—that's how they got to be gold, and silver, and precious stones. They were formed in the crucible of fire; they've already been to the fire.

And, every Christian, dear friend, who is a Spirit-filled Christian, has already had the purging fire of God's Holy Spirit to purge out the dross, and to purge out that wood, and to purge out that hay, and to purge out that stubble. And, I want to warn you, Christian friend, even though you're saved and even though you're born again, there is a judgment of the Christian's work.

Now, this is not a judgment, ladies and gentleman, that determines whether you're going to Heaven or Hell; that's already settled by what you do with the Lord Jesus

Christ. You know, so many people think that if they can just live a good enough life, they'll get to Heaven. One of these days, perhaps they'll face the Lord at the judgment, and He's going to have a little list. He's kind of like Santa Claus, making a list and checking it twice, going to find out who is naughty or nice. And, if you've been naughty, you go to Hell; and if you've been nice, you go to Heaven. You'd be surprised how many people believe that. They think that we're saved by works of righteousness, but that's not true, friend. Your salvation, as I preached tonight—or this morning—is determined by one thing: what you do with Jesus Christ. “He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

And so, the judgment that you're going to face as a Christian is not to determine whether you go to Heaven or Hell. That's determined by what you do with the Lord Jesus. But, a Christian is going to face the judgment, and it is a judgment of his work. There's going to be a day that's going to manifest whether or not you build wood, hay, and stubble upon the Lord Jesus Christ or whether you build gold, and silver, and precious stones upon the Lord Jesus Christ. You're going to face the fire; your life is going to come under the torch test.

II. A Day of Revelation

Now, I want to mention several things about this day of declaration. The first thing I want you to notice is that it is going to be a day of revelation. Look, if you will, in verse 13: the Bible says—the last part—and because it shall be, “[Your work] shall be revealed by fire” (1 Corinthians 3:13). It's going to be a time of revelation. And, I want to tell you, friend, things that you think are important now are not going to be so important then. And, a lot of things that you may not prize highly now may seem very, very important when you see those things in the pure white light of eternity. You see, when we get to Heaven, no longer will we see things from man's viewpoint; we're going to see things from God's viewpoint, and God doesn't see as we see.

For example, put this in your margin: 1 Samuel chapter 16 and verse 7: this is what Samuel said concerning Eliab, who was one of the sons who was a candidate for the King of Israel, one of Jesse's sons. Eliab was a big, sun-crowned, broad-shouldered, winsome man. He was a man that, if you had gone to look for a king, you would have said, “Surely there's a kingly man if I ever saw one.” But, God didn't have His eyes upon Eliab; God had his eyes upon David, the man after God's own heart. But, here is what Samuel said concerning Eliab: “*Look not on his countenance*”—he was a handsome man—“*or on the height of his stature*”—because he was a tall man, for God says—“*[for] I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but [God looks] on the heart*” (1 Samuel 16:7). Aren't you glad

tonight that some who may not be beautiful or handsome—some who may not have shining bright personality—aren't you glad tonight that you can have a heart that's right for God?

You know, sometimes we see these people go walking past and we just say, "Oh, they just seem to have it all. Oh, I just wish I could be like that person, look like that person, sing like that person, uh, serve like that person. I just wish I had the ability. I wish I had the height. I wish I weren't a sawed off little runt. I wish I were this or that." Oh, dear friend, listen, it's so great to know that, that God doesn't see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. Now, we have a different perspective today; but dear friend, at the judgment seat of Christ, there's going to be a day of revelation. And, the things that are highly esteemed among men may be an abomination to God.

Let me give you another verse—Luke chapter 16 and verse 15: Jesus, speaking to those self-righteous prigs of His day, said, "*Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God*" (Luke 16:15). Aren't you glad, dear friend, for that day of revelation that's going to come? And, when that day of revelation comes, the emphasis is not going to be upon size but upon quality. God is not primarily interested in quantity; God is interested in quality. For example, see what the Bible says here in verse 13 again: "*Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is*"—not what size (1 Corinthians 3:13).

Now, we Americans are all enamored by size. I heard some years ago about four nationalities who wrote a book on the elephant: the Britisher wrote a book on the elephant, and he called it *Elephants and the Empire*; a Frenchman wrote a book on the elephant, and he called it *The Love Life of the Elephant*; a German wrote a book on the elephant, and it was a fixed bind volume on *The Intricate Anatomy of the Elephant*; and an American wrote a book on the elephant, and it was called *Bigger and Better Elephants*. Now, that sounds a lot like an American, you know. We just—all enamored by size. But, you know, God is not nearly as impressed by size as we are. And, the Bible says, "*And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort*"—not what size—"it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13). Case and point: Had you rather have a truckload of hay or a handful of diamonds? Huh? You see, it's not the amount; it is the quality that our Heavenly Father is looking for. "*The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is*" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

I heard of a girl who met a Texan, one time. And, he was dressed nicely, and he had one of those Texas Stetson hats on. And, he looked like he might have had money, and she was a little bit of a gold digger. And so, she started to talk to this man and turn on

the charm. And, after they got to be friends, she asked him—she said, “You have a hat on. Are you a rancher?” He said, “Well, kind of.” And, she was trying to get the right information. She said, “Well, do you have any cows?” “Oh,” he said, “Yes, a few.” Said, “Well, do you have any land?” “Well,” he says, “I’ve got some acreage.” Well, after they’d talked a little while further, she said, “How many cows do you have?” “Oh,” he said, “I don’t know—maybe 30 or 40.” Well, that didn’t sound so good, but she said, “And how much land do you have?” “Well,” he said, “I don’t know—I think about 20 acres.” She said, “Is that all?” He said, “Ma’am, it’s downtown Dallas.” Friend, let me tell you, you see, quality is more important than quantity—and it is in God’s sight. *“The fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is”* (1 Corinthians 3:13).

Now, a carnal man can work his fingers to the bone, and he can work himself into a frenzy doing church work—and there’s nothing wrong with doing church work. But, do you know what I’m afraid of? I’m afraid that many who are members this church and many churches who have worked, and worked, and worked in the energy of the flesh are going to come and face the fire and see everything they’ve done go up in smoke, because all they did they did in the energy of the flesh; they did not do according to the authority of the Word of God. And, they were not empowered by the Spirit of God; and their work would be burned, and they will suffer loss. I’m talking about saved people, who have been born again, who are going to Heaven empty-handed.

Must I empty-handed go?

...

Must I meet my Savior so? (Charles C. Luther).

Now, what is going to determine—what is going to determine—the sort, whether or not it is quality instead of quantity? May I give you four tests that you can put to your work tonight—four tests, where you can test your work before the fire ever gets there to test it, before it ever faces the torch, whether, you can see, whether it will be wood, hay, or stubble, or silver and precious stones?

A. You Will Be Tested According to Attitude

The first test that I want to suggest tonight is the attitude test—the attitude test—not merely what you did, but why you did it. What was your attitude concerning the thing? Now, you’re in 1 Corinthians chapter 3; just turn right to 1 Corinthians chapter 9, and you’ll see what I’m talking about—1 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 16. Paul was a preacher of the gospel—and I’m sure that he was a good one—but Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 and verse 16: *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16).

Now, Paul said, “I’m locked in, and I can’t get out. God caught me, and I can’t get

loose. I'm a preacher of the gospel." I feel the same way. I've often thought about what I might do if I didn't preach, but I've never seriously considered it. I probably couldn't get a job, if the truth were known, but I've thought about it. But, I've never seriously considered it. For I know that God has called me to preach. And, I've told you before, I'm as sure of my call to preach as I am of my salvation—and sometimes, even more sure, because I have doubted my salvation when I didn't know the Scripture as I ought. But, dear friend, I've never doubted my call to preach. I just can't get out of it. And, this is what the apostle... Not that I want to get out. I never get weary of the work. I am grateful for the privilege of serving this church. And, sometimes I get weary in the work, but I want to tell you, I never get weary of the work. I am grateful for the privilege of serving this church and serving my Lord.

But, Paul said, *"Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of"*—he says—*"for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel"*—but now, look at verse 17—*"For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but"*—if not—*"but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me"* (1 Corinthians 9:16–17). He's saying, "I've got to preach the gospel one way or the other, but," he said, "I want to watch my attitude. I want to preach not because I have to; I want to preach because I want to." And that, my dear friend, is one thing that is going to make the difference as to whether your service is gold, and silver, and precious stone, or whether it is wood, hay, and stubble.

Have you come to choir practice because you had to? They were checking the roll. Brother Tommy would get on to you, if you didn't come. Brother Jim would read you the Riot Act, if you weren't there, huh? Uh huh, confession is good for the soul. All right, did you ever just sort of go to a deacons' meeting even when the World Series is on and you really wanted to stay home and see who won the World Series, but you had to go to the deacons' meeting? Deacons, did we have a meeting tonight? Did we, deacons? How many deacons were at the meeting tonight? Let me see your hands. Fellows, I forgot it. We didn't have many hands anyway—a whole lot of them forgot it. But, you think I forgot it because of that ballgame? I didn't—I just forgot it because I had company in my house, but I just slap-dab forgot it. But, how many of you—how many of you—have ever gone to a deacon's meeting not because you wanted to but because "woe is me if I don't"—huh?

"Necessity is laid upon me" (1 Corinthians 9:16). I wonder, how many things do we do like that that are church work and things that we do because of necessity? Our attitude is not there; our heart is not in it. We preach, we sing, we teach, because somebody's got to do it. Well, God knows our attitudes, and God says if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward. And so, that's one test you can put to it.

B. You Will Be Tested According to Authority

But, let me give you another test. Not only must the work be tested according to attitude, but the work must be also tested according to authority: By whose authority did you do what you did? Was what you did—that you're calling for Jesus or for the Church—was it done with the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself and the authority of the Word of God?

Now, check this verse, if you will please: 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5, again. Paul is talking about getting a reward; and this time, the figure that he uses is athletics. And, he's saying that we're all spiritual athletes and we're all trying to excel, we're all trying to win that crown, we're all trying to win that laurel, we're all trying to win that loving cup, we're all trying to get the prize at the end of the race. But then, Paul says something to young Timothy that I would that every Christian work in the world would understand anew and afresh—in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5: *“And if a man also strive for masteries”*—that is, he's talking about the athletic endeavors—*“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Timothy 2:5).

Now, if you're an athlete and you're running the 440—that is, you're running around that field one time. And, incidentally, I ran the 440 in '49—1949. That's a good year. All right now, listen—you're running the 440, and you go around that field. And, when you get just half way around, you see the gold post over. I mean, you see the finish line over there. And so, rather than going all the way around, you just decide you'll cut right across the field. I mean, after all, that's the shortest way, and the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. And, you're a pretty good logician; and so, you figure that out, and so you say, “The rest of these fellows can stay on that cinder track. I'm going to win first prize.” Now friend, I don't care how smart it seems to you—you're not going to get the prize, you're not going to get the crown, if you don't strive lawfully. That's what Paul is saying: *“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Timothy 2:5).

You know, there are a lot of people who want to do things for the Lord, and they don't get the authority from the Word of God. Now, I'm going to stir up a hornet's nest right now. If it makes you mad, you can come to me and apologize and I'll forgive you. But, God has not called a woman to be a pastor of a church. Amen. I didn't say God didn't call women to serve Him, and I didn't say women couldn't serve Him; and I did not say that women are not equal with men—they are, in God's sight. With God is no respect of persons (Romans 2:11), and in Jesus there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond or free (Galatians 3:28). But, the Bible says that a *“bishop [is to be]...the husband of one wife”* (1 Timothy 3:2). And, no woman on earth can be the husband of one wife. That's what the Bible says; it's not what I say.

Now look, if you want to argue, don't come arguing with me; just take that verse, and

once you get that figured out, and once you talk God out it, and get God to change it and take it out of the Bible, then you come talk to me about it, okay? But, other than that, don't waste your breath talking to me about it. I'm not mad on women; I'm not down on women. I—listen, brother—I thank God for the women of this church. If it were not for the godly, praying, giving, sacrificing, loving, boosting women of this church I really wonder what would happen. But, I'm just simply saying this, ladies and gentleman—that some people come along, and they say, “Well, God called me; and therefore, I'm going to preach.” For God's not going to transgress His Word for you or for anybody else on the face of this earth. And, when the rewards are handed out, if you did not scribe lawfully with the authority of the Word of God, there would be no crown. You can't say, “I know a better way, God. I've got it figured out. And, since some of these other men here are not what they ought to be, I'm going to step in and fill the gap.” Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says, *“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”* (1 Samuel 15:22).

There are many things that we do that we think are so good, so wise. We do it in our own wisdom, in our own wit. But, you see, it's going to be tested not only according to attitude, but it is going to be tested according to authority. Did you have His authority? Was is backed up by the Word of God? If it was not, no matter how good it may have seemed in your sight, it's wood, hay, and stubble.

Now, I didn't say that the people couldn't be saved if a woman preaches the gospel. Obviously, some people have been saved under women's preaching. Paul says some *“preach Christ of contention...supposing to add affliction of my bonds”* (Philippians 1:16). But, he said, “I rejoice that Christ is preached, and I will rejoice” (Philippians 1:18), but that's not the point we're talking about here. The point that we're talking about here is what is going to happen when you come to the Lord and stand before the Lord and the Lord puts His torch there.

C. You Will Be Tested According to Ability

All right, let me give you a third criteria that our Lord is going to use, I believe. Not only are we going to be tested according to attitude and tested according to authority, but we're also going to be tested according to ability. You see, look, some people have more ability than others; some people are more gifted than others. Some are multi-gifted people, and some have few gifts. Everybody has a spiritual gift from the Lord. But, you know, some have more money than others, and some have more time than others, and some have more strength than others, and some have better minds than others, and some have more talents than others. And, the Bible says in Luke chapter 12 and verse 48: *“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required”*—*“For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required”* (Luke 12:48).

Let's just think in the matter of giving. You've heard me say before that God does not measure your gift by the amount that you put in the plate. God measures your gift by the balance that remains on the check stub after you've written the check—not the size of the check, but the balance on the stub. Do you know what I mean by that? You see, for somebody here tonight to give 1,000 dollars to a venture in victory maybe a great, great sacrifice. For other people to give 1,000 dollars—they could give 1,000 dollars perhaps as easy as some of us could give ten dollars or 100 dollars, and God knows that. God knows the ability we have. Some people can sing like Jim Whitmire; they have a lot of ability. And, some sing like I do—like a frog with a man in his throat.

Now, God knows the difference. God knows the ability that He's given us. "And to whomsoever much is given of the same shall much be required" (Luke 12:48). You think of that woman... Let me illustrate what I'm talking about—about giving, again. Do you remember that woman that was Jesus told about that went up to the treasury, and she was a widow, and she cast the widow's mite in there? Do you know how much the widow's mite was? It was one quarter of a cent. And, she—I can see her with her little children there, all washed and clean, their little clothes patched but clean. I can see her as she comes, looking around, and all those important people there in the church. She's feeling perhaps a little self-conscious because that's all she has—that's her whole living, that's all there is standing between her and starvation, so far as men know. But, she takes that quarter of a cent, and she places it in the treasury of the Lord. And, Jesus was there, and Jesus saw what she gave. Now, I want you to listen to what Jesus said about her. Jesus said—now, pay attention: "She gave more"—not than any of them. Jesus said—"she gave more than they all. She gave more than the whole shooting match—one quarter of a cent" (Mark 12:43). And, the Bible says many rich people were there.

Little widow, you're here in this church tonight. Sometimes you just may feel...you just may feel left out. We're talking about raising five million dollars for a building, and you say, "Five million dollars? What would this little penance do?" Friend, you leave that up to God—you leave that up to God. "Unto whomsoever much is given of the same shall much be required" (Luke 12:48). And, when it comes to gold, and silver, and precious stones, and when it comes to wood, hay and stubble, I want you to know that there is a God in the Glory who knows what you're able to do.

So, the test is going to be according to ability. And, let me say a little story that I heard years ago. And, I don't remember the preacher I heard tell the story, so I cannot give you the background. But, there was a woman who was in the hospital, and she'd been in there for some days. And, you know, they don't let children visit in the hospital rooms very much. But, she'd been in there so long that the father had gotten a dispensation from the nurses to let this family come up with the little children. And, there

were several children in this family, and in this family among those children was a little girl who was retarded. She was a precious, pretty little girl, but she was retarded.

And, the other children had gone and brought some gifts for mother, and among the gifts they had brought some flowers to decorate mother's room. And, they'd forgotten about the little retarded girl, just bringing her along. And, when the little retarded girl saw the flowers that the other children were bringing in the presence, before she went into the hospital—out there in the yard of the hospital by the sidewalk were some weeds, just plain old weeds—and she stooped down, and got a handful of those weeds, and made a bouquet, and went into the hospital room carrying a handful of weeds. And, the other children came, and kissed their mother affectionately, and gave their gifts; and that little retarded girl came up to her mother and gave to her mother a handful of weeds.

Now, I want to ask every mother in this building tonight, do you think that that mother despised that gift? Or, do you think perhaps she valued it more than all the rest because, as Jesus said of Mary of Bethany, "*Let her alone. 'She hath done what she could'*" (Mark 14:8). Have you done what you could?

D. You Will Be Tested According to Aspiration

You see, it's not according to vanity; that's not it at all. It is according, dear friend, to attitude. It is according to authority. It is tested according to ability. And, I want to say it's going to be tested according to aspiration—not only what you did but what you aspired to do, what you wanted to do, what you desired to do.

King David wanted to build a temple, but King David was not able to build a temple. God had not chosen David to build a temple. God, in His sovereign will, chose Solomon to build a temple. David was a man of war, and God did not want a man of war to build a temple. And, I want you to jot this scripture down: 1 Kings chapter 8, verses 17 and 18. And, this is what God said of David, who wanted to build a temple: and God says, "*And it was in the heart of David*"—now, God is saying this through Solomon—"*And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said unto David my father*"—listen to this now—"*Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart*" (1 Kings 8:17–18).

Now, David did not build a temple, but it was in his heart to do so—he wanted to do so. Those of you who come down here to visitation... And, I met such a wonderful group of our people who were down here last Tuesday night at visitation. And, you ought to be here every Tuesday night going out to reach us this community for the Lord Jesus Christ. I told those people, "The important thing—really, the important thing—is not whether or not you were able to bring somebody to Jesus Christ; the important thing is,

was it in your heart?” I’m not asking you tonight, “Are you a soul winner?” I’m asking you, “Do you try? Do you want to? Is it in your heart?” God knows your heart. God knows your desire. God knows what you want to do. Is there a burning, yearning desire to see the lost come to Jesus? Aren’t you glad that God doesn’t just judge us by our achievements? God judges us by our aspiration.

You think of those five missionaries who went to take the gospel to the Auca Indians. Do you remember? Have you read the book *Through The Gates Of Splendor*, and so forth? And, those fine young men, I tell you, when you read the lives of those young men... Some of the finest, most intelligent clean-cut young men—some of the most dedicated young men I’ve ever heard of in all of my life were going to take the gospel to this savage tribe of Auca Indians. And, as they landed the airplane, they were ambushed, and attacked, and speared, and they never got the gospel to them. Others did because of the door they opened, but do you think when they faced our dear Lord at the judgment seat of Christ, He’s going to say to those missionaries, “Shame on you. You never preached the gospel to the Auca”? No, you see, it was in their heart—it was their desire. And, because it was their desire, they’re going to receive the soul-winner’s crown.

Now, what’s in your heart? You see, God is going to judge us according to our aspiration. And so, listen, this day is going to be a time of revelation.

III. A Day of Reward

Now, the third thing I want to say is not only is it going to be—you say, “You mean just the third thing?” Yeah, all right, it won’t be quite as long, but listen—not only is it going to be a time of revelation, but it’s also going to be a time of reward. Look, if you will, in verse 14 again. Go back to 2 Corinthians—I mean 1 Corinthians—chapter 3, now, and look, if you will, in verse 14: now, the Bible says in verse 14, “*If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward*” (1 Corinthians 3:14). The judgment seat of Christ and this day of testing by fire is going to be a time of revelation; it is going to be a time of reward.

Now, I want to make something clear: I trust by the aid of the Holy Spirit tonight, good works do not bring you to Heaven. The Bible says, “It is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy he has saved us” (Titus 3:5). Church membership, baptism, ritual, good deeds, helping the poor, doing things for the needy—that will never get you to Heaven. Works are not a substitute for faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and a new birth.

But now, pay attention—while works do not carry us to Heaven, works follow us to Heaven. Read in Revelation chapter 14 and verse 13: “*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from*

henceforth...that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them" (Revelation 14:13). Their works don't bring them to Heaven; their works follow them to Heaven. And, when you go to Heaven, if your works have been gold, and silver, and precious stones, those works are going to follow you to Heaven. "[And] if any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward" (1 Corinthians 3:14).

Now, every now and then, there's somebody real pious who will say, "Well Preacher, I'm not serving God for reward." Well, I am. You say, "Why?" Because the Bible teaches it. And, I think if the Bible teaches it and encourages me to serve God for reward, then I ought to do it.

Let me give you some verses on rewards. Revelation verse 13—no, I just read that. Revelation 22, verse 12: Jesus said, "*Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be*" (Revelation 22:12). Listen to this scripture—Matthew chapter 6, verse 20: Jesus said, "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*" (Matthew 6:20). Now, that verse doesn't even make sense unless some people are going to have more treasure in Heaven than others. Listen again to our scripture in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 8 again: the Bible says, "*Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour*" (1 Corinthians 3:8). You're going to be rewarded or have a lack of reward by the way that you serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, there are a lot of little obscure and unknown precious saints who don't get much reward down here. People don't give them any credit for their service for Jesus, but God knows. I want to tell you, friend, it will take another world to show who the big preachers are, too. Just because I'm a pastor of a big church... And I'm aware of what I'm saying when I say this, but I believe perhaps the biggest reward is going to go, many times, to the pastors of some of these little crossroad country towns who stayed out there and stuck by the stuff; and they love the Lord.

My folks came to visit me this week, and they brought a bulletin from a church. And, they told me about the size of the town, a little small town—I mean, a little small town, perhaps less than 500 people in the town. And, this little man was the pastor of this little church; and I looked at that bulletin, and on the back of that bulletin was the Sunday sermon that he had preached. And, I want to tell you, it was one of the finest and best outlined expositions of the Scripture I have ever seen. In my estimation, the man who wrote that outline could pastor the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas. God knows, God knows, God knows who His men are. God knows who's faithful. And, there are a lot of little nobodies who seem like nobodies down here that are going to be somebodies up there. And, people that we don't know about are going to receive a reward.

I told you this story, but it bears repeating: Years ago, there was a Sunday School teacher who was so concerned for one of the young men in the Sunday School class that that teacher went in to see this young man who happened to be selling shoes in a shoe store. And, he took the young man from the front desk, and carried him back behind the shoe racks, and explained the gospel to him, and laid a trembling hand on his shoulder, and led that young man to Jesus Christ. The young man was 19 years of age. The young man was thoroughly converted. He went to the church and asked that they receive him for church membership, but the church would not receive him because they said he was too ignorant—he didn't know enough about God.

Do you know who the man was? Dwight L. Moody—one of the most powerful evangelists who ever lived. But, he was just a 19-year-old boy, and they wouldn't receive him. Dwight L. Moody, who had been so soundly converted, decided that he wanted to bring others to Jesus, and he started Sunday Schools in the city of Chicago. Just a layman, never did get ordained—and he had such success bringing boys and girls to Sunday School in Chicago and became such a powerful witness for the Lord Jesus Christ that his fame spread.

Finally, he was invited to England to preach. He became an evangelist, and they invited him to England. And, the man who invited him to come and preach was the pastor of a very suave, erudite pulpit; his name was Frederick Brotherton Meyer. You know him as F. B. Meyer. And, F. B. Meyer was a cultured English gentleman—one of those English divines. And, he invited Moody to preach because he'd heard about Moody. But, he's never heard Moody. And, Moody—I mean, if the King's English got in his way, he just trampled all over it. They said that Moody was the only preacher that could pronounce the word *Jerusalem* in two syllables. But, Moody knew God, and he preached with power and fervor.

But, he had not been long in F. B. Meyer's pulpit before F. B. Meyer was chagrin. "Oh," he said, "Oh no, what have I done? This uncouth, uncultured, unlettered American." And, on top of that—not only did he murder the King's English. He didn't disappoint the King, but he murdered the King's English—I mean the King of kings—but he told what we would call today a tear-jerker—I mean, a deathbed story. It was the story of a Sunday School teacher in America who learned he was going to die; and before he died, he went out and won every scholar in his class to the Lord Jesus Christ. It was a very powerful and moving story.

Meyer was humiliated. After the service and some days later, F. B. Meyer was having tea with some of the ladies, and this lady was a Sunday School teacher. And, he asked her—and he said, "Madam, how goes it with you?" And, do you know what she said? "Wonderful, Brother Meyer." She said, "Since Moody has been here and preached, I've won every girl in my class to Jesus Christ." F. B. Meyer later testified—

this cultured and learned God-fearing man said, “That day I learned something of the language of the human soul; and through Dwight L. Moody, God touched my life for God.” And, you know if you’ve read Meyer’s books that his life was touched by God.

Conclusion

Let’s pray.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 30, 2000

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:9–15

Outline

Introduction

- A. We Are Judged as Sinners
 - B. We Are Judged as Sons and Daughters
 - C. We Are Judged as Servants
 - I. A Time of Revelation
 - A. Tested According to Attitude
 - B. Tested According to Authority
 - C. Tested According to Ability
 - D. Tested According to Aspirations
 - II. A Time of Reward
 - III. A Time of Regret
- Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take the precious Word of God and find 1 Corinthians chapter 3, and I want to add an addendum to the message this morning on spiritual gifts. When I introduced that message, I told you that you are a gifted child. God has given you a spiritual gift, which is a supernatural ability to work for Him. And, one day, you will have to give an account for your stewardship of that gift. One of these days, you are going to be brought into accountability as to what you did with the gift that God has given to you. Now, with that in mind, I want us to read this passage of scripture, and I hope that you'll just keep it open in your laps, because we're going to study together some wonderful truth that has been a great encouragement to me but also a wonderful admonition to me.

Now, even before we get into the message, let me tell you something about judgment: there are three kinds of judgment; all of us have three kinds of judgment. We will be judged as sinners. We will be judged as sons and daughters. And, we will be judged as servants.

A. **We Are Judged as Sinners**

Now, we are judged as sinners. That is, our sin deserves judgment. Now, thank God—the judgment for our sins is already passed. Jesus stood in for us. He took our place. He took our Hell. He took our suffering. He took our sin, our shame. He took it all to

Calvary and paid in full. We have settled out of court. And, thank God, Romans 8:1: *“There is therefore now no condemnation”*—no judgment—*“to [those who] are in Christ Jesus.”* So, our judgment as sinners is in the past, and our sins are in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, never to be brought up against us again.

B. We Are Judged as Sons and Daughters

But, not only are we judged as sinners—we’re also judged as sons. Just because we’re saved by grace and kept by grace, that does not mean that we’re not going to be held accountable in this life if we disobey our Heavenly Father. He is our Heavenly Father. And, though relationship is established by birth and can never be undone, fellowship is established by life and can change. We can get in fellowship or out of fellowship who loves us. Is that not correct?

Now, if we disobey Him—and sometimes we do—He has the right, the prerogative, and has promised to carry us to the woodshed. Do you know what that means? Well, in the Book of Hebrews, the Bible says, “Whom the Father loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6). *“[And] if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons”* (Hebrews 12:8). Now, He’s not using rough language. That word means, “I never sired you. I never fathered you. Had I fathered you and you lived that way, I would have chastened you.” “Whom the Father loves, He chastens” (Hebrews 12:6). All of us tell our children when we spank them, “Sweetheart, I do this because I love you.” And, when I was a kid, that was hard for me believe. And, my dad said, “I love you, son. This is why I’m doing it.” Well, I was his favorite then. He loved me more than he loved my brothers: “I do this because I love you.” That is our judgment as sons. It has nothing to do with our relationship. That’s established by birth—can never change. Once you’re born, you cannot be unborn.

C. We Are Judged as Servants

But, there’s a third judgment, and many of us don’t realize that—not only our judgment as sinners and our judgment as sons, but our judgment as servants. God gave us a spiritual gift, and with that spiritual gift we’re to serve Him. And, one of these days, we are going to give an account of our stewardship, and that’s something we need to understand.

Now, that’s what Paul is dealing with in the third chapter of 1 Corinthians, because the Corinthians were very careless in their use of spiritual gifts. And so, notice what he says. Let’s begin in verse 9: *“For we are labourers together with God”*—now, he’s talking about service, laboring—*“ye are God’s husbandry”*—that means we are God’s vineyard—*“and ye are God’s building”*—now, he’s not talking about this church building that we are in, but he’s talking about those of us who are saints, who are stones built

upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. Notice he says—“ye”—plural, the Church (you’re)—“*God’s building*”—in the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people; in the New Testament, He has a people for His temple. He lives in us. We are God’s building. Now, notice verse 10 now—“*According to the grace of God*”—that is, “the charisma, the *charis* of God—“*which is given unto me, as a wise masterbuilder*”—Paul had a spiritual gift to be a master building—that is, a church builder—“*I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:9–11). Paul came to Corinth, and he preached Christ; and he built the foundation for the Corinthian church. He laid the foundation by preaching Christ, and the Church is built upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, notice what Paul is saying beginning in verse 12: “*Now if any man build upon this foundation*”—what is the foundation? Jesus—“*if any man build upon this foundation gold [or] silver [or] precious stones*”—that’s one category of building materials that he mentions. And then, he mentions a category—“*wood, hay, [and] stubble*”—so, some built upon Jesus wood, gold, silver, and precious stones. Others built upon the same foundation wood, hay, and stubble. Sounds like the story of the three little pigs, doesn’t it? All right. Now, let’s go on—“*Every man’s work shall be made manifest*”—that’s the reason I said we will give an account for our spiritual gift—“*every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try*”—and the word *try* there literally means “test”—“*every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*” (1 Corinthians 3:12–15).

Now, I’m going to stop reading there, but let me just give you the background. Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Church. I hope you know this. Some people believe the Church is built upon Simon Peter. It is not built upon Simon Peter; it is built upon Jesus Christ. He is the solid Rock. He is the foundation of the Church, and our lives are to be built upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, he mentions two kinds of builders here—carnal builders and spiritual builders. Paul was dealing with the Corinthians, and he said, “*I...could not speak unto you as...spiritual, but as unto carnal*” (1 Corinthians 3:1). The Corinthians were wood, hay, and stubble types of Christians, when they ought to have been gold, and silver, and precious stone types of Christians. Now, Paul had laid the foundation, and they were saved; but they were using spiritual gifts as toys, not tools. Their lives were ephemeral. They were natural rather than supernatural. Though they had really been saved, they were making a mess building upon the foundation that Paul had laid there. They were building wood, hay, and stubble. And then, he said, “There are others who may build

gold, silver, and precious stones.” Now, right away, you see there is a contrast. Wood, hay, and stubble would burn—very combustible. Gold, silver, and precious stones—they’ve already been through the fire. That’s how they got to be gold, silver, and precious stones. So, one is cheap, combustible; the other is precious and permanent.

Now, Paul says, “One of these days, a day of declaration is coming. The day will declare it.” The day that he’s talking about is the Judgment Seat of Christ. In 2 Corinthians chapter 5, he says, *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body...whether it be good or [whether it be evil]”* (2 Corinthians 5:10). Just because judgment for you as a sinner is passed—and when you die, judgment for you as a son will be passed—there is coming a day when you’re going to stand before the Lord—the Judgment Day of Christ, the Judgment Seat of Christ—and you are going to be judged as a servant. And, there’s the building. Here’s the foundation: Jesus Christ. Here one builder’s built wood, hay, and stubble. Here’s another builder that has built gold, and silver, and precious stones upon the same foundation. The judgment is going to be by fire. There’s going to be a test. *“It shall be revealed by fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). There’s going to be a torch test. And, of course, wood, hay, and, and stubble would be burned up. Gold, silver, and precious stones would remain upon that foundation.

Now, that’s the background. That’s the analogy. That’s the illustration that the Apostle Paul is going to use. Now, with that in mind, I want you to think about yourself and think, one of these days, perhaps sooner than you realize, you’re going to die or Jesus is going to come. Fifty years from now, most of us will not be here—even if the Lord tarries, right? Twenty years from now, a great many of us will be gone. You know, it’s not way out there, folks. It’s not that far away. We, either... I don’t know whether He’s coming, but I can tell you one thing: we’re going—we’re going. Either He’s coming, or we’re going. We are closer than we realize to stand before the Lord. I’m going to report in, and I’m going to find out whether I have been wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, silver, and precious stones. And, so will you! You say, “Well, what difference does it make?” That’s what I want to show you tonight. And, I want you to notice three things about the Judgment Seat of Christ—that torch test, that day that’s going to declare whether you built upon Jesus Christ wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, silver, and precious stones. Three things I’ll say about that day...

I. A Time of Revelation

Number one: It’s going to be a day of revelation—a time of revelation. Look, if you will, in verse 13 now of this chapter: *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire”* (1 Corinthians 3:13). Now, you can fool me; you can fool others. You’ll not be able to fool the torch test. It’s going to come

out—it's going to come out. One of these days, things are going to look different to you than they do right now. Things are going to look different in the pure white light of eternity revealed by fire. Then, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we'll not see as we see now; we're going to see things from God's viewpoint. You see, God sees from one viewpoint; we see from another.

In preparing this message, I thought about Samuel, who was supposed to choose a king—well, really, not choose a king but recognize the king that God had chosen, the next king over Israel to follow Saul. And, he was to anoint and appoint the coming king. So, he's sent to the house of Jesse, because the king was to come from one of Jesse's sons. And, God gives Samuel instruction, because Eliab came there. And, Eliab was tall, handsome; he looked like a king. He had a kingly, regal bearing about him. And, there was something about his stature; there was something about his demeanor—his charisma—that made him appear as a king. But, here's what God said to Samuel, and I want you to listen to it—1 Samuel chapter 16, verse 7: *“Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth...man looketh on the outward appearance...[God] looketh on the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7).

Now, look around. Every now and then, you see somebody. They walk in a room, and you say, “Wow!” I mean, stunningly beautiful, strikingly handsome, poised, elegance, bearing—they seem to have it all. Do you know God may not be impressed at all? God may not be impressed at all, because He says, “Look, I'm looking beyond all of that; I'm looking to the heart.” And, that's the reason He chose little David. And, who was David? A man after God's own heart.

And then, let me give you a verse in the New Testament—Luke 16, verse 15: Jesus, speaking to those who trusted in their own good works and their self-righteousness—and He said, *“Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God”* (Luke 16:15). Not only is God not impressed—God's turned off. It is abomination. And yet, men highly esteem that; and we praise, and we pet, and we flatter and all of these things, and show respect to these muckety-mucks, and bigwigs, and so forth. God's not impressed. Now, we're impressed. Listen to me—at the Judgment Seat of Christ, things will look very different than they look now. These things will look very different.

Now, what is going to determine—when we have this time of revelation—what is going to determine what is wood, hay, and stubble, and what is gold, silver, and precious stones? May I tell you some ways that God is going to judge? Now remember, the Bible says, *“The fire [will] try every man's work of what sort it is”* (1 Corinthians 3:13)—not of what size it is. We're comparing wood, hay, and stubble with gold, silver, and precious stones. **Question: I bought a truckload of firewood the other day. Which**

would you rather have—a truckload of firewood or a grocery sack full of diamonds? Hmm... Sure, you'd much rather have a grocery sack full of diamonds than a truckload of firewood, would you not? Now, it's not the size; it is the sort that he is talking about. We Baptists think just because we do everything big and do a lot of it that we're impressing God. Not necessarily so. Vance Havner used to say, "If Baptists had a patron saint, he'd be Saint Vitus." I mean, we're so busy doing all these things, but maybe we're not impressing God.

Let me tell you some things that, that God will use in, in, ah, in this time of revelation to declare what sort our work is going to be, and I'll let them start with the letter A so you can remember them.

A. Tested According to Attitude

First of all, we're going to be tested according to attitude—not only what we did but why we do it. Now, you're in 1 Corinthians. Just flip over to chapter 9 for a moment, and look, if you will—and let's look in verse 16: Paul is talking about attitude. He says, "*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*" (1 Corinthians 16:9). I've felt that way sometimes. You know, I, sometimes, I've thought about, "Well Adrian, what would you do if you weren't a preacher?" My mind says, "Does not compute." The *why*? I'm caught; I can't get out of it, not that I really want to. Sometimes on a Monday morning, I might want to, you know. But, woe is me if I don't. I am commissioned—called—to preach the gospel. I don't think I could get out of it if I really wanted to. That's what the Apostle Paul says.

But now, continue to read here in this passage of Scripture. We're in verse 16, and continue to read: "*For if I do this thing willingly*"—"willingly"—"*I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me*" (1 Corinthians 9:17). Now, what's he saying? He's saying, "Look, I've got to do it. There's no way out of it. God's given me a dispensation of the gospel. I've been called. I've been put into the ministry," as I preached this morning. But, he says, "O God, I want to do it—not of compunction, compulsion, but of love and necessity, because I love You. I want to do it willingly." Now, that brings up a real question.

Why are you here tonight? Well, you say, "It's Super Bowl Sunday. And, if I'm not here tonight, Pastor will think I love football more than I love Jesus, so I'd better go." Why are you here tonight? Why do you sing in the choir? Why do you teach that class? Why do you serve in your capacity on a committee? You say, "Well, somebody's got to do it; and so, I guess I just have to do it." Well, you're right. Somebody does have to do it, and I'm glad that you do it. But folks, if you do it because you love Jesus Christ, if you do it willingly, if you do it not for any other motive... You know, Jesus talked about those

who gave money *“to be seen of men”* (Matthew 23:5). Jesus talked about those who prayed *“to be seen of men”* (Matthew 23:5). They do the right thing, but they have the wrong attitude. Serve the Lord with gladness, with joy, with vibrancy. So, first of all, He’s going to test you according to attitude.

B. Tested According to Authority

Secondly, He’s going to test you according to authority—not only why you did it but what you did. Not all work is going to be rewarded, because you did not have God’s authority—you did not have Heaven’s authority. Listen to this verse—2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5: *“And if a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Timothy 2:5).

Now, when I was in high school, I ran track. And, I wasn’t all that good at it, but I did it. But, we had an oval that we would run on—440 yards. You run it four times, you’ve run a mile. Now, if you’re running on that oval, and you say, “Well, rather than just staying on the cinders, I think I’ll just cut across the field. And therefore, if I cut across the field, I can get ahead of all of those other guys out there and I’ll come in first.” Well, you may come in first, but I will promise you, you’re not going to make any points for your track team. You’re not going to get any ribbons, because while you’re striving for the mastery, you’re not striving lawfully. And, you cannot expect, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, to receive a reward, because the Bible says, *“To obey is better than [to] sacrifice”* (1 Samuel 15:22). Now, do you have the authority to do what you do, as God commissioned you to do what you do? Now, don’t let that frighten you off, but you need to please—you need to know that you have God’s authority.

Did you know what I did, for example, before I preached this morning? I got on my knees, and I preached my message to the Lord on my knees to see if He liked it—just say, “Lord, this is what I’m going to tell them.” Now, I didn’t, by the way, I didn’t do that so I could tell you about it tonight. It just came into my head right now. But, I got on my knees, and I said, “Lord, here’s what I’m going to say here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, here, therefore...” And, do you know, I felt good telling the Lord that. And so, I thought, “Well Lord, I believe You’re going to smile upon this message. It’s not just something that I have cooked up. I want to do it, Lord, with the right attitude. I want to do it with the right authority. I want to strive lawfully.”

C. Tested According to Ability

Now, here’s the third thing that’s going to test what sort it is, and that is not only your attitude and not only your authority but your ability. Put this verse down—Luke chapter 12 and verse 48: *“For unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same] shall be much required”* (Luke 12:48). Now, therefore, God is not going to judge me by what I do and what you do. That is, He’s not going to judge me according to your ability; He’s going to

judge me according to my ability and vice versa. You see, God sees our ability.

Do you remember the story of Jesus standing there watching people put money in the church treasury or in the temple treasury? And, there was a woman who came and put in the widow's mite—just, say, a couple of pennies—and she put that in the treasury. Jesus saw this little widow. And, she put in a few pennies, but He said, "It was all that she had." And then, Jesus said, "This is an amazing thing, because there were many wealthy people there that day." Jesus said—are you listening to this?—that she gave *"more than they all"* (Luke 21:3). She didn't say she gave more than any of them. He said, *"[She gave] more than all"* (Luke 21:3). She gave more than all of them.

Now folks, every Sunday, we get a big offering here at the church, because it's a big church and it takes a lot of money. But, you know, there may have been somebody this morning in the offering—you gave more than all the rest of us put together? You see, God knows. The reason that she gave so much is she gave everything. She had nothing left. She had nothing to fall back on. She was just simply trusting God. And, *God doesn't measure a gift primarily by the amount of the check but by the balance on the stub.* And, He said, *"[Well, she gave] more than they all"* (Luke 21:3). What am I saying? She gave according to her ability, which seemed to be small, but yet she gave all. See, God had rather have three gallons from a person with a three-gallon ability than four gallons with a person with a six-gallon ability.

Two men were sitting on the front porch. One was a great big strapping, broad-shouldered, muscular man; the other was a little guy. And, the little fellow said to the big man—he said, "If I were as big and strong as you are, I'd go out there in those woods; I'd find the biggest bear in those woods, and I'd wrestle him right down to the ground." The big man looked down at the little man and said, "You know what?" Said, "There are some little bears out in the woods." You know, we look at other people, and we say, "Oh man, if I had the money he has... Oh, if I had the brain he has... Oh, if I had the opportunity he or she has..." God doesn't compare you to somebody else. If God has given them much, God requires much (Luke 12:48). You can have a bigger reward than somebody that has greater ability than you, if you'll just be faithful. God is going to judge you according to your ability.

Now, that doesn't... I'm not putting a premium upon mediocrity or half-heartedness. You know, he says, *"[You] see your calling, brethren"*—in this next chapter—*"how...not"*—or, this same chapter—*"how...not many mighty, not many noble, are called... God [has] chosen the foolish things of [this] world to confound the wise"* (1 Corinthians 1:26–27). God's plan is to take ordinary people—give them a spiritual gift to do extraordinary things through ordinary people. And, therefore, God gets the glory. That's what it's all about.

God is in the business of getting glory to Himself. When I say that, I'm not putting a

premium upon mediocrity, upon laziness, upon half-heartedness. You may be an average singer, but it ought to be your desire to make your voice sing the sweetest note it can sing for Jesus Christ. You may not be a Ph.D. candidate; you may not have a vibrant high IQ, but you ought to *“study to shew [yourself] approved unto God, a workman that [needs] not to be ashamed”* (2 Timothy 2:15). You may not have bulging biceps and mountains of muscles, but every nerve, every sinew, every fiber, every corpuscle in your body ought to be given to Jesus. It doesn't take much of a person to be a Christian; it just takes all there is of him. God knows what you have. Stop comparing yourselves to others. You are, when you come to the Judgment Seat of Christ, you're going to be judged, friend, according to your attitude. You're going to be judged according to the authority of God behind your life. You're going to be judged according to your ability.

D. Tested According to Aspirations

And then, you're going to be judged according to your aspirations—not only what you did but what you aspired to do, what you wanted to do. David—we mentioned him already—David wanted to build a temple for God. God did not let David build the temple. David's hands were stained with the blood of warfare, and God would not allow him to do this. But, I want you to listen to a very interesting passage of scripture—1 Kings chapter 8, verses 17 and 18: God says, *“And it was in the heart of David my father”*—now, Solomon is speaking, obviously—*“it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart”* (1 Kings 8:17–18). David never got to build the temple, but God said, “David, you wanted to. I know what you wanted to do.” Now, what do you aspire to do? You see, that's more important than what you accomplish.

Years ago, when I was a younger preacher—notice I said younger—there were five men who aspired to take the gospel to the Auca Indians in South America in Ecuador. And, they took their pontoon boat, and they landed there in the river; and they went to try to make friends with those savage Aucas. And, they were speared and killed, and their blood was soaked up in that beach there. And, they gave their lives. One of those young men's name was Jim Elliott. Jim Elliott wrote these immortal lines before he died: “A man is no fool to give what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” He gave his life to gain the martyr's crown. He didn't throw his life away, but he gave his life for Jesus. And, he said that wasn't a foolish thing to do. Some people would have said, “What a waste.” But, I want to ask you a question. These men went to take the gospel to the Auca Indians, but they didn't—they didn't—get the opportunity. Now, do you think God is going to say to them, “Well, too bad! No reward for you. You tried to do it, but

you failed; so you get no reward.” No. God says, concerning to David, “It was in your heart to build a temple. I know it was in your heart. I know you wanted to do it, and I remember you for that” (1 Kings 8:18). It was in the heart of those men to bring the gospel to the Auca Indians. Subsequently, others have done that.

Let me tell you what’s wrong with many in this congregation: it is not... Your great problem is not that you’re not a soul winner. You have a greater problem than that: it is not in your heart to be one. It is not that you have tried and failed; it is that you don’t try. You don’t aspire to be, you don’t pray to be, you don’t desire to be, you don’t work to be, you don’t want to be. It’s not even in your heart. What is the desire of your heart? What is the passion of your heart? You may not achieve what others have achieved; but when you come to stand before the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ to give an account for His anointing and His gifting to you, He’s going to want to know what was in your heart—the desire of your heart. And so, this time—this Judgment Seat of Christ—is going to be a time of revelation.

II. A Time of Reward

Secondly, it’s going to be a time of reward—a time of reward. Look, if you will, in verse 14 of this same chapter right now: *“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive”*—what? What? Say it. Are you here? Hello. He shall receive what?—*“a reward”*—*“he shall receive a reward”* (1 Corinthians 3:14). Now, some people don’t believe in rewards. Some people have the idea when we all get to Heaven, everybody’s going to be the same and that God just homogenizes everybody rather than letting the cream rise to the top. But, I want you to understand that Heaven is a place—a specific reward. Not everybody’s going to be the same in Heaven. There is a doctrine of rewards.

Now, we’re not saved by works. I want that to be perfectly, crystal-clear. But, we are rewarded according to our works. Our works do not bring us to Heaven, but our works do follow us to Heaven. Put this verse down—“Revelation 14, verse 13”: *“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead [who] die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them”* (Revelation 14:13). When you go to Heaven, your works just follow you to Heaven.

And, the Lord knows what kind of a stewardship that you’re practicing with your spiritual gift. Put down “Revelation 22, verse 12”: Jesus said, *“Behold, I come quickly”*—now, listen—*“and my reward is with me, to give [to] every man according as his work shall be”* (Revelation 22:12). Can it be clearer than that? *“To give [to] every man according as his work shall be”* (Revelation 22:12). Or, let me give you a verse that makes absolutely no sense—none whatsoever—unless there are rewards in Heaven,

and it is Matthew chapter 6 and verse 20: Jesus said, “*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven*” (Matthew 6:20). Now, that verse makes no sense whatsoever if some don’t have more than others—treasure in Heaven. And then, Paul says in this verse, again—1 Corinthians 3:8: “*every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour.*” And, you see, there are a lot of obscure and what we call *little saints* down here that people don’t recognize, but they’re going to be recognized up there; and they’re going to be rewarded.

You know, I believe that many of the best pastors are not in the biggest churches. I believe some of the greatest preachers in the world are little crossroad churches, overworked, and underpaid, and working without a lot of resources. But, God keeps a record of those things, and God knows those things. And so, when God comes to give out the rewards, some of those pastors may be way up ahead of some other pastors and some other servants. You see, once God... Once there comes this revelation, God begins to divide the gold, and the silver, and the precious stones from the wood, hay, and the stubble. Then, things suddenly change, and rewards then are given out. And, sometimes people suffer, and they don’t see a lot of fruit.

I have a son right now on the mission field in Spain. They’re not seeing a lot of fruit. Sometime, Brother Mark, we go to place like Panama and other places and preach, and we have just hundreds and hundreds of people come to Christ. I almost hate to tell David about it, because they say, “O God, if we could just get a handful of people.” But, what he’s doing there is laying a foundation and trying to punch through in a place that’s very hard. As a matter of fact, the very area where he is working is called *Extremadura*. It literally means “very hard”—“very hard” That’s where he’s working—the Province of Extremadura.

Adoniram Judson went to Burma and stayed there year after year after year preaching the gospel, suffering for Christ, but didn’t see any harvest. Others came behind him and reaped a harvest. A wise man said this—and I believe it was Adoniram Judson himself who said this: “If you suffer without succeeding, somebody else may succeed without suffering. And, if you succeed without suffering, it only means that somebody else suffered before you. But, there is no success without suffering”—“there’s no success without suffering.” And, sometimes it’s the sufferer that nobody sees that everybody in the light of this world says, “Well, he didn’t amount to very much. But, look at this man over here, reaping this great harvest.”

Somebody asked me when I came to Bellevue Baptist Church, “Do you expect to stand in R.G. Lee’s shoes? Do you expect to stand in Ramsey Pollard’s shoes?” I said, “Absolutely not. I expect to stand on their shoulders.” I thank God for what went before in this church, and we build upon a foundation that other people have built upon. And, what I’m saying to you, ladies and gentlemen, is this—that God knows what is wood,

hay, and stubble. Many times, we don't, because God doesn't see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance; God looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

III. A Time of Regret

Now, here's the third and final thing I want to say. This Judgment Seat—this torch test, this time when we stand before the Lord—not only is it going to be a time of revelation and not only is it going to be a time of reward—and thank God for that... And, I want a reward. I want a crown to cast at Jesus's feet, don't you? I want to hear my Savior say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." I do. The Bible says, "*Abide in him; that, when he shall appear, [ye you won't have shame] before him at his coming*" (1 John 2:28). But, here's the third thing: it's going to be a time of regret. It's going to be a time or regret. Look, if you will, in verse 15: "*If any man's work shall be burned, he*"—himself—"*if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire*"—the preposition *by* may be translated "through"—"*yet so as [through] fire*" (1 Corinthians 3:15). The fire is going to come.

Here's a man. He's wasted his life. God has invested much in him. And, he's not his own. He's bought with a price. But, he's lived selfishly, and carelessly, and carnally. And building upon the foundation, the Lord Jesus Christ, he's built a shack—wood, hay, stubble. It goes up in smoke. Do you know the only reason why that man's going to get into Heaven? He's going to be saved. "*If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved...as [through] fire*" (1 Corinthians 3:15). There's one thing that will not burn besides the wood, hay, and the stubble, and it's the foundation. The foundation is there if he built upon Jesus Christ. Now, if he didn't build upon Jesus Christ, it doesn't matter what you build. But, if he is built upon Jesus Christ—if he is really, truly, honestly given his heart to Christ, repented of his sin, trusted Christ as his personal Savior, then twice-born... He may be carnal; he may be wood, hay, and stubble, but that foundation cannot burn. That foundation is there. So, he will be saved, yet so as by fire, but he will suffer loss (1 Corinthians 3:15).

"Well Pastor, I've figured it all out. I'm glad you preached this, Pastor. You know what I have been figuring, Pastor? Any place up in Heaven will be good. And, even if I don't make the top tier, even if I don't have a lot of crowns and a lot of rewards, well, I'll just get to Heaven. I'll tell you, Pastor, you know what my song is? Just build me a cabin in the corner of Glory-land. That's all I want—just so I make it, just so I don't go to Hell, just so I make it." That's what your average Baptist will think: "Just so long as I'm saved. I may be carnal. My life may go up in smoke. It's all ruined. I have nothing to carry with me."

Must I go, and empty-handed?
Must I meet my Savior so?
[Without] one soul with which to greet Him,
Must I empty-handed go? (Charles C. Luther).

“Oh yes, if I go to Heaven, it’ll just be fine for me.” I don’t think so—I don’t think so.

You know, I don’t understand how it’s all going to work. I don’t understand that, but I can tell you one thing I do know. I can read black print on white paper. And, I’ll tell you what it says: it says if your work is burned, you will suffer loss. Now, when we get there to Judgment Seat, we’ll understand what that means. But, I believe at that time, you’d say, “Oh, if I could only turn back the clock... If I could only do what I needed to do... If I could only go back and win souls...” A very fine member of this church was dying. I went to see him. He was a wonderful man. He told me, “Pastor, I am not afraid to die,” but he said, “I am ashamed to die because I have not lived my life to the maximum for Jesus.” Ashamed to die. *“If any man’s work [should] be burned, [he’ll] suffer loss”* (1 Corinthians 3:15).

I’ve often used this illustration when I preach on this subject. Suppose there is a man who doesn’t believe in banks, so he keeps all of his stocks, his bonds, his security, his currency at home in his dresser—everything he has, nothing outside. It’s all stored inside the four walls. And, his family is there—his wife, his children. He’s at ease. He’s in bed sleeping. But, he wakes up coughing. He looks around, and the room is filled with smoke; and flames are dancing on the walls, and the curtains are going up in flames. And, the roof ahead of him—above him—is groaning, and caving in, and the rafters are burning and crashing down upon the bed. He realized that he has only has a few moments to get out of the house alive. He doesn’t have time to go to the dresser to get his billfold, to get his stocks, his bonds, his currency. There’s no time for any of that. There’s a gaping hole in the wall, and he leaps through that hole in the wall; and the whole house comes down. Everything he has goes up in flames.

And, he hears the cries of his children in the flames as they die. He hears the screams of his wife as she dies in the flame. He’s got embers on him. He brushes them off. Everything is gone—everything he’s worked for all of his life. And, a neighbor comes and stands by him. And, he looks at his neighbor, and he says, “Well, look at that. Everything is gone up in smoke. I’ve lost my wife. I’ve lost my children. All of my life has gone up in smoke. But, look at me. I’ve saved my life. I’m saved. Hey neighbor, let’s go buy a steak and celebrate. I’m saved. I’m saved—saved through fire.” No, I don’t think it will work that way. And, I don’t think when you come to the Judgment Seat of Christ, and see a wasted life go up in flames, and see loved ones die, and go to Hell, and perish in the flames of Hell, that you could have brought to Christ. I don’t know how it’s going to be, but I don’t think you’re going to say to an angel, “Hey, let’s celebrate.” I

don't understand it. But, I can read this: *"If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: [yet] he himself shall be saved; yet...as by fire"—"as [through] fire"* (1 Corinthians 3:14–15).

Now folks, when God saved us, God called us, God commissioned us, God gifted us, God enabled us, God empowered us; and God has a work for you to do. And, one of these days, you're going to stand before Him. You're either building gold, silver, and precious stones, or you're building wood, hay, and stubble. And, I don't know, but I believe if you'll go to God right now and pray about it, He will reveal to you what category—what sort—your life is. Don't compare yourself to somebody else. *"Unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same] shall be much required"* (Luke 12:48). God knows what He's given you, and God wants you to take that and invest it for Him. Does that make sense to you?

Conclusion

Father God, seal the message to our hearts, I pray. In the strong name of Jesus. Amen.

Facing the Fire

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 26, 1976

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:11–16

Outline

Introduction

I. It Will Be a Time of Revelation

A. Attitude

B. Authority

C. Ability

D. Aspirations

II. It Will Be a Time of Reward

III. It Will Be a Time of Regret

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you turn please to 1 Corinthians chapter 3? As you know, we have been preaching through the book of 1 Corinthians, not verse by verse, but selected passages—highlights—in 1 Corinthians. And today we come to the passage found in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, beginning in verse 11—a message that we’re going to entitle “Facing the Fire.”

“For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble—every man’s work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall test every man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built upon it, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:11–16).

Look again at that last verse: *“Know ye not that ye are the temple of God?”* (1 Corinthians 3:16). Folks, do you want to see God’s temple? Look around. Not this building; this is the meetinghouse. *You* are the temple of God. God lives in you. God dwells in you. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for his people. In the New Testament, God has a people for his temple. God lives in us through his Holy Spirit. We are the temple of God.

Now the foundation of that temple is Jesus Christ. Look in verse 11: *“For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians

3:11). You see, the Church is built upon Jesus Christ. He is the sure foundation. Some people tell us that the Church is built upon Simon Peter. For, Jesus said to Peter: *“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church”* (Matthew 16:18). But Jesus was not saying that He was going to build the Church upon Simon Peter. I, for one, am glad that the Church is not built upon Simon Peter, for Jesus had to say to him, in just a few moments: *“Get thee behind me, Satan. Thou art an offense unto me”* (Matthew 16:23).

No, I’m glad that the Church is built upon something better than Simon Peter; the Church is built upon Jesus Christ. Simon Peter had just said: *“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:16). And Jesus said, “That’s right, and upon that rock I’ll build my Church.” Upon that rock—that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God—the Church is built. *“For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11).

A preacher was preaching in Ireland during the Shamrock Races, and there was a heckler; he was doing some street preaching, and a heckler said to him, “Preacher, what do you know about the shamrock?” The preacher, without breaking stride, said, “On Jesus Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other rocks are shamrocks.”

And that is true, dear friend; all other rocks are shamrocks. Jesus is the foundation. *“For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 3:11). Now remember, the Church is His temple. Christ is the foundation, and we are to build upon that foundation.

Continue to read. Look in verse 12: *“Now if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble”* (1 Corinthians 3:12). Immediately, even a casual glance tells us there are two classes of builders: there are the wood, hay, and stubble builders; there are the gold, silver, and precious stone builders. Now what do these represent? Well, if you’ll look at this passage in context, you will see the Lord is talking about carnal builders and spiritual builders. There are carnal Christians and there are spiritual Christians. Remember now, a carnal Christian is a man who is saved, but he sure doesn’t look like it. The little fellow, somebody asked him, “What kind of dog is that?” He said, “He’s a police dog.” He said, “Well, he doesn’t look like a police dog.” And the little fellow said, “Well, he’s in the Secret Service.”

Now I believe there are some folks who don’t look like Christians, and they don’t always act like Christians, but they are Christians. They are what the Bible calls “carnal Christians”; they’re immature Christians. Then, there are others who are what the Bible calls “spiritual Christians.” The carnal Christian is the one who builds with wood, hay, and stubble. The spiritual Christian is the one who builds with gold, and silver, and precious stones. Wood, hay, and stubble are cheap and combustible. Gold, silver, and precious stones are precious and permanent. You see, there are two kinds of lives that people are building.

Now today, you're building. Now I don't know what you're building with, whether you're building with wood, hay, and stubble, or whether you're building with gold and silver, and precious stones. But if you're a Christian, if you have received Jesus Christ, if that foundation has been laid in your life, then I know that you're building with something.

Now one of these days, we're going to find out what you're building with, because, ladies and gentlemen, the day of declaration is coming. Continue to read. Notice, the Bible says in verse 13: *"Every man's work shall be made manifest"* (1 Corinthians 3:13). One of these days, it will be revealed whether you're a carnal builder or a spiritual builder. One of these days, it will be known whether you're building with wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, and silver, and precious stones. It may not be known now, because you can even fool your wife, you can fool your pastor, you may even be deceiving yourself; but, one of these days, you will face the fire.

Look again—look at verse 13: *"Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall test every man's work of what sort it is"* (1 Corinthians 3:13). Friend, one of these days, you're going to face the torch test. One of these days, you are going to face the fire. And in the judgment of the Christian's works, the Lord will take that holy torch and will set it to your life. If you've been a carnal builder of wood, hay, and stubble, all that you've done will go up in flames. Gold, silver, and precious stones have already been through the fire, praise God, and they're not going to burn.

Now you're going to face the fire. And that's what the message is about, this morning: facing the fire. Having said all of this, by way of introduction, I want us to notice three things about that day—the day that will declare it, the day of declaring. First of all, it will be a time of revealing. Secondly, it will be a time of reward. Thirdly, it will be a time of regret. Those three things I want you to remember. The day of declaration, when you face the fire, it will be: number one—a time of revelation; number two—a time of reward; number three—a time of regret.

I. It Will Be a Time of Revelation

Now why did I say it will be a time of revelation? Look again, in verse 13: *"Every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire"* (1 Corinthians 3:13). You see, what your life is now is not yet revealed. Now it will take eternity to show whether the song that was ensuing from this platform was wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, and silver, and precious stones. It will take eternity to reveal whether the sermon that I'm preaching is wood, hay, and stubble, gold, and silver, and precious stones. The Sunday school lesson that you taught in the Spirit, another may teach in the flesh. And we will have to wait until the day of declaration, when God puts

the torch test to us, to see whether we've been building with wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, and silver, and precious stones. And I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, things are going to look a lot different in the pure light of eternity, because, there, things will be seen from God's viewpoint and not from man's viewpoint.

You see, men don't see as God sees. 1 Samuel chapter 16, verse 7—God is speaking to Samuel concerning Eliab. God is seeking over Israel, and this is what God said to Samuel concerning Eliab, a fine, tall, good-looking, stalwart man: God said, *“Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature, because I have refused him; for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7).

Now had you gone that day to choose the king, you would have said, “Let's get Eliab; he's so tall, he's so dark, he's so handsome.” But God says, “I'm not looking for a man tall, dark, and handsome; I'm looking for a man with a heart for God. I want David.” You see, man doesn't see as God sees. He looks on the outward appearance. God looks on the heart. Jesus Christ said, in Luke chapter 16, verse 15: *“Ye are they who justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God”* (Luke 16:15).

What am I saying? I'm saying, ladies and gentlemen, that it will take another world to reveal things. Many times, we say, “That's good,” and God says, “That's bad.” Many times, we say, “That's bad,” and God says, “That's good.” Many times, we say, “That's gold, and silver, and precious stones,” and God says, “That's wood, hay, and stubble.” Many times, we may say, “That won't amount to anything,” and God says, “That's gold, and silver, and precious stones,” you see. There is coming a day of revelation; there is coming a day when God is going to reveal what we have done—when God is going to put the test to it.

Now what are the criteria that God will use? What are the criteria that God will use as He judges us in that day? May I mention four?

A. Attitude

In the first place, we are going to be tested according to attitude. Not only *what* we did, but also *why* we did it. Look in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 16, for a moment. Just stay with one finger there, in the third chapter, and turn to the ninth chapter—1 Corinthians 9, verse 16. Now Paul was a preacher of the gospel, and this is what Paul said: *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 9:16).

I don't suppose there's ever been a preacher who's been called to preach who hasn't, at least one time, thought about how he might get out of it. Paul says, “I preach the gospel, but,” he said, “I can't brag about it; *woe is unto me, if I preach not the*

gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16). I feel the same way; I can’t get out of it. God has called me to preach. I know that. I am more sure of my call to preach than I am my salvation. And I’m certain of my salvation, but I’ve doubted my salvation. I’ve never doubted my call to preach, since God called me. I know that God has called me to preach. I don’t have any choice about it. *“Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 9:16).

But listen to what Paul continues to say: *“For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward”*—now, we’re talking about rewards—*“if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me”* (1 Corinthians 9:17). That is, whether I want to or whether I don’t, I’ve got to. God has apprehended me. God has called me. “But,” Paul says, “if I want to get a reward out of it, I’d better do it with the right attitude.”

Did you know, I dare say, that some of you came to church, this morning, not because you wanted to, but because you *had to*? You had to. You taught your Sunday school lesson, this morning, because somebody *has to*. You’re singing in the choir, because, land sakes, somebody *has to*. You see, you’re doing certain things, not necessarily because you want to, but because you have to; necessity is laid upon you. Well, I’m glad that you do, because it ought to be done. But I’m afraid, dear friend, that when you face the judgment, you may find out that it has become wood, hay, and stubble—that there is no reward, for you’ve not done it willingly. There’s going to be a time when the Lord will test our attitude.

Now Jesus talks about people who prayed in order to be seen of men. Well, He says: *“Verily I say unto you, They have their reward”* (Matthew 6:5). That is, they won’t get any in Heaven. They’ve already been seen of men, and that’s all the reward they get! So what is the first standard that God uses? Attitude. We’re going to be tested according to attitude.

B. Authority

Secondly, we’re going to be tested according to authority. Who told you to do it? Is it something you cooked up, or is it something that the Lord taught you to do? You know, the Lord doesn’t want you to just scheme up something to do for Him. That which is gold, and silver, and precious stones is that which God has directed you to do in His service and that which you have done in the authority of His Word.

You know what the Bible says in 2 Timothy chapter 2, verse 5? *“And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Timothy 2:5). Do you know what that means? It means that Bruce Jenner never would have won the decathlon had he broken the rules. There is an Olympic rulebook that says if you want to win the gold medal, if you want the victor’s crown, if you want to strive in the

masteries, you've got to do it lawfully. And ladies and gentlemen, if you want to face our dear Lord at that last day and hear Him say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant," if you want to receive the victor's crown, if you want to be crowned, then you must strive lawfully—that is, with authority of God.

I say, when God comes to determine your life and to see whether it is wood, hay, and stubble, or gold, and silver, and precious stones, number one—He's going to look at your attitude; number two—He's going to look at your authority. Did you do what you did lawfully? Did you do it under the direction and the impulse of the Holy Spirit and the guidance of the Word of God?

C. Ability

The third basis of judgment, not only attitude and authority, but also, God is going to test us according to ability. You see, God expects more out of some people than He does out of others. The Bible says, in Luke chapter 12, and verse 48, "*For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required*" (Luke 12:48). God expects more out of the Billy Grahams, and the Spurgeons, and the Wesleys than He might out of some preachers. But you see, God doesn't measure us that way. God just simply looks at what ability we have, and if God has given us much, God requires much.

If God has given little, then God requires but little. I think all of us know the story of that widow who came to the worship service that day and put in the widow's mite, which was less than one quarter of one cent, and yet, Jesus Christ said that she had given more than they all—not given more than any other had given, but given more than they'd all given (Mark 12:42–43). That is, she gave more than was taken up in the worship service by all of the wealthy people, that day. Why? Because she was judged according to her ability.

Do you remember when Mary of Bethany took that alabaster box of ointment—that sweet perfume—broke it, and anointed the head of Jesus? What did Jesus say about Mary of Bethany, that day? Jesus said of Mary, in Mark chapter 14, beginning in verse 6: "*Let her alone. Why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me ... she hath done what she could*"—oh, underscore that: "*what she could*"—and then, Jesus said—"*Wherever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of, for a memorial of her*" (Mark 14:6–9). And I'm fulfilling that Scripture, this morning, when I'm preaching about Mary of Bethany. She did what she could.

Say, folks, the real question is not what would you do with a million dollars, if you had it. The real question is what are you going to do with that seventy-five bucks you've got, you see. That's the question, isn't it? The question is not what would you do, if you were Tommy Lane; not what you would do, if you were Adrian Rogers; but what you are

going to do with what God has given you. One man came up to another man, a great big brawny man, a little old squirt guy came up, and said, “Man, if I were as big and strong as you are, I’d go out in the woods, and find the biggest bear I could find, and wrestle him right down to the ground.” The big man looked at the little fellow and said, “Bud, there are plenty of little bears out in the woods; go find one of those.” Sure, if you can’t wrestle a big bear, wrestle a little bear.

You see, the important thing is that you do what you do, according to the ability that God has given you. *“Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required”* (Luke 12:48). And I had rather be a person with a quart capacity and have that one-quart capacity filled up to the brim, than to be a person with a ten-gallon capacity half-full. You do what you do in the ability that Jesus gives.

D. Aspirations

And when the Lord comes to mark against your life, and when you face the fire and the torch test, number one—He’s going to look at your attitude—not only what you did but why you did it; number two—He’s going to look at your authority—who told you to do it; number three—He’s going to look at your ability—what ability did you have to get the job done; and then, again, you’re going to be tested according to your aspirations—not only what you did, but what you wanted to do, what you attempted to do, and what you tried to do in the name of Jesus.

King David wanted to build the temple. He never was able to build the temple. But I’ve always been blessed by the Scripture in 1 Kings chapter 8, beginning in verse 17. Solomon was talking about his daddy—his father, David—and this is what Solomon said: *“And it was in the heart of David, my father, to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said unto David, my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart”* (1 Kings 8:17–18). *“Thou didst well that it was in thine heart”* (1 Kings 8:18).

Some of you have gone out in God’s Invasion Army, and you’ve never won a soul to Jesus Christ; but you wanted to. It was in your heart, and God knew that. God knew that. You see, the worst thing with some of us is not that we don’t win souls; the worst thing is we don’t even try. What do you want to do? What are the aspirations? What are the desires? What are the ambitions? What are the inclinations of your heart? What do you aspire to do? God said, “David, it was not my plan for you to build the temple. But David, one thing I know; you would have, if you could have; because you wanted to. And I wrote it down as good as done.” Isn’t that great?

You see, when God comes to mark against your life, when you face the fire, when the torch test comes, the Bible says the fire is going to try every man’s work of what sort it is—not what size it is, of what sort. God is not looking for quantity; God is looking for

quality. There are people in this church who work their fingers to the bone doing church work in the energy of the flesh, and they'll be surprised one day to find out that it's wood, hay, and stubble. Somebody said, "If Baptists had a patron saint, he'd be St. Vitus." Always doing things, but, so often, in the strength of the flesh; carnal builders, rather than spiritual builders.

II. It Will Be a Time of Reward

All right now, what I'm trying to say is, first of all, it will be a day of revelation; the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is, and it will be revealed by fire. What would happen if you put a torch to a house made of wood, hay, and stubble? Gone up in smoke. The second thing: Not only will it be a time of revelation; it will be a time of reward. Go back and look at our text in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, and look in verse 14: "*If any man's work abide which he hath built upon it, he shall receive a reward*" (1 Corinthians 3:14).

Now folks, God is going to reward you for your works. We Baptists have preached long and loud that you're not saved by works, and that is true. "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—not of works, lest any man should boast*" (Ephesians 2:8-9). Paul said to Titus: "*Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us*" (Titus 3:5). We are not saved by doing good works, but we are rewarded according to works: "*If any man's work abide which he hath built upon it, he shall receive a reward*" (1 Corinthians 3:14).

Works don't lead you to Heaven; works follow you to Heaven. Revelation chapter 14, verse 13: "*And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors, and their works do follow them*" (Revelation 14:13). Works never lead you to heaven; works follow you to heaven. And the works that I do, down here, are going to follow me to Heaven. Whether it be the works of wood, hay, and stubble, or whether it be the works of gold, and silver, and precious stones—whether I be a carnal builder, or whether I be a spiritual builder—not only will it be revealed, but I will be rewarded accordingly.

Now I know there are some folks who don't believe in the doctrine of reward. There are some of these real spiritual people, and they say, "I just serve Jesus because I love to serve Jesus, and I don't want a reward." Well, friend, if the Bible teaches rewards, I want a reward—because the Bible teaches it. There's nothing in the Bible that's superfluous. Don't you get more spiritual than the Bible is; you're too spiritual then. The Bible teaches rewards. It's very clear.

Listen to these scriptures. Revelation chapter 22, verse 12—Jesus said: "*Behold, I*

come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be” (Revelation 22:12). Jesus Christ commanded us, in Matthew chapter 6, verse 20: *“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”*—that doesn’t make sense, unless some are going to have more than others—*“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”* (Matthew 6:20). The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 8: *“Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor”* (1 Corinthians 3:8).

I tell you, ladies and gentlemen, when you face the fire, it’s going to be a time of revelation, and, for some, it will be a time of reward. And I’m glad, because there are a lot of obscure but precious saints, who get no credit, down here, and very little reward, down here, for their service to Jesus Christ. Many of the greatest pastors in the world pastor little country churches in crossroad towns with a handful of a congregation, and nobody hears of them. But they love the Lord Jesus Christ as much as the W. A. Criswells, and the Billy Grahams, and the others. They are true to Jesus Christ. And I tell you, dear friend, God looks at the heart. And then, if any man’s life is made out of gold, and silver, and precious stones, and that man did what he did with the motivation and the ability of the Holy Spirit with the right attitude, then, I tell you, many who are first, down here, are going to be last, up there, and many who are last, down here, are going to be first, up there. Because, things are going to be re-evaluated. We’re going to see things differently.

You know, we know the big names, so many times. I told you, several years ago, a story I want to repeat, at this time. A Sunday school teacher went into a shoe store, and laid a trembling hand on the shoulder of a shoe clerk, and told that shoe clerk about Jesus Christ, the salesman a nineteen-year-old boy. That boy, under conviction, repented of his sin and received Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. He made application for church membership, but the church questioned him and said he didn’t know enough to be a member of the church; and, they wouldn’t let him join for a year. His name? Dwight L. Moody—one of the greatest Christian evangelists who ever lived.

Moody, still as a layman, started a Sunday school movement in the city of Chicago. God gave him a burden—a compassion—for the hearts and lives of little children, and he started getting them together. And before long, his fame as a preacher of the gospel began to grow. And though he was illiterate, and uneducated, and really murdered the King’s English, God used him. And he was invited to go across the ocean to speak in England. And there in England, he spoke in the church of a man named F. B. Meyer, Frederick Brotherton Meyer—what an imposing name, what an imposing man, a towering intellect, a scholar, very erudite, very learned, very proper, as many of the British are. And when Moody stood up to preach in Meyer’s church, Moody used slang language. He mispronounced words. He was the only man in the world, they say, who could say Jerusalem in two syllables. And he used what some would call “a tear-jerking

story.” He told a story of a Sunday school teacher who learned he was going to die, and, before he died, he won every student in his class to Jesus Christ. And it was a very emotional story. And F. B. Meyer, this very proper and somewhat pompous English preacher, was sitting there, bumping his fingers, saying, “Oh my, oh my, when will he finish? Why did I ever invite him? Oh my, oh my.” And his sensibilities were wounded by the uncouth American, Dwight L. Moody.

Later, however, Meyer was having tea with one of the ladies of the church, and he said, “Madam, how does it go with you today?” She said, “Wonderful, Brother Meyer.” She said, “Since Moody has been here, God has touched my heart, and I have won every girl in my class to Jesus Christ.” F. B. Meyer testified, “Later that day, I learned something of the language of the human soul, and my life has never been the same.”

God anointed the life of F. B. Meyer through Moody, and F. B. Meyer came to the United States. While F. B. Meyer was in the United States, he spoke in a chapel of a Christian school. And there in the chapel of that Christian school, he was talking about making a full surrender to Jesus Christ. And F. B. Meyer said this: “There are some of you who are not willing to serve the Lord as you are; some of you are ready to quit. But,” he said, “if you’re not willing, would you at least tell God, ‘O God, I’m not willing, but I am willing to be made willing?’”

And Wilbur Chapman, who was just ready to quit school, said, “O God, that’s me; O God, I’m so weak. I don’t even have the will to serve You. But O God, I’m willing to be made willing, if You’ll just make me willing.” And God made him willing. And Wilbur Chapman became a mighty, powerful evangelist. He went out to preach the gospel, and he needed a helper, and he looked around and found an ex-baseball player, YMCA clerk—his name was Billy Sunday—and asked him, “Would you come and help me?” Sunday left his YMCA work and came to work with Chapman.

Sunday was a strange man. He had unusual and unique abilities. And when Chapman retired from evangelism, he turned it all over to Billy Sunday. And Billy Sunday, who had been taking the offering, setting up the chairs, and doing all these other things, doing the counseling, Sunday became the evangelist. Sunday even took some of Wilbur Chapman’s sermon notes and preached from them. But Sunday became the evangelist, and the hand of God was on Billy Sunday, in a remarkable and an unusual way. It is said that Sunday won over a million men to Jesus Christ in his ministry.

Sunday came to Charlotte, North Carolina in the year 1924, and he preached a revival meeting there. And God blessed it in a remarkable way. And the city of Charlotte, North Carolina was turned upside down by the Billy Sunday campaign. And out of that Billy Sunday campaign there, there came a group of men known as “the Charlotte Prayer Meeting.” These businessmen, who banded together, continued to

pray. Time went on; Charlotte cooled down; and the depression came. These men felt that the depression was God's hand of judgment upon America and upon Charlotte, and they started to pray for revival in the city of Charlotte. And they prayed, "O God, O God, send a revival to Charlotte that will not only shake Charlotte but will shake the world."

And God sent to Charlotte, North Carolina Mordecai Ham. Mordecai Ham, whom some of you have heard preach, came to Charlotte, North Carolina. He preached, "Hell hot, Heaven sweet, sin black, judgment sure, and Jesus saves." And he just preached, and there was a young sixteen-year-old, lanky, skinny-as-a-rail, farm lad, who came to hear him preach. That boy didn't like the preaching, because it was too hot. And so he got up in the choir, thought he wouldn't mind if he was behind it—and, that's why they're there—got up in the choir, but the Spirit of God found that sixteen-year-old boy up there, in the choir, and he was saved. Do you know his name? Billy Graham.

Billy Graham was saved in that meeting in Charlotte, North Carolina that Mordecai Ham was preaching. And Billy Graham has preached to kings and princes, and preached on nationwide television, and only eternity will be able to record the number of souls that have come into the Kingdom through the ministry of Billy Graham.

That's an amazing chain of events that I've related to you, but the remarkable thing about it is this: that it started with a Sunday School teacher who laid a trembling hand on the shoulder of a shoe clerk and told him about Jesus. Many of us have heard of Dwight L. Moody. Many of us have heard of F. B. Meyer. Many of us have heard of Wilbur Chapman. Many of us have heard of Billy Sunday. Many have heard of Mordecai Ham. Many have heard of Billy Graham. But I dare say, very few people know Mr. Kimball, the Sunday school teacher who won Moody to Jesus Christ.

But I want to tell you one thing, dear friend: God knows his name. And what I'm saying is this: that many who are first shall be last. You may be a Sunday school teacher, and the only thing you may do worthwhile in this world is win a boy or girl to Jesus Christ. But you don't know what you're doing, friend, when you win a boy or girl to Jesus Christ. You don't know what forces that you may be setting in motion. And oh, what a time it will be when the saints go marching in and the rewards are given out. And I'm saying, dear friend, that many precious but obscure saints who are nobodies down here will be somebodies up there.

III. It Will Be a Time of Regret

It will be—number one—a time of revelation; number two—it will be a time of reward; number three—it will be a time of regret. Look at the rest of this scripture. Verse 14 says, "*If any man's work abide which he hath built upon it, he shall receive a reward*"—now verse 15 says—"*If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet as by fire*" (1 Corinthians 3:14–15). A time of regret—some

are going to suffer loss.

The carnal builder, the man who has been a Christian; he's been saved, but all of his life is made up of wood, hay, and stubble. He's had the wrong attitude. He hasn't had the right authority. He hasn't lived up to the ability that God has given him. His aspirations have been selfish, rather than victorious. And now he faces the fire; the torch is put there, and *whoop*, it all goes up in smoke. And he suffers loss.

"Oh," you say, "Brother Rogers, that won't be so bad, if I'm saved." Well, listen to these scriptures, friend. First John 2, verse 28: "*And now little children, abide in him, that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming*" (1 John 2:28).

Did you know that some wood, hay, and stubble builders, if Jesus Christ were to come right now, rather than having confidence, even though you're saved, you'd want to crawl under the seat? You wouldn't be ready to meet Jesus. It's not a blessed hope to you. Yet, you're saved. But you know you're not ready to go meet the Lord Jesus. You have no confidence. The Bible says, in Matthew chapter 5, verse 19: "*Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven*" (Matthew 5:19). Friend, don't tell me that you want to get the booby prize when you get to Heaven. Other people are receiving a reward, and you're called the least. The Bible says, in 2 John, verse 8: "*Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward*" (2 John 1:8). The Bible says, in Revelation chapter 3, verse 11 (Jesus Christ is speaking): "*Behold, I come quickly; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown*" (Revelation 3:11).

What does all this mean? Did you know, ladies and gentlemen, that it will be possible for you to go to Heaven, and yet, the only thing that you will have there is a burned-over foundation? The only reason that you get to Heaven is that, when the fire came, the foundation wouldn't burn. You're saved, but that's it.

'Must I go, and empty-handed?'

Must I meet my Savior so?

Not one soul with which to greet Him,

Must I empty-handed go? (Charles C. Luther)

Oh, what a sad day it's going to be! What a day of regret it's going to be! For so many carnal Christians who are saved, but their life has been a life of wood, hay, and stubble, it's going up in smoke. I know enough about human nature to know what half of this congregation is thinking, right now. You're thinking, *Well, any place in Heaven will be all right for me*. That's just what you're thinking. You're saying "Well, if it's Heaven, it can't be that bad, wherever it is. Just build me a cabin in the corner of glory land; that'll satisfy me." Well, it won't satisfy God, and I doubt really, if in the sense that you're

thinking about, it'll satisfy you.

The Bible says that you will be saved by fire. Actually, the Greek says you will be saved *through* fire. The idea is that a man wakes up in the middle of the night, his house is in flames, and he leaps out through a burning wall. He's saved through fire.

Suppose you had all of your valuables at home: your children, your loved ones, your house, your life's investment—it's all there. You have no other real estate; you have no insurance; you have no savings—it's all right there. And your loved ones—they're all right there. And in the middle of the night, you start to choke. You open your eyes, and, already, the room is filled with smoke; the flames are dancing on the walls; the timbers are groaning; and the house is caving in. There's no time for you to go to the bureau dresser and get your billfold, even. There's no time to awaken the children. All you can do is leap out through a hole in the wall, and it all goes up in smoke. And your loved ones perish in the flames. What would you do? Would you say, "Glory to God! I got out! I saved my neck! It's all right. I'm saved"? Is that what you'd do? No. And I tell you, you may get to Heaven, but you're not going to be saying, "Glory to God! I saved my neck, so it's all right." Because, dear friend: *"If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss"* (1 Corinthians 3:15).

Some of you are going to see your loved ones perish in the fires of Hell and your works perish in the fires of judgment, because you built out of wood, hay, and stubble. Some of you are going to see your entire life's service as a deacon, a Sunday school teacher, an usher, a choir member, go up in smoke, because it was done in the energy of the flesh, rather than in the power of the Holy Spirit. You're a builder, all right, but you're a carnal builder.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, we only have so many hours, so many weeks, so many days, to build, and it's about time we started building with gold, and silver, and precious stones. Let's bow in prayer.

The Believer's Judgment

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 6, 1983

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 3:11–17

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.”

1 CORINTHIANS 3:13

Outline

Introduction

- I. It Is Going to Be a Day of Revelation
 - A. God Will Test You According to Your Attitude
 - B. God Will Test You According to Your Authority
 - C. God Will Test You According to Your Ability
 - D. God Will Test You According to Your Aspiration
- II. It Is Going to Be a Day of Reward
- III. It Is Going to Be a Day of Regret

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles tonight and I would like for you to turn to 1 Corinthians 3, and we're going to begin reading in verse 11. First Corinthians 3:11. The title of our message tonight, "The Believer's Judgment, the Believer's Judgment." Now God's Word says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Now right away we have the idea of building and edifice, a building. And, you know, when you build a building, you don't start from the roof down; you start from the foundation up. And the foundation of this building is Jesus Christ. Verse 12: "Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try (and the word *try* literally means the fire shall test) every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. And if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire. Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." By the way, verse 17. I heard a free translation of verse 17 that says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him

shall God destroy..." Now remember the temple of God is the church; not some building, but the people. And a free translation of this, somebody gave it this way: Church wreckers God will wreck. I like that. "If any man defile the temple of God, him will God destroy..." I want to speak to you tonight on this subject, "The Believer's Judgment." And I want to say that the believer has a three-fold judgment. First of all, the believer is judged as a sinner. Secondly, he is judged as a son. Thirdly, he is judged as a servant.

Now what is the believer's judgment as a sinner? Well, the believer has had his sins judged. My sins have already been judged. You see, I settled my case out of court. I'm never going to come to the Great White Throne Judgment because the Bible says in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation (that is, there is therefore now no judgment) to those who are in Christ Jesus." And I am in Christ Jesus. You see, when Jesus died, I died. Jesus died for my sins. When God judged Jesus, He judged me. When Jesus paid that debt penalty, He paid it on my behalf. I was in Christ. I died with Christ. And, therefore, to me that judgment is in the past. It's already gone. I was judged as a sinner. I was condemned. I was guilty. I was crucified. The price has been paid. Suppose there were a man here today who is adjudicated guilty of some capital crime and sentenced to die in the electric chair? They strap him in the electric chair. They pull the lever. Ah, the electrodes are there fastened to him. The surge of the electricity goes through his body. His body quivers, stiffens, relaxes, quivers, stiffens, relaxes. They say, "That's enough." The physician who is there comes. He takes the vital signs. He says, "This man is dead." And they write out a certificate of death. From that time on, his crime has been paid for. The state has nothing more against them. Now suppose, after this has been done, it has been witnessed. He's been, ah, electrocuted. And a physician has attested to the fact he's dead. Suppose later, let's say two or three weeks, he's seen walking up and down the streets of our town? The policeman say, "Aren't you so-and-so? Weren't you guilty of thus and such a crime?" "Yes." "We've going to take you in." He says, "Oh no, you're not." "But you were guilty?" "Yes, I know, but I paid the price. Ah, ah, I, I died. You don't have any, you can't bring me into double jeopardy. I, I, you're finished with me." But the policeman says, "There must be something we can do to you." He says, "You can't do a thing in the world." "Well, how did you come back alive?" "That's none of your business." Now you say that's an absurd thing. But, friend, that's exactly what happened to me. I was crucified with Christ and now I'm raised with Christ. I was put to death with Christ and now I live with Christ. And my sin debt is paid, and the law has no more hold on me. That price has been paid, and judgment for me as a sinner is finished. I'll never come into condemnation. I've already been into condemnation. And my condemnation was fulfilled in the cross. Now, since I am no longer a sinner, I am a son, and so now I am being

judged as a son. Did you know that the Lord constantly is judging me? He's carrying me to the woodshed. He punishes me. He whips me. He chastises me. I'm glad He does, for the Bible says, "Whom the Lord loves, He chastens." Don't feel bad, dear friend, if the Lord chastens you. He's dealing with you as sons. "For what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not." Now when I was a boy, my dad used to whip me. He used to say, "Son, I'm doing this because I love you." As a little boy, I couldn't understand that. I don't even think I believed it. Then I got to thinking about it. If he loves me, if he's doing this because he loves me, I'm his favorite. He loves me far more than he loves my brother or my sister. Boy, he poured out a lot of love on me. But as I look back now with, ah, the maturity of wisdom, I can understand exactly what the Scripture means when it says, "No chastening for the present time seemeth to be joyous, but grievous. But afterward, it yielded that peaceful fruit of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." I've told you before, my dad was, you know, he was one of those old fashioned daddies. He never would whip a child on an empty stomach. He turned us over and that's where he whipped us. Now I want to tell you, dear friend, he understood how to apply the board of education to the seat of knowledge. And there's nothing wrong with that. There's something wrong with child abuse. There's something wrong with being cruel to children. But there's nothing wrong with loving corporal punishment if it is done with wisdom and done by a dad, a mom who loves that child. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, "Foolishness is bound up in a heart of a child, and the rod of discipline, of correction will drive it far from him." And, dear friend, the Bible says, "Don't spare for his crying. Thou shalt deliver his soul from hell." Do you know what that means? It means that the child that does not learn to respect authority in the home will not respect authority in the school or in the government or in God's book. And one day he's going to be a rebel who will die and go to hell because he never learn to respect authority. I'm not talking about being cruel. I'm not talking about child abuse. I am talking about loving a child. Sometimes a person says, "Oh, I just love him so much I can't punish him." That's a lie. You don't love him so much you can't punish him. You love you. You just hate to hear him cry. It makes you unhappy. The Bible says, "He that loveth his son chasteneth him betimes." He certainly does. And so there is our judgment as sons. Has God ever carried you to the woodshed? Sure, He does. Sure, He does if you love Him and He loves you. There are times when the Lord, not because you're not His child, but because He, you are His child, He's going to chastise you. And so I've had my, my judgment as a sinner. That was when Jesus died for me and I died with Him on the cross. I'm having my judgment as a son. He is correcting me day by day, correcting me, judging me, and causing me to walk more closely to Him. But one day, after I die, I'm going to have my judgment as a servant. And that's what I want to talk to you about tonight, my judgment as a servant, the believer's judgment, when we come to the

judgment seat of Christ. Now I want you to look at this passage of Scripture because it is a marvelous passage of Scripture, wonderful indeed. The Scripture here describes our lives as though we are a temple. Look, if you will, in verse 16. The Bible says, "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." Now in the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people. In the New Testament, He has a people for His temple. We are the temple of God. Not this pile of stone and brick and wood, but us, flesh and blood. We are temples of God. And corporately we are one grand temple, and the Spirit of God lives in us. Now the foundation of that temple is Jesus Christ Himself. "For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." Now if we're not building on Jesus, we can't build the temple. We're building on the sand, and the building will not last. But what about those who build upon this foundation? There are two types of builders. Look, if you will, in verse 12. He says, "Now if any man build upon this foundation (that is, upon Jesus. He's saved, he's born again, he knows Christ as his personal Savior, and now he's building the temple of his life), if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble." Two categories of building materials: gold and silver and precious stones; wood, hay, and stubble. They represent the two kinds of builders, the carnal builder and the spiritual builder. The wood, hay, and stubble are cheap and combustible. The gold and silver and precious stones are precious and permanent. And so he's making a contrast here between two types of lives: the carnal Christian and the Spirit-filled Christian. The wood, hay, and stubble Christian; the gold, silver, and precious stone Christian. They are both building on the same foundation. A carnal Christian is saved. A carnal Christian will go to heaven. But when he gets to heaven, he's in for a rude awakening, for the Bible says, "A day of declaration is coming." Notice that the gold, silver, and precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble represent men's works. And notice in verse 13: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it..." Now, folks, are you paying attention? As surely as I'm standing here, the life that you live as a Christian is going to be brought into review at the judgment seat of Christ. The day will declare it. Every man's work shall be made manifest. A day of declaration is going to come. God is going to look at the building that you've built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ, and God is going to be the building inspector, and He's going to see what kind of a reward you're going to have in heaven. You are going to be tested, and the test is this: He's going to put a torch to the building you've built. It shall be revealed, the Bible says, by fire. And the fire shall try or test every man's work of what sort it is. It almost reminds you of the story of the three little pigs, doesn't it? Here's a house built of wood, hay, and stubble. And when it is set on fire, it goes up just like that. Here's another house built of gold and silver and precious stones. When the torch comes, it doesn't burn. How is gold, silver, and precious stones, how are they formed to

begin with? They've already been through the fire. That's the way you get gold and silver and precious stones. Now all of this is by background, and I want us now to get right into the text, and I want you to understand what the believer's judgment as a servant is going to be. There are three things I want to say about it.

I. It Is Going to Be a Day of Revelation

First of all, I want to say that it is going to be a day of revelation. Look, if you will, in verse 13: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be (now notice this) revealed by fire..." It's going to be revealed by fire. It's going to be a day of revelation. What I mean by that is, God is going to pull away the veil, take away the camouflage, rip from our faces the mask, and God is going to show us we're exactly what we are. The torch test is going to reveal the kind of persons that we are. We're going to see things in the white light of eternity. We're going to see things at the judgment seat of Christ from God's point of view. You see, God doesn't see things as we see things. One of the most interesting Scriptures to me in the Old Testament is that story when Samuel went to find Israel's king. He went to anoint young David as king. And he went to Jesse and he said, "Jesse, bring your boys out here. I want to see which one God has chosen." Jesse was proud of his sons, all except for one little old boy named David who was out in the backside of nowhere tending the sheep. And so Jesse thought, *Surely, I know which one of my sons is going to be the king of Israel.* There was a big, sun-crowned, tall, broad shoulders, strapping boy who had a winsome and a pleasing personality. His name was Eliab. And so Jesse was so proud of this boy. Surely, if anybody looked like a king, it would be him. And so Jesse said, "Eliab, come over here. I want the prophet Samuel to look at you." And when Samuel saw him, this is what Samuel said in 1 Samuel 16:7: "Look not at his countenance, nor at the height of his stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart." Now here was a man who was as handsome as a movie star. Here was a man who was broad shouldered and had a tall countenance. But the prophet of God was able to look into that man's heart. And I want to tell you, if Eliab lived today, he would have people following along after him. He would be the kind of a man that everybody would want to follow and idolize and have for a friend. He would have been voted Most Likely to Succeed, and all of the rest of it. But the prophet of God was able to look at that man's heart and see that man's heart was not what he wanted. Do you know why God chose David? God saw something about David that only God could see, and it was this: He was a man after God's own heart. God doesn't see as man sees. Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart. Now I'm going to tell you, dear friend, when the day of revelation comes, a lot of things that we think are so

important are not going to be important. And a lot of people that we think are big shots are not going to be big shots. Let me give you another verse. This is from the New Testament. In Luke 16:15, Jesus looked at those big shots of His day, and He said, "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knoweth your hearts. For that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God." Now I want you to see what I'm talking about. Look, if you will, in verse 13: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire (now watch this next thing); and the fire shall reveal every man's work of what (what's that next word?) sort it is." Not what size it is, but what sort it is. I want to tell you something, friend. Bellevue Baptist Church is not a great church because it's a big church. That doesn't make Bellevue Baptist Church a big, a great church. The fire is going to try every man's work not to as what size it is, but what sort it is. I understand that there were four men from four different nationalities went to write a book about the elephant. The British wrote a book about an elephant. He called it, "Elephants and the Empire." The Germans wrote a book about an elephant. It was a, a thick-spined book on the anatomy of the elephant. A Frenchman wrote a book about an elephant. He called it, "The Love Life of the Elephant." You know what an American wrote? He wrote a book about an elephant called, "Bigger and Better Elephants." Now that's just the way Americans are. We think if it's bigger it's better. That's not necessarily so. I'm not against a big church, and I believe a church ought to be big. I believe it ought to continue to grow. But I don't think a church is great because it's big. I don't think a crowd impresses God all that much. Barnum Bailey got a crowd, dear friend, in a circus. What is it that impresses God? Not what size, but what sort. Now I want to ask you a question: Which would you rather have, a truckload of hay or a handful of diamonds, huh? See. That's what he's talking about. He's talking not about, ah, quantity; he's talking about quality. The fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. I heard about a gal out in Dallas. Fell in love with a man. He was a guy that had a big hat and a fancy cowboy suit. He looked like an oilman to her or maybe a big cattleman. Had a big hat. However, they say the bigger the hat, the fewer the cows. But he had a big hat. And, and, ah, she just really didn't know how wealthy he was. He just had the look of wealth about him. And she was kind of a gold digger, pumping him for information. And so she said, "Well, ah, ah, do you have any oil wells?" He said, "No." Well, he said, "I got one oil well, but it's not worth much." Well, that, that didn't seem to be so good. She said, "Well, do you have any cattle?" "Well," he said, "I got a few head of cattle, a couple dozen head of cattle." So that didn't seem so good. Well, she tried something else. She said, "Do you have any land?" "Well," he said, "I've got 100 acres." Well, that didn't sound so good. She said, "Where is it?" He said, "Downtown Dallas." Now, friend, where would you rather have 100 acres, downtown Dallas or out in the boonies

somewhere? Now the idea is this: That quality is more important than quantity. You know, we sometimes think that if we do a lot for God, He's going to reward us. But I want to tell you, dear friend, it is not how much you do, but what you do. The fire is going to try every man's work of what sort it is – wood, hay, and stubble; gold and silver and precious stones. What criteria is God going to use when He looks at our lives? How is God going to tell what sort it is? I mean, what, what is the, what is the standard that God is going to use? I want to mention some.

A. God Will Test You According to Your Attitude

First of all, dear friend, when God comes to reward you, when God comes to measure your life, when God comes to test your life to find out whether your life has been gold, silver, or silver stones, wood, hay, or stubble, the first thing, I believe, that He's going to look at is your attitude. Not what you did, but why you did it. You're in 1 Corinthians. Go on, just turn right to chapter 9 for a moment and look with me, if you will, in verses 16 and 17. First Corinthians 9:16-17. Now Paul says, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I preach not the gospel!" That is, Paul says, "God has called me. It's necessary that I preach the gospel. I'm a trapped man. I can't get out of it." I feel the same way. I've sometimes thought, *Adrian, what would you do if you weren't a preacher?* Friend, I can't come up with anything. God's got me. I know He's got me. I know His hand is upon me. I would feel like a Benedict Arnold if I did not preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. I would feel like the apostle Paul. "...woe is me if I preach not the gospel." But notice in verse 17: "For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed until me." Now what does that mean in plain English? Well, I'll tell you it means several things, but one thing it means is this: That when God looks at you, God measures not only what you do, but God measures why you do it. For example, why did you come to church tonight? Well, you said, "I, I, I had a responsibility in church training. I had to be here." Or, "My mama made me come." Or, "I'm a deacon, and they say the deacons are supposed to be here every Sunday night." Or whatever it is. What was your motive for coming here tonight? Friend, did you do it because you love God? Did you do it because you love the work of God? Did you do it because you want to? You know, I have to ask myself this question: Why do I preach tonight? Am I preaching because you pay me? Am I preaching because I like to be up here in front of people? What is my motive for preaching the Word of God? I believe I know my motive for preaching the Word of God. God has called me to preach, and I want to do it to please Him. Before I was a pastor of a church, I would go to street corners and preach, and jail houses and preach, and trailer camps and preach, and rescue missions and preach. And I want to tell you, God, being my witness, I'm grateful for my salary, but I would pay, I would pay for the privilege to preach the gospel of Jesus. Now don't tell the

Finance Committee that, okay. I would pay for the privilege of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. And I don't ever expect to retire. I hear some preachers say, "Well, I, I'm going to retire." I know the time will come when I won't be able to pastor this church, but the time will never come, I pray, that I'll not be able to preach the gospel, even if it's just a grunt or a groan or passing out a track, because my life is given to getting out the gospel. I want to ask you, dear friend, why do you sing a solo when you sing? Why do you preach a sermon? Why do you teach? Why do you come to church? Why do you give your money? Why, why, why? God knows why. God knows why. God knows what motivates you. Paul said, "If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward." God is going to look, dear friend, at your attitude, at your attitude. You know, you can do a good thing for a wrong reason and lose your reward. There's nothing wrong with praying. But Jesus said, "If you pray to be seen of men, verily, you have your reward." That is, you've been seen of men. That's it. Nothing at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It's just going to be wood, hay, and stubble. Nothing with wrong with giving. You ought to give. And, bless God, we, we're going to have to give, aren't we? But if you give to be seen of men, Jesus said, "Verily, you have your reward." Oh, I'm telling you, ladies and gentlemen, when it comes to the judgment seat of Christ and our Lord looks at us, the question is going to be: What was your attitude when you did it?

B. God Will Test You According to Your Authority

But I'm going to tell you something else. Not only am I going to be tested according to my attitude, but I'm going to be tested according to my authority. That is, who told me to do it? And am I doing it in accordance with the Word of God? You know, there are a lot of people who work their fingers to the bone doing church work, but they're not under the authority of the Word of God. They have gone off on their own. They are doing things without God's anointing, without God's authority. They are doing church work, but they are not submitting themselves to the Word of God. Let me give you something here. Second Timothy 2:5. The Bible says, "If a man strive for the masteries, he is not crowned except he strive lawfully." Do you know what that means? It means if you don't play by the rules, you cannot win the game and you cannot receive the victor's crown. Now at the judgment seat of Christ, when the Lord looks at me and the Lord says, "Adrian, I'm going to put a torch to your life. I'm going to find out whether your life is wood, hay, and stubble; gold and silver or precious stones," He's going to look not only at my attitude, but my authority. Did I submit myself to the Word of God? I want to say in all sincerity, I thank God for women whose lives are given to get out the gospel. I thank God for women who share their testimonies and who have the ability to prophecy, because some have given, been given the gift of prophecy. But nowhere in the Bible does the Bible teach that a woman is to a pastor of a church. You understand that? Nowhere! As a matter of fact, the Bible says that a pastor is to be the husband of one

wife. That's mighty hard for a woman to do. And the Bible says the husband is the head of the house. And the Bible says, "If a man know not how to take care of his own house, how shall he take care of the house of God?" That is, that a man is to be in authority in home, just as he's to be in authority in the church. And, by the way, preachers, if you're not right at home, don't try to pastor a church. I mean, if you can't do it at home, don't export it. "If a man know not how to take care of his own house, how shall he take care of the house of God?" That doesn't mean that all of your children have to be saved, because you can't force anybody to be saved. But it does mean that you have your family in control and that you are the spiritual head and leader of your house. But, you see, what about a woman who says, "God has called me to preach, and I'm going to pastor a church because God has called me." God doesn't contradict Himself. And so here's somebody. She works and she works and she slaves, and you say she's sincere. Fine! And I'm not the judge. But I want to tell you this, my dear friend: When you come to the judgment seat of Christ, and you say, "Where is my reward?" He's going to say, "No one is crowned, except he strive lawfully." Now that'll make some lady mad tonight. I don't know who, what her name is, but, but it makes you angry. I'm not saying it spitefully or hatefully. I thank God for the ministry of ladies. I thank God for what they do in and through our churches. I'm using that for an example to show you, dear friend, that we are going to be crowned, we're going to be rewarded if we do what God says not only according to our attitude, but according to authority.

C. God Will Test You According to Your Ability

Let me give you a third criterion that He's going to use. Not only attitude and authority, but ability. You see, God looks at my ability. And God wants to see what do I do to, with the gifts that He's given me, the talents He's given me, and the abilities that He has given me. You see, the Bible says in Luke 12:48, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of the same shall much be required." Now we need to stop measuring ourselves by other people and saying, "Well, I, I wish I had the ability or the talent that he has or she has." If God wanted you to have that ability, if God wanted you to have that talent, He would have given it to you. When I first started out as a young preacher, I listened to Billy Graham. I said, "Boy, I want to be like Billy Graham." Then I listened to Hyman Appleman. I said, "Boy, I want to be like Hyman Appleman." Then I listened to E. J. Daniels, and I said, "Boy, I want to be like E. J. Daniels." Then I listened to W. A. Criswell, and I said, "Man, I want to be like he, ah, W. A. Criswell." And every preacher I would hear, I'd say, "Oh, I wish I could be like that person." But I couldn't be. God didn't want me to be like those people. And all I would have been would be a little, cheap, tin imitation of Billy Graham, W. A. Criswell, E. J. Daniels, or Hyman Appleman. And God showed me one day, "Adrian, there's something that you can be better than anybody else in the whole wide world at being, and that's Adrian Rogers. Be Adrian Rogers. Be

the man that, that I made you to be. And you use the gifts that I gave you.” And God’s not going to compare me, ah, to Dale Palmer tonight. And God’s not going to compare Dale Palmer to me or to anybody else. Dear friend, God says, “To whomsoever much is given, of the same shall much be required.” And God may require more of a Billy Graham than He requires of some of us. But I tell you, dear friend, we are to serve God with the ability that God has given. And when the judgment comes, when the judgment comes, the Lord is going to reward some people because they served according to their ability. The classic story of the offering being taken in church and the widow put the widow’s mite in the offering plate, do you remember that story? She gave, in today’s measurements, a quarter of a penny, a quarter of a cent. But Jesus said, concerning that widow there that day, “She hath given (are you ready for this?) more than they A-L-L, all.” A quarter of a cent. Why? Because God does not measure the gift by the amount on the check, but by the balance on the stub. And she gave it all. She gave everything that she had. And, by the way, that quarter of a cent has been the cause of multiplied millions of dollars who’ve been given to the kingdom of heaven by, that have been given to the kingdom of heaven by people who’ve been inspired by her generosity and her love. I preached about a month ago about Mary of Bethany who took an alabaster box and broke it at Jesus’ feet and anointed Jesus’ feet with that perfume and wiped Jesus’ feet with the hair of her head. And there were some people who remonstrated about her. And there were some who said, “Why this waste? Why, that could have been taken and sold and given to the poor.” Jesus said, “You let her alone. She hath wrought a good work on me.” And then Jesus said, “She hath done what she could.” Now you stop comparing yourself to somebody else. You stop saying, “Oh, I wish I could sing like Tommy Lane. I wish I were as smart as Paul Williams. I wish I had the suave ways of a Bob Sorrell,” or whatever it is. Listen. That has nothing to do with it. Are you doing what you can? I tell you, folks, it frightens me, it frightens me, because I wonder tonight as I look at my own heart and my own life, am I living up to gifts and the abilities that God has given me? And when I say that, I don’t mean that I think that I have a lot of gifts and abilities. You’re not understanding what I’m saying if you think I mean that. But I’m just asking what is going to happen to me when I come to the judgment seat of Christ? And God will say, “Adrian, had you applied yourself? Adrian, had you sacrificed. Adrian, had you disciplined. Adrian, had you believed Me, your life would have been so far different, because, Adrian, I invested so much in you. Adrian, I gave you this gift. I gave you that ability. I gave you this talent, and you did not use it and you did not maximize it.” I’m telling you, ladies and gentlemen, God has given to every mother’s child in this building tonight abilities, and He’s going to hold you accountable for them.

D. God Will Test You According to Your Aspiration

We’re going to be measured tonight according to our attitude, according to our authority,

according to our ability. I'll tell you something else we're going to be measured by, and that's according to our aspiration; not only what we did, but what we aspired to do, what we tried to do, what we attempted to do. David, in the Old Testament, is one of my heroes, so much that I named one of my sons David. But David wanted to build a temple for God. And God would not allow David to build a temple because David had been a man of war and his hands were bloody. But here's what David heard from the Lord: First Kings 8:17-18. God said to His servant David, "And it was in the heart of David my father (he's saying this through Solomon), it was in the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build a house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart." I want to tell you something, folks. You know, Jesus may come before we build out east, did you know that? He may come. I mean, He may come tonight. But I'm so grateful for a congregation that said, "Lord, if You want it done, we're going to try and do it. It's in our heart. It's in our heart." And the way we voted last Sunday night, God looked down and God saw your heart. You aspired to do it. You wanted to do it. You desired to do it. And God knows your desire. Ladies and gentlemen, the question tonight, listen to me, are you listening? The question is not how much money are you going to give. The question is, how much do you want to give? The question tonight is not how many souls are you going to win to Jesus. The question is, do you want to win souls for Jesus? Do you desire to win souls to Jesus? What about a person who went out last Tuesday night when we had visitation, went out and knocked on a door, and nobody was there? Or if somebody went out and witnessed and the person refused Christ? Jesus didn't win everybody He witnessed to. But I want to tell you, I believe, if I know the God of heaven, that that person who went and witnessed and wanted to win a soul to Jesus Christ is going to receive the same reward as that man who went and witnessed and won a soul to Jesus Christ, hmm. See, God has not called us to be successful. He's called us to be faithful. Do you think that if that person receives Christ, that you did it? No, God did it. You see, it is the Lord that gives the increase. What I'm trying to say, dear friend, that God is not going to look at you for the things that you achieved, but the things that you have attempted, the things that you have aspired to do under His leadership. Do you remember those five fine, intelligent, Spirit-filled young men who went to take the gospel to the Acca Indians? They became miss, martyrs. They were speared to death on a beach called Palm Beach there. Not the Palm Beach, Florida, but Palm Beach over there on the shores of Ecuador. And they perished there, and they found their bodies there. They landed their airplane, got out with gifts to try to make friends with the Acca Indians. And they were speared and martyred, put to death. Do you think when those men face the Lord, do you think God's going to say to them, "Shame on you. You failed. You went to take the gospel to the

Accas and you didn't take the gospel to the Accas. You got killed instead. Shame on you." Hm. No! Because it was in their heart. It wasn't what they did; it was what they aspired to do that God is going to see. And, incidentally, Jim Elliot, one of the leaders, wrote this in his Bible: "A man is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." Amen. He gave his life. He can't keep it, anyway. But he's gained the martyr's crown and he'll never lose it, because God looked at that man, and God saw that man, and God saw in his heart what he aspired to do. I'm trying to tell you this: That the day of the believer's judgment is going to be a day of revelation. The day shall declare it. It shall be revealed by fire. And the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it shall be. Now the second thing I want to say, and very hurriedly on the second point.

II. It Is Going to Be a Day of Reward

Not only is it going to be a day of revelation; it's going to be a day of reward. Go back to 1 Corinthians 3 with me for a moment. Look, if you will, in verse 14. Look at it. "If any man's work abide which he hath build thereupon, he shall receive a (what's the next word?) reward, a reward. If any man's work abide..." I mean, after the fire comes, after the torch is put to it, if any man's work is still there after the judgment seat of Christ; if it is gold and silver and precious stones, that man is going to receive a reward. Now I want you to get your theology straight tonight. You are not saved by being a gold and silver and precious stone type of person. You're saved by the foundation, which is Jesus Christ. You are not saved by works. The Bible says, "It's not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." The Bible says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest any man should boast." The Bible says, "To him that worketh not but believed on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." You are not, you are not, you are not saved by good works. But if you are saved, then there should be those works. Luther said, "We're not saved by faith and works, but by a faith that works." Good works do not lead us to heaven, but good works follow us to heaven. Let me give you some Scripture. Revelation 14:13: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." When I go to heaven, the works that I have done here on this earth are going to follow me right on to heaven. I'm going to rest from my labors, but my works are going to follow me. And so are yours. Revelation 22:12. Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be." "I'm going to reward you," Jesus said, "according to your works." Matthew 6:20: "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven..." Now that does not make sense unless some are going to have treasure there and others are not. Again, our Scripture here, 1

Corinthians 3:8, 3 and verse 8: "...every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." Are some going to have more reward in heaven than others? Absolutely, absolutely! And I'll tell you, things are going to be different in heaven. You see, I, I said before, you can't tell who a successful pastor is. Did you know, Brother Dale, and I'm sure you know this because you have preached, as I have, around, some of God's greatest preachers are never heard of? I mean, they're pasturing out here in Podunk Hollow somewhere. But they love God, and they work, and they study, and they pray. And there are a lot of people that are looked on as being one of the big fellows. Sometimes a preacher will write me a letter. I'm even embarrassed to tell you this, but he'll write, and he'll just say, "You know, Brother Rogers, I'm just a little nobody down here at crossroads church somewhere, and I know you couldn't possibly take time to talk to me, but could you do something?" Folks, that, that, that saddens my heart, cause I want to tell you, if a man is where God has put him, he is in the most important place on earth. Let me tell you something, friend. The most important place on earth is not the ministry. The most important place is not the ministry of music. It is not being a missionary. Do you want me to tell you the most important place on this earth? The center of God's will, wherever it is, whatever it is. That's all! Just the center of.... You can't get higher than that. Just in God's will. And, you know, sometimes we, we, we look at people and we say, "Oh, he's important," and, "She's important. He's not important," and, "He's not important." I want to tell you something, friend. Did you know that some of the blessings that I'm enjoying as the pastor of this church, Bellevue Baptist Church, are blessings because people have suffered and paid a price? Did you know that I have an eternal debt to Dr. Ramsey Pollard because of the price that he paid for this church, who literally laid down his life for this church? When I came to be the pastor of this church, I received th, three things. I received a congregation that loved one another. I received a congregation that believed the Bible was the Word of God. And I received a congregation that believed the pastor was God's spiritual authority. Young preachers, how'd you like to come to a place like that? Wasn't God good to me? That's what I had given to me. And I had that given to me because there were people, just like you and like Dr. Pollard, who faced adversity and problems and trials and paid a price. Do you know what Adonirah Judson said, who took the gospel to Burma? He said, "There is no success without suffering." And he said this: "If you suffer without succeeding, it will mean that someone will succeed after you. And, and if you have succeeded without suffering, it means that someone suffered before you. But there's no success without suffering." And, you see, sometimes one person suffers and somebody else succeeds. Did you know that? But God knows that. God knows that. And Bible says, "Many that are last shall be first, and many that are first are going to be last." I'm telling you, there's coming a time of reward when God is going to look and God's going to see. How do you

think these buildings got here? How do you think this property got here? I'll tell you, I'm looking into the faces of some of you dear, sweet saints who've been members of this church, who brought your money tied up in the corner of a handkerchief, and literally suffered and did without and, and gave and gave and gave and gave that we might come to this place. God knows those things. Some people never get their name in a church bulletin, never get their name in lights, never get to make an announcement. They don't even get to lead in silent prayer in the primary department. But God knows. There's going to come a time of reward. And there will be rewards.

III. It Is Going to Be a Day of Regret

I wish I had more time on that, but I must close by saying not only is this judgment of the believer as servants going to be a time of revelation. Not only is it going to be a time of reward. But it's going to be a time of regret, a time of regret. Look, if you will, in verse 15: "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Now I want to imagine the scene. You have been building all of your life. But you've not been a Spirit-filled Christian. You've been a carnal Christian. Your life has not been gold and silver and precious stones. It has been wood, hay, and stubble. And now the judgment is there. And our Lord takes the torch and He puts it to your life, and (blowing sound). It burns like that, and it goes up in smoke. And your entire life is reduced to a pile of ashes. Everything that you dreamed for and schemed for and labored for is gone just like that, and you'll suffer loss. The only reason that you'll get into heaven is because that foundation won't burn. Remember who the foundation is – Jesus Christ! And you did receive Christ. You were saved. You were a carnal Christian. But the Bible says, "If any man's work shall be burned, he'll suffer loss..." Well, you say, "Brother Rogers, you know, I, I know how the average Christian thinks. You're thinking right now, 'Well, that's true. I, I realize I'm a carnal Christian. I'm going to suffer loss. But any place in heaven will be pretty good, huh.'" Isn't that the way a person thinks? You know, "Just as so long as I get in there. I mean, I'll be saved, but singed. That'll be all right with me. You know, I'll get into heaven with my coattails smoking. Be okay, so long as I get there." As a matter of fact, we've even made a little song about it. "Just build me a cabin in the corner of Gloryland." Isn't that right? Friend, I cannot tell you all that God has in His mind, and I don't know how God's going to do it, but I can tell you, as surely as my name is Adrian Rogers and I'm standing here tonight, if you have been a carnal Christian, if you've not been a sacrificing, Spirit-filled, separated, godly, soul-winning person, the day will come when you will, with bitter tears, regret it. "If any man suffer loss, if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss." It would be like having everything that you'd lived for in this life burn up in your house and your house burn right down to the foundation. You have no fire insurance.

Everything that you owe is in that house.

Conclusion

Well, you say, “Brother Rogers, I’m just not so interested in having a reward. I’m not all interested in a crown.” I am! I am! I want a crown, because one day, they tell me, up in heaven they’re going to cast their crowns before Jesus’ feet.

Faithfulness

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 15, 2001

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 4:1–2

Outline

Introduction

- I. Faithful to Our Families
- II. Faithful with Our Finances
- III. Faithful to Our Friends
- IV. Faithful to Our Fellowship
 - A. We Are to Encourage One Another
 - B. We Are to Admonish One Another
- V. Faithful to the Faith
- VI. The Motivation for Faithfulness
 - A. God Has Been Faithful to Us
- VII. How to Be Faithful
 - A. Be Faithful in the Small Things
 - B. Be Faithful in the Secret Things
 - C. Be Faithful in the Sacred Things

Conclusion

Introduction

I want to talk to you tonight about faithfulness. First Corinthians chapter 4—and look in verses 1 and 2. These are wonderful verses, and they are directed to you. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 4, verses 1 and 2: *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God”*—a steward is somebody who handles the affairs of another—*“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful”* (1 Corinthians 4:1–2).

Now, what is faithfulness? Let’s think of some synonyms: integrity, loyalty, dependability, fidelity. One wise man said, “Faithfulness is doing your duty ’til your duty is done”—faithfulness. I love that. It’s somebody that you can depend upon. Let me give you a verse—Proverbs 25, verse 19: *“Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth”*—have you ever had a broken tooth?—*“and a foot out of joint”* (Proverbs 25:19). Can you imagine a man with a broken tooth and a foot out of joint—how much misery he would have? Well, that’s the same kind of misery that some people have when they put confidence in an unfaithful man.

Today, we live in a day of unfaithfulness—a day when man’s word means so very little, whether he puts it on a marriage certificate and contract, or whether it’s a business

contract, or whether it is a treaty between nations, or whether it's the word of a politician. Faithfulness seems to be a commodity in short supply. The Gallop people, who are doing polls *ad infinitum* did a poll about honesty and faithfulness, and they said that 40% of the American public admits to—now, these are those who admit—they admit to calling in sick when they're not sick. They admit to short changing a customer. They admit to pilfering and cheating on exams. I mean, that's 40% of us—40%. That's almost half, and these are those who admit to it. And then, Mr. Gallop said this: "It is my view as a survey researcher that we are facing in this nation a moral crisis of the first dimension. The great problems of our time, I believe, are moral and spiritual, rather than political and economic." What he is really saying is there's an absence of faithfulness in America today.

Some years ago, Joyce and I went to Yellowstone National Park. And, we wanted to see—of everything out there, you know what we wanted to see?—Old Faithful. And, we stayed in that old lodge. And, did you know Old Faithful was right outside our room—about as far as from here to those lilies over there? And, we just stepped out the door, and there's Old Faithful. You know, Old Faithful—there are about 200 geysers out there, and Old Faithful is not the biggest; it is not the most spectacular, but it's the one I wanted to see. It's the one everybody wanted to see. And, do you know why they wanted to see it? Every 65 minutes, you could count on it. Every 65 minutes it'd spew water—boiling water—up into the air, about 170 feet into the air. And so, they call it Old Faithful. You know, I wish there were a lot of church members that I could call *old faithful*. "*It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*" (1 Corinthians 4:2).

You see, God not only desires faithfulness—listen, friend—God requires faithfulness. The Bible says, "*It is required of stewards, that a man be found faithful*" (1 Corinthians 4:2). Psalm 31, verse 23: "*O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful*" (Psalm 31:23). Do you want God to take care of you? You want God to preserve you—to watch over you? How much do we need the guidance and the guardianship of our great God? Well, God preserves the faithful. One of these days, Adrian is going to stand before the Lord. And, do you know what I want Him to say to me? The same thing you want Him to say to you—Matthew 25, verse 21: "*[The] Lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant*" (Matthew 25:21). Soon I'm going to report in. Soon you're going to report in. A lot of the things that we think are important will not be important then. But oh, how important it will be to hear the Lord Jesus say, "Son, well done. You've been good. You have been faithful."

Are you a faithful person? Does your wife think of you as a faithful person? Do your children think of you as faithful? Does your employer think of you as a faithful person? Do your grandkids think of you as a faithful person? You know, when I thought about this message, I had to do some checking up—ask myself this question: "Adrian, do you

just talk about faithfulness? Are you truly a faithful person?” Let me talk to you about some areas or some marks of faithfulness. How can you tell whether a man is a faithful man—a woman, a faithful person?

I. Faithful to Our Families

First of all, I believe that the starting place, outside of our relationship to the Lord, is to be faithful to our families, don't you?—to be faithful to our families. I remember when I stood there at that marriage altar and Joyce came down that aisle—the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen in my life—and I committed myself to her, to be faithful to her. And, by God's grace, I have been; and by God's grace, I will be. The marines say, “Semper Fidelis”—“Always Faithful.” We need to be faithful to our mates.

Adultery is the ultimate in unfaithfulness. If you've taken a solemn vow, be true to that vow. But, you don't have to commit physical adultery to be unfaithful. There is a certain form of emotional unfaithfulness. Gentlemen, I want to tell you something: you be a one-woman man. Never flirt with another woman, and never stop flirting with your wife. Keep on flirting with her. Be faithful to the very death. You know, some have a love affair with their work, or with sports, or other things, and I think they're unfaithful to the marriage.

I think the number one problem with kids—and I've done a lot of counseling, *a lot*—the number one problem with kids with their parents is resentment towards their parents. And, the resentment toward their parents often comes from broken promises. Now, I've always thought that I've kept my promises. And, one time, I was going to preach on faithfulness; and I just got my kids together, and I said, “I want to ask you a question: Have I ever promised you anything that I did not do? Did I not keep my word, unless I was providentially hindered?” And, you know what I thought they were going to say? “No, Papa, you never have.” I thought they were going to pat me on the back. And, one of them said, “Yes, I can remember a time when you said you were going to do something and you didn't do it.” I said, “When? Tell me.” And, they did, and they were right. I'd just simply blown past it; I'd forgotten it. And, I said, “Will you please forgive me?” I don't want any kind of resentment of un-kept promises. And, you have to be careful with kids. You know, if they say, “Can we go to the beach?” you might say, “We might if we can find time.” They start putting on their bathing suits. I mean, you have to be very careful what you say to little children.

Last Wednesday, we had our grandson Andrew over to the house. Andrew is a real sport model, and I love him. And, you know, he always wants to play with Papa, and we have certain games that we play. And so, I said, “Andrew, I'm glad that you're coming over to my house on Wednesday. We'll play some.” Now friend, that was a promise. And, early in the morning, Andrew said to me, “You know, Papa”—said, “I've got to

leave. I can only be here for a day. I'm leaving tonight. And now, Papa, we'd better not waste any time." I had all this work to do, but he said, "Now Papa, the day will be over before we know it. We had better not waste any time." I think we need to go to our children some time and say, "You know, have I told you I'd do something and didn't do it? If I have, forgive me." That will cause some of that resentment to melt away. We need to be faithful to our families.

II. Faithful with Our Finances

Friend, not only to our families—we need to be faithful with our finances—faithful with our finances. Turn in your Bibles to Luke chapter 16. I want to share something very interesting here. Luke chapter 16—the Gospel of Luke: our Lord here is talking about faithfulness, and begin in...well, let's begin in verse 10: "*He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much*"—or, "*is faithful also in much*"—"and he that is unjust in the least"—now, listen to this—"is unjust...in much" (Luke 16:10). Now, read that carefully. He doesn't say, "If you're faithful in that which is least, you also might be faithful in much." No, there's no way that you could fail to be faithful in much if you're faithful in the least, because the much is made up of the least. Everything big is made up of something little. And, he says, "Also, if you are unfaithful in that which is least... "*and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in the much*" (Luke 16:10). It doesn't say that if you just steal a few dollars, that's bad, but it's not like robbing a bank. That isn't what he says. He says...it doesn't say, "You could be unfaithful in much." You already are unfaithful in much.

Now, notice in verse 11: "*If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon*"—that's just synonymous for money—"who will commit to your trust the true riches?"—now, he goes on to say—"And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's"—that is, "when you're a steward"—"*who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon*" (Luke 16:11–13). Mammon is the word for the god of money. You cannot make a god out of your money. That's the reason why you can never say to young people, "Make all the money you can, just so you can make it honestly." Nobody should be making all the money they can. They're making all the money they can—they're going to be making money when they ought to be doing something else, when they ought to be soul winning, or when they ought to be praying, or when they ought to be studying the Bible, or when they ought to be attending church, or whatever. No, if you make all the money you can, then money has become your god. No man can serve two masters (Luke 16:13).

Now, listen to me: how you handle your money is an indication of how you would

handle spiritual treasure. That's what he is saying here. He says, very carefully—look at it: *“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?”* (Luke 16:11). Now, God may be withholding spiritual blessings from you because you've been financially unfaithful. Do you know what most people think? I'll guarantee you most people in this room think this—you won't when I finish preaching, but here's what you think right now: you think, “You know, if I would really be faithful with praying, and singing, and witnessing, maybe God would bless me materially? Maybe I could have more finances. If I just pray better and love Jesus more, maybe God would give me more things.” That's exactly backward. That isn't what God is saying. God is not saying if we will be faithful spiritually, then God will make us rich materially. What God says in this passage—listen to it carefully: “if you're faithful with that which is material, God will make you rich spiritually.” That's what it says. Listen to it—listen: *“If [you've] not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give [to] you that which is your own?”* (Luke 16:12). And, let me back up to the verse before that: *“If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon”—“money”—“who will commit to your trust the true riches?”* (Luke 16:11).

You see, look, folks—if you want faith, if you want power and prayer, if you want spiritual understanding, then be faithful with your finances. And, if you're faithful with your finances, then God will give you the true riches. The true riches are not the material things; the true riches are spiritual things. Now friend, if you want to find out just how faithful you are, look at how you earn your money, how you give your money, how you save your money, how you spend your money. All of these things show faithfulness. We need to be faithful to our families and absolutely faithful to our husbands, to our wives, to our children, to our grandchildren. We need to be faithful with our finances.

III. Faithful to Our Friends

I'll tell you another way that we need to be faithful: we need to be faithful to our friends. Let me give you a couple of verses. Proverbs 17, verse 17: the Bible says, *“A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity”* (Proverbs 17:17). And, here's a great verse—Proverbs 18:24: *“A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”* Are you faithful to your friends?

May I ask you a question? If I were to ask our congregation as an assignment tonight, as your homework for this sermon, when you go home, write a letter to five people—to five friends that you believe you could really count on in time of need—would anybody send you a letter? Hmm? How many letters would you get if this congregation had for an assignment, “Write down five people that you could truly count on in time of need—a brother in adversity”?

There are many definitions of friendship. “A friend is someone who strengthens you

with his prayers, blesses you with his love, and encourages you with his hope.” I think that’s excellent. Somebody else says, “A friend is somebody who believes in you when you cease to believe in yourself.” An English publication had a contest for the best definition of a friend. Here are three that won honorable mention: “A friend is somebody who multiplies your sorrows and divides your griefs.” Isn’t that true? Oh, when you’re with a friend... “Somebody who multiplies your joys,” I meant to say. You know what they say? “When you lay an egg, stand back and admire it.” Now, you know the reason I said it that way? Because that’s the way I wrote it. I can’t think, but I can really write. “A friend is somebody who multiplies your joys and divides your griefs.” Or, here again: “A friend is someone who understands your silence.” But, here’s the one that won the prize: “A real friend is someone who comes in when the whole world has gone out.” Are you faithful to your friends?

There was a man who sat up late one night pondering about friendship and reading 1 Corinthians 13, which is the ode—the poem—to love, and he said this—and he wrote this to a friend: “During the past few months, I have read and re-read the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians. I hope I’ve not violated these verses by writing them into friendship, but I think you will see the message I see in them: Friendship is slow to lose patience. It looks for ways of being constructive. It is not possessive. It is neither anxious to impress others, nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Friendship has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage at the other’s expense. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of slights or gloat over the mistakes of the other. A friend does not make himself big by making the other small. On the contrary, it is glad when truth prevails. It knows no limits to its endurance, no end to its trust, no failing of its hope, and in this it can outlast anything. True friendship stands when all else have fallen.” That’s good. And then, that person said, “Here is a creed to my friend.” Listen to this if you have a friend: “I owe you loyalty, even to my hurt, but I do not owe you my agreement. I owe you tolerance, and encouragement, and recognition of your gift. I owe you a part of me—my time, my thought, my possessions, and my vulnerability. I owe you serious consideration of your admonishment of me. I owe you my forgiveness. A friend who truly forgives does not need to forget.” We need to be faithful—faithful to the family, faithful in our finances, faithful to our friends.

IV. Faithful to Our Fellowship

I’ll tell you another thing we need to be faithful to: we need to be faithful to our fellowship. I’m talking about the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to be faithful to one another. Romans chapter 12 and verse 5: “*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another*” (Romans 12:5). You belong to me; I belong to you. Will you please be faithful to me? I promise that I will be faithful to you.

A. **We Are to Encourage One Another**

We belong to one another, and we need to be faithful to the fellowship. That's the reason Hebrews chapter 10, verse 25 admonishes us that we're not to "[forsake] the assembling of ourselves"—"[we're not to forsake] the assembling of ourselves together"—"as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another" (Hebrews 10:25).

That is, we encourage one another. Did you know I'm encouraged by you tonight? I was encouraged by the music tonight. I'm encouraged by your countenance. I'm encouraged by that brother just nodded his head just a few moments ago. I am encouraged by the atmosphere that is in this place. We are to encourage.

B. **We Are to Admonish One Another**

We are to admonish. We're to build up one another. You don't just go to church for what you can get; you go to church for what you can give. Do you know when you're here tonight you're saying two things? You're saying, number one, "The Lord Jesus is important to me." And, you're saying, number two, "The brothers and sisters are important to me." You're saying, "You, my brother, you, my sister, are important to me." We are faithful one to another.

V. **Faithful to the Faith**

Not only should we be faithful to the fellowship—I'll tell you what else you need to be faithful to and I need to be faithful to: friend, we need to be faithful to the faith—I mean, to what we believe. Second Timothy 1, verses 13 and 14: "*Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in [Jesus Christ]. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us*" (2 Timothy 1:13–14). We are stewards of the mysteries of God.

There is a war on the faith today. Did you know that many people look at Bellevue Baptist Church as narrow, and bigoted, and hard-line, and arrogant because we won't bend concerning the Bible? I'm sorry they feel that way, but we're not going to bend—we're not going to bend. We are one generation away from paganism. We need to pass the baton. We need to hold high the torch. William Booth, who founded the Salvation Army, looked at the 20th Century—the one that just passed—and he said, "The chief danger of the 20th Century will be religion without the Holy Ghost, forgiveness without repentance, salvation without regeneration, and Heaven without Hell." Well folks, I'll tell you what: it came in the 20th Century, and we're getting a double dose in the 21st Century.

VI. **The Motivation for Faithfulness**

Now, why be faithful? What is the motivation for faithfulness?

A. God Has Been Faithful to Us

Well, number one: God has been so incredibly faithful to us, has He not? I love this verse—1 John 1, verse 9: *“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). Have you ever thought what that one verse means to you? What if when you fail the next time—and you will—that you could not be sure whether God would forgive you? Can you imagine that? Can you imagine that—not being certain that God would forgive you? But, *“if we confess our sins, he is”*—what?—*“he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us”* (1 John 1:9). And, when I face temptation, how am I going to overcome? Well, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13: *“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: [and] God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation [freely] make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it”* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

I’ve been on the trail long enough to know now that I have never, never, never, never called on Jesus in time of temptation that He did not come to my aid. Never! Thank God, He has forgiven me when I’ve failed. And, thank God, He’s been faithful to help me in time of temptation. He is faithful to forgive. He’s faithful to help. He is faithful to keep us. First Thessalonians 5, 23 and 24: *“and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he [who] calleth you, who also will do it”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23). I’m not...I haven’t been kept by holding onto Him. It’s not my faithfulness; it is His faithfulness. He has never let go of me. He is the One who began a good work in me, and He will perform what He has done. And, one of these days, I’m going to meet the Savior face-to-face, and I want to hear Him say to me because of His faithfulness to me, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” I love Revelation 2, verse 10, which says, *“Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life”* (Revelation 2:10). Oh, how faithful we need to be to the Lord Jesus Christ!

VII. How to Be Faithful

I’m going to wrap this up by talking about how, now, to be faithful.

A. Be Faithful in the Small Things

And, I want to say, first of all—and this is so important. I’ve thought about this: be faithful in the small things—be faithful in the small things. Luke 16 and verse 10: *“He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much”* (Luke 16:10). As I’ve already told you, all big things are made of little things. Your body, as we talked about this morning, has various members. It’s made up of components—hands and feet, eyes and ears—and they’re made up of

smaller pieces of muscle and tissue. And, that is made up of cells, and those cells are made up of atoms and a molecular structure. It keeps getting smaller, and smaller, and smaller. Everything big is made up of something small.

The ocean—the ocean is made up of drops of water. And, those drops of water are made up of molecules. I was reading this past week about Albert Einstein. Did you read that in the paper? He was the one who first postulated there was such a thing as a molecule. Nobody's ever seen one, but there are molecules. And, these molecules make up drops of water, and drops of water make up the ocean.

And, time—well, we think of time as spanning all of the centuries, and the eons, and the ages, but time is made up of ages. And, ages are made of years, and years are made of days. And, days are made of hours, and hours are made of seconds; and seconds are made of nanoseconds. And, if you're faithful in that which is small, there's no way that you can not be faithful in that which is much.

Brother Mark, you and I were at the Panama Canal here a couple of years ago. It's an engineering marvel. They tried to build the Panama Canal, first of all, and they started to cut through those mountains. And, there are some enormous mountains there, and they could not get through those mountains. They gave it up. The mosquitoes were everywhere, and thousands of people died of malaria because of the mosquitoes. And so, they stopped the project. And, you know what they did? They learned how to control the mosquitoes; and when they were able to control the little things, they were able to cut through those mountains. You take care of the mosquitoes—God will take care of the mountains. It's the small things that really count. You see, you can do much by doing little, but you cannot do much if you ignore the little.

There was a great evangelist of yesteryear. His name was Wilbur Chapman. He was the one that gave Billy Sunday his start. Wilbur Chapman said this... I love this. I want to memorize it. I think I will re-memorize it. I've forgotten it: "The rule that governs my life is this: anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult is wrong for me, and I must, as a Christian, turn away from it." Now friend, it's the little foxes that spoil the vines. Listen to this again—listen to it: "The rule that governs my life is this: Anything that dims my vision of Christ, or takes away my taste for Bible study, or cramps my prayer life, or makes Christian work difficult is wrong for me, and I must, as a Christian, turn away from it."

Parents, one of the best things you can do is to teach your children to be faithful in little things. When they come to church on Sunday morning, let them bring an offering. Let them bring an offering to church—just pennies, part of their... Teach them to tithe their...teach them to tithe their allotment, allowance, and to give beyond their allowance. And, that child that you teach to bring his pennies to Sunday School may one day

endow a college with millions of dollars. Teach them to be faithful. When you're faithful in that which is small, you can be faithful in that which is much.

David, before he was King of Israel, was a shepherd boy and kept a few sheep. And, before he slew Goliath, he had killed a lion and a bear. *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much"* (Luke 16:10). Be faithful in the small things.

B. Be Faithful in the Secret Things

Listen, be faithful in the secret things. Now, who is the man Adrian? The man Adrian is not the man in the pulpit. The man Adrian is the man in the hotel room. That's the man Adrian, when nobody else knows but God and Adrian. That's the man you are. That's the woman you are—when nobody else knows, in the secret things. It's easy to preach; it's easy to say these things. But, what are you in the secret things?

Michelangelo was painting the Sistine Chapel ceiling—the great artist—and was up there working on a cornice—on top of the cornice. And, someone said to him, "Michelangelo, nobody can see that." He said, "I can see it, and God can see it." You see, the things that nobody else can see—the things that nobody knows about—these secret things.

Now, it's one thing for you to praise the Lord in a worship service; but friend, if you get in a worship service and you praise God and worship—corporate worship—where you don't praise Him privately, there's something wrong with you. What is your private worship like? And, by the way, you have no right to praise Him in private or in public if you're not committed to Him. That's a form of spiritual pornography. It's like looking at pictures of somebody that you're not married to. No, don't get intimate with a God that you're not committed to. And, don't just simply be committed to Him in public and not in private. You be faithful. Be faithful, precious friend, in the small things, in the secret things.

C. Be Faithful in the Sacred Things

And, be faithful in the sacred things—in your prayer life, loving the Lord Jesus. Be faithful.

Conclusion

And one of these days soon—and very soon—we'll stand before Jesus. And I don't think any of us are going to be perfect, and I'll probably be way back in line behind many of you. But, when I meet Him, when I look upon His face, the One who died for me and saved me by His grace, I really do want to hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And I know you do, too. Friend, it's required of stewards that a man be found faithful. In the small things, the secret things, and the sacred things, we'll be faithful.

The Measure of a Minister

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 25, 1996

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 4:1–5

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Calling of the Man of God
 - A. Minister
 - B. Steward
- II. The Character of the Man of God
- III. The Criticism of the Man of God
- IV. The Compensation of the Man of God

Conclusion

Introduction

I want us to speak tonight on “The Measure of a Minister.” How do you measure the man of God? What are the standards for the man of God? Would you turn to 1

Corinthians chapter 4? And, Paul talks about his life as a minister of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, I believe it would be good for us to look at this passage as we ordain the young man, Greg Addison, to the gospel ministry.

You know, there are a lot of folks who love to critique, criticize, evaluate, and measure ministers. I’m well aware that many of you have roast preacher every Sunday for dinner. And, you know, we sometimes want to rank ministers—ministers of the Word of God. And, sometimes we categorize a pastor as a success or a failure by the size of the church, or by the kind of staff that he might have, or by his preaching or rhetorical ability, or by the degrees that he holds, maybe by the books that he’s written, or maybe his way with the people, his popularity, or whatever. We tend to kind of categorize, and rank, and measure preachers this way. And, I believe that all of this is an offense unto God. That’s not the way that we are to take measure of the man of God.

As a matter of fact, one of the problems in the church at Corinth, that Paul wrote this letter to, was that they were comparing ministers—they were comparing ministers of the Word of God—and it brought division in the church. And now, you’re in chapter 4; well, now, let’s just read here—verses 1 through 5: *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ”—now, that’s what we’re talking about; that’s the subject matter now, taking account of the ministers of Christ—“and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful. But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine*

own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God” (1 Corinthians 4:1–5).

Now, what had happened in the Corinthian church was that they had preachers on parade; they were comparing one with another. Go back to chapter 1 and look, if you will, in verse 12, and you’ll get that idea: Paul is talking to this carnal church, full of spiritual babies, and he said, *“Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas”*—and then, there some real sanctimonious ones who said—*“and I of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 1:12). Now, here was a church full of preacher followers, comparing one with another.

And then, Paul goes on to say—look in chapter 3, if you will, verse 1 through 5: *“And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able”*—Paul wanted to give them a steak from the Word of God, but he couldn’t feed them with meat; he had to give them a bottle and then stand at the door and burp them on the way out—*“For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?”*—that is, “other men who had never met the Lord.” Oh, God deliver us from a church where there is envying, and strife, and divisions! Now, what was the envy, and the strife, and the division about? Well, look in verse 4—*“For while one saith, I am of Paul”*—“Boy, I like Paul. He is my preacher.” Now, Paul was a great theologian. Just think of a man like Paul who could write the Book of Romans. But—*“another [says], I am of Apollos”*—“Apollos just holds me spellbound. What an orator! What a communicator!” And, Paul goes on to say, if you say that—*“are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?”* (1 Corinthians 3:1–5).

Now, what was happening here was there was division in the church, because they were trying to critique, criticize, categorize, follow, laud various ministers. Paul said, “Hey, you’re like a lot of little babies. You’re acting carnally.” Now, certainly, the congregation has the right to evaluate and to judge false doctrine, if a man of God is preaching false doctrine. Certainly, they have a right if a man of God fall into moral sin. As a matter of fact, the Bible says clearly that such a one is to be called on the carpet; he is to be rebuked before everybody, that others may see and fear. But, we are not to get into this thing that so many people do about ministers.

So now, go back again, if you will, to chapter 4, verse... Now, you got the setting. Now, back here in chapter 4 Paul, now, is describing the minister. And, what are the marks of the minister? How do you measure the minister? What is God’s standard for

the man of God, like the man of God we are ordaining and setting aside tonight?

I. The Calling of the Man of God

Well, there are four things that I want to put in your heart and mind as we look at this passage of scripture—the very first of which is the calling of the man of God—the calling of the man of God. Look in verse 1: “*Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God*” (1 Corinthians 4:1).

Now, what has Greg Addison been called to? He’s educated as a lawyer; and by the way, he is a crackerjack lawyer. As a matter of fact, he is, in my estimation, one of the finest legal minds in this city and would have, in the eyes of the world, a great, great future. But, God said to this young man, “I want you in the ministry. And, here are two things I want you to be: I want you to be a minister, and I want you to be a steward.”

A. Minister

Now, look at the word *minister*, if you will here. The word *minister*—do you know what it means? Greg, do you know what it means? It means, “slave.” What Paul is saying is, “*Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 4:1). That word—it’s a Greek word *hyperetes*, and it means, “slave.” But, it’s a special word. There were different words for slaves. There were domestic slaves. There were physician slaves. There were accountant slaves. But, Paul takes a special word here for slave, and the word that he’s chosen that is translated in my *King James Version* of the Scripture, *minister*, is a word that literally means, “lower rower.”

You say, “What is a lower rower?” Well, that’s what the word means—“a lower rower.” Back in these days they had slave ships. And, they didn’t have diesel engines or gasoline engines; and so, the way that they would make their ships move when there was no wind in the sails—they would have slaves beneath the deck. And, these slaves would be shackled to the oars. And, sometimes they would have one, two, and sometimes even three ranks of oarsmen. And, you would be there, shackled to the oar. You would be, perhaps, some sort of a prisoner of war—some kind of a slave. And, there would be there a drummer to beat cadence, so these men would pull the oars and there would be some brawny taskmaster there with a long whip, walking up and down and whipping these men to make them pull in cadence and to make that ship move.

Now folks, you did not want to be beneath the decks—*there* being the engine of that ship. But, if you were beneath the decks, there’s one place you did not want to be, and that was on the bottom—on the bottom. If you were a rower, you didn’t want to be a lower rower, because when you’re at the bottom, you’re down there in the bilge water. You’re down there where the rats and the vermin are. And, besides that, all of the excreta from these other men’s bodies and so forth is falling on you—not a happy

picture. And, there's that man with that lash, and there's that drummer beating that drum, and there is this man in the worst place on earth, I believe—a lower rower. Now, that's the etymology of the word that Paul used here. So, that's what you're getting into, young man. You are called to be a slave.

Now, who are you a slave of? Look at it: *“Let a man so account of us, as of the [slaves] of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 4:1). Folks, look up here; let me tell you something: Greg Addison is not your slave; he's Jesus's slave. All right, remember that. So, *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers”—the slaves—“of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 4:1). He is the bond slave of the Lord Jesus Christ, as is every true God-called minister.

Now, the best way that he can serve us is not by serving us but by serving the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, the reason that so many preachers get into difficulty today is that they're serving people rather than serving Jesus. Now, you can serve Jesus by serving people; but if you serve people rather than Christ, you're going to get into a lot of trouble. I've learned that early on in my ministry.

I read about a young preacher, one time, who came to church that had 700 members. And, this church had been known for being like the Corinthian church. They were full of strife, and envy, and debate. And, the former minister had been trying to please them all, and get them together, and all of this. And, one of the ladies in the church, who, by the way, had been one of the chief progenitors of all of that trouble, came to him, and she said, “Young man, we're glad to have you as our minister, but you're going to have a difficult time trying to please us all.” And, he looked at her, humbly but sincerely, and said, “My dear friend, it will not be my purpose to try to please you all. It will be my purpose to try to please Jesus Christ. And, if I please Him, that ought to be good enough for the rest of us.”

Now, our responsibility—my responsibility—is not to please people. The Bible says if I please people, I would not be the servant of Christ (Galatians 1:10). And, sometimes, as a man of God, you have to take stands that are unpopular. I know, sometimes I've gotten into trouble. I've said things and done things that maybe I ought not to do and should be called into accountability for. But, I have taken stands that are right and true and that Jesus has laid on my heart, but folks have not always liked it. As a matter of fact, sometimes I get home and the dog won't even wag his tail at me, when we used to have a dog. Now, the Bible teaches that this man and every minister is to be a servant of Christ.

Now, to be a servant of Christ doesn't mean that we get bragged on for that. Fast-forward over to chapter 9 and look at it. Paul says here in verse 16: *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16). Now, Paul said, “God called me to preach the gospel. But,” he said, “I can't take any real praise for that.” He said,

“God is the One who put me in the ministry, so I don’t have anything to glory of. It’s His work. What do I have that I have not received? I am being an obedient slave. But,” he says, *“woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel [of Christ]”* (1 Corinthians 9:16). Now, here’s the first thing this young man is; therefore, he is a minister—that is, he is a slave.

B. Steward

Go back to our text—chapter 4. Not only is he a slave—he’s also a steward. Look at it: *“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God”* (1 Corinthians 4:1). He’s a slave of Jesus, and he’s a steward of the mysteries of God. Do you know what the mysteries of God are? That’s the New Testament; that’s the Word of God. He has been called to be a steward.

Now, do you know what a steward does? A steward manages the affairs of somebody else. *If you go on an airplane and fly on an airplane, there is a steward or a stewardess. And, when time comes to get the Coca-Colas and the peanuts, they pass them out. Now, they’re not giving away their own things; they are distributing that which belongs to somebody else. It’s not their things that they are distributing. They are stewards.* This man has been called and set aside, as every God-called minister, to be a steward. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul told Timothy—excuse me, Titus—in Titus chapter 1 and verse 7: *“For a bishop”*—and that’s what he will be also—a bishop. The word *bishop* means, “overseer”—*“For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God”* (Titus 1:7). We are stewards of God—stewards of the mysteries of God, of the Word of God. So, we are to be serving that which belongs to God.

Do you know what a household steward was, if he served food? He was the cook, and he was the waiter. He would go into the kitchen and prepare the food. And then, he would serve it. Did you know that’s primarily what my responsibility is? I go into God’s kitchen, prepare food for you, and then I come and I serve it to you. I am a steward of the mysteries of God. I’m not trying to give to you my things. But, I just simply take the Word of God, analyze it, organize it, illustrate it, and apply it, because God has called me to be a slave of Jesus and a steward of the Word of God. That’s what He calls every God-called man to be. And, therefore, as a steward, I must be faithful—I must be faithful to give a balanced diet.

One of the things I endeavor to do in my preaching is to preach the whole counsel of God. The Apostle Paul said in Acts chapter 20 and verse 20: *“I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you”* (Acts 20:20). And, every man of God is to be faithful to the One who called him and to be a steward of the mysteries of the Word of God. Again, the Bible says he is to rightly divide the Word of God. (2 Timothy 2:15) That means to cut it straight. So, that’s the call of the man of God; that’s what this man has been called to be—a slave of Christ and a steward of the Word. That’s what he is. That’s what every

God-called man is called to be. That's the call of the man of God.

II. The Character of the Man of God

Now, here's the second thing: I want you to see something of the character of the man of God. Look, if you will, in verse 2. What's his character to be? *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found"*—what's the next word?—*"faithful"* (1 Corinthians 4:2). That's his character—that's his character. We are looking around here for faithful men. Every man desires that his steward who has control over his affairs be faithful. Our main responsibility for a man of God is not to be clever, not to be intelligent, not to be brilliant, but to be faithful.

You're in chapter 4. Go over to verse 17 and look at it. Paul talks about his young protégé whose name was Timothy: *"For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son"*—now, he's talking here metaphorically. He was his son in the ministry—*"and faithful in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 4:17). Paul said, "Hey, I'm going to send you a young minister, a young Greg Addison, and his character is this: that he is faithful."

Just go on to chapter 7 and look, if you will, in verse 25. I was looking at some of these scriptures this afternoon. Paul is giving advice concerning marriage, and he says, *"Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful"* (1 Corinthians 7:25). Paul, when he talked about himself, he said, "God forgave me. He gave me mercy and then He gave me wisdom. And now, I want to be faithful." And so, I want to say to our young man, tonight, his call is to be a slave of Jesus. His call is to be a steward of the mysteries of God. His character—he is to be faithful.

III. The Criticism of the Man of God

Now, here's the third thing I want you to notice—and I hate to say this, but I got to say it: Paul also speaks of the criticism of the man of God. You know, there are people who love to criticize the man of God. And, did you know that they would criticize any, any man? I mean, a church... Folks, churches are not perfect.

As a matter of fact, there was a church—a friend of mine told me about this; he was an older preacher—and they needed a pastor. And so, they came to this older preacher, and they said, "Can you recommend to us a pastor?" He said, "Yes." He said, "I have a man for you." He said, "He is a brilliant theologian." Well, they liked that. And, he said, "Also, he's a missionary-minded man. He's a great soul-winner." Well, they liked that. And, he said, "Also, he's a hard worker. He works prodigiously." Well, they like that. And, they said, "Also, he lives such a clean and a holy life." Well, boy, they were getting out their pens, ready to go after this man to be the pastor. But, he said, "Now, let me tell

you something: he's getting up in years." "Well, maybe we could, we could... You know, that would be all right." He said, "He's in bad health." "Oh," they thought, "hmm..." And, he said, "He's not really good looking, and he's really not much of a public speaker." You could see them putting their pens down. Then, he said, "And besides this, he gets into trouble everywhere he goes. He just kind of stirs up fusses—sometimes riots. As a matter of fact, he's been put in prison several times, and he's sometimes been beat up." And, they said, "Well, he just really doesn't sound like the kind of man we want." He said, "Well, that's all right. You couldn't get him anyway. He's already in Heaven. His name is Paul—the Apostle Paul."

Hey, Brother Jim, there are a lot of churches today who would not call the Apostle Paul. I mean, they would look him over, and they'd say, "Well, you know, I don't believe he's the kind of a man that would dignify the pulpit that we want." And, they were criticizing Paul as far back as this time. Look at it in verses 3 and 4: "*But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you*"—that is, measured by you—"or of man's judgment"—now, the word *judge* here means, "evaluation." They were evaluating him. And, Paul said, "That's a small thing with me that you critique me, that you evaluate me, because what you're doing—you're just brining man's wisdom, man's judgment, here, and you're judging me as men would judge another man." There were some who said, "Well, Paul—he's not fit to be an apostle. He's not fit to be a pastor. He's not fit to be a leader." And, there was a "Stop Paul" and anti-Paul movement in this church. And, Paul said, "Hey, I'm not losing any sleep over that"—"*with me it is a...small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment*"—and then, he says this—"yea, I judge not mine own self" (1 Corinthians 4:3).

Now, I want you to follow his logic. Paul is saying, "Hey, I am not going to stay awake all night wondering what you think about me, and what you think about my motives, and what you think about what I'm doing." There are some who were saying, "Oh, Paul—he's just...he's a showboat. He's just...he's a megalomaniac. He's this or that." They were judging Paul's motives. And, Paul said, "How can you judge me when I cant even judge me?" Now listen—see what he says: "It's a small thing with me that you judge me with man's judgment. I don't even judge my own self" (1 Corinthians 4:3). That's interesting.

You know, the human heart is kind of deceitful. You know, it's hard for us to do introspection and look in. All right, I preached this morning. I studied the message. I prayed over it. I preached as best I knew how. "Now Adrian, why did you do that?" Well, I think I did it for Jesus. I think I was sincere. I believe I was as sincere as I can be, preaching with all of my heart—not for pay, not for praise, but for the Lord. I believe that—sincerely believe that.

But, what if I'm wrong? What if I'm wrong? What... Do you think my old deceitful

heart's going to betray my old deceitful heart? Folks, I can't even judge me. How are you going to do it? That's what Paul is saying. Paul is saying, "Hey, as far as I know, there's nothing in my heart that's wrong." That's what he's saying. He says, "*I know nothing by myself*"—he says, "I don't know a thing in the world in my heart unconfessed, un-repented of." But, he said—"*yet am I not hereby justified*" (1 Corinthians 4:4). "Just because I can't know it, just because I don't know the little peccadilloes in my own heart," he said, "that still doesn't justify me." What he's saying is, "How on earth are you going to criticize me, when I cannot criticize myself?" Folks, it's very hard for a man or a woman to evaluate themselves; and so, we better stop trying to evaluate one another. That's what he's saying. Isn't that right? I mean, folks, listen—just be honest.

Greg, it's strange to be a minister of the Word of God—it really is. Folks, you'd have to know what it's like to be a preacher, especially from the pulpit.

I remember downtown, when we were having three services, downtown, back-to-back, I would study for a message, prepare a message, and step out on that platform to preach that message, and sometimes I would preach at eight o'clock and all Heaven would come down—preach the same message at 9:30 and nothing would happen, preach again at 11 and all Heaven. Sometimes I'd preach at eight o'clock—it would be dead as four o'clock in the afternoon—I mean, nothing. I'd think, "O God, You've forsaken me. God, I'm backslidden. What has happened to me, Lord? I've got to run this sermon in the shop and re-do it, or throw it in the fire—do something." Come out at 9:30—Heaven come down. How do you explain that? I've gotten old enough now just to simply say, "The wind blows where it will." And, when God blesses, you can't take a lot of praise for it; and when God doesn't bless, you can't get condemned about it. Just be faithful—just be faithful. Just preach the Word of God. It's a strange thing.

How are you going to evaluate yourself? A man of God has to spend his ministry not looking to others, not listening to others, but being faithful to Jesus, as he knows Jesus, and preach the Word of God and leave the results with God. So, my dear brother, I want to give you some bad news and some good news. The bad news is this that you will have some folks who will criticize you. The good news is they don't know what they're talking about—they don't know what they're talking about. How are they going to judge you, when you can't even judge you? Just be faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

IV. The Compensation of the Man of God

Now, here's the last thing before we lay hands on this young man. We're talking about the call of the man of God—he is a slave and a steward. We're talking about the character of the man of God—he is to be faithful. We're talking about the criticism of the man of God—that's not to affect him; he's to keep his eyes on Jesus. Last of all, the compensation of the man of God. I can tell you, this man would do better financially if he

stayed in law. But, that's not the kind of compensation that I'm talking about.

Look, if you will, in verse 5: Paul says, *"Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God"* (1 Corinthians 4:5). What is the compensation of the man of God? What is it? It's to hear Jesus say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." You see, when Jesus comes, He's going to reveal those things that we didn't know. Paul said, "I don't know why I do what I do. I think I know. I don't know anything of myself that's wrong. But, I'll wait until He comes—then He's going to reveal my heart. He's going to show what was ego and what was humility. He's going to show what I did for the praise of others and what I did for the glory of God."

You see, the same Apostle Paul says... Just go over here to 2 Corinthians, and I'm finished—last scripture we'll turn to—but 2 Corinthians 5, verses 9 and 10. You're in 1 Corinthians. Now, Paul still has this same thing in mind—look at it. They were asking Paul, "Paul, why do you work like you do? Why do you do this?" And, he gives them the answer; he says, *"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent"—that is, whether I stay with you or go to Heaven—"we may be accepted"—or "acceptable"—[to] him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:9–10). There's no better reason to do anything than to be acceptable to Him.

Now, I want to tell you, Greg Addison, the world has its standards. The world says, "Here's what real compensation is." But, when you stand before Jesus one day, things will look a whole lot different in the white light of eternity.

Conclusion

I want you to live, love, work, and pray, so that when you stand before the One who has called you and put you in the ministry, you will hear Him say, "Well done."

Christ, Our Passover

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 23, 1986

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 5:7–8

Outline

Introduction

- I. Moses' Symbolic Lamb
 - A. It Was a Special Lamb
 - B. It Was a Slain Lamb
 - C. It Was a Saving Lamb
 - D. It Was a Shared Lamb
- II. Mary's Saving Lamb
 - A. He Was a Special Lamb
 - B. He Was a Slain Lamb
 - C. He Is the Saving Lamb
 - D. He Is a Shared Lamb

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 5? And, in a moment, we are going to read together verses 7 and 8. As Brother Jim has told you—I have reminded you—next Lord's Day is Easter. This is the time of year when our Jewish friends are celebrating what we call "the Passover." Passover and Easter are inextricably interwoven, so it is important that you understand the importance of both. Both of them are very, very important to us. Now, we know that without the resurrection of Jesus, our hope of Heaven wouldn't be worth a half a hallelujah. Brother, I want to tell you, somebody has well said, "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."

And, I want to tell you something else: our Jewish friends at this time of the year—next month, actually—will celebrate what they call "Passover." And, I want to think about Passover this week, because Passover is about a lamb—the Lamb of God. Jesus is God's Lamb. Read with me, if you would, in 1 Corinthians 5:7: *"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"* (1 Corinthians 5:7–8). Passover is about a lamb; that Lamb's name is Jesus.

The Old Testament feast of Passover, whether our Jewish friends realize it or not,

was a picture, prophecy, portrait, and a foregleam of God's Lamb, who would one day come into the world. We have a little nursery rhyme that we sing: "Mary had little lamb, his fleece was white as snow." And indeed, Mary, the Virgin Mary, had a little Lamb. His fleece was white snow. He was God's sinless and spotless Lamb. And, in the Bible, a Lamb depicts the Lord Jesus Christ. And, I want us to look, first of all, at the Old Testament ceremony of Passover. And then, I want us to look at the New Testament Passover, because it is not only Jews who are commanded to keep Passover—Christians are commanded to keep Passover. The scripture that I just read to you says, "*Let us keep the feast*" (1 Corinthians 5:8). So, you want to learn how to do it?

All right. As I was driving to church this morning, I got to thinking, "Brother Jim, I will never unload all the truth that's in my heart today." So, you just pray for me, because there's so much in me. If you just get part of it, you are going to be blessed—not because of the preacher, but because of the truth that is here. So, if you are ready for a blessing—if you will pay attention and if you have sensitivity for the things of God—you are going to be blessed, as we think about Christ, our Passover. Now, I'm going to be a little unorthodox and have a two-point message. I want us to think, first of all, about Moses's symbolic lamb; and then, I want us to think about Mary's saving Lamb.

I. Moses' Symbolic Lamb

All right. First of all, let's think a little bit about Moses's symbolic lamb. Turn backward with me in the Old Testament to Exodus chapter 12 for just a moment. Now, Exodus chapter 12 takes place when the Jews are slaves in the land of Egypt. They are getting ready to be delivered from the land of Egypt, the land of bondage. Egypt represents sin, darkness, and slavery. Pharaoh, the hard taskmaster, represents Satan himself, who keeps the children of God in bondage. All right. So, here is a picture of how God is going to deliver his people from the land of Egypt. Do you know what the symbol of ancient Egypt was? It was a serpent—a snake, a serpent. The King of Egypt wore a serpent—a coiled serpent—on his crown. On their staffs, on their scepters, by their throne there would be that coiled, venomous serpent.

Now, God is getting ready to destroy the power of Egypt. God is getting ready to deliver His people, and He is going to defeat the serpent—He is going to defeat the snake. And, do you know what He is going to use to defeat that snake? A little lamb. Now, a lamb is the weakest and the gentlest of possibly all the animals. You think about a lamb: a lamb can't run, and it's slow. Its little knobby knees can't carry it very fast. He can hardly outrun anything. A lamb has no fangs or poison like a serpent. A lamb has no huge teeth like a lion. A lamb has no claws to shred and tear. A lamb is a defenseless animal—so gentle, so meek. A lamb seems to say, "If you're hungry, eat me. If you're cold, shear me; take my wool and get warm."

I heard a preacher say one time that he knew a man in the church that worked in a slaughterhouse. In this slaughterhouse, they were killing cattle. It was his job to cut the throat of the cattle, and he said he didn't mind the job at all. But, he said, one day, this slaughterhouse began to process lambs. He said he wasn't prepared for it. He said a little lamb came down the shoot, and he was to kill that lamb. It was the first one he had ever killed. He said he could remember how the cattle would just tear and pull with his strength and look at him with all of the noises he would make. But, he said the little lamb just stood there, looked at him with languid eyes, and made no defense whatsoever. He said he felt guilty as he picked up the skin of the lamb, took that knife, and cut its throat. He said the lamb never uttered a sound; the lamb just looked at him. He said the blood of that lamb blurted out on his hand. And, he said the lamb saw it, and he licked the blood from his hand as if to say, "I'm sorry." That man said he would never kill another lamb. He said he quit; he said he resigned. He said he couldn't do that. A lamb is so gentle, so meek, and so mild. And, God choose a lamb to defeat the serpent.

Now, I want you look here in Exodus chapter 12. God is getting ready to take His people out of the land of Egypt and out of the land of bondage. I begin in verse 1: *"And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months"*—it corresponds to our month of April—*"it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month"*—that is, the 10th of April—*"they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb"* (Exodus 12:1–4). I want you to notice several things about Moses's symbolic lamb.

A. It Was a Special Lamb

First of all, I want you to notice it was a special lamb. Notice Exodus verse 5: *"Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats"* (Exodus 12:5). This lamb, first of all, is a special lamb—had to be absolutely and totally perfect. This lamb had to be without spot and without blemish. And, that pictures the sinless, spotless character of the Lord Jesus. This lamb was a picture, a portrait, a prophecy—this Passover lamb, as I'm telling you—of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, who was without sin. Jesus never, ever committed one sin. He was a spotless lamb; He was a special lamb.

The Bible tells us here that the lamb was to be a male. We have some liberals today who are trying to "de-sex" the Bible; they are trying to neuter Jesus. And, they have retranslated the Bible, *"For God so loved the world...he gave his only begotten [child]"*

(John 3:16). My friend, if I had time, I could give you a strong and theological argument why Jesus had to be a male to redeem us. Listen, a male—the firstling of the flock, this lamb, this spotless lamb—the very male child represents Jesus, the Son of the living God.

Now, they examined the lamb. As a matter of fact, according to this scripture, they would keep the lamb up for three days. From the 11th to the 13th day they would examine the lamb. There came a time when the priests would examine the lamb. They would scrutinize the lamb so carefully that they even would open the mouth, look in the mouth, and examine the eyelids. They would microscopically, as it were, examine the lamb. He was a special lamb.

B. It Was a Slain Lamb

Second thing: not only was he a special lamb, but the special lamb was a slain lamb. Look in verse 6: *“And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening”* (Exodus 12:6). This lamb was to die in the evening, in the afternoon, at a particular time—not in the morning, but in the evening, it was to die. It was slain. Again, it pictures the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who would one day die for our sins.

Now, dear friends, the liberals and modernists today don't like the idea of the blood of the Lamb. They do not like the idea of a blood sacrifice. They call it a “slaughterhouse religion.” But, I remind you, the Bible says in Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 22—says, *“Without shedding of blood is no remission”* (Hebrews 9:22). This lamb was slain. Now, the liberal makes much of the life of Christ and little of the death of Christ. But, I remind you, we are not saved by learning lessons from the life of Christ; we're saved by receiving life from the death of Christ. And, it is the death that saves us.

C. It Was a Saving Lamb

This lamb was a special lamb. This lamb was a slain lamb. And, therefore, this lamb became a saving lamb. The blood of this lamb was caught in a basin. Now, notice Exodus 12:7: *“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.”* And then, if you will, notice in Exodus 12:22: *“And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning. For the LORD will pass through to smite the Egyptians; and when he seeth the blood upon the lintel, and on the two side posts, the LORD will pass over the door”—*that's where we get the word *Passover*—*“the LORD will pass over the door, and will not suffer the destroyer to come [into] your houses to smite you”* (Exodus 12:22–23). This lamb was a saving lamb. They were to take the blood—nothing else but the blood. Had they set a

live lamb by the door, it would have done no good. Had they writing beautiful poetry on the doorpost, it would have done no good. Had they encrusted the doorposts with rubies, and diamonds, and emeralds, and gems, it would have done no good. For God said, *“When I see the blood, I will pass over you”* (Exodus 12:13).

The angel of God’s wrath—the angel of God’s vengeance, the angel of God’s justice—was passing through the land. And, dear friend, those people in that house of safety got in that house only one way: they walked in under the blood. That’s the only way you can get in the house of safety—is to walk in under the blood. They walked in, every one of them, underneath the blood—blood here and blood here. And, in they walked. The only place there was no blood was down here, because you will not trample under your dirty feet the precious blood of Jesus and go to Heaven. Oh, there’s blood on the side and top, because, dear friend, this is the blood that is a covering for our atonement, a satisfaction for the holy fires of the wrath of Almighty God. This lamb was a saving lamb.

D. It Was a Shared Lamb

Now, the next thing I want you to notice is this lamb—this symbolic lamb—was to be a shared lamb. Look, if you will, at Exodus 12:8 and following: *“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire”*—now, dear friend, the fire speaks of the fires of God’s wrath. Jesus, God’s Lamb, baptized His soul in Hell for us. Jesus, God’s Lamb, suffered the fires of the wrath of God. Jesus, God’s Lamb, walked the burning corridors of Hell, that we might be saved—*“roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it”*—the bitter herbs speak of repentance and brokenness on our part, as we feast upon the Lamb—*“Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD’s passover”* (Exodus 12:8–11).

Can you imagine that? Can you imagine that scene? Here’s the blood on the doorpost and on the lentil. And then, they take that body of that lamb and begin to kindle fires. Can you imagine what the Egyptians must have thought? Can you imagine the aroma that went over the land of Egypt as a quarter of a million lambs are being roasted all at one time? Can you imagine this? And then, they begin to feed on the lamb. They—all of them, by their families—take this lamb that has saved them, and now they feed on the lamb. For the lamb that has saved them is the lamb that will strengthen them. And, every one of them, when they walked out of Egypt, walked out with a lamb on the inside—*“Christ in you, the hope of glory”* (Colossians 1:27). The saving lamb was

the strengthening lamb. And now, a bunch of slaves are becoming a nation, and they are fellowshiping together—all of them—by feeding on a lamb. And, God is making a nation out of a group of slaves. Moses's lamb was a special lamb. Moses's lamb was a slain lamb. Moses's lamb was a saving lamb. Moses's lamb was a shared lamb. The Lamb of God was Moses's lamb in picture, type, and prophecy.

II. Mary's Saving Lamb

Now, let us look at the other side of this message and think not only of Moses's symbolic lamb, but let us think of Mary's saving, sacrificial Lamb, because you see that Old Testament lamb was only a prophecy of the true Lamb.

Jeremiah the prophet had taught that something better was to come. Turn to Jeremiah chapter 31 with me. Let me show you a key verse. Jeremiah chapter 31—trust you'll turn to it in God's Word. I will begin reading now in verse 31. Now, Jeremiah is looking to the future. He is looking past the Old Testament dispensation days. He is looking to the future: *"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah"*—now, underscore the phrase "new covenant." That is...do you know what the word *covenant* means? "Testament." This is talking about the New Testament. God says, "You have an Old Testament, but I'm going to give you a New Testament." The word *covenant* and the word *testament* are the same—*"I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt"*—what was the day that he took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt? The night of the Passover, the day of the Passover. He says, "Now, that's the old covenant. Now, I'm going to give you a new covenant." That's the Old Testament. I'm going to give you a New Testament—*"which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days"*—that is, after the Old Testament days—*"After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more"* (Jeremiah 31:31–34). God is saying, "It's going to be a spiritual religion—not one of the letter, but one of the spirit; not one of the law, but a law now that is written in the heart; one of intimate knowledge. You won't have to be taught about the Lord. You will know the Lord. Your sins will be forgiven. This is a New Testament—something new not like what happened to you when you came out of Egypt in the land of the Passover."

Now, keep that in mind, and let me tell you what began to happen in... Do you remember, they were to keep this feast of the Passover as a memorial, a perpetual feast? That's the reason our Jews today keep the Passover. Every April, they keep the Passover. But now, something began to happen in those Old Testament times, the time of Moses. They began to learn how to keep the Passover. And, they would do some unusual things.

For example, they would take that bread—that unleavened bread—because they were to keep it with unleavened bread. And, they would divide the unleavened bread into three pieces of bread. They would put those three pieces of bread into a sash—into a cloth bag—called a “matzo tosh.” And, it would have three divisions. They would put one piece of bread in the top division, another piece of bread in the middle division, and another piece of bread in the bottom division. And then, at a particular time in the ceremony—the Passover ceremony—these Old Testament and Orthodox Jews would reach in, take the middle piece bread out, and they would break it and pass it around the table. Now, no one really knows how this got started or why they did it. They themselves did not know why. They just did it. And then, they would take a cup, and they would set that cup aside during the feast. And, no one would drink from that cup, because they said, “That is Messiah’s cup.” And, they called that cup “*the cup*”—not a cup, but “*the cup*.” And also, they would have a chair. No one would sit in that chair. It is Messiah’s chair. “When Messiah comes,” they said, “He’ll sit in this chair”—“when Messiah”—and the word *Messiah* means “Christ.” It is the Old Testament word for “Christ”—“when Christ comes, He’ll sit in that chair. When Christ comes, He’ll drink from this cup.” And so, they had that middle piece of bread. They would break it and feed each other. They have a cup waiting for Messiah to come and drink from that cup. They have there a chair waiting for Messiah to come and sit in that chair.

Then, one day, John the Baptist, filled with the Holy Spirit from His mother’s womb, was baptizing down by the Jordan River. And, he looked, and he saw one coming. John the Baptist said in John 1:29: “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.*” God’s Lamb has now come—Mary’s Lamb—born of a virgin. John knew him. The Holy Spirit said, “That’s the One—that’s the One—that the centuries have been yearning for. That is the Lamb of God.” Let me tell you about that Lamb.

A. He Was a Special Lamb

First of all, I want to tell you about that Lamb. He, too, was a special lamb—a special lamb, never another like this One. Jesus Christ was the sinless, spotless, virgin-born, male child of Almighty God, the Son of the Highest. Did you know that the Old Testament priests had commissioned a certain generation and brand of shepherd to go down to the field of Bethlehem and begin to raise sheep—little lambs? And, they would

breed these lambs because they were bred of lambs. Those lambs were bred by those special shepherds as Passover lambs. And, they were very special lambs. They were raised to be without spot or without blemish.

Now remember, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, where those little lambs were born in Bethlehem. They were born right out there in the field of Boaz. On a particular Sunday before Passover, they would begin to bring those lambs into the city, through the sheep gate. Those lambs would be coming to the Temple Mount. At the same time you talk about Palm Sunday—this Sunday at the same time—when those lambs would be coming in through that sheep gate into the city, out of the field of Bethlehem—on that same Sunday—Jesus Christ is coming into the city, riding upon a donkey. The same time as those lambs, God’s Lamb is coming into the city.

And then, the priest would begin to examine those lambs and look at those lambs. And, for three days, they would examine those lambs to make certain they are perfect. Have you ever wondered why the gospel story spends so much time on the last three days of the life of Christ? I mean, the gospels aren’t all that long (the books). But, you study your Bible, and you find out how much time is given to that last week and especially the last three days of that last week. There, on the Temple Mount, Jesus is being examined by the Sadducees, Pharisees, and civil rulers. They are examining Jesus, trying to find a flaw, trying to find a fault. But, they have to say, “*Never man spake like this man*” (John 7:46). Jesus said, “*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*” (John 8:46). They could lie about Him; they could slander Him, but not one could accuse Him of sin—not one! Even Pilate had to say, “*I find no fault in him*” (John 19:6). God’s perfect Lamb was examined there.

B. He Was a Slain Lamb

I want to tell you, dear friend, that this Lamb was a special Lamb. And, I want to say this Lamb was a slain Lamb. The Lord Jesus Christ took Himself, by the will of God, to that place called “Calvary.” Remember that the Jewish day begins at sundown—about 6 p.m. That same night, Jesus said, “Go into the city to prepare, we must eat the Passover” (Luke 22:8). Now remember, we are talking about the Passover. This is just before Jesus was to be crucified. So, the disciples go to that place. They prepare a Passover meal, as Jews have prepared a Passover meal through the centuries. There was Messiah’s cup. There was Messiah’s chair. There was that bag with three pieces of bread, a middle piece in it. And, on the night of the Passover, Jesus is there with His disciples. Jesus reaches in, and He pulls out that middle piece of bread. And, He breaks that middle piece of bread; and then, He unlocks the mystery of centuries. He says, “*This is my body, which is broken for you*” (1 Corinthians 11:24).

For centuries, the Jews held the Trinity in their hand and never knew it—God the

Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. *“This is my body, which is broken for you”* (1 Corinthians 11:24). And then, the Bible tells us in Luke chapter 22, the supper having ended, after the supper, after the Passover, Jesus takes the cup—not a cup; *the cup*, Messiah’s cup—and says, *“This cup is the new testament in my blood”* (Luke 22:20)—the New Testament. Jeremiah said there is an Old Testament; there was the old covenant with the old Passover. Now, Jesus said, “Here is New Testament, a new covenant—not with the blood of Moses’s lamb, but with the blood of Mary’s Lamb. This is the new covenant in My blood”—“in My blood.” Oh, my dear friend, every time you take the Lord’s Supper, I trust you’ll remember that.

Now, by this time, He goes to Gethsemane—that night of agony. And, by 9 a.m., He is on His way to be crucified. And, Jesus takes that cross, and He goes up a rocky prominence. We call it “Mount Calvary,” “Golgotha.” Do you know what it was? It was a part of Mount Moriah. Do you know what Mount Moriah was? In Genesis chapter 22, God had told Abraham to sacrifice his son in a place, God said, *“I will tell thee of”* (Genesis 22:2)—not just any place, “in a place I will show you.” And, the very place that God told Abraham to sacrifice his son was Mount Moriah. Now, as Abram and Isaac are going up that hill—and Isaac is potentially to be sacrificed—Isaac says to Abraham, his father, *“Behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering”* (Genesis 22:7). And, Abraham said to Isaac, *“God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering”* (Genesis 22:8)—not God will provide a sacrifice for Himself, but God will provide Himself a sacrifice. God will be the sacrifice. *“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself”* (2 Corinthians 5:19).

And listen, dear friend, where Abraham was to have sacrificed Isaac is the place where God the Father provided Himself a sacrifice. And, on that same mountain, God’s Lamb—God’s Passover, the Lord Jesus—was sacrificed. It all begins to come together. He, Jesus, was the special Lamb. He, Jesus, was the slain Lamb, that One that was crucified. And, while Jesus was there on one end of Mount Moriah, on the Temple Mount, the Levites and the priests were on the other end of Mount Moriah. Now remember, they were to sacrifice the lamb in the afternoon. When did Jesus die? Three o’clock in the afternoon. At three o’clock in the afternoon, those Levitical priests had sharpened their lethal knives. Those lambs had been examined. They were perfect and spotless lambs. And, without a whimper, they are lying there. And, that Levitical priest takes their chin and takes that razor sharp knife, and he cuts their throat; and the blood spills out. At the same time, Jesus bows His head in agony and blood, and He says, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30)—“paid in full. It is done. It is done. It is done. It is finished. It is finished. Levites, you can go home now. Priests, you can go home now. Shepherd, you can retire now. We don’t need you anymore. That’s the Old Testament. That’s the old covenant. That’s finished. It is done.”

C. He Is the Saving Lamb

Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us. He died in the right place, at the right time, for the right reason, and He, my friend, is God's saving Lamb. And, God says to every one of us, when that blood is applied to our hearts and our lives, and when He sees the blood, He will pass over you, because every man, woman, boy, or girl in this auditorium tonight is under the judgment of God. And, without the blood of the Lamb you will not escape that judgment. Your sin will be pardoned in Christ or punished in Hell, but it will not be passed over apart from the blood of Jesus Christ. He is God's saving Lamb.

Now, in the Old Testament, they took that blood, and they took hyssop, which is a common weed that just grew out of the wall—they took hyssop, and they applied the blood to the doorposts. Jeremiah said, though, "Now, this new religion is going to be in the heart—not on some door, but in the heart." Now, what does that hyssop represent? It was so common and so easily available. What does it represent? The blood that was applied by faith and hyssop represents faith that applies the blood to our hearts. *"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). And, the blood of the Lamb is applied by the hyssop of faith to the heart of any person. And, when that happens, He becomes the saving Lamb.

Are you listening to me? Let me tell you something now, my friends. When you leave this auditorium today, everybody will either walk out under the blood or over the blood. You are going to walk out some way, saved or lost. Either you are going to say "yes" to Jesus Christ or you, one more time, will trample beneath your feet the blood of God's Lamb. But, everybody will leave this auditorium either under the blood or over the blood of God's precious Lamb. I pray to God that today you'll take that step of faith and say, "Lord Jesus, I believe You. I receive You. I take You."

D. He Is a Shared Lamb

Now, not only was Jesus a special Lamb, a slain Lamb, a saving Lamb, but Jesus was also the shared Lamb. You see, the Lamb that saves is the Lamb that strengthens us. And, just as they fed upon Moses's lamb so long ago, we are to feed upon Mary's Lamb. By faith, we are to commune with the Lamb.

Take your Bibles here, please, and turn with me to 1 Corinthians chapter 10. Remember that 1 Corinthians chapter 5 told us to keep the feast. Now, you say, "Pastor, how can I keep Passover?" All right, let me show you how. First Corinthians chapter 10—look with me in verse 16: *"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?—the blood of Messiah—"the bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 10:16). As they fed upon

that lamb so long ago, we feed upon the Lamb. The Lord's Supper pictures our feeding upon the Lamb. Look in 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 23: *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped"—not a cup, but the cup—"saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood"—remember, Jeremiah said about that new covenant—"this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come"* (1 Corinthians 11:23–26).

Let me tell you something, friend, about the Lord's Supper: when you come to the Lord's Supper, you don't have to be mournful and weep. The Lord's Supper is a celebration. We're not mourning a corpse; we are hailing a Conqueror. The Lord's Supper is a meal with a friend, the Lord Jesus. And, I'll tell you what it celebrates: the Lamb has slain the serpent. The Lamb—the Lamb—has slain the snake.

One last scripture, and I'm finished. Turn to Revelation chapter 5, now, and look with me in verse 11—John gets a glimpse of Glory: *"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him"* (Romans 5:11–14). Glory be to *"the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the [sins] of the world"* (John 1:29).

Conclusion

Let's bow in prayer.

Let's Celebrate Passover

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 08, 2001

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 5:7–8

Outline

Introduction

- I. Our Redemption Prophesied
 - A. A Spotless Lamb
 - B. A Sacrificial Lamb
 - C. A Saving Lamb
 - D. A Shared Lamb
 1. The Lamb Was Roasted
 2. The Lamb Was to Be Eaten in Its Entirety
 3. The Lamb Was to Be Eaten with Unleavened Bread and Bitter Herbs
 4. The Lamb Was to Be Eaten on a Day of Rest
- II. Our Redemption Provided
 - A. Jesus Is a Spotless Lamb
 - B. Jesus Is a Sacrificial Lamb
 - C. Jesus Is a Saving Lamb
 - D. Jesus Is a Shared Lamb

Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding 1 Corinthians chapter 5—1 Corinthians chapter 5; and when you've found it, look up here. Let me tell you what I'm going to do today: I'm going to call you today to a celebration. Let's celebrate. You know, sometimes we have the idea that salvation is a funeral. It is not a funeral; it is a feast, and we're called to a celebration. And, don't get the idea that Jesus was some sort of a grab-pail religious recluse. He was not—is not. And, if you come to the Passion Play, you'll understand that, when you see the Lord Jesus in the wedding of Canaan. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons that they crucified the Lord Jesus was that He enjoyed life, and these smug, sanctimonious Pharisees could not stand that.

But, the Bible says of the Lord Jesus, "*Thou hast...anointed [him] with the oil of gladness above [his] fellows*" (Hebrews 1:9). And, by the way, one of the best witnesses we can ever be for the Lord Jesus Christ is to have joy and gladness. Most of the people that you meet tomorrow morning are not all that interested in Heaven or Hell. They want to know how to hack it on Monday. Isn't that right? And, you come with a big black Bible under your arm—you look like an advanced agent for the undertaker: "Don't

you want to be a Christian so you can be as miserable as I am?" No! Listen, we're called to celebrate, and what I'm calling you to celebrate today is the Passover.

Have you ever thought about a Christian celebrating Passover? Today, this week is Passover, and it's also Palm Sunday. Did you know that Easter and Passover are inextricably interwoven? Did you know that Christians are called on to keep Passover? You say, "That's Jewish." Well, look, if you will here, in 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 7: "*Purge out therefore the old leaven*"—now ladies, that means "yeast"; that's what you put in bread to make it rise—"*Purge out...the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump*"—talking about a lump of dough here—"*[for] as ye are unleavened*"—now, watch it—"*For even Christ our*"—watch it—"*passover*"—"Christ our passover"—"*is sacrificed for us. Therefore*"—verse 8—"Therefore let us keep the feast"—he's talking to Christians. He's saying, "Christians, keep the feast of Passover"—"*not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth*" (1 Corinthians 5:7–8). So, we are to celebrate, and Passover is a celebration; and Christians are told to keep Passover, and Jews are told to keep Passover.

And, what is Passover all about? Well, it is about a lamb. Now, let me give you the background—historical background. Most of you may know it, but some may not. The Jews were in bondage in the land of Egypt. Egypt, in the Bible, is symbolic of sin; it represents the world, the flesh, and the devil. Pharaoh represents the devil himself—the king of Egypt. The bondage that they were in represents the flesh that keeps us in bondage; and then, of course, the land of Egypt itself represented the world. And, they were in bondage to the world, the flesh, and the devil. But, God said, "You're My people; you're chosen people. I'm going to bring you out of Egypt. I'm going to bring you into Canaan." And, the night that He brought them out of Egypt and headed them toward Canaan was the night that we call *Passover*.

And, God had been sending plagues upon the land of Egypt, and this great final plague was the plague when the death angel would pass over the land of Egypt and the first-born in every family would be slain unless there was, on the doorpost of that house, the blood of the lamb. If they had taken the little lamb and put the blood of the lamb on the doorpost of that house, when the death angel came through the land of Egypt, God said, "*When I see the blood, I will*"—what?—"pass over you" (Exodus 12:13). That's where we get the term *Passover*, and it is all wrapped up in a lamb—a little lamb called the *Passover lamb*.

Now friend, think about it: a lamb—is there anything more gentle than a lamb, anything weaker than a lamb, anything more defenseless than a lamb? No fangs, no claws, cannot run, no strength. A lamb's so gentle; a lamb's so meek. A lamb just seems to present itself for slaughter, as lambs to the slaughter (Isaiah 53:7; Acts 8:32).

Never fights back—a lamb seems to say, “Are you hungry? Kill me and eat me. Are you cold? Shear me; take my wool—make a coat for yourself.” A little lamb. Now, the symbol of Egypt was not a lamb; the symbol of Egypt was a serpent—a serpent. Looking at some of the Hollywood movies, there’s Pharaoh, and up there on Pharaoh’s crown is what? A serpent—a snake. Look at Pharaoh’s scepter. At the end of Pharaoh’s scepter, what is there? A coiled serpent, a snake—venomous, powerful, poisonous, ominous. What’s Passover all about? The lamb is going to decimate the serpent. The little lamb is going to lead them out, and that’s we call *Passover*.

Now, take your Bibles and go backward to Exodus chapter 12. We’re going to find out the story of Passover, and then we’re going to find out why, folks, we have reason to celebrate—why we’re going to keep and celebrate Passover.

I. Our Redemption Prophesied

First of all, I want you to notice in Exodus chapter 12 what I’m going to call our redemption prophesied—our redemption prophesied. Now, the Old Testament is the book of prophecy. The Old Testament says somebody is coming; it speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ. Look, if you will, in chapter 12—the first six verses: “*And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you*” (Exodus 12:1–2). That is, “I am going to give you a brand new start.” Would you like a new start? Would you like a brand new start? Would you? This day can be the first day of the rest of your spiritual life. I am telling you, today, you can have a brand new start. This can be the first day of your new life.

Verse 3: “*Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take [of] them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb*”—now, notice in verse 5 how the lamb is delineated and described—“*[The] lamb should be without blemish*”—very important—“*a male of the first year*”—very important—“*ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening*” (Exodus 12:3–6)—that is, “in the afternoon.” And then, look, if you will, in chapter 12 and verse 11—fast-forward: “*And thus shall [you] eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand...[you] shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD’s passover*” (Exodus 12:11).

May I tell you four things about that lamb? And, I pray God will write them upon your heart.

A. A Spotless Lamb

First of all, the Passover lamb was a spotless lamb—a spotless lamb. Verses 5 and 6—look at it again: *“Your lamb shall be without blemish”* (Exodus 12:5). Not a scab, not a scar, not a wound, not an extra part, no part diminished—here is a perfect lamb, a little male lamb without blemish. Now, any blemish, any spot, any blur would have disqualified that lamb. So, the Passover lamb was a spotless lamb. And, how the priest would examine that lamb later on in the temple sacrifices to make certain that it was without spot and blemish!

B. A Sacrificial Lamb

Number two: Not only was the lamb a spotless lamb—it was to be a sacrificial lamb. Notice verse 6: *“And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening”* (Exodus 12:6). In the 14th of April, about 3 p.m. in the afternoon, the father in that home would take the neck—the chin—of that little lamb, and stretch the neck, and take a sharp—razor-sharp—knife, and draw it across the throat. The jugular would be cut; the red blood would spurt out and be caught in a basin. What is the lesson that God was teaching His people so long ago? It is one of the great fundamental truths in the Word of God: *“without shedding of blood [there] is no remission”*—*“without shedding of blood [there] is no remission”* (Hebrews 9:22). Why? Because in the blood is the life (John 6:54) and *“the wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23); and so, there must be an atonement for sin, and that is the taking of innocent life.

Now, we need to learn a lesson right here before we go on—that the lamb had to be slain. And friend, salvation is not learning lessons from the life of Christ. People think, “Oh, I just want to see Jesus, learn about Jesus, and follow Jesus.” Well, learn all you can and follow Him, but that’s not salvation. *Salvation is not learning lessons from the life of Christ; salvation—listen—is receiving life from the death of Christ.* Here was a lamb—a spotless lamb. Here was a lamb—a slain lamb.

C. A Saving Lamb

And thirdly, here was a lamb—the Passover lamb was a saving lamb. Look now in verse 12—verse 7 of chapter 12: *“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it”* (Exodus 12:7). And then, look, if you will, in verse 22: *“And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning”* (Exodus 12:22). Now, God says to the father of the house, “When you slay that little lamb, put the blood in a basin; then go get some hyssop”—hyssop—I’ve seen it many times in the Holy Land. It’s a weed; it just grows out of the

wall—little white flowers that come in a bunch—“Get a handful of hyssop”—it’s like a paintbrush—“dip that hyssop in the blood. Then go to the door of your house and put some blood on the sides—on this side, and this side, and then on the lintel—and then the people are to come in the house through the blood. Stay in the house in the morning—until the morning—while the death angel is passing through the land.” And so, everybody that came into that house had to walk in through the blood.

Now, very important you understand this: God said, “*When I see the blood, I will pass over you*” (Exodus 12:13). Now, suppose they said, “Well, the blood—that’s a little too gory. I’ll tell you what we’ll do: rather than blood, let’s put some poetry on the doorposts—some beautiful poetry.” You know, there are people who’ve taken the blood out of the hymnals today because...and they’ve substituted that with some lovely poetry. The blood—that’s a little...that’s slaughterhouse religion to them. Well, nobody says, “No, not poetry. I’ll tell you what—let’s do something even better: let’s encrust it with jewels, rubies, diamonds, gold and emeralds. Let’s put them all over the door. Surely that ought to satisfy God.” But, God didn’t say, “When I see the jewelry, I’ll pass over you.” Oh, yes, it’s the lamb. “I’ll tell you what let’s do: let’s take a little live lamb, and let’s just tie a little live lamb there at the door—no need to kill a precious lamb.” But, God said, “*When I see*”—what?—“*the blood, I will pass over you*” (Exodus 12:13).

D. A Shared Lamb

This lamb—a spotless lamb. This lamb—a sacrificial lamb. This lamb was a saving lamb. And then, this lamb—the Passover lamb—was a shared lamb. Look in verses 8 and 9: “*And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water*”—that is, “Don’t boil it”—“*but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof*” (Exodus 12:8–9). Now, think of what happened to this little lamb—this little innocent lamb.

1. The Lamb Was Roasted

First of all, it was roasted; the fire began to burn this little lamb. Our Lord Jesus, as we’re going to see, felt the fire of God’s wrath. The fires of God’s wrath burned themselves out on the Lord Jesus Christ. And, by the way, can you imagine what it must’ve smelled like that night in Egypt—that afternoon—when a quarter of a million lambs are being roasted there? What must the Egyptians have thought? Here they are—they are becoming, now, not a bunch of slaves. They are becoming one people; they are becoming one nation—a new people with a new day. And, they’re fellowshiping over a lamb. It was to be roasted, and they were to eat it.

2. The Lamb Was to Be Eaten in Its Entirety

They were to eat all of the lamb—not to leave anything. Why? Because when we

receive Jesus, we don't receive Him in partiality, do we? As I've said before, some people say, "Well, now, I've taken Him as my Savior. I now make Him my Lord." No, you take Him as Savior and Lord. He is the Lord Jesus Christ. *Lord* means "master." *Jesus* means "mediator." *Christ* means "Messiah." He is Master, Mediator, Messiah. You eat all of the lamb. You receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Is He your Lord? Have you received Him as Lord? Friend, if you've not trusted Him as Lord, it's my duty to inform you He is not your Savior. You don't... It's not a little cafeteria line where you say, "I'll have some Savior today—no Lordship, thank you." Oh no, no. "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31). They were to eat the lamb; they were to eat all of the lamb.

3. The Lamb Was to Be Eaten with Unleavened Bread and Bitter Herbs

They were to eat the lamb with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. The bitter herbs spoke of repentance and remorse. That is, they were broken over their sins. The unleavened bread stands for sin. Not only were they broken over their sin, but they were broken from their sin. Bitterness—unleavened bread—speaking of genuine repentance. Jesus said, "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*" (Luke 13:3; Luke 13:5). And now, this roasted lamb—this lamb that is consumed, all of it, this lamb with bitter herbs and unleavened bread—this lamb, listen, is now inside of them, giving them strength, power, nourishment. And, when they walked out of Egypt, a lamb walked out inside of them. "*Christ in you, the hope of glory*" (Colossians 1:27).

4. The Lamb Was to Be Eaten on a Day of Rest

And then, God said, "When you do this, now, there's no work to be done this day. When you keep the feast, you're to rest this day." Why is this? Because it is the finished work of our Lord. "I cannot work my soul to save; that work my Lord has done" (author unknown). Have you stopped struggling to be saved? Have you now said, "Lord, I can't do it. You never said I could. You always said You would, and I'm going to trust You now. No, work is the very act of eating the Passover, but watch it—he said, "When you eat it, you eat it with your loins girded, you eat it with your shoes on, you eat it with your staff in your hand, ready to move out" (Exodus 12:11).

Now, we're not saved by works; we're saved to do good works. And, salvation is not the end; it is the beginning, amen? *I told you about a boy—one time, I performed a wedding for him. He was as nervous as a cat with a long tail in a room full of rocking chairs. And, after the ceremony, he said to me, "Preacher, is it all over?" I said, "No, son, it's just beginning."* Friend, when you come to the Lord Jesus and trust Him as your personal Savior and Lord, then...*your staff in your hand, your shoes on your feet, your loins girded, ready to serve the Lord.* This lamb, a spotless lamb, a sacrificial lamb, a saving lamb, a shared lamb—that's our redemption prophesied.

II. Our Redemption Provided

Now, let's look at our redemption provided—our redemption provided. I think by now you've already gotten the picture of that Old Testament ceremony. That Old Testament feast was a picture, a prophecy, a portrayal of Jesus, who is going to come. I hope you've gotten that connection. Now, take your Bibles and find Isaiah chapter 31, a key verse—excuse me, Jeremiah chapter 31—Jeremiah chapter 31, a key verse. Begin in verse 31. Jeremiah the prophet, now, he looks back toward Passover, and he looks forward toward Calvary; and here's what Jeremiah the prophet said, and I would to God that every son and daughter of Abraham could understand this passage:

“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel”—underscore the phrase “new covenant.” Do you know what the word “new covenant” means? New testament: “I will make a new testament.” I asked you to turn this morning to a New Testament. There is the Old Testament; there is the New Testament. God says, “I’m going to make a new testament with the house of Israel”—“and with the house of Judah”—now, watch this—*“Not according to the [testament]”*—“the covenant”—*“that I made with their fathers in that day [when] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt”*—what day is he talking about? The Passover—*“which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant”*—the new covenant—*“that...I make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD”*—now, watch this—*“I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it [upon] their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man to his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more”* (Jeremiah 31:31–34). God now is prophesying that New Testament, where God’s law will be in their heart. They’ll have an intimate knowledge of God; their sin is remembered no more. God has a Lamb—a different Passover Lamb.

Put in your margin “John 1, verse 29.” John the Baptist, who we’ll see portrayed in the Passion Play—old John the Baptist who ate honey...but brother, he didn’t preach it. Old John the Baptist saw Jesus coming—John 1, verse 29. And, what did he say? Now, you have to remember all of this in the light of Exodus chapter 12. Remember all of this in the light of the Passover lamb. When John saw Jesus coming, he said, *“Behold the Lamb of God”*—*“Behold the Lamb of God”*—*“[that] taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). He was talking about you there. We’re in this world; our redemption is prophesied. Let me give you four things—now, watch it:

A. Jesus Is a Spotless Lamb

Number one: Jesus is a spotless Lamb. Do you agree with that? I hope you do. Put in

your margin “1 Peter 1, verses 18 and 19”: *“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, [such] as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb”*—as a lamb—as a lamb—*“without [spot or blemish]”* (1 Peter 1:18–19). Jesus is the spotless Lamb.

By the time of Christ, the priests had begun to raise Passover lambs down in Bethlehem. You know, Jesus was born in Bethlehem, about five miles from Jerusalem. These lambs were born to die, and they were very special lambs. Brother Jim talked about Jesus coming into the city there on that Palm Sunday, when the Lord Jesus Christ was coming down on that donkey, down the Mount of Olives and up past the Kidron Valley and up into Jerusalem to the Temple Mount—the same time the Lamb, God’s Lamb was coming into the city. And, the people were saying, “Hosanna, Hosanna, Hosanna.” The priests were bringing those lambs from the field of Bethlehem, and they were coming into the sheep gate—all of them up to the Temple Mount at the same time. And, the priests up there on the Temple Mount would be examining those Passover lambs to make certain there’s no flaw, no failure, no nothing missing, nothing additional. They had to be perfect lambs. The same time that those lambs were being examined, God’s Lamb was being examined.

Have you ever wondered why so much time is given to the last week—in the Gospels—the last week of Jesus’s life? More than a third just given to that last week. Why? Because He’s being examined. The Sadducees examined Him. The Pharisees examined Him. The Herodians examined Him. The priests examined Him. Pilate examined Him. And, every honest one of them said, *“[No] man ever spake like this man”* (John 7:46). Pilate had to say, *“I find no fault in [him]”* (Luke 23:4). And, neither could you. I’m telling you, Jesus could face His enemies, and Jesus could look them straight in the eye; and Jesus could say, “Which of you can convict Me of sin?” I wouldn’t say that to my friends, much less my enemies. But, Jesus is a spotless lamb. They nit-picked Him. They questioned Him. They queried Him. But, He’s God’s spotless lamb—a lamb without spot or blemish.

What were Jesus’s strong points? He didn’t have any strong points. To say He had strong points implied that He had some weak points. Jesus was perfectly balanced. Every point was a strong point. There were no weak points; He was perfectly balanced.

B. Jesus Is a Sacrificial Lamb

Jesus—a spotless Lamb. Jesus—a sacrificial Lamb. Now, remember our text that we began with—1 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 7: it says, *“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”*—*“Christ our passover”*—Jesus is our Passover—*“[He] is sacrificed for us”* (1 Corinthians 5:7). Now, the Jewish day begins at sundown, 6 p.m. The night before the

crucifixion, Jesus said to His disciples, “I want to have this Passover with you. Go and prepare a place. We must eat the Passover tonight.” That Passover that Jesus ate with His disciples was to be the last of the old ones and the first of the new ones.

And so, they’re there at the table, having the Passover; and by this time, a tradition had evolved. The Jews began to have a bag that they called a *matzo tash*—a bag. Matzo—you know what that is? It’s unleavened bread. And, they’d put the bread in this bag for the Seder—the Passover meal—and they made the bag in three divisions. And, they put a piece of bread in the middle part of that bag; and at a certain time in the meal, the father is to take that middle piece of bread, break it, and pass it around, and everybody’s to eat a piece of it—about the size of an olive, the rabbis would tell us. And, he takes this middle piece of bread and passes it around. Now, he breaks it in half, and the one half is broken in smaller pieces and given to them, but the other half is wrapped in a linen napkin and hidden away. Somebody takes it and hides it. The children will go look for that other half that is hidden away, wrapped in linen, buried somewhere. Oh friend, I hope you’re getting this.

Now, the night—that last night—that Passover that Jesus is having with His disciples... Put down “Luke chapter 22, verses 19 and 20”: “*And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it*”—now, if this was Passover according to the tradition of the day—and certainly, it was—He reached into that middle section of that matzo tash, and He took a piece of bread, and He broke it, and He said—“*This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me*”—now, watch this: verse 20—“*Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you*” (Luke 22:19–20). Remember, Jeremiah said, “There’s coming a new testament”—“there’s coming a new testament” (Jeremiah 31:31). This blood is the new testament: “*This cup is the new testament in my blood*” (Luke 22:20).

Now, let’s go back to that piece of matzo—that unleavened bread. If you take matzo today, it looks very much the same. It’s striped, speaking of the lashes that were laid on the Lord Jesus—on His body. It is pierced, speaking of the nails and the spear that went into His side. It is taken from that middle part of that compartment. For centuries, the Jews have held an emblem of the Trinity in their hand—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. And, they take that out of that middle section.

And, even at this time, Jesus is not only prophesying His crucifixion—“*This is my body which is [broken] for you*” (Luke 22:19)—but He’s also prophesying His resurrection. Put it—“Matthew 26, verse 26”: “*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to [his] disciples, and said, Take, eat*”—now, watch this—“*this is my body*” (Matthew 26:26). But, what was the blessing that Jesus gave? The Bible says He blessed it. Well, even today, I’ll tell you what blessing every Jew will give at this moment in the Seder. He’ll say this: “Blessed art Thou, O

Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringeth forth bread out of the earth.” Jesus said, *“This is my body”* (Matthew 26:26). Then, He said, “Blessed be You, Lord God, King of the universe, who brings bread out of the earth.” Jesus now is talking about His resurrection. Jesus said, *“This is my body which is [broken]”* (Luke 22:20)—His crucifixion. “Blessed are You, O God, that brings bread up out of the earth”—and He gave it to these people there.

Then, by 9 a.m., He’s on his way, after dark Gethsemane, He’s on his way to Calvary. And, where is Calvary? Well, Calvary’s Mount Moriah; Calvary’s where the temple was built. There’s that rock ridge there. It’s that land where God said to Abraham, “Abraham, take your son Isaac, your only begotten son, the son of promise, the son of prophesy. Take him there to a place that I will show you and sacrifice him there”—Mount Moriah, where Abraham was about to take the life of his own dear son, when God said, “Abraham, don’t do that. It’s not Isaac that I want. Abraham, it’s you. I know that you love Me, and there’s a ram caught in the thicket—a ram crowned with thorns there on top of Mount Calvary.” And, God says, “Take that ram and sacrifice him.” What a picture—what a picture—of the substitutionary death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Isaac had said to his father Abraham, “Father, here’s the wood. Here’s the fire. Where is the sacrifice?” And, Abraham said, *“God will provide himself a lamb”* (Genesis 22:8). and he did, that day.

C. Jesus Is a Saving Lamb

Mary had a little Lamb, His fleece was white as snow: God’s Lamb—a spotless Lamb, a sacrificial Lamb. Up He goes, up Mount Moriah, up to the place to fulfill the prophecy. The Lord Jesus is a saving Lamb. Oh friend, there’s no other way to be saved apart from the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, what were they to do in the Old Testament? They were to take hyssop and put blood on the doorpost. What are we to do? What is our hyssop? It is faith—it is faith: *“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). Don’t put the blood on the doorpost. Jeremiah said, “I’ll put my law upon their hearts.”

There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel’s veins;
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains (William Cowper).

Thank You, Lord.

There is power, power, wonder working power
In the precious blood of the Lamb (Lewis E. Jones).

Jesus is on that cross. Three p.m. in the afternoon—those priests have taken those

perfect lambs. They're pulling back their necks; they're drawing back their knife across that throat. At the same time, God's Lamb is bowing His head, and He's saying, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). It's paid in full. It's done. 'Tis over. Priest, you can go home now. Passover shepherds, we don't need you anymore. Little lambs, set them free. God's Lamb has done it all. Praise God!

D. Jesus Is a Shared Lamb

Jesus—a spotless Lamb. Jesus—a sacrificial Lamb. Jesus—a saving Lamb. And now, let's come back to our text. Jesus—a shared Lamb. Remember what we've said there in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 7 and 8: *"Purge out therefore the old leaven"*—remember, leaven stands for sin. *"Purge out the sin"—"that [you] may be a new lump"*—a new loaf of dough—*"as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread"*—you want some unleavened bread? What is it? Not anything you can hold in your hand—*"the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth"* (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

And, when Jesus had that feast—that last Passover feast—it was not a mournful experience; it was a celebration. And friend, that's the reason I said we need to celebrate Passover. You see, when we come to the Lord's Table, we don't come to mourn a corpse; we come to hail a conqueror. And, how are you to keep the feast? Are you a child of God, today? Do you want to celebrate Jesus? Well, I'll tell you how to keep the feast. Keep it with unleavened bread—unleavened bread. What is leaven a symbol of? Leaven is a symbol—an emblem—of sin.

You know how a Jewish family—Orthodox Jews—will keep Passover, today? The father in that family will get some bread crumbs, some cookie crumbs, some crackers—anything that has leaven in it—and he'll take little pieces and hide them all around the house. And then, he'll call the children in, because the house—this is where we get the idea of spring cleaning—the house has to be absolutely clean, no leaven anywhere. And, the children will go, and they'll look; and they'll see on a windowsill a crumb. "Daddy!" Daddy runs in. "Look, look—there's some leaven!" He has a wooden spoon—has a feather. He takes that, carries it to a fireplace, and burns it, purging out—purging out that old leaven. Why don't you do that? Why don't you say, "O God, search me. Know my heart. See if there be some wickedness in me, Lord Jesus, Lamb of God, if You so died for me. Paul says, "Let us keep the feast. Purge out the leaven" (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

I'll tell you, if Jesus so loved me, I want to live for Him, I want to love Him, and I don't want to keep any leaven in my heart that nailed Him to the tree, do you? I hope not. That's the reason God calls us to absolute, total holiness. That's how we keep Passover

today: holiness to the Lord.

I'm finished, but I want you to go back with me to that night in Egypt—that terrible night. I want you to imagine three boys. First boy is Pharaoh's first-born son. Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, has a son. The son says to Pharaoh, "Daddy, you know that Moses that's been causing so much trouble? Daddy, I have heard—the talk is on the streets—that there's a death angel coming, and the first-born in every family is going to be killed here in Egypt. Now Dad, I think we'd better get us a lamb and put some blood on the doorposts." Pharaoh says, "Son, son, son, don't you know that I'm Pharaoh? Don't you know that we have the very best priests in the whole world? Don't you know, Son, that we have our religion, we have our magicians, we have our soothsayers, we have our priests, we have all of the gods of Egypt? Son, don't worry. Forget that blood of the lamb stuff." And so, he says, "All right, Father." That night, that boy dies, "*for without shedding of blood [there] is no remission*" (Hebrews 9:22).

But, another boy comes, and he says—this boy is Jewish boy—he says, "Father, I've heard that the death angel is coming through the land. Father, I'm your first-born. Father, can we put some blood on the doorposts?" "Of course, my son. We'll get a spotless lamb, and we'll put the blood on the doorposts." That boy says, "Dad, have you done it right? Are you sure you've done it—both sides, the top? Was it a spotless lamb?" "Yes, Son. Yes, yes, yes." "Dad, this is a fearful night. Thank you for doing that." But, that boy stays up all night long 'til the morning comes up: "O God, please, dear Lord; help me, Lord. Please!" The blood is there. He's perfectly safe, but he doesn't sleep hardly at all, if at all.

Then, there's a third boy. That third boy says, "Dad, have you heard about the Passover lamb?" "Yes, Son." Dad, will you put the blood on the doorpost?" "Yes, son." "Dad, have you done it?" "Yes, my son." "Thank you, Dad. Good night, Daddy. I'm going to sleep. See you in the morning." And, in the morning, he awakes refreshed.

Now, of the last two boys, which one was the safest? Well, they were both just as safe, because the blood was on the door. Friend, it's the blood that makes us safe; it's the Word that makes us sure. Now listen—just rest in Jesus. If you've put your faith in Him, then you can say, "Hallelujah! What a Savior! What a Savior!" And so, friend, I'm calling you to celebrate Passover.

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Every head bowed, and every eye closed. And, if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ, let me lead you in a prayer and Jesus can become your Passover right now. Right now, the blood can be applied to your heart, and God's death angel of judgment will never visit your house if you'll receive Him. Pray a prayer like this:

“O God, I thank You for the spotless Lamb of Jesus. Thank You, Jesus, that You died for me. And now, Lord Jesus, by faith—by faith—I receive You. I apply the blood to my own heart. Forgive my sin; cleanse me”—“*the blood of Jesus...[cleanses]...from all sin*” (1 John 1:7)—“Now, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. If an Old Testament Jew had to put the blood on the very front door, how could I ever be ashamed of You? Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

The Passover Lamb

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 28, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 5:7–8

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Symbolic Promise in Moses' Lamb
 - A. The Character of the Lamb
 1. The Lamb Had to Be Male
 2. The Lamb Had to Be Without Spot or Blemish
 - B. The Condemnation of the Lamb
 - C. The Confession of the Lamb
 - D. The Communion of the Lamb
 1. They Were Not to Leave Any of the Lamb
 2. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Bitter Herbs
 3. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Unleavened Bread
 4. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Their Loins Girded
- II. The Saving Power of Mary's Lamb
 - A. The Character of the Lamb
 1. He Was a Spotless Lamb
 - B. The Conviction of the Lamb
 - C. The Condemnation of the Lamb
 - D. The Confession of the Lamb
 - E. The Communion of the Lamb
 1. Shed Blood
 2. Shared Blood

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, I ask you to turn to Exodus 12. Just put your mark there. And also, turn, if you will—even before we go to Exodus 12, be finding 1 Corinthians chapter 5, also. And, as you're finding that, look up here and let me tell you that this is a wonderful week in the life of believing people everywhere. Today is the day that we call Palm Sunday. It's the day that Jesus came into Jerusalem riding upon a donkey and that triumphal entry into the eastern gate into the city. It is also the week that Christians call, around the world, *holy week*. It's the week of the Passion of our Lord—the week that He hung upon a cross in agony and blood for us. It's also a time that our Jewish friends celebrate Passover. And so, I want us to think about all of those things this morning, and the Easter season, and the Passover season. Christians observe Easter, and our Jews—

our friends, the Jews—observe Passover. But, there are some wonderful truths that both Christians and Jews need to learn about Passover.

Now, Passover is about a Lamb—a Lamb was slain. And, Passover was about a lamb back in the time of Moses, and it is still about a Lamb, whether that lamb be Moses's lamb or Mary's Lamb. You see, Mary's Lamb was only a fulfillment of the prophecy of Moses's lamb. Mary had a little Lamb. His fleece, indeed, was white as snow. The Passover, as it relates to Moses and the Jew, is this—that they were slaves in the land of Egypt. And, God is going to take them out of slavery in Egypt; He's going to redeem them, and He's going to bring them into the Promised Land, the land that flows with milk and honey—out of the land of bondage and into the land of victory. And, how is He going to deliver His people? Listen to me: He's going to do it—would you believe it?—with a Lamb. If you were to think of the epitome of weakness, it would be a lamb—a little, innocent, weak, small, defensive animal, a lamb. If you slaughter a lamb, you almost feel guilty. And, the lamb just seems to present itself to death. *“As a [lamb] before her shearers is dumb, so he”*—Jesus—*“openeth not his mouth”* (Isaiah 53:7). He just seems to present Himself to death. The lamb says, “Are you hungry? Eat me! Are you cold? Shear me, and with my wool make a coat.”

Now remember, they were down in Egypt. Pharaoh is a type—a picture—of Satan. Egypt is a picture of bondage. And, God is going to deliver them. Do you know what the emblem of Egypt was? It was a serpent. Look in your history books. See the pictures of the Pharaohs. See that thing he wears on his head. Look at it carefully, and what you will see is an adder. You will see a serpent up there on his crown. That's the symbol of Egypt—a venomous, poisonous, dangerous serpent.

Now, what is about to happen is this: God is going to deliver His people, and He's going to do it with a Lamb; and it is the Lamb that will slay the serpent. Look, if you will, first of all, here in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, beginning in verse 7: Paul says, *“Purge out therefore the old leaven”*—you see, Passover was kept without leaven—*“that ye may be a new lump”*—that is, a new piece of dough—*“as ye are unleavened”*—now, watch this; watch it carefully. Underscore it—*“For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast”*—should Christians keep Passover? Absolutely! That's what he says—*“Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness”*—you see, leaven, in the Bible, that's yeast, which is always an emblem of sin]—*“but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”* (1 Corinthians 5:7–8).

Now, having read that, go back now to Exodus chapter 12, and we're going to look at two things today: we're going to look, first of all, at Moses's lamb, and then we're going to look at Mary's Lamb. We're going to look at the symbolic promise that was in Moses's lamb, and then we're going to look at the saving power that was in Mary's

Lamb. Have you got that? The symbolic promise that was in Moses's lamb and the saving power that was in Mary's Lamb.

I. The Symbolic Promise in Moses' Lamb

Now, you're in Exodus chapter 12. Remember this—that the Jews are slaves in Egypt, and God is getting ready to bring them out. And so, I begin in Exodus 12, verse 1: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months”—that is, it's going to be a brand new day—“it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb”—now, listen to this—“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole...congregation”—“and the whole assembly of the congregation”—“of Israel shall kill it in the evening”* (Exodus 12:1–6). And then, skip on down to verse 11: *“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's Passover”* (Exodus 12:11). Now, we're talking about what happened to the Jews down in Egypt. God says to Moses, “Moses, tell the people to take a little lamb. It is the lamb that is going to deliver them”

A. The Character of the Lamb

Several things I want you to learn now about the lamb. The very first thing is this: the character of the lamb—the character of the lamb. Verses 5 and 6 tell us about the character of the lamb (Exodus 12:5–6).

1. The Lamb Had to Be Male

Number one: the lamb had to be a male. Christ is the Son of God.

2. The Lamb Had to Be Without Spot or Blemish

Number two: the lamb had to be without spot or blemish. It was chosen on the tenth day of April. It was examined for three-and-one-half days. They looked at the lamb to see if there was any spot, any blemish. They would go carefully through the wool. They would open the mouth—examine the inside of the mouth. They would examine even the eyelids of the little lamb. And, that lamb had to be spotless—a perfect lamb, picturing the spotless Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. So, there's the character of the lamb.

B. The Condemnation of the Lamb

Now, I want you to notice the condemnation of the lamb. In verse 6, the Bible tells us

that that lamb was to be slain—that innocent little lamb (Exodus 12:6). The father in the family would pull back the neck of that little lamb and with a sharp knife would cut the jugular; and the blood—the rich blood—would pump out and spurt out, and that blood would be caught in a basin. God is teaching His people so long ago what the Bible teaches in the New Testament—and listen to it carefully; we sang about it: *“without shedding of blood [there] is no remission [of sin]”* (Hebrews 9:22). Never forget that! So many people say, “Well, I just don’t believe in that blood religion. I just follow Jesus as my example.” Friend, listen carefully and never forget it: *salvation is not learning lessons from the life of Christ; it is receiving life from the death of Christ*. That is what it is all about. And so, you see the character of the lamb; you see the condemnation of the lamb.

C. The Confession of the Lamb

And then, you see the confession of the lamb. Notice in verse 7 what he says they were to do here: in verse 7 he says that they were to *“take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it”* (Exodus 12:7). Now, how were they to do that? They would take hyssop. Hyssop was a common weed. You could find it—just like those weeds in those walls there in that Passion Play set. They would go up and get a handful of this hyssop—very common, easy to get hold of. They would dip that weed in that basin of blood from that sacrificial lamb; and then, they would go to the door posts of the house, and they would strike that blood upon the sides and upon the top—the lintel of that house.

Actually, in doing that, they would make the sign of the cross. And, there’s the blood upon the little... There’s the blood upon the doorposts. And, everybody that went into that house—or everybody that came out of that house—went in and out under the blood—under the blood. That is, they were confessing that there had been a lamb slain for that house. There’s no way that they could hide it, nor should they be ashamed of it. And, there was no substitute for it. Had they written poetry all over the doors—had they encrusted the lintel and the doorposts with jewels—it would have done no good. Had they set a live lamb—a live lamb—beside the door, it would have done no good. As we sang,

There is pow’r, pow’r, wonder-working pow’r
In the precious blood of the Lamb (Lewis E. Jones).

And so, you see the character of the lamb. You see the condemnation of the lamb. You see the confession of the lamb.

D. The Communion of the Lamb

And then, next of all, you see the communion of the lamb—the communion of the lamb. Look, if you will, in verses 8 and 9 of this same chapter: *“And they shall eat the flesh in*

that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water”—that is, “boiled in water”—“but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning [shall] ye...burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded”—that is, “your suit—your clothes—on, your belt bucked, your shoes on your feet, your staff in your hand”—“and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD’s passover” (Exodus 12:8–11).

Now, what is this? He says not only is the blood to be applied, but the lamb is to be consumed. Now, this lamb was to be roasted with fire because it pictures, again, the Lord Jesus Christ, who took the fires of Hell for us and baptized His soul in Hell for us. For you, dear friend, He did that. Jesus allowed the fires of God’s wrath against sin to burn themselves out in Him. And, can you imagine what that must have been? A lamb—every house there in the land of Egypt that was occupied by Hebrew—they are roasting a lamb. Can you imagine what the Egyptians must have thought—a quarter of a million lambs being roasted? What the aroma must have been like? Now, what is happening is a bunch of slaves are becoming a nation. They are feeding and feasting together on a lamb. There’s the consumption and the communion of the lamb. The lamb that died for them is now the lamb that is in them.

1. They Were Not to Leave Any of the Lamb

And notice—he said, “Eat all of the lamb; don’t leave any of it” (Exodus 12:10). So many times, people want to leave a little of Jesus around. They say, “Well, I’ll take Jesus as my Savior; later on I may make Him my Lord.” Oh, no, no. You believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, don’t you? You feed upon all of the lamb.

2. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Bitter Herbs

They were to eat the lamb with bitter herbs. That speaks of the brokenness—the bitterness—over our sins. So many people strut down church aisles like they’re doing God a wild favor. They’ve never fed on the bitter herbs; they’ve never seen the awfulness, the hellishness, the hurtfulness, the heinousness of their sin.

3. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Unleavened Bread

And then, they’re to eat of it with unleavened bread. Leaven is a symbol of evil. Not only are we to be broken over our sins—we’re to be broken from our sins. Unleavened bread means that they’re done with the old way. This is the first day in the new calendar for these people.

4. They Were to Eat the Lamb with Their Loins Girded

They are to eat it with their loins girded, their staff in their hand, ready to travel, because when you receive the Lord Jesus Christ, that’s not the end of it; that is the beginning of it. That’s when you walk out a new person. And, when they walked out of that house

and when they walked out of Egypt, a lamb walked out inside of them. It is Christ in you—the hope of Glory, the beginning of a new year, the beginning of a new life.

Now, that's Moses's lamb. That's all symbolic. That's the symbolic promise of Moses's lamb.

II. The Saving Power of Mary's Lamb

Now, let's look at the saving power of Mary's Lamb. You see, all of the Bible is about the Lord Jesus Christ—the Old Testament, the New Testament. In the Old Testament, He's enfolded; in the New Testament, He is unfolded. And so, what is the saving power of Mary's Lamb? Moses's lamb only prophesied Mary's Lamb.

Jeremiah the prophet, after Moses, taught there was coming a new day for Israel—there was a day when God is going to make a new covenant with them. Put down “Jeremiah 31” in your margin—verses 31 and 32: *“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel”*—the new covenant is another way of saying “a new testament.” A covenant and a testament are the same thing. We have, in the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament—the old covenant and the new covenant. God says, “I'm going to make a new testament with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah”—*“Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of...Egypt”*—now, He's talking about the old Passover—*“which covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD”* (Jeremiah 31:31–32). So, He says, “I'm going to make a new passover, a new covenant—not like the one I made with the old Passover.” And, this new one is this: He said, “I'm going to write God's law in their hearts. They will have an intimate knowledge of Me, and I will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:33).

Now, the Jews would keep this memorial feast once a year. And, somewhere in antiquity they began a process. They would take three pieces of unleavened bread, and they would put those three pieces of unleavened bread in a matzo tash, which is a bag that they kept the unleavened bread in—three wafers of bread. And, in this matzo tash, this bread would be kept. The middle piece was taken out, and it would be broken—the middle piece now. It would be broken and given to people at the table. If you attend a Jewish Seder today, you'll see the same thing happen. Also, there would be a cup of wine there, sitting at a place at the Jewish observation of the Passover—a cup of wine and an empty chair. This would be... This cup would be Messiah's cup, and the empty chair would be for Elijah—Elijah, who was to be the prophet who would prophesy the coming of our Lord, prophesying the Messiah coming. And, at a certain time, while that chair is empty... That's Elijah's chair. He's the unseen guest. They're waiting for him,

hoping that he would come at any time and say, “*Blessed [is] he that cometh in the name of the LORD*” (Psalm 118:26).

There’s that cup—Messiah’s cup—sitting there. They would say to a little child at the Passover—and still to this day do, “Go to the door. Look. See—see—if He’s coming.” And, it breaks my heart that still little Jewish children are coming, saying, “He’s not yet come—He’s not yet come.” And, they go, and sit, and look at that empty chair. John the Baptist came in the spirit of Elijah, saying, “*Behold, the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29)—John 1 and verse 29. Two thousand years ago, John the Baptist said, “*Behold the Lamb of God*” (John 1:29). He is the Elijah who has announced that our Messiah has come.

A. The Character of the Lamb

Now, several things I want you to notice with me about Mary’s Lamb... Remember, we talked about the character of Moses’s lamb. Let’s talk about the character of Mary’s Lamb.

1. He Was a Spotless Lamb

Number one: He, too, was a spotless Lamb. The Bible tells us in 1 Peter 1, verses 18 and 19 that Jesus is “*a lamb without [spot] and without [blemish]*” (1 Peter 1:19). Thank God for our holy Savior.

Did you know that by this time the Jews—by the time of Christ—had begun to raise Passover lambs in Bethlehem? Isn’t that something? Because God’s little Lamb would be born in Bethlehem. And, in the fields of Bethlehem, in the fields of Boaz, they would be raising not just lambs for commerce but lambs for Passover. A special breed of lambs would be raised right there. And, these lambs were special lambs because they were born to die. They would bring those lambs from the fields of Bethlehem—and I’ve been there many times—they would bring them up to Jerusalem, and they would bring them in on Passover—in through a gate called the *sheep gate*. Now, on the same day that those shepherds were bringing that those lambs in from the fields of Bethlehem up to Jerusalem, up to the Temple Mount, up there to be sacrificed, that same day—the day that Christians call *Palm Sunday*, the day that we’re celebrating today.

God’s Lamb would be coming that Palm Sunday road. He would be coming up through that eastern gate, going into that same temple area. And, the people would be saying, “Hail Him! Hail Him!” They’d be throwing their garments down in front of Him and their palm branches. But, before long, that same fickle crowd would be screaming for His blood, saying, “Nail Him! Nail Him! Crucify Him!” The lambs were coming. God’s Lamb was coming. Up there on that Temple Mount they would be examining the Passover lambs. The priests, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the Levites would be

looking at those lambs to make sure that they were spotless and perfect, the same time they were examining God's Lamb.

Have you ever wondered why so much time in the gospels is given to the last week in the life of Christ? Almost a third of the gospels is given to this last time. It is the time of examination. They were examining Him. He was examined by Herod. He was examined by Pilate. He was examined by all of those who were there looking for some fault—looking for some flaw. They had to get false witnesses to find some fault in Him, because there was no fault in Him. He could say, "Which of you can convict Me of sin?" I wouldn't ask that to my friends, much less my enemies. But, that's what He said to them. They had to say, as Pilate, "I find no fault in Him." They had to say, "Never a man spoke like this man." He was God's spotless Lamb!

I want to ask you a question: What were the strong points of Jesus? Don't answer because He didn't have any strong points. To have strong points implies that He had weak points. He was absolutely, totally perfect—no strong points—the powerful, perfect Son of God. So, they questioned Him, and they nitpicked Him. You see, first of all, in Him—His coming—the character of the Lamb.

B. The Conviction of the Lamb

And then, you see the conviction of the Lamb. Pilate said, "*Let him be crucified*" (Matthew 27:2). And, the Jewish sundown begins at 6:00 p.m. Jesus now says to His disciples, before Pilate convicted Him, at this last Passover of the Old Testament—the old covenant kind—He said, "Go into the city and prepare for us. We're going to eat Passover." It was the last of the old ones and the old covenant, and it was hosted by Jesus Himself. They're sitting at the table.

And then, Jesus, the Bible says, He took bread and broke it—He took bread and broke it. Put in your Bible "Luke chapter 22, verses 19 and 20": "*And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is [broken] for you*" (Luke 22:19). Now, what piece of bread did He take? He took the piece of bread that Jews today still take. He took the middle piece out of the matzo tash, and broke it, and said, "*This is my body*" (Luke 22:19). For centuries, the Jews had held the Trinity in their hands and never knew it. "*This is my body*" (Luke 22:19). That's what it's all about! "This broken bread represents My body." If you were to take a piece of matzo bread and look at it, you would see it both striped, and pierced, and baked in fire. "With His stripes we're healed. He was pierced for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5). I tell you that the fires of God's wrath burned themselves out upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you know how they made matzo? They made matzo out of unleavened bread. Do you know what leaven is? You ladies know what leaven is: it's yeast—it's yeast. And, they would leave a piece of bread out long enough, some dough, until the yeast

spores in the air would come and permeate that, and it would become leavened—that is, that which causes it to puff, and to rise, and to swell, and to bake, and to make that leavened bread that we are accustomed to eating. And, when they had made one loaf, before they'd put that loaf in the oven, the housewife would take a piece—a lump from that piece from that lump—and it would have leaven in it. And, she would take that piece that had leaven in it; and when she makes a new loaf of bread, she puts that old piece in that new loaf, and that causes it to be leavened. And, when she makes another loaf of bread, she takes a little piece before it's baked to put in the next bread. So, what happened? With leavened bread there's always some of the old bread in the new bread. It's always there—it's always there.

Now, leaven represents sin. But, when Jesus took that middle piece of bread and said, "*This is my body*" (Luke 22:19), it was unleavened. There was no sin in it because in from Adam all the way down—all of us have inherited the sin of Adam. There's a little bit of Adam in each one of us. Did you know that? We're all connected to him. But, thank God, there is a new Adam. There is a new Jesus. There is a new Lamb. There is a new passover. There is new unleavened bread. There's a brand new start in the Lord Jesus Christ. Yeah, give Him a hand! And so, this is the new covenant—this is the new covenant. And, from here, from Passover, which Jesus now said, "This is...this blood." He took the cup—Messiah's cup, Messiah's cup—and He says, "*This cup is the new [covenant] in my blood.*" Drink ye all of it" (Luke 22:20). And, the old Passover is over; there is a new passover.

C. The Condemnation of the Lamb

And so, Jesus now goes to dark Gethsemane. And, from dark Gethsemane, He goes up to the Temple Mount. Do you know where Jesus was crucified? Do you know what this rock hill represents? Friend, it was Mount Moriah—Mount Moriah. Where was the Jewish temple built? Mount Moriah. Well, you say, "What's so interesting about Mount Moriah?" I'll tell you what is interesting about Mount Moriah:

Years ago, before Jesus was born in the flesh, God came to the father of the Hebrew nation. His name was Abraham. And, God said to Abraham, "Abraham, take your son, Isaac—your only son, the son of promise, the son of miracle, the son of your love, the son of all of your hopes—take that son and sacrifice him upon a place that I will tell you of the exact place." And, do you know what that place was? Mount Moriah. Same place, same place—the same place where Jesus died! And, Isaac, who is a picture—a type—of the Lord Jesus Christ, as they're going up Mount Moriah, he says, "Father, father, look—you're going up there to make a sacrifice. Here's the wood to burn the offering. Here's the fire to set the wood on fire. Where's the lamb?" He didn't know

that he was the lamb. And, a brokenhearted father yet said in faith, “God will provide Himself a lamb—God will provide Himself a lamb!”

You remember that dramatic moment when Isaac got up, because there was a ram with his head caught in a thicket—a ram crowned with thorns that pictures the Lord Jesus Christ. And, Abraham called that place Jehovah Jireh—“the Lord will provide.” And, I’m telling you that when Jesus Christ went up there to Mount Moriah... Now, we understand what Jesus meant when He said, “Abraham saw My day and was glad” (John 8:56). Abraham saw it—that God would provide Himself a lamb. Hallelujah for the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ! There on Mount Moriah, 3:00 in the afternoon, the lambs were there, and God’s Lamb was there. The priests took the throats of those little lambs, and with their lethal knife they cut those throats; and the blood began to flow. And, God’s Lamb is hanging on the cross, and the sun hides its face. It becomes dark as midnight. And, God’s Lamb cries out, “*My God, my God, why hath thou forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34). I’ll tell you why: because He was bearing my sin and your sin. And God is “*of purer eyes than to behold [iniquity]*” (Habakkuk 1:13). He became the sin bearer. And, all of the sins of all of the worlds were distilled upon the Lord Jesus. And, He cries out in victory, “*It is finished!*” (John 19:30)—It is paid in full. And, I want to say to all of you Levites and all of you little lambs, you can go home now. We don’t need you anymore.” All that was a picture. All that was a prophecy. It is fulfilled. As John the Baptist said, “*Behold, the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29).

D. The Confession of the Lamb

The character of the Lamb, the condemnation of the Lamb, the confession of the Lamb: Did you know that in the old Passover had they not openly confessed the lamb, there would have been no hope? Suppose a person said, “Well, we’re going to kill a little lamb, but we don’t want all the Egyptians to know that we are believers. So, we’re going to kill this lamb in the back room, and we’re not going to let anybody know.” No, you can’t do that! The Passover angel came through the land of Egypt. And, if there was a house that did not have the blood on the door posts, judgment came to that house.

Friend, you cannot bootleg a blessing. Jesus said, “If you’re ashamed of Me, I’ll be ashamed of you” (Luke 9:26). You are to openly and publicly confess the Lamb. Hyssop stands for faith. Take that faith and strike it on the door posts of your heart. Remember, Jeremiah said, “I’ll make a new covenant. This time I’ll write it upon their hearts” (Jeremiah 31:33). Openly and publicly confess the Lord Jesus. Romans 10:9–10: “*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*” (Romans 10:9). There’s the confession of the Lamb.

E. The Communion of the Lamb

1. Shed Blood

And then, do you know what they did? There was the communion of the Lamb. In Moses's lamb, they fed on the lamb. What do we do? We feed upon the Lord Jesus Christ. That's why we have the Lord's Supper. It is what has happened; it is Passover now that has been transformed into a memorial feast remembering God's Lamb. And so, we sit at the Lord's Table, still celebrating Passover. We take that broken bread: "*This is my body which is [broken] for you*" (Luke 22:19). We take that ruby red cup: "This is my blood" (Luke 22:20). This is the new covenant that Jeremiah spoke of so long ago.

Are you ashamed of the Lamb? Have you confessed Him? Do you have communion with Him? Have you fed on Him? We are what we eat. You see, He doesn't just forgive your sins. When you place your life under the blood, you feed on the Lamb. There is strength—there is power—in this One who is Heaven's bread.

2. Shared Blood

And, not only is there the shed blood; there's the shared blood. There's the power of the Lord Jesus Christ that is in us. And so, remember what Paul said in 1 Corinthians chapter 5: "*let us [therefore] keep the feast*" (1 Corinthians 5:8)—"*For...Christ our passover is sacrificed for us*" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Now, in closing, I want you to use your imagination. I want you to imagine three boys in the land of Egypt under Moses's lamb:

First of all, there was Pharaoh's son. Pharaoh's son comes to him, and he says, "Dad, do you know what is on the streets? Do you know what people are saying? People are saying that everybody has to kill a lamb and put the blood on the doorposts. And, if there's no blood on the doorposts of the house, there's something called a death angel—a death angel is going to come through the land of Egypt. And Dad, the firstborn in every family is going to die. Dad, I am the firstborn. Don't you think we ought to get us a lamb?" Pharaoh says, "Son, listen—I'm fed up with these Hebrews, and I'm fed up with their superstition and their weak God. Son, we have the best religion that money can buy. We have thousands of gods. And I, myself, am a god. Son, your daddy is very strong and powerful. Son, don't you worry about this 'blood of the lamb' business. Go to bed. Sleep well, Son. Daddy loves you. Go to bed, Son."

There's another boy. He's a Jewish boy. He says to his dad, "Dad, do you hear what Moses said? Dad, do we have a Passover lamb? I don't want to die." And, the father says, "Son, we're going to do just what Moses said. Come with me." And, they killed a lamb. They apply the blood, and the boy says, "Thank you, Dad—thank you, Dad. I don't want to die. Dad, do you think it's going to work?" "Well, God says so." "Dad, do you think I'm going to be safe?" "Well, yes." "Well Dad, the death angel is coming." "Well

Son, we've done everything." "I know, but I'm just concerned." And, all night long that boy tosses and turns, but the blood is on the door. The death angel passes over that house.

There's another boy; he's a Jewish boy. He says, "Dad, are we going to make a Passover sacrifice?" "Yes, we are, Son. Here's the blood on the doorposts—on the lintel." The boy says, "Dad, isn't that wonderful? Isn't it glorious what God has promised? Dad, thank you for obeying the Lord. Good night, Daddy. Have a good night's rest, Dad. I'm going to bed." And, he sleeps soundly.

The first boy perishes because he refused the blood. The second one worries all night, but he makes it. The third one has a good night's rest. Now, listen to me—it's the blood that makes us safe; it's the Word that makes us sure—it's the Word that makes us sure. You know, not only can we say, "Look, I'm saved," but why go to Heaven second-class? Friend, we sang it:

There is pow'r, pow'r, wonder-working pow'r
In the precious blood of the Lamb (Lewis E. Jones).

And, when you get over to the Book of the Revelation and upon the throne, you know what you're going to see? "*A Lamb as it had been slain*" (Revelation 5:6). And, do you know what the people in Heaven are going to be doing? They're going to be singing through all the ages, "Worthy, worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Hallelujah for the Lamb!"

Conclusion

Now friend, everybody in this building will walk out today either under the blood or over the blood. Either you will apply the blood of Jesus Christ to your heart and be saved, or you will trample beneath your feet the blood of Jesus. You say, "I don't mean to." Well, you will, for Jesus said, "*He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad*" (Matthew 12:30). And, you cannot—you dare not—be ashamed of the One who died for you. That's the reason I'm going to give an invitation for you to come forward this morning, openly and publicly, letting it be known that the blood is upon the lintel and the doorposts of your house.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you're saved, begin to pray for those round about you who may not be saved. And, I want you today, if you've never done it, to receive God's Passover Lamb. The Lamb has already been slain.

Now, the Bible says, "*If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved*" (Romans 10:9). Would you pray a prayer like this? If you want to be saved, pray this: "Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. I need to be

saved. I want to be saved. Jesus, thank You for dying for me. Thank You for paying my sin debt with Your blood. I now receive You into my heart this moment. I receive You this moment as my Lord and Savior. I give You my heart. Sincerely, I trust You to save me. Thank You for doing it. And, Lord Jesus, help me never, never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Christ, Our Passover

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 19, 1981

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 5:7–11; 11:23–26

*“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.
For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 5:7

Outline

Introduction

I. The Prophesied Lamb

- A. A Special Lamb
- B. A Slain Lamb
- C. A Saving Lamb
- D. A Shared Lamb

II. The Presentation of the Lamb

- A. The Special Lamb
- B. The Slain Lamb
- C. The Saving Lamb
- D. The Shared Lamb

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, please, and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 5. Tonight, we're thinking on this subject: “Christ, Our Passover”—1 Corinthians chapter 5. Now, leaven in the Bible is an emblem and a symbol of sin. And so, there was some sin in the Corinthian church, and Paul is remonstrating with them. And, I begin in verse 7, where Paul says to them, *“Purge out therefore the old leaven”*—that is, “Get the sin out of the church”—*“that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast”*—not only Jews are to keep the feast of the Passover; Christians are to keep the feast of the Passover—*“Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”* (1 Corinthians 5:7–8)

And then, I want you to read in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 23: the Apostle Paul says, *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had*

given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. [And] after the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament”—or, “the new covenant”—“in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.” (1 Corinthians 11:23–26)

Passover is about the death of a lamb, and it is primarily about the Lord Jesus Christ, because Jesus is that Lamb. Jesus is the Lamb of God. Indeed, Mary had a little Lamb, and His name was Jesus. And, I want you to see how all of the Bible, in a sense, is about the Lamb. I want you to see in the Old Testament with me today, as we see the Old Testament Passover that our Jewish friends are celebrating today, I want you to see the prophecy of the Lamb. And then, we’re going to come to the New Testament, and we’re going to see the presentation of the Lamb that was prophesied in the Old Testament.

I. The Prophesied Lamb

Now, we’ve read the New Testament, but let’s go backward to the Old Testament and see what the New Testament was talking about. Turn with me to Exodus chapter 12 for just a moment, and let me read to you the story of the first Passover—Exodus chapter 12. And oh, how important tonight that you use your Bibles! I’m reading now verses 1 through 6: *“And the LORD spake unto Moses”—this is Exodus 12, verse 1—“And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt saying, This month shall be [to] you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household”—“if the household”—“be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of...souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it...from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening”—and then, read verse 11—“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD’s passover.” (Exodus 12:1–6, 11)*

Now, as we think about that Old Testament lamb, there are four things I want you to notice about the Old Testament lamb, because I’m going to apply those four things to the New Testament Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, I want you to see the marvelous and wonderful prophecy and parallel there is between Moses’s lamb and Mary’s Lamb. First of all, let’s look at Moses’s lamb—the lamb that Moses prophesied.

A. A Special Lamb

The first thing I want you to notice is that it was a very special lamb. Read again verses 5 and 6: *“Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month.”* (Exodus 12:5–6) Now, this was a very special lamb.

First of all, notice that he says, “a lamb,” and right away, this is remarkable because a lamb is the weakest of all of the domesticated animals that I know anything about. A lamb has no fangs. He cannot bite you and really hurt you. A lamb has no claws. A lamb is just there for the slaughter, and even when you slaughter a lamb, they tell me that you feel guilty. I heard Dr. Bailey Smith tell, one time, about a man who was in a slaughterhouse, and he was told to slaughter a lamb. And, he said when he took the knife and cut that lamb’s throat and the red, warm blood flowed out on his hand, he said the lamb just looked up at him as if to say, “Why did you do that?” and turned and licked the blood from his hand. He said, “I quit. I’ll never slaughter another lamb.” The lamb just seems to present itself to the slaughter. It never fights back. The lamb—it seems to say, “If you are hungry, eat me. If you are cold, shear me and get wool. Here I am. I present myself to you.”

Israel was in slavery in Egypt when this happened. And, the Pharaoh was the King of Egypt, and the Pharaoh wore upon his crown a serpent. And, if you’ll look at some of those Old Testament pictures, you’ll see the Pharaoh with his crown upon his head and with that cobra—that serpent—up there, which was a symbol of the power of Egypt. And, indeed, there is deadly, venomous power in the fangs of the serpent, but what we’re going to see is, now, that the lamb—the gentle, meek, and lowly lamb—is going to overcome the power of the serpent, which symbolizes the power of sin.

Notice also that this lamb was to be a lamb without spot and without blemish. That’s the reason it was chosen on the tenth day of April and it was watched for three full days. They examined the lamb for three days. Look, if you will, beginning in verse 11: *“And thus shall ye eat it”*—yes, let me read here—*“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand...ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD’s passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite...the firstborn [of] the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt [will] I...execute judgment: I am the LORD. And the blood shall be [for] you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt.”* (Exodus 12:11–13) That is, the blood of the lamb was to be an atonement for their sins. The blood of the lamb was to be put upon the doorposts of the house. And so, this lamb had to be an absolutely perfect lamb because it was going to be a substitutionary lamb. It was going to be a lamb that would propitiate the anger of God. And so, for three days

they took this lamb—this Paschal lamb, this Passover lamb—and they examined it. They looked it over for not one spot. And, historians tell us that they even examined the eyelids of the lamb. They did not want there to be one blemish upon the lamb.

It was a male lamb. (Exodus 12:5) Now, you know the feminists are going about to do a rewriting of the Bible now. They want to take all the sexist language out of the Bible, and they want to say, for example, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten child...” But, I want you to notice that God says that the lamb is to be a male. I believe people better leave God’s Word alone and better take it just like it’s written, don’t you? Here’s a male lamb—a male lamb. This lamb was to be taken, and this lamb is to be without blemish and without spot. The point I’m making is that the lamb, first of all, was a special lamb—not just any lamb; a very special lamb.

B. A Slain Lamb

The second thing I want you to notice—not only was it a special lamb; it was to be a slain lamb. Look in verse 6: “*And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: [for] the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening.*” (Exodus 12:6) On the fourteenth day of April, about three o’clock in the afternoon, the father of the family would take that little lamb—and actually, the word that describes this lamb means “a little pet lamb,” a lamb that had become a household pet, a lamb that the children had learned to love—and he would take the chin of that lamb and pull it back. And, with a razor-sharp knife he would cut the throat of that lamb, and from the jugular vein the blood would spurt out, and it would be caught in a basin.

This lamb was to be a special lamb; this lamb was to be a slain lamb because a living lamb could not have saved them in that day. Remember the scripture that we read—verses 11 through 13: God says, “*When I see the blood, I will pass over you.*” (Exodus 12:13) They were to take the blood of the lamb and strike it upon the lintel and upon the two side posts of the house. And, we learned last night, or several nights ago, in our Seder Supper that this is the sign of a cross—taking the blood of the lamb and putting it upon the doorposts, or the lintel, and the two side posts of the house. And, here the cross is formed, and here is that bloody cross. And, God says, “*When I see the blood, I will pass over you.*” (Exodus 12:13) And so, this lamb had to be a slain lamb, for salvation does not come by learning lessons from the life of Christ but receiving life from the death of Christ.

C. A Saving Lamb

And so, it was a special lamb, first of all. It was a slain lamb, next. Thirdly, therefore, it became a saving lamb. Look, if you will, in verse 7: “*And they shall take of the blood, and strike it [upon] the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.*” (Exodus 12:7) And then, look, if you will please, in verse 22—

verse 22—of this same chapter: *“And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop, and dip it in the blood that is in the bason, and strike the lintel and the two side posts with the blood that is in the bason; and none of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning.”* (Exodus 12:22)

Now, what does this represent? The hyssop was a weed that grew in the wall, and they would take this weed, dip it in the blood, and then the blood is painted on the doorposts. And then, every member of the family walks into that house—that house of faith—under and through the blood. Again, it would have done them no good to put rubies and diamonds and emeralds upon the walls and the doorposts of that house. It would have done them no good to write gorgeous and beautiful poetry, but they had to put the blood there. It would have done them no good to put a whole lamb that had not died there in front of the door. There had to be the shedding of blood, for the Bible says, *“Without [the] shedding of blood is no remission.”* (Hebrews 9:22)

D. A Shared Lamb

Now, the fourth thing I want you to notice about Moses’s lamb... First of all, we said it was a special lamb, a male without blemish. Secondly, we said that this lamb was a slain lamb. Thirdly, it became a saving lamb. But, don’t forget the fourth point: it became a shared lamb. Read, if you will, verses 8 and 9 of this same chapter, as we continue to read: *“And they shall eat [of] the flesh [of it in] that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread...with bitter herbs...shall [they] eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and...the purtenance thereof.”* (Exodus 12:8–9) They were to consume the lamb.

Now, notice here every household was to have a lamb, or in some cases, several houses might go together if they didn’t have enough in one household for a whole lamb, because the entire lamb was to be consumed. Can you imagine what the Egyptians must have thought? Can you imagine the smell in the air as a quarter of a million lambs are being barbecued at one time all over the land? Can you imagine the aroma of this roasted lamb that’s going up? Can you imagine what the Egyptians must have thought? But, I’ll tell you what was happening: a bunch of slaves were becoming a nation; a bunch of slaves were coming together. And, the thing that was bringing them together and making them a new people is this: they were fellowshiping with God and fellowshiping with one another over a lamb that had saved them. A special lamb had become a slain lamb, which had become a saving lamb, which had become a shared lamb, and they were feasting upon that lamb. And, when they went out of the land of Egypt, a lamb went out with them, inside them. A lamb was inside them when they left the land of sin, and what does that tell us? That not only does Jesus save us, dear friend; Jesus keeps us. He dwells within us. And, *“Christ in [us is] the hope of glory.”*

(Colossians 1:27)

Now, God told them that they were not to just do this at one time, but they were to continue to keep this feast, for it was a reminder of His covenant with them. Look, if you will, in verse 14: and God said to the Jews on this day of the Passover, *“And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”* (Exodus 12:14) And, that’s the reason that our Jewish friends today are keeping the Passover—because God had said here in Exodus chapter 12 and verse 14 that they were to keep the Passover as a memorial forever, and that’s the reason they celebrate today Passover.

Now, that’s Moses’s lamb in the Old Testament—a special lamb that became a slain lamb that became a saving lamb that became a shared lamb as they fed upon that lamb. And, the lamb now lived and dwelt within them. Now, let’s go to the New Testament, and let me tell you what had happened. Well, let me, before we get to the New Testament, let me just turn you to Jeremiah chapter 31 for just a moment. And, turn to Jeremiah chapter 31, if you will, and let’s look in verse 31—Jeremiah 31 and verse 31. That Old Testament lamb was only a prophecy of the New Testament Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jeremiah the prophet began to preach, and Jeremiah had taught that something even more wonderful was to come than what the Jews had already experienced. And, this is what their prophet Jeremiah said, as I begin reading in verse 31: *“Behold, the days come”*—now, it wasn’t there yet when Jeremiah said this—*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, [when] I will make a new covenant”*—now, that word “new covenant” means “new testament.” The word “new covenant” and “new testament” are exactly the same word. You can say, “covenant.” You can say, “testament.” It is six of one or half a dozen of another. And, here’s what Jeremiah says—*“Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant”*—or, “a new testament”—*“with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand [and led] them out of the land of Egypt”*—that is, “I’m going to do something better than the old Passover; I’m going to give you a new covenant.” And actually, the word *covenant* may be translated “blood covenant” because the root word means “to cut.” “I will make a new blood covenant with you, not like the Old Testament Passover”—*“which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be [my] covenant that I will make with the house of Israel”*—in other words, this is what the New Testament is going to be—*“After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts”*—they’re not to be bound by this Old Testament, external, ceremonial law, but it’s going to be a new law in the heart—*“and [I will] write it [upon] their hearts; and [I] will be their God, and they shall be my people.”* (Jeremiah 31:31–33) This is what Jeremiah says that God is going to do in

that day. He is going to write God's law in their heart. They're going to have an intimate knowledge of God, and he says that their sins are going to be remembered no more. (Jeremiah 31:34)

And, as the Jews down through the centuries kept the Feast of the Passover, some strange traditions came into their minds and, I believe, were planted there by Almighty God. As they would take the Passover, they would take the bread—the unleavened bread—for Jesus said they were to take the Passover...or the Bible says they were to take it with unleavened bread. (Exodus 12:15) And, they would take that matzo bread, and they would break it in three pieces and put it in a beautiful bag with three different sections. One piece of bread would go in here; and then, right beneath that another piece of bread would go in here, and right between, under that, another piece of bread. And, our Jewish friends today who've kept the Passover did exactly this same thing. They have what they call a "Matzah Tash," a pocket in which to put these three pieces of bread. And then, at a certain time in the feast, that middle piece of bread between the three pieces of bread is drawn out, and that middle piece of bread—that middle piece of unleavened bread—would be broken and given to all of those people around the table. Also, the Jews developed over the centuries a cup that they would set there at the table and an empty place, and that cup is called "Messiah's cup." And, it's just set there, and it's filled with wine or filled with the fruit of the vine; and it is for Messiah. And, they would say, and the old rabbis would say, "When Messiah comes, He will take that cup." And, they were doing that as they were looking forward to the new covenant, or the new testament, that Jeremiah had prophesied so long ago.

II. The Presentation of the Lamb

Now, I want you to keep that in mind, and now you're going to see what happens in the New Testament. Remember now they had the Old Testament covenant. They'd had the old Passover, but Jeremiah says, "There's coming a new testament. There's coming a time when your sins are going to be forgiven. The law is going to be in your heart, and you will know me intimately." It was at that time—in "*the fulness of time*" (Galatians 4:4)—that God's New Testament Lamb appeared. His name was Jesus. And, when Jesus came to be baptized of John the Baptist, we read in John chapter 1, verse 29, old prophet John looked, and when he saw Jesus coming, he pointed that finger to Him and said, "*Behold the Lamb of God [that] taketh away the sin of the world.*" (John 1:29) He knew—He knew. Old John the Baptist, who was filled with his mother's womb—filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb—knew that Jesus was the fulfillment of all of this prophecy that took place back in Exodus chapter 12.

Now, remember the four things we told you about Moses's lamb? Remember that he was a special lamb, he was a slain lamb, he was a saving lamb, he was a shared lamb.

Keep that in mind. Remember now that Jeremiah says there's going to be a new covenant. Remember now that Jesus is the Lamb of God, and I want you to notice now those four things about the Lord Jesus Christ.

A. The Special Lamb

The first thing I want you to notice is that Jesus was a special Lamb. There was never another like the Lord Jesus. You see, through the centuries the priests had begun to breed a very special strain of Passover lambs. These lambs were pedigreed lambs. These lambs were very, very special. They were the very best because they were going to be offered in the temple sacrifices at Passover. And, they raised these lambs outside Jerusalem in Bethlehem's field, in the field of Boaz. Out there these special lambs and these very special shepherds were out there raising these Passover lambs. They were the very best, I say, because they were born to die. And, you know, that special day before the Passover, these priests took these lambs from Bethlehem and they led them into the temple area. They came up from the fields of Bethlehem and through the Sheep Gate up into the temple area getting ready to be slain. Exactly the same time that those shepherds were leading those lambs up from Bethlehem's field through the Sheep Gate, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself was coming into the city of Jerusalem through another gate—Jesus was coming. Enter. We call it "Palm Sunday." Those lambs were entering into the temple area, and the Lamb—God's Lamb—was entering the city. And there, the Lord Jesus Christ, those last days, is in the city.

Have you ever wondered why the Bible spends so much time—the gospels spend so much time—dealing with the last week of Jesus's life? It's an interesting thing—you know, the gospels, or the story of the life and the death, the burial and the resurrection, of Jesus Christ. And, Jesus had a public ministry of three years; but yet, you find out that one-third of the gospel record deals with just one week. Why is this? Why is so much time given to that very special period of time when the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—God's Lamb, this special Lamb—went into Jerusalem? I'll tell you why: it is because Jesus was there being examined.

You see, dear friend, the priests were examining those Old Testament lambs. They were making certain that those Old Testament lambs were without spot and without blemish. But, at the same time, Jesus was being examined. You go back and read the last week of Jesus's life, and the Pharisees were doing what? They were questioning Him. They were looking Him over. What were the Pharisees doing? They were questioning Him. They were nitpicking Him. What were the Herodians doing? They were looking for some flaw in Him. What were the civil leaders doing? They were looking at Him. They were putting Him on trial. They examined Him. They examined Him. They examined Him. They examined Him! And, when they finished, He could say, "*Which of*

you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46) He was a Lamb without spot and without blemish. He was a special Lamb. And, even that civil ruler, Pilate, said, *"I find no fault in him."* (John 19:4, 6) He was a special Lamb, that Lamb who came into that city on that Palm Sunday when those other lambs came into that city.

B. The Slain Lamb

I want to tell you, dear friend, not only was He was a special Lamb; He was also a slain Lamb. The Jewish day begins at sundown—six o'clock. That night, Jesus said to His disciples, "Go into the city and prepare. We're going to eat the Passover tonight." (Luke 22:8) And, this Passover was to be the last of the old ones. It was to be hosted by Jesus Christ Himself. And, at the exact moment, at a very special time as they're eating that last Passover meal together there in the upper room, Jesus took that bag with three pieces of bread, and He took out that middle piece of bread; and He took it, as the rabbis had done for so long and as the leaders had done for so long, and He broke it. And, He said, *"This is my body which is [broken] for you"*—Luke chapter 22 and verse 19. (Luke 22:19) And, at that moment, when Jesus Christ took that middle piece of bread out and when He broke it, He unraveled the mystery of the centuries. He said, *"This is my body."* (Luke 22:19) Those Old Testament priests and prophets and rabbis had held the Trinity in their hand, symbolically, for years, those three pieces with that middle piece being the Son of God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. That middle piece, Jesus, the Bread of Life, is taken out. And, Jesus said, *"This is my body."* (Luke 22:19) I say, they had had the emblem, the symbol, of the Trinity in their hands for a thousand years.

And then, Jesus took the cup. Remember the Bible says in Luke chapter 22, verse 20—well, let's just turn to it because I want you to see it—Luke chapter 22, verse 19: "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave it unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: [do] this...in remembrance of me. Likewise also [He took]"—not a cup, notice—"the cup"—Messiah's cup—"saying, This cup is the new [covenant] in my blood"—now, remember a long time ago where I said that Jeremiah had said in Jeremiah 31, verse 31, "I'm going to make a new covenant. I'm going to make a new testament." (Jeremiah 31:31) Jesus says, "This cup is that new testament." Jesus said—*"This cup is [that] new [covenant] in my blood, which is shed for you."* (Luke 22:19–20) Note carefully that Luke says, *"After [the] supper..."* (Luke 22:20) That is, after the Passover, He took the cup, Messiah's cup. It is the new covenant. Something very wonderful now has transpired. It was what I—it was what Jeremiah—had prophesied in Jeremiah chapter 31, verses 31 through 34.

And then, from there, after Jesus had that Last Supper and after Jesus had kept that last Passover with His disciples, Jesus went out from there across the Brook Kidron and

He went into Gethsemane, and there Jesus prayed in Gethsemane. There, Judas came and betrayed Him, and there He's led away to be crucified. And, where did they lead the Lord Jesus to crucify Him? They led Him to a rocky promontory called Mount Moriah, and it was on Mount Moriah that they crucified Him.

Why Mount Moriah? Because, you're going to see in our study on Genesis, this was where Abraham proposed to sacrifice Isaac—on the mountain that God said, "Abraham, I'll show you the place." (Genesis 22:2) And, it was on Mount Moriah—on this same rock that Abraham took his son and was about to sacrifice him. And, Abraham said—and Isaac said—to Abraham, "Father, I see the wood, and I see the fire. But father, where's the lamb? Where's the sacrifice?" (Genesis 22:7) And, Abraham said with prophetic insight, "God"—"God"—"will [supply] himself a lamb"—"God will provide...a lamb." (Genesis 22:8) And, He did—He did. God provided a Lamb on this same spot.

Did you know that the Bible says that the gospel was preached unto Abraham? (Galatians 3:8) Did you know that the Bible says that "*Abraham...[saw] my day...and was glad*"? (John 8:56) And now, centuries later, God's Lamb, the One that God has provided in a fulfillment of what Abraham anticipated, goes to this same spot up on Mount Moriah. But, there it's now approaching three in the afternoon, and on that same rock—on that same Mount Moriah—those Levitical priests are sharpening, sharpening, sharpening, sharpening their lethal knives, for they're getting ready to take those special lambs and they're getting ready to slit their throats. And, at three o'clock in the afternoon, those knives flashed and the blood is split. But, at that same time—exactly that same time—Jesus is hanging upon the cross, and Jesus is saying, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30)—"It is done! It's done!" "Levitical priests, you can go home now. We don't need you any more. Your task is finished." All that that Old Testament prophecy talked about—that's all been fulfilled now. It is fulfilled in the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. And, the covenant that Jeremiah prophesied and predicted is now into effect. It is the New Testament in the finished work of the Lord Jesus, God's Lamb.

You see, He was a special Lamb. He was examined, and they said, "*I find no fault in him.*" (John 19:4, 6) He was a slain Lamb. He was the fulfillment of all of these prophecies, and I want you to know that He came in the fullness of time. (Galatians 4:4) And, when He died, He died on the dot. And, I believe that you can take Bible scriptures and put them together and can show from Daniel chapter 9 that the Bible prophesied the exact day, month, year, and moment that Jesus Christ would die—I believe that. I believe, dear friend, that we have such a marvelous, fantastic book, if we could only understand all of the truths that are there.

C. The Saving Lamb

He was a special Lamb; He was a slain Lamb, and, therefore, He was a saving Lamb.

Now, go back to the Old Testament lamb. Remember, they put the blood in a bowl, and they took hyssop and they applied the blood with that hyssop. What does the hyssop stand for to us today? The hyssop today symbolizes faith. And, you see, the blood is not applied to the doorposts today; the blood is applied to our hearts. Today, the blood is not applied with hyssop; the blood is applied by faith. For God says, *“I will [write] my law in their inward parts, and write it [on] their hearts.”* (Jeremiah 31:33) That’s the reason Paul says in 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.”* (Romans 10:9) That’s what Jeremiah was talking about when he said, *“[I’ll] write it in their hearts.”* (Jeremiah 31:33) *“Believe in [your] heart that God hath raised him from the dead”*—“Believe in Passover and Easter at the same time.” That’s what Paul is saying: that God raised this slain Lamb—*“[and] thou shalt be saved.”* (Romans 10:9) He is the saving Lamb.

D. The Shared Lamb

But, I want to say one last thing: not only was Jesus a special Lamb, and not only was Jesus a slain Lamb, and not only is Jesus the saving Lamb; He is our Passover. And, when God sees His blood applied our hearts, His angel of judgment passes over us. But, He’s also to be a shared Lamb.

Now, let’s go back to the text that we started with. Go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 16—I believe the Lord’s Supper ought to mean so much more to you after this—1 Corinthians chapter 10, and look, if you will please, in verse 16: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?”*—remember that I told you that a bunch of slaves were becoming a nation as they fellowshiped over a lamb? I want to tell you, right here, we’ve got a bunch of slaves who became a new people because we fellowship over a Lamb. Do you know what the word *communion* means? It means “to share a common life; *koinonia*, “a sharing of life”—*“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”* (1 Corinthians 10:16–17) Yes, He is a shared Lamb.

Look, if you will, in verse 23—chapter 11 and verse 23: *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it”*—remember now, it’s that middle piece—*“and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. [And] after the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me”*—and then, listen to verse 26. And oh, may the

Holy Spirit write this upon you heart!—*“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.”* (1 Corinthians 11:23–26)

Have you ever felt that, when you come to the Lord’s Table, that suddenly you’re supposed to look mournful? Have you ever tried to take the Lord’s Supper and just so anticipate His death? Do you think there’s something wrong with you if the tears don’t flow? I believe that there’s something wrong in thinking that the taking of the Lord’s Supper must always be a mournful experience. I believe the taking of the Lord’s Supper ought to be filled at times with hilarious joy because not only are we looking back to His death; we’re looking forward to His coming. *What we’re doing, friend, is not mourning a corpse; we’re hailing a Conqueror.* And, you see, the whole thing is wrapped up in this: a Lamb has slain the serpent. That’s what it’s all about. A Lamb—a little, meek Lamb, with His shed blood—has overcome mighty Pharaoh’s serpent.

Conclusion

One last passage I will read, and I’ll be finished. Turn to Revelation chapter 5, because we’re supposed to be preaching on Revelation tonight, and indeed, we’ll not leave, therefore, without reading this climactic verse. And, how it ought to set the joy bells ringing in your heart! Revelation chapter 5 and verse 11: *“And I beheld, and...heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and [for] ever.”* (Revelation 5:11–14) And, God’s people said, “Amen.”

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Father in heaven, we’re so grateful for this Passover, O dear Lord, and for this Resurrection Day that somehow, dear Lord, in your providence have fallen by the human calendar upon the same day. Now, dear Lord, we pray that many here tonight might understand that Jesus was the Lamb of God meant to take away their sin and, tonight, that they might trust Him and be saved. Bring conviction of sin, dear Lord. In Jesus’ name. Amen. †

The Case for Moral Purity

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 16, 1977

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:9–7:2

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Development of Moral Impurity
 - A. The Attitude of Modern Parents
 - B. The Failure of a Liberal Clergy
 - C. The Pressure of Madison Avenue
 - D. The Influence of a Corrupted Media
 - E. The Weakness of Modern, Godless Education
 - F. The Uncertainty of This Age
- II. The Danger of Moral Impurity
 - A. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Mental Health
 - B. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Physical Health
 - C. Moral Impurity Sins Against Society
 - D. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Personal Relationships
 - E. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Future Happiness
 - F. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Relationship with God
- III. The Directives for Moral Purity
 - A. Negative Directive: Flee Fornication
 1. Watch Your Company
 2. Guard What You Read, What You Watch, What You Listen To
 3. Control Your Thought Life
 - B. Positive Directive: Make a Full Surrender to Jesus Christ
 - C. Practical Directives
 1. Premarital Chastity
 2. Postmarital Fidelity

Conclusion

Introduction

We want to speak to you on this subject: “The Case for Moral Purity.” And I’m beginning our reading in 1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 9: “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind—* here he refers to homosexuality—*nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord*”

Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

And then, turn, if you will, later in the chapter, to verse 15: *“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I, then, take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he who is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is outside the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 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? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:15–20).*

We are told that America is going through a moral and sexual revolution. We are told that the ideas that are found in the Word of God, and the truths, and the prohibitions, and commandments that are revealed to us in Holy Scripture are no longer applicable; they are old-fashioned, outmoded, and out-of-date. And the result is this: that our young people are being sucked down, into swirling sewers of sin; our homes are coming apart at the seams; we are seeing the slaughter of millions of precious little unborn babies who are being put to death; venereal disease is rampant; and, our nation is in chaos. It is time, ladies and gentlemen, that we came back to the Word of God.

I. The Development of Moral Impurity

Now I want us to think, first of all, about the development of moral impurity. What has caused the situation that we find ourselves in, today?

A. The Attitude of Modern Parents

In the first place, there is the attitude of modern parents who cannot wait for their children to grow up. We see boys and girls who are dating at the age of ten, going steady by the time they’re thirteen, getting married by the age of seventeen, and getting divorced before they’re old enough to vote. May God have mercy upon us! We are pushing young people into situations that they are not emotionally and mentally capable of handling. Young people, today, find themselves playing with matches in dry grass, as it were. And we need, as parents, to straighten up some, back to the Word of God, and put some good old-fashioned discipline into our homes.

B. The Failure of a Liberal Clergy

But not only do I blame the attitude of modern parents; I blame the failure of a liberal clergy—preachers who no longer are preaching the Word of God. There used to be a time when preachers would stand up and say, “The Bible says...” Then, they started saying, “The Church says...” And now we have a generation of preachers who stand around and scratch their head, and say, “It seems to me...” Well, we’re not interested in

what it seems to you, sir; we want to know: Is there a message from the infallible, inerrant Word of God? One of these erstwhile so-called preachers said, in a highly respected women's college, not so very long ago, (speaking in chapel): "Sex is good; sex is fun. It is also funny. Premarital intercourse is not bad or dirty; indeed, it can be beautiful." Can you imagine a Benedict Arnold claiming to be a man of God? He'll have to answer at the judgment bar of God for such a statement.

C. The Pressure of Madison Avenue

All right. Not only do we have the failure of modern parents, not only do we have the ranting and the ravings of a liberal clergy, but another developer of this awful situation is the pressure of Madison Avenue. Everything today is sold by sex, it seems. Toothpaste, soap, hand lotion—we've got to have all of these and have them in the right proportions to be loved and to be lovable. And it makes no difference whether we're selling real estate or an automobile; somehow, sex has to enter into the situation.

D. The Influence of a Corrupted Media

Another developer of the situation that we're in is the influence of a corrupted media and, primarily, Hollywood. To try to reform Hollywood would be like running a soda shop in Hell. Hollywood is depraved almost to the core, and the moviemakers are systematically seducing your children. In Hollywood, sodomy is glamorized and adultery is portrayed as normal and desirable.

E. The Weakness of Modern, Godless Education

Another contributor to the situation that we find ourselves in is the weakness of modern Godless education. We have a generation of people who have said, "We cannot teach the Word of God nor the standards that come from the Word of God." And yet, these same people want to teach sexual information. They have no standard of right; they have no standard of wrong. In our modern schools, our children are being taught that they have descended from animals. And is it any wonder that they have begun to act like animals?

F. The Uncertainty of This Age

Then, on top of that, is the uncertainty of this age: a generation of young people who have been born in the shadow of the atomic bomb, with fall-out in their milk. They are not even sure that they will grow to be old enough to get married and have legitimate fulfillment. We live in the age of *instant*. We have instant coffee; we have instant cereal, instant breakfast, instant lather, instant credit, and instant peace by the use of a pill. And this generation also wants instant gratification. It does not want to wait for anything. And so the motto is, "If it feels good, do it." "You only go through once; grab all the gusto you can."

II. The Danger of Moral Impurity

But let's think not only about the development of moral impurity, but let's think, if we might, about the danger of moral impurity. Why did God say to flee fornication? Why does this Bible thunder from Sinai: "*Thou shalt not commit adultery?*" (Exodus 20:14). Is God being cruel? Is God some sort of an ogre, sitting on a throne, making laws to make us squirm like a worm in hot ashes, trying to keep them? No, when God says, "Thou shalt not..." He's simply saying, "Don't hurt yourself!" And when God says, "Thou shalt..." God is saying, "Help yourself to happiness."

May I give you some of the dangers of moral impurity? And I want you young people, who are being bombarded by every side from unbelievable pressures of Madison Avenue, liberal clergy, godless education, and so-called relevancy, I want you to listen to these reasons. I want to give you four, or five, or perhaps more, reasons for moral purity; and, I want to show you these reasons may be negative in a sense: the danger of moral impurity.

A. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Mental Health

In the first place, moral impurity sins against your mental health. There is something unique about this particular kind of sin. That's what the Bible means in verse 18, when it says: "*Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is outside the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body*" (1 Corinthians 6:18). There is something about immorality that is very disturbing to the mental, psychological wellbeing of the person who practices this type of sin.

A former president of the American Psychiatric Association said, and I quote, "Premarital sex relationships resulting from the so-called new morality have greatly increased the number of young people in mental hospitals." Dr. Billy Graham said he talked to the head psychiatrist at one of our great eastern universities, not long ago. He said that over 50% of all of the university students there are suffering psychological problems, because of immoral relationships. Now listen to it again. Over 50% of all of the students, in this great eastern university, suffering psychological problems, because of immoral relationships.

A lovely young lady wrote her father a letter. This young lady was away at college, and she wrote to her dad, that she loved very much, for advice, and this is what she said: "When I see how casually sex is taken by my classmates, they make it all sound so natural, and so inevitable, that there are times when I wonder what I am waiting for." End of quote. Her dad wrote her back a letter, and this is what her father said to her: "I think I can tell you in six words what you are waiting for. You are waiting to be free, free from the nagging voice of conscience, and from the grey shadow of guilt; free to give all of yourself, not a panicky fraction. Some deep instinct in you knows what tremendous

influence your first complete union with another person can be, and that same instinct keeps telling you not to blur it, not to waste it, and not to make it small.”

David committed immorality, and David wrote, in Psalm 51: “*my sin is ever before me*” (Psalm 51:3). It has gotten down into his psyche, trust me. “No torture the poets name can match that fierce, unutterable pain he feels, who day and night carries his own accuser within his breast” (Murray, T. B.).

B. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Physical Health

Immorality may harm you psychologically; it sins against your mental health. But not only does impurity sin against your mental health, impurity also sins against your physical health. There is the danger of social disease. You say, “We have our modern drugs.” With our modern drugs, ladies and gentlemen, venereal disease is ten times greater in America than it has ever been before. And Dr. Leonard Heimoff recently reported syphilis at its highest level ever and gonorrhea at epidemic proportions. He says that it is out of control on a worldwide basis, and new strains of disease are being developed that are not responding to the drugs that many are now using. You sin against your physical health.

C. Moral Impurity Sins Against Society

But not only do you sin against your mental health, and not only do you sin against your physical health, you also sin against society. No society can long endure that takes a loose view of sex. It is the sin that led to the downfall of Greece, the sin that led to the downfall of Rome, the sin that led to the downfall of Egypt, and the sin that led to the downfall of Babylon. Gibbons, in his book *The Rise and Fall of the Roman Empire*, listed the causes that caused Rome to fail and to fall, and number one on the list was sexual immorality.

Let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen: Immorality is the enemy of the home; and, the enemy of the home is the enemy of the nation. Immorality causes us to sin against society. You can put it down that people who treat sex lightly treat other human beings lightly, also. Just mark it down. There is, in America, an alarming rise in illegitimate births. May I say *there are no illegitimate babies, just illegitimate parents?* But my heart was grieved to read that, this past year, in Washington D.C., the capital of the so-called greatest nation on Earth, there were more children born out of wedlock than were born in wedlock. I tell you, that ought to cause us to fall on our face and weep before Almighty God.

Unborn children have some rights, too. We have come to a sad place in America where we weep, and groan, and moan about the execution of a confessed murderer, and then, at the same time, murder millions of unborn babies. Something is wrong—something is drastically wrong—with our system of values.

I want to say, again, that people who treat sex lightly will treat human beings lightly, also. Impurity—immorality—not only sins against mental health, it not only sins against physical health, it also sins against society itself.

D. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Personal Relationships

May I say, fourthly, that impurity sins against your personal relationships with other people? It destroys love. It destroys the very thing that it seeks to get. Immorality kills love. Those who were once, perhaps, romantically inclined, who fall into immorality, find that their love never has the sweetness that it could have had. So often, a young man will say something like this: “After she yielded, I no longer loved her.” It’s a case of getting what he wanted, and then, not wanting what he got.

You see, after immorality comes in, though all of the flaunting of the *avant garde* society and philosophies, though all of this is mouthed, there is still that basic loss of self-respect and respect for the other person. The more permissiveness prevails in any society, the less women are treated like human beings, and the more they become like objects—things to be used. Some men have the idea that the ideal place to live would be in the South Seas Islands where all of the girls just are there for the gratification of the man. But if you were to travel to the South Sea Islands or other places, and there, studied those kinds of permissive societies, you would find that women are not treated as persons; they are treated as things. And real love—real tenderness—as the Bible teaches—that a husband should have for his wife, and a wife for her husband—disappears. There is no such thing as free love. Love costs. It is a great and a grand commitment.

Sometimes, a young man will say to a young lady, “I love you.” Now he says that in order to get her to compromise her purity upon the altar of his lust. And so he keeps telling her, “I love you. I love you. I love you.” What he means is, “I love me. I love me. I love me.” And he wants to gratify himself. Oh, he loves her; he loves her like a man loves oranges. He takes an orange, cuts the plug from it, squeezes the sweetness and the juice from it, throws it on the ground like a piece of garbage, wipes his mouth, and says, “Man, I love oranges!” That’s the way he loves you, young lady.

Let me tell you, real love is not that way. *Love lives to give. Lust lives to get.* We live in a generation of people who do not know the difference between love and lust. May I tell you that impurity destroys personal relationships? Love can never have the tenderness, the sweetness, the pureness, and the wholeness that God meant for it to have.

E. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Future Happiness

May I tell you, again, that impurity sins against your future happiness? There is a loss of sensitivity to true love that perhaps can never be again regained in your

marriage. Surveys show that the highest standard of marital happiness is found among couples who were both pure when they came to the marriage altar. Impurity before marriage causes suspicion and accusation after marriage. What is so wrong with impurity before marriage? May I tell you that impurity before marriage is so bad, because sexual fulfillment after marriage is so wonderful.

You see, God is not trying to keep you from sex. Don't get that idea. Never get the idea that sex is bad, dirty, or impure. It is not. It is the wonderful gift of a loving God. And the Bible says: "*Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge*" (Hebrews 13:4). Now why did God say that? Is God keeping us from sex? No. God created male and female, and then, God said, "That is good."

But God has put some high walls around this thing called "the marriage act." Why? Not that He's trying to keep that from us, but that He is trying to keep us for it. *Sex is so bad before marriage, because it is so good in marriage.* And God wants you to have the fulfillment that He has planned for you. And people who keep God's laws concerning purity enjoy sex more than people who break God's laws. You have to feel sorry for the Playboy crowd, because they have missed what the Creator has designed them for.

I am saying impurity sins against your future happiness. A man in South Africa saw some little boys playing on the ground with shiny rocks. He watched how they splashed in the sunlight. He stopped, stooped down, picked up one of them, and found out it was a diamond. This is the way they discovered some of the South African diamond mines. Here were little boys, playing marbles with diamonds; and, I'm afraid that's what today's generation of young people are doing. God has given something that is so beautiful, so intrinsically beautiful, and so wonderful, and this is the reason the Bible says: "*Thou shalt not commit adultery*" (Exodus 20:14). That is, don't adulterate something that is so beautiful, and so wonderful, and so lovely. Impurity sins against future happiness.

F. Moral Impurity Sins Against Your Relationship with God

May I say, again, that impurity is wrong, not only because it sins against future happiness, but it is wrong because it sins against your relationship with God? Look again, in the Word of God—1 Corinthians chapter 6, and verse 9: "*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind*" (1 Corinthians 6:9).

Why did God put idolatry in a list with sexual sins? I believe that the goddess of this age is sex. I believe that we are worshipping at the shrine of sex. And God says that fornicators—those who commit sexual immorality before marriage; adulterers—those who are untrue to their marriage vows; effeminate and abusers of themselves with mankind—those who are perverted and are homosexual, God says they will not inherit

the Kingdom of God.

You say, “If I’ve committed any of these sins, does that mean I’m not going to Heaven?” Not necessarily, but it means, unless you get saved, you’re not. That’s what it means. Notice the next verse: *“And such were some of you”—not are.* You would never find Paul ordaining one of these—*“And such were some of you”* (1 Corinthians 6:11).

All right. I want you to continue to read. Look again, in God’s Word, in verse 15: *“Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I, then, take the members of Christ, and make them members of an harlot? God forbid”* (1 Corinthians 6:15). Notice verses 19 and 20: *“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? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Why should a person keep himself morally pure? A person should keep himself morally pure, because there are few sins, if any other, that will do more damage to you spiritually than the sin of immorality. It destroys your relationship with God.

Remember, also, that God has promised to judge this sin. God says, in Exodus chapter 20, verse 14: *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exodus 20:14). I don’t care what Ann-Margret has to say. I don’t care what Hugh Hefner has to say. I don’t care what Liz Taylor has to say. I don’t care what Johnny Carson has to say. God says: *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exodus 20:14). That’s what God says, and God is not giving advice. That is not advice, my friend; that is law. These are His holy laws, and law without a penalty is only advice. But this is not advice. And it will not be long before those who flaunt God’s laws will find that the sweet warm flames of lust have turned to the horrible flames of Hell. When a person so sins—when a person so flagrantly flaunts the law of God—he sins against his relationship with God.

Young people, it makes sense to keep yourselves pure. I am thankful to God that I was able, as a teenager, to keep myself pure, and go to the marriage altar, and I’m so thankful to God for a holy marriage. What a difference it makes! How sweet and how wonderful!

When a person sins against his purity, he sins against his mental health; he sins against his physical health; he sins against society; he sins against his relationships; he sins against his future happiness; and he sins against a holy God and his relationship with that God.

III. The Directives for Moral Purity

Now we’ve talked a little bit about the development of moral impurity; we’ve talked a little bit about the dangers of moral impurity. Let’s talk, for just a little bit, about directives for moral purity.

Now look in chapter 6, verse 18: *“Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is outside the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. 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? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s. Now concerning the things about which ye wrote unto me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and every woman have her own husband”* (1 Corinthians 6:18–7:2).

A. Negative Directive: Flee Fornication

What are the directives for moral purity? First of all, Paul gives some negative directions. He says, in verse 18, to *“flee fornication”* (1 Corinthians 6:18). At least twenty-seven times in the New Testament, the child of God is told to flee, or to run. When you deliberately place yourself into temptation, you have already sinned.

1. Watch Your Company

Now how are you going to flee? Well, may I say—number one—watch your company? Guard your company. The Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 33: *“Be not deceived: Evil company corrupts good manners”* (1 Corinthians 15:33). In plain language, that means: You show me the crowd you run with, and I’ll show you the kind of a person you are, or you will soon become. You watch your company. Again, the Bible says, in the book of Proverbs: *“A companion of fools shall be destroyed”* (Proverbs 13:20). Watch your company.

2. Guard What You Read, What You Watch, What You Listen To

Secondly, another way to flee is to guard what you read, what you watch, and what you listen to. “I’ve set no unclean thing before mine eyes” (Psalm 101:3), the Word of God says. Watch your eyes. But you say, “Oh, Mr. Rogers, it doesn’t bother me to go to these R-rated, X-rated films; that doesn’t bother me. It doesn’t bother me to read these hellacious, so-called “adult-only magazines.” They’re not adult-only, they’re for immature little people. “But it doesn’t bother me,” you say. Well, if you can continually look upon nakedness, lewdness, lasciviousness, and listen to cheap, course, suggestive talk, and it doesn’t bother you, maybe you ought to go see your doctor. It just means that you have something missing—that you’re not healthy. You see, a person has something wrong with him if he wants to lust after another man’s wife. He also has something wrong with him if he can look at lewdness and nudity and it doesn’t affect him. Of course, he’s lying, or he wouldn’t be looking at it. He looks at it for the effect that it gives him.

But the Bible asks this question: *“Can a man take a fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned?”* (Proverbs 6:27). You wouldn’t put garbage in your mouth. Don’t

put garbage in your head. Watch what you read. Be selective. Some of you parents ought to go home and throw half the magazines out of your house—just get rid of them. Watch what your children go to see. If you had some neighbors who were living in open adultery and fornication, you wouldn't say to your little boy or little girl, "Mama's going shopping. You get the soapbox, and crawl up and look through over the window sill, and see what you can see, or entertain yourself at the neighbor's house, while I'm gone." You'd say, "Oh no, I wouldn't do that." No, you'd give them a dollar, and send them down to the movie house to see the same thing. You say, "Now you prop yourselves down there, and you watch for a couple of hours an adulterous, immoral relationship." *Actresses: They have faces like angels and morals like alley cats. "Flee fornication"* (1 Corinthians 6:18).

3. Control Your Thought Life

Now you watch your company; you watch what you read; you watch what you view; and then, control your thought life. We are what we think. The thought is the father of the deed. *You sow a thought; you reap a deed. You sow a deed; you reap a habit. You sow a habit, and you reap a character. You sow a character, and you reap a destiny.* And it all begins with your thought life. As a man *"thinketh in his heart, so is he"* (Proverbs 23:7).

This is the reason the Apostle Paul said: *"Whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things"* (Philippians 4:8). God so made you that you cannot think two thoughts at one time, and if you're thinking what is right, you cannot be thinking what is wrong. It is not a sin to be tempted, but it is a sin to take that temptation in and entertain it. Someone has well said, "We cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads, but we can keep them from making a nest in our hair." You watch your thought life.

B. Positive Directive: Make a Full Surrender to Jesus Christ

The Bible says, on the negative side, that we are to *"flee fornication"* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Get as far away from it as we possibly can. On the positive side, we're to make a full surrender to Jesus Christ. Look in verse 19. Verse 18 says: *"Flee fornication"* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Verse 19 says: *"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? For ye are bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). You remember that you belong to Jesus Christ. You say, "But I don't want to belong to Jesus; I want to be free." Well, friend, you will only become free when you belong to Jesus Christ. *"If the Son, therefore, shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed"* (John 8:36).

If a railroad train says, “I don’t want to run on these tracks; I want to be free,” then off through the meadow it tries to go, how far do you think it goes? Here’s a kite tied to a string. It says, “I don’t want to be tied to a string; I want to be free.” The string breaks, and down it goes. Here is a tree planted in the earth. The tree says, “I don’t want to be planted in the earth. I want to be free.” And it’s jerked up from the earth, and so, it died.

My dear friend, freedom is found in Jesus Christ. Everything that is truly free is functioning as God made it to function. Just as a railroad train was made to run on rails, God made you to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, to know Him, to love Him, to keep His laws, and it is in Him that “*we live, and move, and have our being*” (Acts 17:28). Real freedom comes from Jesus Christ. You are free, my dear friend, to sin; but that’s not freedom. It’s only freedom to die and go to Hell.

C. Practical Directives

We’ve given some directions negatively—“*flee fornication*”; and positively—“*glorify God in your body*” (1 Corinthians 6:18, 20). Now let me say something, practically. Look in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, verses 1 through 3: “*Now concerning the things about which ye wrote unto me, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband*” (1 Corinthians 7:1–2). We’ll stop there, in verse 2.

1. Premarital Chastity

Now practically, what does this mean? It means, first of all, premarital chastity. It means keep yourself pure until you come to the marriage altar. Premarital impurity does not ensure your happiness after your marriage; it diminishes it. You save yourself for the one that you’re going to marry. You keep yourself pure.

One young girl was speaking to another young girl, and this young girl, who had lived fast, and loose, and immorally, said to another pure, sweet, young lady, who had kept herself clean and pure, “Come on, we’re having a big time. Everybody is doing it. Don’t be so old-fashioned.” Do you know what this pure young girl said to this other girl who had already become slightly soiled and greatly reduced in price? Do you know what she said to her? She said, “Listen. Anytime I want to become like you, I can, but you can never again become like me.” Now you think about that practical advice.

2. Postmarital Fidelity

Premarital purity; and then, postmarital fidelity. “*What, therefore, God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*” (Matthew 19:6). You keep your marriage holy; you keep it right. Let me tell you something, friend: There is nothing more wonderful than a Christian marriage, when it is a holy marriage and a pure marriage.

Peter Marshall said, “Dearly beloved, the marriage that is rightly understood and properly appreciated is the most delightful, as well as the most sacred and solemn, of

human relations. It is the clasping of hands, the blending of lives, and the union of hearts that two may walk together up the hill of life to meet the dawn, together bearing life's burdens, discovering beauty, and sharing its joys and sorrow. Marriage is more than moonlight and roses and much more than the singing of love songs and the whispering of vows of undying affection. In our day, it is, by many, lightly regarded, and, by many, it is lightly discarded. But marriage will ever remain in the sight of God an eternal union, made possible only by the gift of love, which God alone can bestow." Well said, Peter Marshall.

Conclusion

Oh, my dear friend, some practical advice: premarital purity and postmarital fidelity; that is the plan of God, and you'll never improve on what God planned. "But," you say, "Pastor, the message is too late for me. My heart has already been broken. My life has already been defiled. I've not listened to what I knew to be right. I've already failed."

Well, in Scotland, some men were sitting around at an inn, drinking tea, and they were discussing stories, and swapping stories (fishermen). One man, with a flamboyant gesture of his hand, knocked the other man's hand, and the tea and the cup went out, and all against the wall, and made an ugly brown stain upon the white plastered wall. He was horrified. But a man there, in that inn, said, "Never mind," and he went over to that brown stain on the wall, and he took out his crayons, and he started to sketch. And drawing around that form that didn't seem to make sense, suddenly there emerged a royal stag with his antlers spread. The man who did that was Sir Edwin Lancer, who was England's foremost painter of animals; and, he was able, with his creative genius, to take that old stain and make something beautiful out of it.

And I want to tell you: Jesus Christ is that kind of an artist. I want to tell you that Jesus Christ can take a life that has been blotted and stained, and, by His transforming power, He can make something beautiful out of it. And Jesus Christ can heal a broken heart, if you give Him all of the pieces. Jesus Christ can heal a broken marriage. Jesus Christ can cleanse. Jesus Christ can set you free. Hallelujah, what a Savior! What a Savior is Jesus! Let us bow in prayer.

Safe Sex

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 7, 1988

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 7:1–9, 26, 29–33

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Way of Happiness for the Married Life
 - A. The Sanctity of Safe Sex
 - B. The Selflessness of Safe Sex
 - C. The Security of Safe Sex
- II. The Way of Helpfulness for the Single Life
 - A. It Is a Good Life
 - B. It Is a Gifted Life
 - C. It Must Be a Guarded Life
 - D. It Will Be a Godly Life
- III. The Way of Holiness for Every Life
 - A. Immorality Is Psychologically Harmful
 - B. Immorality Kills True Love
 - C. Immorality Endangers Future Marital Happiness
 - D. Immorality Destabilizes People
 - E. Immorality Endangers Society
 - F. Immorality Brings the Danger of Conception
 - G. Immorality Brings the Danger of Disease
 - H. Immorality Is Denounced by the Word of God

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to open your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 7. And, when you find it, I want you to look up here. I want to talk to you on this subject: “Safe Sex.” I’m aware, if nothing else, I have your attention. I want to tell you something, folks: only twice in the history of recorded civilization have we seen a complete disintegration of the home. One time was 300 years before Christ, 300 BC—the ancient Greek civilization. The other was in 33 AD—the Roman Empire. Both of these disintegrated, but it began with the disintegration of the family. The family went first; then, there was the culture, and then there was the fall of that nation.

America is on the brink of disintegration. One day, somebody may write *The Rise and the Fall of the American Empire*. Now, it need not happen because God still moves. And, my dear friend, if we do not come to a grip with what God, who made us, has to say about sex, you can write America off. She will not survive.

I. The Way of Happiness for the Married Life

Now, I want to talk to you about the way for a happy marriage and for safe sex.

A. The Sanctity of Safe Sex

I want you to look with me in 1 Corinthians chapter 7, verse 1: *“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.*

Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Corinthians 7:1–2). I call that “the sanctity of safe sex.” God has set some definite boundaries—and for the physical, active marriage. And, without these boundaries, a nation, a city, a family cannot exist. **Can you imagine what it would be like trying to play a football game without any rules, without any boundaries? Fullback gets the ball, and he goes up through the stands with it. Lot of folks would get hurt. Now God has given some boundaries not to harm us, but to help us—to protect us.** Inside these boundaries, sex is a wonderful gift of God. You’ll never improve on God’s plan. And, look in chapter 6, verse 16, where, here, Paul is warning against relationships with a harlot, and God says what? *“What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh”* (1 Corinthians 6:16).

Now, God’s plan in sex is to bring a man and a woman in the sanctity of marital love to a sense of oneness, where they become one flesh. Over here on the mountainside, a little stream begins to bubble up out of the ground. There’s a little spring there. The water comes up, and it begins to bubble up and trickle down the mountainside. Over here on another mountainside, another little spring bubbles up out of the ground. And, the water begins to trickle down, and this stream finds that stream. And, those streams flow together, and the waters mingle—not to be separated again. And then, it begins to flow ever wide and deeper. That’s what a marriage is to be: over here somewhere, a little girl is born; over here somewhere, a little boy is born. Guided by the providence of God, guided by the unseen hand of God, those lives come together. And, they blend, and they become one flesh. That’s what we call “the sanctity of safe sex.”

B. The Selflessness of Safe Sex

I want you to notice the selflessness of safe sex. Look on, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: *“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power”—that word power means “authority”—“of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife”* (1 Corinthians 7:3–4).

Now, what is the selflessness of safe sex? It is the giving of one’s self. The key word here is the word *render*. *“Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife [render to] the husband”* (1 Corinthians 1:3). Lust is always

marked by getting; love—real love—is always marked by giving. And, God uses this word *render*, which literally means “to give.” And, notice it is the husband who is mentioned first, because the husband is to be the initiator. Verse 3: *“Let the husband [give to] the wife [her] due”* (1 Corinthians 7:3)—that kind, loving, sexual embrace that is due to her. And, God made the husband to be the initiator. He made the wife to be the responder. And, if the husband wants his wife to respond in love, he is to render to her that intimacy.

Now, I heard of a wife who got so frustrated with her hardheaded husband she hit him in the head with a pot full of geraniums. And, somebody said, “Why did you do that?” She said, “It was an advertisement I saw that said, ‘Say it with flowers.’” Many times we husbands are so hardheaded, so stupid, we don’t know how to show that love, that benevolence, to our wife. There is a selflessness in safe sex.

C. **The Security of Safe Sex**

But, I want you to notice not only the sanctity of it and the selflessness of it, but I want you to notice the security of it. Notice in verse 5: *“Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again”*—now, he’s talking about sexually—*“that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency”* (1 Corinthians 7:5)—that means “because of your lack of self-control.”

Now friend, the way to have a secure home is to see that God has one plan and one plan only for a husband and a wife, for a man and a woman to come together sexually: it is in the bonds of holy matrimony. God says it is to be a selfless thing, a giving thing. He calls it “benevolence.” And, God says if we’ll do this, there will be a security, but if we don’t do this, we leave ourselves wide open to an attack by the devil. An unloving home is an insecure home. An unloving home, a home that does not have a proper sexual attitude, is a home that is open to an attack by the enemy.

Some wives need to read this very carefully—especially need to read verse 5: *“Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency”* (1 Corinthians 7:5). Some women need to understand that God has given a husband a sexual drive, and it is a God-given drive. And lady, if you don’t meet that drive, somebody else will, or a part of him will die. You see, if somehow, some way, you don’t give to your husband that romantic, physical love that he needs, the devil’s going to say to him, “That’s due to you. She doesn’t give it to you—she can’t complain if I cheat a little.” The devil has done that to so many people.

You know, sometimes a wife comes to me for counsel, and I never have the courage to say sometimes what I feel like I ought to say. She says, “You know, I believe my husband is running around on me.” It’s not always the case, but sometimes, dear friend,

I look at her, the way she keeps herself—she looks like something that Kaiser made when Fraser wasn't looking. She just...she doesn't care. She goes around looking like an unmade bed. And, he's off at work, and all of these slick chicks are there, walking around on their high heels and their faces all made up. He comes home, and she meets him at the door in a faded housecoat, different colored slipper on each foot, orange juice cans in her head. I don't know why they put all that stuff up there. Lady, you ought to wise up. I'm not excusing the husband—God will surely judge him if he's unfaithful to his wife. If he doesn't confess it and repent of it, God will surely judge him. But, you see, what you've done, lady, is you have given the devil an open door. You've said, "Come on in, Satan. Wreck our home!"

It's not only the women who withholds a romance—not only the women who sometimes are cold, and indifferent, and frigid. How we need to understand, dear friend, there is the security of safe sex! The Bible teaches that we should earnestly try to satisfy the need of our partner.

II. The Way of Helpfulness for the Single Life

Now, I want to move on, and I want to talk not only about safe sex, or the way of happiness for the married life, but I want to talk to you a little bit more about the way of helpfulness for the single life. It's very interesting. You say, "Pastor, I'm not married, and you said this is only for those who are married. What about me? What about the single life?" Let's see what God's Word has to say about the single life.

A. It Is a Good Life

First of all, I want to say this about the single life: it is a good life—a good life. Look in verse 1 again: "*Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman*" (1 Corinthians 7:1). It doesn't say, "It's best," just says, "It's good. It's okay." You don't have to be married, and you're not losing some super happiness if you stay single. There is a bona fide single life, and it's time we learn that. "*[It's] good for a man not to touch a woman*" (1 Corinthians 7:1). And, I think some of us who are married need to stop looking down our noses at people who have settled for the single status. I'll tell you, there are a lot of things worse than not being married, and number one is being married to the wrong person. One man said, "For 25 years, my wife and I lived in perfect bliss." Well, what happened then? "Well, we got married. That ruined it."

B. It Is a Gifted Life

Now listen, it is a good life—verse 1 (1 Corinthians 7:1). But, it is a gifted life—verse 6: Paul says, "*But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself*" (1 Corinthians 7:6–7). Paul, when he wrote this, was

unmarried. He had been married, I believe, but he was now unmarried. I think he was a widower. *“I speak this by permission, not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that [manner]”* (1 Corinthians 7:6–7).

That is, some people are gifted to be single. There are definite advantages to being single. Now, when Paul says, *“I [write] this by permission”* (1 Corinthians 7:6), what he’s literally saying is, “I’m writing in a way of a concession. I’m giving you permission. You don’t have to get married.” Paul is not beating the drum for the single life. He’s just simply saying, “If you don’t want to get married, that’s all right.” He is saying that you’re not going to be how ever more spiritual if you stay single. What Paul is saying is that there are some people who are called and some people who are spiritually gifted to serve God as single people, and that’s the context that he’s writing about here.

Look in chapter 7, verse 26: he’s talking to the single, and he said, *“I suppose therefore that this is good for the present distress, I say, that it is good for a man [to] so...be”* (1 Corinthians 7:26). To so be what? Single. Why? Because of “the present distress.” Then, look, if you will, in verse 29 and following: *“But this I say, brethren, the time is short”—they were in a state of emergency—“it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away. But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord: But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife”* (1 Corinthians 7:29–33).

When you get married, folks, you take on a load of obligation. A person, for example, might be called of God in an emergency to serve God as a missionary in a particular mission field where it calls for a single person. He may want to be an itinerant person, to travel a lot, and God says, “For you, it’s best that you stay single.” But, if that is God’s plan for you, God will give you the gift of celibacy. Now, if God doesn’t give you that gift, and if God doesn’t give you that calling, you should assume that He wants you married. But, if God gives you that gift and God gives you that calling, then thank God for it; but remember, it is a good life; it is a gifted life.

C. It Must Be a Guarded Life

But, it must be a guarded life. Now look, if you will, in verse 8 and 9 of this same chapter: he says, *“I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I”*—it’s good; it’s fine. But now, watch verse 9. Every single person, you listen to this—*“But if they cannot contain”*—that is, “if they cannot control

themselves sexually”—*“let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn”* (1 Corinthians 7:8–9). Now, he’s not talking about burning in Hell here; he’s talking about burning with the fires of lust—to burn with desire. Now, if you find these flames of passion in your heart—you find that desire, that hunger for a wife, that hunger for that physical relationship—you must not, you dare not, come together sexually without being married. God says, “If you can’t control yourself, marry!” But, there is absolutely no way under God’s sun that you’re to be sexually active and please God without being married. You understand that?

D. It Will Be a Godly Life

Dear friend, we need to be so clear about this matter. The single life is a good life. It is a gifted life. It is to be a guarded life, and, therefore, it will be a godly life. Look in chapter 7 and verse 32 again: *“But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 7:32). Thank God for those who remain single, that they can please the Lord. God gifts them, calls them, to this special life.

III. The Way of Holiness for Every Life

Now, I want you to think not only, therefore, about way of happiness for the married person, and the way of helpfulness for the single person, but I want you to think of the way of holiness every person, married or single. Now, let’s back up before chapter 7, and look with me in chapter 6 again; and see what the Apostle Paul is talking about. Look with me in 1 Corinthians 6 and verse 9: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?”*—now, if you are living in sexual immorality, I want you to listen to me right now—*“Know ye not”*—don’t you know that—*“the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate”*—that means “perverts, Sodomites”—*“nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God”*—now, it doesn’t mean if you’ve done any thing of these things that you can’t go to Heaven, but notice verse 11—*“And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus [Christ], and by the Spirit of our God”* (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Thank God for that! I don’t care how terrible your sexual sin may have been. Thank God for a God who can cleanse you, wash you, justify you, and sanctify you in His sight. But, I’m going to tell you something: if immorality is your lifestyle, if you’re practicing premarital promiscuity or post-marital infidelity and God doesn’t lay the rod on you, I wouldn’t give a half a hallelujah for your hope of Heaven; you’re going to Hell. You say, “Oh, Brother Rogers, don’t say that!” Friend, God says it! God says, “Don’t be

deceived!” How the devil has told this generation... I don’t know how we get off with thinking we can wave our hands in the face of God and say, “God, I know You said, *‘Thou shall not commit adultery’* (Exodus 20:14), but I’m going to commit adultery anyway, and I’m going to Heaven. O God, I know You said, *‘Flee fornication’* (1 Corinthians 6:18), but I’m going to practice fornication, and I’m going to Heaven.” No, you’re not—no, you’re not.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked” (Galatians 6:7). Who are you? Who do you think you are that you’re going to break the laws of God? You’re not going to do it. You say, “Do you mean, Brother Rogers, if I’m saved and I’ve committed that sin, I lost my salvation?” No—no, dear friend. A Christian can slip and fall into temptation and fall into sin. I’ll you something: if he’s saved, the Holy Spirit will tear him up on the inside. He’ll repent. He’ll get right with God. The Bible says, “That which is born of God doth not habitually practice sin” (1 John 3:9).

When I was a youngster, I pastored a church down in Florida. I was pastoring a church when I was 19 years of age. I was pastoring down in the little town called Fellsmere. The chief occupation was, number one, sugar mill; number two, frog hunting; number three, moonshining—three big industries out there. And, I had a professional frogger in my church. He’d go out at nighttime and get frogs—made a good living out there in the swamps by the Everglades in that little sugar mill town. His name was Neil Shearer. He was a little man, about *that high*, tough as a hickory nut. He told me a story one time I shall never forget. He said it’s a true story. He said before he got saved, he was a poacher. He would poach alligators, and kill alligators, which was against the law, and skin them, and sell their hides. They would shine the headlight on those alligators and then go up in that airboat alongside the alligator—wouldn’t shoot him with a gun, because the game warden would hear. Every one of those poachers carried a great big heavy hammer in his airboat. And, he would idle that motor, that big prop on the back—airplane engine on that back of that airboat—he would idle that motor. He had that headlight on his head, right between his eyes, shining on that gator’s eyes. He said, “Pastor, we would come up alongside that gator and lean out, and with that hammer, we’d hit him right between the eyes, and stun him, and cut his throat. No sound for the game warden to hear.”

Neil said to me, “Preacher, one day I came alongside the biggest alligator I have ever seen in my life.” He said, “I knew I was going to have plenty of money in my pocket.” He said, “I idled the motor. I took my hammer,” and you’d have to know Neil; you’d have to see him—swarthy little guy, muscular. He said, “I took my hammer, and I swung with all of my might.” But, he said, “I missed his head, and the hammer went up; and when it did, it flipped me out of the boat, straddle that alligator.” Do you know what he said to me? He said, “Preacher, I got back in the boat without getting wet.” Now

friend, I want to tell you a Christian can slip and fall into sin. We all know that. But, you're going to fear sin like that man did that alligator. I mean, don't tell me—don't tell me—that you are habitually practicing sin and you expect to meet God in Heaven.

Listen to what God says now; listen to it: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind...shall inherit the kingdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 6:9–10). I'll tell you how fast you'll get to Heaven: you'll get there just as fast an idolater will. God puts it all in the same thing.

Now friend, I'm telling you there is the way of happiness for the married life; there is the way of helpfulness for the single life, but there must be the way of holiness for every life. That's what God says. “Well,” you say, “why did God say that? Why is God so hung up on us living chaste and pure lives?” I'll tell you why: because He loves you. *When God says, “Thou shall not,” He's saying, “Don't hurt yourself.” When God says, “Thou shalt,” He's saying “Help yourself to happiness.”* Let me give you eight reasons for keeping yourself morally pure.

A. Immorality Is Psychologically Harmful

Number one: Immorality is psychologically harmful—it is psychologically harmful. Francis J. Breslin, who is the former president of the American Psychiatric Association, said, “Premarital sexual relations resulting from the so-called ‘immorality’ have greatly increased the number of young people in mental hospitals.” You're not smarter than God. It's psychologically harmful.

B. Immorality Kills True Love

Second reason: Immorality kills true love. When you commit immorality with any person, there is a basic loss of self-respect. The more permissiveness prevails in any society, the more women are looked on as objects to be used, rather than people to be loved, and tenderness and real love disappear.

C. Immorality Endangers Future Marital Happiness

Third reason: Immorality, premarital sex, always endangers future marital happiness. It follows as night follows day: there is a loss of sensitivity. There is a loss of the true depth and beauty of love. Surveys have shown that those who were sexually pure when they went to the marriage altar have the highest opportunity and most likelihood to have a happy marriage. You can understand why. Suppose a boy says to a girl: “We're in love, and I love you so much, I just can't wait. I can't stand it.” And, he talks her into giving into his desires. And, later on, he has to go overseas for a business trip, or he's in the army, or he's away. She says, “I know him. He's the kind of guy who can't wait.” But, think about a man who loves a girl, and he respects her and keeps himself pure. You

see the trust that builds? Friend, you see, when people practice what the world calls “safe sex,” they cheat themselves, so many times, of their future happiness. I tell our young people, you eat your cake—you’ll have a crummy tomorrow. Friend, God has a wonderful plan for you. Sex is so bad outside of marriage because it’s so good inside marriage.

D. Immorality Destabilizes People

Reason number four: The most unstable people are those who practice what is called “free love,” which is a contradiction in terms because there is no such thing as free love. Love takes commitment. The less education a person has, the more his tendency to be impure; the more education, the less tendency. Surveys have shown it is not the stable, growing, self-reliant personality that dabbles in free sex. More often it is the person who is insecure, who’s anxious, and who is fearful.

E. Immorality Endangers Society

Number five: Immorality is one of the greatest dangers to any society. It was the sin that led to the downfall of Greece, and Rome, and also of Egypt, Babylon, and other societies. Gibbons, when he wrote of the fall of the Roman Empire, listed that in his first of five reasons. Immorality is the enemy of the home, and the enemy of the home is the enemy of the nation. I’ve been absolutely amazed at surveys that I’ve read in the newspaper where people have been asked, “Does it make any difference to you whether a presidential candidate is faithful to his wife or not? Would you vote for a man...? It wouldn’t make a difference to me.” Well, it makes a difference to me. I want to tell you, friend, when a man goes to the marriage altar, and he takes a solemn vow and breaks that vow, unless he repents of it with every inch and ounce of his heart, I can’t trust him—I can’t trust him. I don’t see how anybody could trust him. Put it down big; put it down straight; put it down plain: people who treat sex lightly will treat other people lightly. People who treat sex lightly will treat other people lightly. Immorality is the enemy of the home, society, the nation.

F. Immorality Brings the Danger of Conception

Number six: There is always the danger of conception. We hear people talk about illegitimate babies: “illegitimate babies, illegitimate babies.” My friend, *there are no illegitimate children, but there are plenty of illegitimate parents.* That little baby didn’t ask to be born. And, every baby has the right—an unborn child has a right—to come to birth and maturity. But, they also have a right to be born into a home where husband and wife are committed one to another.

G. Immorality Brings the Danger of Disease

Number seven: There is the danger of disease, and it’s a very real danger. Our high-

powered drugs are failing us, and it is not just AIDS that we're facing. All kinds of numbing, horrible, vile, filthy disease are eating away... We're seeing a modern epidemic. *"Be not deceived; God is not mocked...[whatever] a man [sows], that shall he also reap"* (Galatians 6:7).

H. Immorality Is Denounced by the Word of God

Number eight: There is the clear, plain teaching of the Word of God, so you don't need the other seven reasons. You've just got God's Word! God's Word says, *"Thou shalt not commit adultery"* (Exodus 20:14). God's holy, inerrant, infallible Word says, *"Flee fornication"* (1 Corinthians 6:18). Hey, folks, you're not smarter than God. **You get an automobile—it has an instruction manual. It says, "Put oil in the crankcase." You say, "Well, I'm going to put molasses in mine." Well, help yourself, and they'll tow you in. God knows more about this than you know.**

Accept by faith that God loves you, friend. God's laws are for your welfare. But, I want to tell you, dear friend, not only are God's laws for your welfare; if you break God's laws, God's going to judge you. Law without penalty is only advice, and God's not giving advice.

These kids are talking about "going all the way": "Oh, we went all the way." They don't know what they're talking about. They haven't gone all the way yet. She gets pregnant. You have to go tell her dad that you're going to have to marry her. You'll have to face what he says to you—you've gone a little further, but you haven't gone all the way. You say, "I won't tell her dad. We'll get an abortion. We won't have this baby." Hey, folks, that's where you're wrong. You've already got the baby; it just hasn't been born yet. These people say, "Are you going to have that baby?" You've got that baby. What do you mean, "Are you going to have it?" The question is, "Are you going to kill it?" not, "Are you going to have it?" You've got the baby. And so, when you go to that abortitorium and kill a baby, you've gone a little further, but you haven't gone all the way. When you have a blood test and a disease comes in your body, and they say there's nothing they can do for you, you've gone a little further, but you haven't gone all the way. You haven't gone all the way 'till you stand before God; then, you've gone all the way. You see, kids just don't understand what they're talking about when they say, "We're going all the way."

Conclusion

Safe sex: get married; find a good wife; love her; be loyal to her. I'm so glad I went to the marriage altar a virgin and married a virgin. I wouldn't take anything from my Christian home. I'm not trying to put any body under a guilt trip, because the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses, and God forgives. But, I'm telling you, it's time that we parents,

and pastors, and people held up a standard and say, “This is right. This is what God says, and it is good.” There’s a way of happiness for the married life. There’s the way of helpfulness for the single life, but there’s to be the way of holiness for every life. That, my friend, is safe sex.

Six Positive Principles for Proper Practice

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 27, 1977

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Principle of Expediency
- II. The Principle of Enslavement
- III. The Principle of Example
- IV. The Principle of Edification
- V. The Principle of Exaltation
- VI. The Principle of Evangelism

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles, please, and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 6? We're preaching through 1 Corinthians, and not every verse, but simply some of the more important factors of the book. And today, we are in chapter 6.

Now we're facing a New Year, and we trust that this New Year will be the very best ever. And some of us have made some resolutions. The problem with too many resolutions is "they go in one year and out the other." And we need to carry them out. Somebody said that New Year's resolutions are like babies crying in church: They need to be carried out. And sometimes, it's hard for us to carry out the resolution that we have made.

But isn't it great, and isn't it grand, and isn't glorious that our God is the God of the new start.

He came to my desk with quivering lips,
The lesson was done.
Dear teacher, he said, I want a new leaf,
I've spoiled this one.
And for the old leaf stained and blotted,
I gave him a new one all unspotted;
And into his sad eyes smiled.
Do better now, my child.

I came to the throne with a quivering soul,
The old year was done.
Dear Father, I said, Have you a new leaf?
I have spoiled this one.
For the old leaf stained and blotted,
He gave me a new one all unspotted;
And into my sad heart smiled.
Do better now my child (Wheeler, Kathleen).

And we want to do better. We've got a new year, and we, every one of us, I believe, want it to be the very best year it can be for His glory and for our good. But in order to do better, we need to know how to do better. And so I want us to think, this morning, on this subject: "Six Positive Principles for Proper Practice." That's hard to say: "Six Positive Principles for Proper Practice." That is, six principles that will teach us how to decide between right and wrong.

Now you know that's not as easy as it may sound. Sometimes, it's easy to decide between right and wrong, because we have the Ten Commandments, and the Ten Commandments do not change. Men and women come and go, but the Ten Commandments are here for every age. And men and women are broken, trying to break the Ten Commandments, but we thank God that they are here.

However, there are many questions about right and wrong that are not covered, specifically, by the Ten Commandments. You see, the Bible is not a rulebook. The Bible is a guidebook. The Bible is not a book of minute laws; the Bible is, rather, a book of great principles. And you ought to be glad. You see, God doesn't write everything in the Bible that we need to... Well, He writes everything we need to know, but He doesn't write it in a way that, sometimes, we'd like to have it.

For example, God doesn't say in the Bible, "Thou shalt not smoke pot," or God does not say in the Bible, "Thou shalt not drive through a school zone at 110 miles an hour," but God does put certain principles in the Bible. And the principles are what we're talking about. You see, if God were to make the Bible of minute laws rather than great principles, it'd take a boxcar to carry it around—probably take a railroad train.

And besides that, the principles that would be in it that would be applicable to us would not be applicable to Paul. Can you imagine somebody in Corinth reading and saying, "God says, 'Thou shalt not attend X-rated movies,'" and he'd say, "What's that?" Well, you see, it wouldn't make sense to them. And another thing—if God simply made the Bible a rulebook rather than a guidebook, you know, there are folks who can always find loopholes in laws, but you can't find loopholes in God's great principles. So let's notice what these six positive principles for proper practice are that are recorded in the

book of 1 Corinthians.

I. The Principle of Expediency

All right, first of all, 1 Corinthians chapter 6, and verse 12. Here's the first of these principles: "*All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient*" (1 Corinthians 6:12). All right. Now the first principle of proper practice is the principle of expediency. Paul says: "*All things are lawful*"—that is, no longer are we under the Mosaic Law—"*but all things are not expedient*" (1 Corinthians 6:12). Now what does that word *expedient* mean? Well, when you think of *expedient*, you think of travel; an expedition is a journey somewhere.

Now what Paul is saying, when he says, "*all things are not expedient,*" is that not all things help me on my way (1 Corinthians 6:12). Now ladies and gentlemen, a Christian is somebody who's going somewhere. A Christian is somebody with a goal, a purpose in mind. He's not just drawing his breath and drawing his salary, eating to live and living to eat. He has a purpose; he has a goal in his life. And if you don't have one, you ought to get one, because you won't be worth much in this year, or any year, unless you are goal-oriented.

I heard of a man, who went to some farms, and he noticed on every barn, on every tree everywhere, there was a bull's eye-type target, and right in the center was a mark right dead eye in the center of the bull's eye. He said, "Well, I don't know who lives around here, but, evidently, the world's best marksman. I'm going to look him up and talk with him." He asked around, and they directed him to the town moron, and found out this was the man who'd been doing all of the shooting. He said, "I don't understand it. How do you do it? How do you hit the bull's-eye every time?" He said, "Well, I do it differently than other people." He said, "You see, I shoot first and then draw the target, later." And then, he explained it. He said, "I aim at nothing, and I hit it."

I will guarantee you that you will hit it every time. But you are not to be aiming at nothing. You're to be aiming at something; you're to have some goals; and you're to have some plans. And these goals are to be God-directed, Holy Spirit-given goals. And everything you do in word or deed—every action this year—you ought to ask yourself, "Is it expedient?" That is, does it help me toward my goal? You see, is it expedient? Does it help me, or does it hinder me?

Now there's nothing wrong with a hundred-pound barbell, but, if I've got it on my shoulder when I'm running a hundred-yard dash, I'd better throw it away, right? You see, there's nothing wrong with it, as such; there's nothing wrong with a barbell. But it's not expedient to carry one on your shoulder, if you're running a hundred-yard dash. And some of the things in your life are wrong, simply because they are a waste of time—that's all. They are a drag anchor that keeps you from arriving in God's appointed

harbor. So the first test—the first principle for proper practice—is this: expediency. And the question you should ask, before you do this or that, is this: Is it expedient?

II. The Principle of Enslavement

All right, number two: There is the principle of enslavement. Look in chapter 6, and verse 12, again; Paul says: *“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any”* (1 Corinthians 6:12). That is, I am not going to be enslaved by anything.

You see, Jesus Christ not only gives us goals, but Jesus Christ came to set us free. We’re to be free. And the Bible says: *“If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed”* (John 8:36). Those who talk the most about freedom are those who have the least of it. It seems to me, in this day and this age, people are talking about free speech, free sex, free love, and all of that, and they themselves—are the slaves of sin.

Now they would deny that if I were to say that to them. They’d say, “I do what I want to do.” That’s the reason why he’s a slave, you see. Jesus Christ sets us free not to do what we want to do, but to do what we ought to do, you see. He is free to do what he wants, but he’s not free to do what he ought. He is free to sin, but he’s not free not to sin. Do you understand what I’m saying? It is only in Jesus Christ that we become free not to sin. It is only in Jesus Christ that we become free to do what we ought, rather than what we want. It is Jesus Christ who gives us that pure liberty. And we are not to be enslaved by anybody or anything, and yet, many Christians, who have been set free by the Lord Jesus Christ, can again become entangled, if they fail to abide by it. There are many Christians who are free theoretically, but they are not free practically.

There’s an old story I heard. During a war and a certain battle, one of the soldiers called to his commander and said, “I have taken a prisoner.” And the commander said, “Wonderful, bring him with you.” And the soldier said, “Well, he won’t come.” And so the commander said, “Well, leave him, and you come on.” He said, “He won’t let me go.” Now you wonder who has taken who. There are a lot of Christians who are talking about victory in the Lord Jesus Christ, but they themselves seem to be enslaved.

III. The Principle of Example

You want to know whether a thing is right or wrong? You may ask yourself this question: “Will this thing enslave me?” You’d be surprised what some people in this congregation may be enslaved by. Some say, “I can take a drink, and it doesn’t hurt me.” Friend, that’s a mighty selfish way of looking at it. Did you know that? May I say that again? You say, “I can take a drink and it doesn’t hurt me.” If that’s all you’re thinking about, you had better read chapter 8, verse 1: *“love edifies”* (1 Corinthians 8:1). And if what you do may cause somebody else to stumble, then what you do is wrong, wrong, wrong.

Moderation is not the cure to the liquor problem; it is the cause of it. It is the moderate drinker who can drink and hold his liquor that encourages the one who cannot drink and hold his liquor to drink. And that's the reason we're in the mess that we're in, because the magazine ads always show the man of distinction, rather than showing the drunk in the gutter.

Now go back to Romans chapter 14, for a moment; just keep one finger there in 1 Corinthians. There's been a lot in the newspaper about social drinking. I'm warming up a sermon on it, and you'll just get the front end of it, right now.

All right now, look in Romans chapter 14. Look in verse 13. It's not up to us to go around judging other people who may drink. It's not up to us to go around judging other people who may smoke. It's not up to us to go around judging other people who watch the wrong kind of films. Chapter 14, verse 13: *"Let us not, therefore, judge one another any more"*—oh, but it's not finished yet, watch it—*"but judge this, rather: that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way"* (Romans 14:13).

As Christians, it's not our job to go around judging other people; it's our job to judge ourselves, and to see to it that we, as Christians, do nothing that would cause anybody else to stumble. And so therefore, continue to read in Romans 14, verse 21; just put a big star by it: *"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 it? The question is not "Would it hurt you?" The question is "Will it hurt somebody else? Will it cause somebody else to stumble?" If it will, then the principle is you leave it alone. No man lives unto himself; no man dies unto himself. And the question that everybody must ask is not only "Will it hurt me?"

Some of you older teenagers—you are addicted to rock music, and you say, "Well, I love Jesus." And yet, you have in your family a little brother or sister, and all day long they're listening to the records of yours. You say, "It doesn't hurt me." I wonder what you may be doing to your brother or sister. I wonder what kind of an influence you may be having on your little brother or your little sister by this so-called liberty of yours in the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is time that Christians stop thinking simply of themselves and start thinking of each other. And you may come to me with a big argument, and you say, "Well, I don't see anything wrong with this; I don't see anything wrong with that." Yeah, you're pretty smart: *"Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifies"* (1 Corinthians 8:1). Now had you rather be smart or loving? You see, the question that we need to ask before we do anything is "What about my example? Would it wound somebody else's conscience? Would it cause somebody else to sin? Would it drag somebody else down?" If it would, for their sake then, I'd leave it alone.

First of all, expediency: Will it help me on my way? Secondly, enslavement: Does it

enslave me? Thirdly, example: I can get by with it, but would it cause somebody else to be hurt? Would it cause somebody else to stumble?

IV. The Principle of Edification

All right, the next principle—principle number four: the principle of edification. Look in chapter 10, and verse 23. Paul repeats again: “*All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient*”—we’ve dealt with that. Now he gives another reason—“*all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not*” (1 Corinthians 10:23). The test of edification.

What does it mean *to edify*? *To edify* means “to build up.” An edifice is a building. You see, by your life, you’re either building or tearing down. Everything that you do as a Christian should have a positive influence, or it will have a negative influence. If your word is not a positive word that encourages, it will be an idle word that discourages. Every conversation, every friendship, every joke, every television program, every friendship, should pass this test: Does it edify me? Am I a better person? Am I a stronger person for having done this? Are they better people? Are they stronger people for having done this?

You see, there’s nothing wrong with entertainment; there’s nothing wrong with recreation. We’ve got some sourpusses around that are so negative that if they ever get into Heaven, they’ll back into Heaven. They think that anytime God sees anybody having fun, He moves in to break up the game.

As I told my class, this morning, they think of God as a cosmic killjoy, but God is a good God, and God wants you to have plain, old fun. And *if you’re a blue-nosed, black-robed Puritan, who believes it’s wrong to have fun, I’m sorry for you, because I’m having a glorious time going to Heaven, and a lot of fun.* There’s nothing wrong with fun; there’s nothing wrong with recreation. But you ought to ask yourself this question: Does this recreation—does this entertainment—edify?

You put a test to your entertainment. Do you know, after you’ve had your entertainment, it ought to refresh you; it ought to relax you; and it ought to restore you. You ought to say, “Boy, I feel like going to work now; boy, I’m happy in the Lord. Where’s that Bible? Let me get at it.” You see? But if it just kind of leaves you with a blue feeling and a dark brown taste in your mouth, and you just kind of feel defeated, and you watch some old story, and you say, “Oh, man, I feel depressed after watching that,” it just didn’t edify. You see, a Christian is to be somebody who edifies himself and who edifies someone else. That’s the reason we call it *recreation*.

Now I know I’ve got some folks—some of them are edifiers, and some of them are wreckers. I’ve got friends, boy, when I’m around them, it’s like a breath of fresh air; they just make me feel so good. I can think of several people. Boy, I just can’t be around them long before I just want to say, “Praise the Lord! Hallelujah!” There’s just something

about them. I've got other friends—they look like an accident going somewhere to happen. I mean, they're like that guy who's got that little cloud over his head everywhere he goes. They're like a drink of water to a drowning man. They're just gloom spreaders and depressive fault-finding people, who do not encourage, who don't edify, and who don't build up. I want to be the kind of a person, who, when somebody is around me and leaves me, they love Jesus just a little more. I want to do the kind of things that will make me a stronger person, a better person. All things don't edify.

Now you can argue long and loud that it may be right or it may be wrong, or, "I don't see any harm in this; I don't see any harm in that." But ask this question: Has it built me up? Has it edified me? If it edifies—fine. All things don't edify; all things may be lawful. You may come along like a Philadelphia lawyer, and back me into a corner, and say, "There's nothing wrong with this." I just want to know: Does it make you a better person? Does it build you up? Are you stronger in the Lord? If so, praise the Lord! Have at it!

V. The Principle of Exaltation

All right now, the next principle—chapter 10, verse 31: "*Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31). The next principle is the principle of exaltation. Does it exalt the Lord? Does it glorify the Lord? If it glorifies Him, if it exalts Him, you can do it. If it doesn't, you have no business doing it. Isn't that plain? Isn't that simple? Would you do it if Jesus were with you? Well, folks, He is.

You know, aren't you glad we don't live in the day and the age, boys and girls, where, when you went on a date, a chaperone went with you? Some dear lady with a face like a hatchet would sit right between you. They called her a chaperone. Well, I want to remind you, if you're saved, you still have a chaperone: His name is the Holy Spirit. And everywhere you go, He goes. You don't say to the Holy Spirit, "Now Holy Spirit, I'm going in here; You'll have to stay outside." You know, a little boy goes to school, he says, "Fido, you stay out here; I'll pick you up on the way back out. A little dog can't come in the school." Can you imagine how the Holy Spirit of God must be grieved at some places some Christians go? Can you imagine how the dear Holy Spirit of God must be grieved at some things some Christians do, because those things dishonor the name of Jesus? One of the tests—one of the principles—that I can ask is "Does it exalt Jesus?"

If Jesus were standing here, in His literal presence, with His literal eyes, and flesh, and blood, looking at me, would I do it? Can I say, "Jesus, I do this in Your name for Your glory, and give You the thanks?" Now if you can't, then, according to this verse, you ought not to do it. Look at it again. This is not just talking about the so-called

churchy things; it's talking about sitting at dinner: *"Whether, therefore, ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God"* (1 Corinthians 10:31). I haven't got any business doing anything I can't do to the glory of God.

We're not our own; we are bought with a price. Therefore, we are to glorify God in our body and in our spirit. In this New Year, you have not two goals, not three goals, but one goal: It is the glory of God. That: nothing more, nothing else, nothing but the glory of God. You're bought with a price. And if it does not exalt Him, you have no right whatsoever to participate in anything that does not glorify Him.

You may call yourself a Christian. There's an old story that's come down through history about Alexander the Great, the great general who conquered the world at 33 and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer. It is said that in Alexander's army there was a sneak thief. And according to history, if there was anything that Alexander the Great hated, it was a thief, a sneak thief. Finally, they ferreted the man out. He was reported to the general. The general called him in, and before the general remonstrated with him, the general asked him this question: He said, "What is your name, soldier?" And the soldier said, "Sir, my name is the same as your name; by coincidence, my name, too, is Alexander." And when Alexander heard that, he stood to his feet, looked him in the eye, and said, "Soldier, you had better change your conduct or change your name."

I'm sure that Jesus Christ has every right to say that to some who are here, today, who call themselves Christians. It is the name of Jesus Christ that is being dishonored—not your family name, and not Bellevue's name. It is the name of your Sovereign—the name of your Savior—that is being dishonored. And the Bible says, a principle of proper performance is this: Does it glorify God? (1 Corinthians 10:31). This is the test of exaltation, the principle of exaltation.

VI. The Principle of Evangelism

The final principle: the principle of evangelism. Look at chapter 10 again, in verse 32: *"Give no offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Greeks, nor to the church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved"* (1 Corinthians 10:32–33). Now what does that mean? Paul said, "I don't want to do anything that would offend anybody—that would keep them from coming to Jesus Christ." And one of the great questions that I must ask about anything I do is "Would it hinder my witness for Jesus Christ to them?" If it would, I have no right to do it.

You see, I cannot go into a Jewish synagogue, or into a Jewish temple, and use bad manners, and be offensive, because, according to my Lord, that would be wrong for me to do. I can't go out here, to the pagan world, and be rude and uncouth to the Gentile

world, because, according to my Lord, that would be wrong. Did you know that a Christian should be a gentleman? Did you know that? Did you know, young ladies, that you ought to so dress that no one will think you're a Christian by the way you dress, but no one will be surprised that you are, when they find out? Amen? You don't go around with a black robe on; you're to be fresh and pretty, feminine and sweet. But you're to be modest. You young men are to have manners; you are not to be offensive. You are to so live, and so act, and so talk, and so conduct yourselves that it will open the door for you to witness to Jesus Christ. That's what Paul says: "Don't offend people" (1 Corinthians 10:32–33).

What a fine principle that would be for us, in this coming year, that we would so live that we would not be ashamed to witness for Jesus Christ, after we've lived before certain people! Some of you cannot witness on the job, because you have been so cranky. You've been so offensive. Some of you are worrywarts, and you worry, worry, worry, worry, and then you go to witness. What do you think that sounds like? You worry all the time, and then you tell them to trust Him. You tell a dirty joke, then. Do you think you can turn around and witness of the pure Jesus? You gossip about somebody else, and then, you think you can turn around and tell about His love for people? No. You see, a Christian is to so live that the way he has lived always leaves the door open for him to witness.

We're the only Bible the careless world will read. We're the sinner's gospel; we are the scoffer's creed; and we are the Lord's last message given in deed and word. What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred? They're looking at us, and we're to so live.

The principle of evangelism: that we may be able to witness to Jesus Christ and for Jesus Christ. Look at it, again—1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 32: *"Give no offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Greeks, nor to the church of God; even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved"* (1 Corinthians 10:32–33). There are six powerful principles for proper practice. I hope that you'll carry them with you, into all of 1977.

Conclusion

Now having said that, and in conclusion, let me say this: Nobody can behave himself into the Kingdom of Heaven. And even though these are ways that we're supposed to live, if you think this is all there is, you're dead wrong. You must first believe the gospel before you can behave the gospel. And nobody is saved by being good; we're saved by trusting Christ. Salvation is not a reward for the righteous; it is a gift for the guilty. Salvation is not even a creed—believing the right thing; it is not even a code—doing the right thing; it is not a cause—serving the right thing; it is not a church—belonging to the

right thing; but it is Christ. *“He that hath the Son hath life”* (1 John 5:12). Christianity is a vital, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It is receiving Him. Not believing *about* Him, but believing Him, receiving Him, knowing Him, and inviting Him into your life, folks. He makes you a brand new creature; He gives you a new life.

Do you know the trouble with so many folks, this New Year? They turned over a new leaf, but they needed a new life. That life is in Jesus Christ. Now these are six positive principles for proper performance. But before any of these, you must receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Six Positive Principles for Proper Practice

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: February 12, 1989

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12

“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Principle of Expediency
- II. The Principle of Enslavement
- III. The Principle of Example
- IV. The Principle of Edification
- V. The Principle of Exaltation
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Conclusion

Introduction

I have an article that I clipped from The Commercial Appeal some time back, and the title of the article is this: “Strange Laws Reflect Man’s Quirky Nature.” It’s written by a man named Dick Hyman in New York. He says, “Out of the universe of laws, ordinances, and statutes ratified in the legislative chambers and all levels of government in the United States, more than 2,000 can safely be said to be archaic, ludicrous, and outmoded.” Then he goes on to say, “Many of the archaic laws were enacted during horse and buggy days in order to protect horses, cattle, and other livestock from the automobile, which was rapidly becoming the preferred mode of travel.” And then to cut through the article, I want to name some of the laws and just read some of the laws that have been enacted in the halls of legislatures across America. For example, in North Carolina, a small town named Dunn in North Carolina passed an ordinance forbidding anyone to snore at night so loud that it disturbed the neighbors. Then, again, we find out that one federal statute, repealed a few years ago, was this: that it is illegal for any postmaster in the United States to shoot ducks. That’s right. Here’s another law. Section 371, title 18, of the United States Annotated Code read this: “It is a violation of federal

law for a Pullman porter (that is, a porter on a railroad Pullman car) to brush off clothing of a passenger on a car traveling interstate.” Well, let me try another one. “It is a violation of federal law to make a false statement in order to obtain a free bath in Hot Springs, Arkansas.” Here’s one we can understand. “In Memphis, it was illegal to drive a car while asleep.” Here’s one: “A New York traffic law stated, ‘Two vehicles, which are passing each other in opposite directions, shall have the right of way.’” All right, here you go. In Bexley, Ohio, a town ordinance passed in 1918 prohibited residents from installing slot machines in their outhouses. That’s the law. In Nebraska, a husband was legally justified by law in physically removing his wife from the house in order to get her out for a ride for the benefit of her health. I suppose the most ludicrous of these laws that’s mentioned here is one voted by the legislature in Kansas, and it said in part, and I want you to listen to this, “When two trains approach each other at a crossing, both shall come to a full stop and neither shall start up until the other has gone.” It’s the law!

Now I only read that to show you how silly laws can be, how silly rules can be. So many times rules are written to help us in a time when we’re trying to stop something or keep something from happening that we don’t think should happen, and so we make a law, a rule. But, primarily, rules are for immature people. Rules are primarily for kids. The Bible is not primarily a rule book. The Bible is not a book of minute laws. The Bible is a book of great principles. It is not primarily a rule book; it is a guide book to teach us to live by principles. And you ought to be grateful that the Bible is more of a guide book than a rule book. You ought to be grateful that the Bible is a book primarily of principles and not minute laws, because after a while we would find some of the silly things that we found in these laws that I’ve just written. For example, if the Bible were a rule book, number one, it wouldn’t be big enough to carry around all the rules. You’d have to have a freight car to carry it around. Number two: If the Bible were a rule book rather than a guide book, a, it wouldn’t relate. For example, suppose in order to keep people from smoking marijuana we were to find a, ah, rule in the Bible that says, “Thou shalt not smoke pot.” Well, that might all right to this generation, but what about other generations who would have no idea what you were talking about? Or think of someone in the apostle Paul’s time who would pick up the Bible and say, read in there, “Thou shalt not attend an X-rated movie.” They would say, “What’s an X-rated movie?” It wouldn’t make sense to them, and so forth. You see, if it were minute laws, it wouldn’t apply in one generation. Or if it did, it wouldn’t apply in the other generation. Number three: Smart men can always find loopholes in laws. You can always find a loophole in a rule, but you can’t find a loophole in the character of Jesus Christ. And, you see, there are certain principles that God gives us; primarily this: that Jesus Christ is Lord, and we’re to live our lives. We’re to become like the Lord Jesus. Now I ask you this morning a question. I said, “Is it right for a Christian to play golf on Sunday?” Or I ask this

question: “Is it, is it, ah, all right for you attend Hollywood movies?” Or, “Is it all right for you to take a social drink?” Or, “Is it all right for you to go to a party where people are drinking if you don’t drink?” “Is it all right for you to carry around a make-believe cocktail at such a party?” “Is it all right for you to play cards?” “Is it all right for you to dance?” “Is it all right for you to go to a rock concert?” “Is it right or wrong for you to wear makeup?” “Is it right or wrong for you to do this or this or this or this or this or this?” Well, many of us have already formed opinions about most of those things that I mentioned. And some would say, “That’s all right, and that’s not right, and this is okay, and that’s not right.” And so we all have our little set of guides, and so forth, right? Right. All right. So, it, I am not going to tell you specifically about each of these areas. I have my opinions about each of these areas. But I want to do something tonight that I used to do with our Pastor’s Discovery Class. I want to give you some principles, what I call, “Six Positive Principles for Proper Practice.” These are principles that you can apply to anything. And if that particular thing that you want to do will pass through this grid of these principles, then I would suggest that it’s probably all right for you to do it. And these principles are all found in the book of 1 Corinthians. And we’re going to look in the 1 Corinthian materials because you’re going to find out that, ah, the Corinthians were Paul’s problem children. He said, “I couldn’t speak unto you as to mature Christians. I had to treat you like babes in Christ. I’ve had to deal with you like little children.” And remember that rules are for kids. Paul is trying to help them to grow up and to live by principles. And he gives them six positive principles for proper practice. That’s hard to say. Here they are.

I. The Principle of Expediency

Number one: The first principle – and if you’re going to write them down – is the principle of expediency, expediency. First Corinthians 6:12: “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient...” Now don’t ask yourself whether or not you can lawfully do something. The question has to go beyond that of lawfulness to expediency. Now what does the word *expedient* mean? Well, when you think of an expedition, what are you thinking of? An expedition is, is a, is a, a trip, a journey. You’re going somewhere. And so the word *expediency* has the idea of travel. It has the idea of bringing you to a desired goal. An expedient thing is something that moves you toward a goal. Now every Christian ought to have goals in his life. I have some very definite, specific goals in my life and then I have some general goals. For example, a general goal is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. I have some specific goals. But all of us ought to be goal-oriented. And so everything that we do, we have to ask ourselves, number one, do I have some goals that are from God? And does this thing that I want to do..... I don’t ask myself whether or not it is legal, whether or not it is lawful. I ask myself is it expedient? Does it help me to be what I ought to be for Jesus Christ, and does it get me

to the goal that Jesus Christ has set for me? I remember an old story about a man who came to a country town one time and he saw on every barn, every tree, every post there was an old-fashioned bulls-eye-type target, you know, with the concentric rings. And in the center, the dead center, of every target was a bullet hole. I mean, dead center. That man said, "I don't know who is here, but there's a tremendous marksman somewhere in this town. I want to meet him." And he finally did meet him and found out he was the town moron. He asked this man, he said, "How do you manage to hit the target right in the center every time?" He said, "Well," he said, "I'm different than other people." He said, "Other people paint the target and then shoot." He said, "I shoot and then paint the target." Now he said, ah, he said, "Here's what I do." He said, "I aim at nothing and I hit it every time." Now, folks, you'll do the same thing. If you don't have a goal, if you aim at nothing, that's exactly what you're going to accomplish. There must be a goal in your life. And so some things are wrong for you, not because they are intrinsically wrong. They may be lawful, but they are not expedient for you. They are a waste of time. For you, they are an anchor that keeps you out of God's appointed harbor. And it may be fine, it may be, ah, it may be a hobby, it may be a friendship, it may be an avocation, a vocation, whatever it is. Whatever it is, if it keeps you from attaining what God wants for you in your life, it's wrong, even if in itself it's harmless, right? It may be lawful, but is it expedient?

II. The Principle of Enslavement

Now if it doesn't bring you to your God-appointed goal, for you it's wrong. So the first question, the first principle, is the principle of expediency. All right. Now there's a second principle, and it's the principle of enslavement. Continue to read here in 1 Corinthians 6:12: "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any." That is, of anything. That is, I'm not going to be enslaved by something. I'm not going to let this thing have power and control in my life, even if it is innocuous, even if it is legal, even if it is lawful, even if it's all right. If I am becoming a slave to it, for me it is wrong. Jesus Christ came to set us free. Now an unsaved man is only free to do what he wants. He's not free to do what he ought. A Christian is free to do what he ought to do in the Lord Jesus Christ. And no one is truly free who's dragging his chains with him. Jesus came to make us free, and free indeed. So anything that enslaves you, right or wrong, is wrong if it enslaves you, other than Jesus Christ. You'd to be a slave to Jesus Christ. For example, you could be a slave to food. There's nothing with food. Food is lawful, obviously, but it's wrong to be a slave to food. How many of us truly are slaves to food? You know, right now I'm at least 10 lbs. overweight by my own choice. I've never eaten anything except that I chose to eat it. Think about it. You see, many times we don't

have, and I, I'm speaking to me sometimes, the discipline just simply to say no to something as harmless in the general sense as food. Food is legal, but we can't be enslaved by it. Some people ought to quit smoking cigarettes, not because it's going to give them lung cancer, which it may, but just simply because they become a slave to nicotine. Isn't that right? They're just enslaved by it. Have a little old cigarette about that big, a 6'2" man, "I just can't quit." He's enslaved by that little white slaver, that little cigarette. People are enslaved by television. People are enslaved by lust. People are enslaved by rock music. A number of kids today are literally enslaved by rock music. They're addicted to it. For that reason, even if the lyrics were all right, some of them ought to say, "That's wrong. It has become, it has become a fixation in my mind." Paul said, "I may be lu, lawful, but I'm not going to be brought under the power of it." There's the principle of enslavement. If anything becomes a compulsion in your life, for you it's probably wrong.

III. The Principle of Example

All right. Now here's the third thing. There's a third principle. It's the principle of example. Would you take your Bibles and turn now to 1 Corinthians 8 and look with me in verse 8. First Corinthians 8:8: "But food (some translations give it meat) but food commendeth us not toward God, or commendeth us not to God: for neither if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if any man see thee who hast knowledge sitting at the table in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ. Wherefore (and there ought to be a star or something in your Bible by this wherefore), Wherefore, if food make my brother to offend, I will eat no meat while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." The third principle is the principle of example. I have to ask myself this question: Am I setting a wrong example? Might I cause somebody else to stumble? Verse 9: "Take heed lest this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak." There may be some things that you are at liberty to do, but you don't do them anyway because it might cause somebody else to stumble. The last question is not, will it hurt me? That's not the last question. The last question will, ah, that doesn't settle it. That's only the selfish way of looking at it. You have to ask yourself this question: Could it hurt somebody else? Now let me give you the historical situation and the background for 1 Corinthians 8. Back in this time, Christians, ah, and Jewish worshippers rather, ah, in the old temple sacrifices would offer sacrifices, ah, to the Lord, but they weren't the only ones who would offer animal

sacrifices. The pagans would also offer animal sacrifices. And many times the pagans would bring the very best of the animals, the sheep, and the goats, and the cattle, and they would offer them upon pagan altars to their demon gods. After they'd made these blood sacrifices, they would take that fresh, grade A meat and they would bring it down to the meat market and put it in the meat market. Now you could go down there and buy sirloin (I'm just using an example now), buy sirloin for \$.50 a pound, where you might pay, ah, ah, several dollars a pound for it somewhere else. And so, ah, the Christians were saying, "Well, that's the place to buy your meat. Go down there to the pagan meat market and buy your meat at a discount price. It's been offered to idols, but that's all right. There's not a thing in the world wrong with the meat. And so that's where we get our meat." Other people said, "I cannot believe that you would do such a thing. That's terrible. That's horrible. Do you mean to tell me to save a few dollars you would eat meat that had been offered to a demon god? You would so betray the Lord Jesus Christ for a few measly dollars and eat that? Why, I wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole." The other person would say, "Now, wait a minute, wait a minute. I don't believe in that demon god. I don't worship that demon god. There's not a bit of difference in that meat that I'm eating and the meat that you're eating, except I pay less for it. And, after all, God wants us to be good stewards of our money. And if I get it for less price, then I've got more money to put in reaching upward so we can get the new building built." All right. I want to ask you a question. Which one was right and which one was wrong? You could get on either side of the fence, couldn't you, and argue that. There were some who said it's absolutely wrong; others said there's not a thing in the world wrong with it. Now the apostle Paul looked at that and he said, "Now, look. You might know that there's nothing wrong with it, but that's not the only question." Go back up to verse 8, ah, chapter 8:1 and, and get the context. "Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know (you underscore that), we know that we all have knowledge..." We can argue rationally. Nothing wrong with it. We all have knowledge. But watch this. "...Knowledge puffeth up, but love edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing as he ought to know." These people who swagger with their superior knowledge. But then he goes on to say, "But if any man love God, the same is known of him. As concerning therefore the eating of those things that are offered in sacrifice unto idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. For there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there are gods many, and lords many), but there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, be whom, by whom are all things, and we by him. However there is not in every man that knowledge..." Now do you get the situation? What Paul is saying is that our conduct is to be channeled like a river between two banks. On the one hand is knowledge; on the other hand is love. You've

got the Word of God to tell you what to do, but you've also got love to tell you what to do. There is, there is the, there is the, the bank of learning and the bank of love. The Bible must be consulted and my brother must be considered. If I just simply say, "Well, I know this is all right. It won't harm me," that's not the only question. I have to ask myself, could it cause somebody else to stumble who may think that this thing is wrong? The Bible says, "Don't let your good be evil spoken of." Put your bookmark there and turn with me, if you will, to Romans chapter 14 and let's look at another passage. Just turn left to Romans here. Romans chapter 14. You're right in the neighborhood. And look with me for an example here. Romans chapter 14, and I want to read in verse 13. "Let us not therefore judge one another any more..." On things that are doubtful, things that you could in an argument about, like meat offered to idols, it's not my responsibility, privilege, prerogative, or right to judge you, nor is it your right to judge me. "Let us not judge one another any more..." You want to judge? "...judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way." Don't judge your brother; judge yourself. And as you judge yourself, don't ask, "Will this hurt me?" but you ask yourself, "Could it cause somebody else to stumble?" Now I want to get a good illustration of that. So you're in John, ah, Romans 14. Skip on down to verse 21, and here's Paul's conclusion. "It is good neither to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor any thing by which thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." Now let's apply this to exam, to one of the examples. I've said, "Is it all right to take a social drink?" You might be able to say, you might say in your mind, "I believe in Bible times there was a wine that good people drank in Bible times." I think I could argue with you about that, and I think I could show there's a difference in the kind of wine that Jesus, ah, turned, ah, water into wine and what is sold today. I believe I.... As a matter of fact, I've got some tapes over there you could go listen to. But suppose you said in your mind, "I, I think that's, I think that's all right." And then you said, "And besides that, I'm not an alcoholic. I will never be an alcoholic. I just drink a little wine to relax me or I just have a beer when I come in from cutting the lawn. Not a thing in the world wrong with it. It doesn't hurt me." Does that end the discussion? No. You have to ask yourself this question: Could it cause somebody else to stumble, somebody else to fall? You see, out of every fifteen who begin to drink, two will become an alcoholic. And nobody ever starts to drink and become an alcoholic. Nobody says, "I'm going to be drunkard. Give me the first drink." No. He doesn't know. You don't you. Nobody knows. Ah, and, and, and three others will become problem drinkers. So one out of every three is going to have difficulty with it one way or another. Now suppose I, as the pastor of this church, decided it won't hurt me, that I can handle it? So I'm going to have a little beer in my refrigerator. I'm going to drink a little cocktail when I go out to eat. Now suppose your child says, "Mom, is it all right to drink?" You say, "No darling, I don't want you to touch it." Suppose your child

says, “But, mommy, the pastor drinks and he’s a good man. The pastor drinks and he loves Jesus. The pastor drinks and he and his wife are happy.” Isn’t that going to make it hard on that mother to tell her child not to drink? You know it would. And then suppose that child begins to drink and that child becomes a drunkard. Or suppose, on the other hand, if I drank and the child never became a drunkard, but suppose other people said, “That hypocrite. That hypocrite. He ought not to do that. He doesn’t really love God or he wouldn’t do that.” In any case, if I caused other people to stumble, would it be worth it for me to have that drink? No. That’s what the apostle Paul said, “No big deal.” He said, “If eating meat or drinking wine causes my brother to stumble or offend,” he said, “hey, folks, I won’t eat any. I won’t drink any.” Do you understand that? You see, the final question is not, “Will it hurt me?” but, “Will it hurt somebody else?” I personally am a tea-totaler. I don’t believe that moderation is the answer to the liquor problem. I believe it’s the cause of it. I believe if everybody who drank got skunk drunk, maybe we could do something about it. But it’s the man of distinction, the moderate drinker, who emboldens other people to drink many times that causes those people to stumble. Now, dear friend, you can go through all of the ramifications and the arguments for and against beverage alcohol, but I don’t know how a Christian can get around Romans 14:21: “It is good neither to eat meat, nor to drink wine, nor any thing by which thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.” So there’s the problem of example. I don’t just ask, “Can I eat this meat that’s been offered to idols?” I say, “Would it scandalize somebody else? Would it hurt somebody else? Would it cause them to fail?” Then if so, I’m not going to do it. There’s the principle of example.

IV. The Principle of Edification

Now here’s a, here’s a fourth principle, and it’s the principle of edification. Turn with me, if you will now – we’re back in 1 Corinthians where we started, and turn with me to 1 Corinthians 10:23, 1 Corinthians 10:23: “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” Now when we said when you think of a, of an expediency, you think of a trip. When you think of edification, you think of a building. A building is an edifice. And what Paul is saying is a thing may be lawful, but I have to ask myself this question: Not only will it bring me to my goal or keep me from getting to my goal, but I have to ask this question: Will it build me up? Will it make me strong? To edify is to build up. Anything I have to ask myself can I do, should I do, or should I not do, I have to ask myself this question: Does it build me up? The films that I watch, the programs that I participate in, the friendships that I have, the conversations that I carry on, the vacations that I, I, I take, will it pass the test of edification? Does it build me up? Does a rock concert make a young person a better person? Does it build him up? You ask yourself that question. You see, the Bible is not

against recreation. As a matter of fact, the Bible teaches recreation. We get our word *recreation* by putting two things together – re-creation. There’s a time when we need to be entertained. There’s a time when we need to be relaxed. Let me tell you what real entertainment is. Let me tell you what real recreation is. Does it pass this test: Does it refresh? Does it relax? Does it renew? Does it restore? Does it recreate? If it recreates, it is recreation. That is, it builds you up. It edifies you. But if it doesn’t build you up, if it pulls you down, then it doesn’t edify; it destroys. Have you ever done something that afterward you just felt less of a whole person, less happy, less wholesome, less holy? Then leave it alone. You can just simply ask yourself this question: Am I built up by this thing? Is it genuine relaxation, refreshment? It just popped in my head as I was saying this. Certainly not in my notes. But I can remember an occasion out in Colorado when I was with some friends on a drive up on Mount Evans in June, and it began to snow. I was with five other preachers. Four others preachers and myself. Five in the group. The most beautiful snow I believe I’ve ever seen. It was one of those that began to stick on the trees up there in the top of that great huge mountain, Mount Evans. We got into the most rollicking snow fight you’ve ever seen in your life. I mean, you talk about preachers who were mercilessly hitting each other side the bean with snowballs, it was that. Most of us at that time were from Florida and were just maniacal at the snow, anyway. Having a wonderful time. Then after a while, we came around the bend and there was a lodge. Went in there. And there were the red checkered tablecloths and the hot coffee and cocoa, and there was the laughter, the praise the Lord. One of the greatest days of my life. I, it, it, it put so much joy, so much relaxation, so much fun. I just felt so invigorated, so renewed after being with those men, seeing the beauty of God, laughing uproariously, hugging one another, wrestling with one another, just thinking about the good that we had in the Lord Jesus Christ. My dear friend, that’s recreation. That’s recreation. That’s what builds up. There are some things that you just kind of feel dirty after you’ve watched, dirty after you’ve done, dirty after you’ve listened to, pulled down, debilitated, made weaker, not made stronger. You might say, “It’s all right, it’s all right.” Paul says it may be legal, but does it edify? Does it build you up? Does it renew you, refresh you, restore you?” So there’s the, the principle of edification.

V. The Principle of Exaltation

Now the fifth principle is the principle of exaltation. Does it exalt the Lord Jesus? Look, if you will, in chapter 10, 1 Corinthians 10:31. Well, let’s go back to verse 30: “For if I by grace be a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks?” Now they were talking about, ah, whether or not again he could eat that which is offered to idols. And so he just comes to the bottom line. He says, “Well, I’m going to tell you what I’m going to do about it. Wherefore therefore, whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or

whatever you do, do all, A-L-L, to the glory of God.” I submit to you that’s one of the greatest texts in all of the Bible. “Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” Now can you do the thing that you’re questioning for the glory of God? Can you have that form of entertainment for the glory of God? Can you watch that episode for the glory of God? Some things you can. It may be something even silly. But if it causes you to be renewed, refreshed, relaxed, restored, maybe God wants you to do something silly. It doesn’t mean that you have to be standing around singing, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.” Can you go fishing for the glory of God? I would certainly think so. Could you go skiing for the glory of God? I would certainly think so. Could you do needlepoint for the glory of God? I would certainly think so. Could you plant a garden for the glory of God? I would certainly think so. Could you play baseball for the glory of God? I would certainly think so. All of those things would be legitimate, and many, many other things, thousands of things. But right away you’d have to ask yourself if you’re looking at some pornographic literature, you’d have to ask yourself, am I doing this for the glory of God? I mean, is the Lord Jesus Christ pleased with what I am doing? Or let me put it this way: Would you feel comfortable doing it if Jesus Christ were there in the flesh beside you? Hmm. Good question. Would you feel comfortable doing it? Would you think that He would smile and would He participate? It’s a good question. Well, you say, “No, Jesus was straight-laced.” Now, wait a minute. Jesus was the life of the party. Jesus went to parties. Jesus went to feasts. Jesus went to weddings. Jesus was not a religious recluse. He was the kind of a fellow that little children wanted to come and sit in His lap. But on the other hand, Jesus did not participate in that which did not somehow give God glory. See, whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, I want to make a confession. I believe I personally am a long way from fulfilling this verse. Personally, I’ve got so much room, I’ve got light years to travel before I come to that place where I could say, “Whatever I do, I do all to the glory of God.” But I’m going to tell you something else. That’s my goal. That’s my aim. That is my desire to exalt the Lord Jesus. We’re here to exalt Him. That’s why we live. We’re not our own. We are bought with a price. The principle of exaltation.

VI. The Principle of Evangelism

Now here’s the last principle of these six proper principles, positive principles. It’s the principle of evangelism, evangelism. Look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians 10:32 now. “Give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Greeks, nor to the church of God.” And let me just say while we’re in the neighborhood, if you want to understand the Bible, understand these three categories of persons. He’s talking about the Jews. Part of the Bible pertains to the Jews. The Greeks – that speaks of those who are not saved. And

the church of God. And rightly dividing the word, you have to understand the differentiation between those three groups. “But give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Greeks, nor to the church of God.” Why? Look in verse 33: “Even as I please all men in all things (watch it), not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many...” Why? “...that they might be saved.” I live a certain way. I do things and I don’t do other things in order that I might have a good witness. There are times, for example, when your neighbor might have built his fence a little too far on your piece of property. Now you could go over there and legally read him the riot act and tell him what a scoundrel he is and be legally right. But if you did it in such an attitude that you never win him to Jesus, what’s it worth? What’s it worth? A few inches of property, and so forth. What I’m trying to say is this: that you’re going to have to be careful that whatever you do, whatever you do that you don’t hurt your ability to win somebody to Jesus Christ. You listen to a dirty joke and then try to speak of the pure love of Jesus. You gossip and then try to tell the gospel of Jesus Christ. You worry and then tell your neighbor how they ought to trust Christ. You see, there are a lot of things that we do that are wrong just simply because they hurt our ability to witness for Jesus Christ. I told our people in our Pastor’s Discovery Class about one of our denominational workers in Nashville, Tennessee. This man was a member of a fine church in Nashville, and the man loved the Lord. He worked in our denominational headquarters. He took his shirts into a particular laundry and said, “I want these shirts done this particular way.” He had a way that he liked the collars starched. He had a way that he liked the cuff done, and so forth. It was something like he wanted heavy starch in the collar, but not any starch in the body of the shirt, or something like that. Everybody has their little peccadilloes, and so forth. When he came to pick up the shirts, the shirts weren’t done right. So this man very kindly said, “Look, that’s not what I wanted. Would you mind doing the shirts over?” They said, “No, that’s all right. We’ll do the shirts over.” When he got the shirts back again, they had done them wrong again. He sent them back again. The third time they were still wrong. Do you know what he did? He said, “Look, is that so difficult? Is that so hard? Am I asking something that is ridiculous? Can’t you get it right?” They said, “Well yes, sir. Yes, sir. We’ll get it right. We’re sorry.” He said, “Well, thank you,” and left. That night he went to visitation at his church. He was given a card for some people to call on. He looked at the name. The name on the card was the same as the name of the dry cleaners. He called somebody over. He said, “I want to ask you a question.” He said, “Are these the people who own a certain dry cleaners?” He said, “Yes.” He said, “They visited our church?” “Yes.” “You want me to call on them?” “Yes.” “Do you know them?” “Yes.” “May I ask you a question?” “All right.” “Do they know me?” “Yes.” “Do they know what I do, that I work for the Baptist denomination; I’m a member of this church?” “Yes, they do.” “May I ask you another question? What do they think of me?” He said, “You

want me to be honest?” He said, “Yeah, go ahead.” He said, “They think that the most important thing on this earth to you is how your shirts are done.” Hmm. I want somebody to think the most important thing on this earth to me is Jesus Christ, see. I mean, ah, ah, you can have your shirts done right. That’s all right. But I wonder how many souls we’re going to ruin our opportunity and our chance to witness to. Paul said, “Look, I’m not going to do it. It makes no difference to me. I am going to give no offence to the Jew, the Greek, or the church of God. I do it that people might be saved.”

Conclusion

Now, friend, if you’ll take those principles. They’re not minute laws. And don’t come to me afterward and say, “Is it all right to play golf on Sunday?” I have my opinion. I hope you’ll have yours. I’m not about to set myself up as a judge, jury, and executioner to you. But I am here as your pastor to tell you that there is to be reproduced in your life the beauty of the Lord Jesus Christ. And do you know what we’re to do as Christians? We’re to be very easy on everybody else and very hard on ourselves. Now most of us are just the opposite, right. Paul said, “Don’t judge one another, but judge this rather, that no man put an occasion, a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother’s way.” If somebody else doesn’t see what you see about something, fine. They may love God more than you do. Don’t go around judging them. But, my dear friend, you judge this rather, that you don’t cause anybody to stumble. And whatever you do, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Wouldn’t the world be a lot better if everybody lived that way? I’ll guarantee you it would. And that’s the standard we have here at Bellevue Baptist Church. There are certain things that we don’t sponsor, certain things that we don’t allow. Somebody may say, “I see nothing wrong with that,” and maybe you don’t, but we’re not going to give somebody an occasion to stumble. We’re not going to wound somebody’s conscience. We’re going to take the high road and at the same time not, try not to judge other people. Let’s bow in prayer. Father, we thank You for Your Word tonight. And it’s been very helpful to me personally to look at these wonderful principles. And I thank You, Lord, for such a wonderful book as the Bible that guides us and leads us in these matters. We love You and worship You and praise You. In Jesus’ wonderful name, amen.

Positive Principles for Proper Practice

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 24, 1993

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:12; 8:8–13; 10:23, 31–33

Outline

Introduction

- A. If the Bible Were a Book of Minute Rules and Laws, You'd Need a Freight Train to Carry It Around
- B. If the Bible Were a Book of Minute Rules and Laws, What Would Relate to One Age Would Not Relate to Another Age
- C. If the Bible Were a Book of Minute Rules and Laws, You Might Be Able to Find Loopholes in It
- I. The Principle of Expediency
- II. The Principle of Enslavement
- III. The Principle of Example
- IV. The Principle of Edification
- V. The Principle of Exaltation
- VI. The Principle of Evangelism

Conclusion

Introduction

We're speaking on this subject: "Six Positive Principles for Proper Practice." I want to give you today some principles that will help you to make the moral decisions of your life. Now, I want to say this—listen carefully: there are some great eternal standards of right and wrong that have been set by Almighty God, settled by the Word of God. No stutter, no stammer, no equivocation, no apology—God simply said, "This is right, and this is wrong." Men and women come and go, but the Ten Commandments are here to stay. And, men and women are still being broken trying to break them. God has given His Word. But, having said that, there are a lot of issues that are not settled by the Ten Commandments, per se. And, why is that? I'll tell you why: the Bible is not primarily a rulebook; the Bible is primarily a guidebook. The Bible is not so much a book of minute laws as the Bible is a book of great principles. And, I'm glad that it is a book of great principles, and I'll tell you three reasons before we ever get into the message.

A. If the Bible Were a Book of Minute Rules and Laws, You'd Need a Freight Train to Carry It Around

If the Bible were a book of minute rules and laws, you'd need a freight train to carry it around on. I mean, there would be so many issues and so many subjects that you'd have to look up that you could not carry your Bible as you carry it now (under your arm).

B. If the Bible Were a Book of Minute Rules and Laws, What Would Relate to One Age Would Not Relate to Another Age

I'll tell you something else—another reason I'm glad: if the Bible were a book of minute laws and rules, what would relate to one age would not relate to another age. As we've already said, can you imagine somebody in Corinth picking up the Word of God and reading, "Thou shalt not go to an R-rated movie"? Now, what would that mean to them? Or, "Thou shalt not drive recklessly in a school zone"—what would that mean? It wouldn't mean anything to them at all. But, you see, principles can apply to the first century, and principles can apply to the 20th Century.

C. If the Bible Were a Book of Minute Rules and Laws, You Might Be Able to Find Loopholes in It

I'll tell you another reason that I am glad that the Bible is not a book merely of rules, but principles: you can find loopholes in laws, but you can't find loopholes in principles. There's a difference. And, everybody's always looking for a loophole, aren't they?

Back in 1908, there was a football game between Carlisle and Harvard. Now, Paul Harvey told this interesting story in his very popular series, *The Rest of the Story*. Now, these were football rivals, and you know how important football is to this generation—just as important back in that generation. Now, the coach at Harvard was what we call a "purist." That is, he went by the rules; he lived by the fundamentals of the game. But, the coach at Carlisle—he was always looking for ways to bend the rules and get around the rules, and his claim to fame was what we call today "razzle-dazzle." In that day, we call it "wiff-waff," and that's Coach Warner. And, Coach Warner had just played Syracuse, and he stayed up all night reading the rulebook, trying to figure out how he could read the rulebook, play by the rules, and still, by wiff-waff, win the game. And, he beat Syracuse.

You know what he did? Before the game, he had all of the jerseys of his team altered. And, on every jersey, he had sewn a football made of cloth. Everybody had a football right there. So, the men got down on the line when the ball was hiked. And, every man stood up, and every man had a football. Nobody knew who to tackle, and Carlisle beat Syracuse. And, they complained. He said, "There's nothing in the rulebook against it." So, these two coaches—the coach at Harvard and the coach at Carlisle—met. Now, they were mortal enemies on the football field, but they respected one

another. And, they met the night before, and the coach at Harvard said to the coach at Carlisle, “You’re not going to use those jerseys again, are you?” “There’s nothing in the rulebook against it.” The coach at Harvard said, “All right.” So, when they met on the field of combat, they were meeting at Harvard, the home team. And, the home team always gets to supply and choose the balls. The coach at Harvard came out. All of his team was dressed in the same crimson red jerseys that they always wore. Out came Carlisle. There were the footballs all sewn on their jerseys, but when they reached in their bags and pulled out the footballs that Harvard had prepared, every football was crimson red. Harvard won the game.

I just tell you that story because to me it’s an interesting story of how you can manipulate rules. But, there’s a principle in football, and what is the principle in football? Play fair—play fair. Now, if they had used the principle, they would not have equivocated about these little rules that they have. Now, I want to say that to say this about living right: if you’re one of these people that just simply try to live by the rules but not by the principles, you’re always going to try to figure out a way to bend the rules, to do what you want to do.

Now, Paul was writing to some very immature people, the Corinthians. He said, “I had to treat you like little children, like immature babies,” because they were wanting to live by rules and not by principles. And now, the Apostle Paul is trying to give them some principles. Rules are for kids. *When you go away from your house, if you have little children, you say—and you think they’re old enough to stay at home, but you’re not quite certain—you give them a lot of rules: “don’t let anyone in the house. Don’t play with matches. Don’t do this, and don’t do that.”* You don’t tell that to your grown children, hopefully, because they’re old enough to live by certain principles. Principles are for those who are mature; rules are simply for children and for kids.

Now, let me give you six positive principles for proper practice. They’re all going to come right out of this Book of 1 Corinthians. Are you ready for them?

I. The Principle of Expediency

Principle number one: It is the principle that we want to call, from the Word of God, “the principle of expediency.” Look, if you will, in chapter 6 and verse 12: Paul says, *“All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient”* (1 Corinthians 6:12). Now, how do you make up your mind whether or not a thing is right or wrong for you? “Shall I do this thing, or shall I not do this thing? Can I practice this, or shall I not practice this?” Well, ask yourself this question—not, “Is it lawful?” but, “Is it expedient?”

You say, “Well, I don’t know what expedient means.” Well, when you think of expedient, what other word do you think of? You think of *expedition*. Expedition is a journey. You’re going somewhere if you’re on an expedition. And, what the word

expedient means is “something that brings you to your goal, something that brings you to your destination.” Every Christian ought to have some God-given goals. Every one of us ought to have a holy ambition in our lives. I have goals for my life. I believe they have been given by God, hammered out on the anvil of prayer, and these are goals for my life. Now, I can tell whether a thing is right or wrong for me, number one, by this: Does it bring me to my appointed goal, or does it hinder me? Is this activity an anchor that keeps me out of God’s harbor, or is it something that propels me toward my God-given goal? Now, number one: If you don’t have any God-given goals, then expediency makes no difference for you.

That eminent theologian and philosopher Yogi Berra said, “You have to be careful if you don’t know where you’re going because you might not get there.” You need to know where you’re going. God has laid His hand upon you. This was the great goal of the Apostle Paul, he said—“that I might lay hold of that for which God has laid hold of me.” (Philippians 3:12) Do you have a philosophy for your life? Do you have some God-given ambitions and goals? Do you? Then, for you, a lot of things will be settled. You won’t have to say, “This is right, or this is wrong, because of some rule.” You’ll say, “This is right, or this is wrong for me, because it may or may not bring me on my way. It is not expedient for me.” There are some things that I don’t do just simply because they don’t help me to reach my God-given goal. So, what’s the first principle? The principle of expediency.

II. The Principle of Enslavement

Here’s the second principle: the principle of enslavement. Look, if you will, in chapter 6, verse 12: “*All things are lawful...but [not] all things are...expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any*” (1 Corinthians 6:12). Now, to be “brought under the power” means “to be enslaved by anything.” You see, Jesus Christ came to set you free. And, the Bible says, “*If the Son*”—that is, the Son of God—“*shall make you free, [you will] be free indeed*” (John 8:36). But, anything other than Jesus Christ that enslaves you is wrong for you. You say, “Well, I’m not a Christian, but I’m not enslaved.” Oh, yes, you are. “He that serves sin,” the Bible says, “is the servant of sin” (John 8:34). The unsaved man is free to do what he wants, but he’s not free to do as he ought. And, he is free to choose, but he’s not free to choose the consequences of his choice. But, Jesus truly, by that perfect enslavement to His sovereignty, sets us free in every other area.

Now, are you a free person? Or, is there something that has enslaved you—pornography, lust, nicotine, caffeine, rock music, television, sports, appetite? Far more people are killed in America by overeating than they are by poison. You’re a slave. Many people are slaves to a little cigarette that big. Great big six foot 205-pound man—

“I just can’t quit.” That’s got him. I was reading about a person who had Buerger’s disease—that sometimes you have to amputate a limb. This individual had gone to see the doctor at Oschner Clinic, and the doctor said to this individual, “If you don’t quit smoking, we’re going to have to cut off one of your legs.” You know what he said? “Above the knee or below the knee?” That’s pathetic. But, how easy it is to be enslaved by anything! You say, “Well, I can quit any time I want to.” The only problem is you just don’t want to, do you? You’re enslaved, and you’re kidding yourself. “*All things are lawful [for] me, but all things are not expedient*”—that is, “they don’t bring me to my goal”—“*all things are lawful...but I will not be brought under the power of any*” (1 Corinthians 6:12). And, no man is fully free who drags his chain with him.

I heard of a man who was in the midst of a battle—a very furious battle—and he called out to his commander, and he said, “I’ve taken a prisoner.” The commander said, “That’s wonderful. Bring him with you.” He said, “Well, he won’t come.” “Well,” he said, “then you’d better come and lead him yourself.” He said, “He won’t let me go.” You wonder who has taken who.

In Jesus—in Jesus—we are to be set free. And, I have to watch: Am I getting enslaved by anything other than the Lord Jesus Christ? That’s a principle.

III. The Principle of Example

Now, here’s the third principle—and that is the principle of example. Now, this time, fast-forward to 1 Corinthians chapter 8, verses 8 through 13—here’s a very interesting passage of scripture: “*But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumblingblock to them that are weak*”—the key word is *stumblingblock*—“*For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol’s temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when [you] sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, [you] sin against Christ. Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend*” (1 Corinthians 8:8–13).

“Pastor Rogers, I don’t understand that scripture. What does it mean?” Well, if I tell you the historical background, you would understand. What happened—Paul is living in a pagan society there at Corinth. There were many people who were practicing idol worship, and they would practice idol worship with their bloody sacrifices. They would take the very best of the sheep, and the oxen, and the goats, and they would sacrifice them to their God; and they would sacrifice those bloody sacrifices to these idol gods. The meat had been sacrificed to the idol. Well, they would take that meat, and they

would bring it to the pagan meat market and put it there in a meat market. And, there, in the meat market, this meat would be sold. Number one, it was the best; number two, it was the lowest price. And, many Christians were saying, “Well, it’s good stewardship to go down there and buy that meat, because if you go down there and buy that meat at the pagan meat market, it’s the very best meat. It’s good and nutritious for you. It’s not contaminated in any way, and we’re being good stewards. We’re saving our money; we’re buying prime rib for 50 cents a pound, and that’s wonderful.”

Other people were saying, “Don’t tell me that you, in order to save money or in order to get a better cut of meat, that you would eat something that has been used in devil worship, that you would eat meat that’s offered to idols. God forbid that you should do such a thing.” You can see how an argument could go, couldn’t you? Paul said, “Well, if you eat meat, you’re not any better or any worse; the food’s not going to change you. The meat—putting something in here—is not going to change what’s here or here. You’re neither better nor worse if you eat that meat—nothing wrong with the meat.”

I want to ask you a question. Let’s just take a survey here today. You up to it? Okay. How many of you think it would be better to buy your meat there, save money, get better food, and have some extra money to give to the Love Offering this year? How many of you think that would be better? There are a lot of you. Good. How many of you say, “Well, even though it’s better food and all that and even though we’re being good stewards, I don’t want to have anything to do with any kind of meat that’s been offered to idols”? All right. Now, how many of you take the Fifth Amendment? Let me see your hand. You’re not going to vote. All right. Now, you can understand, therefore, we’re just about split three ways here: the eaters, the non-eaters, and the non-voters. All right. Now, that’s the way it was at Corinth. And, actually, they didn’t laugh about it there, because they were grim about it; they were deadly serious.

Now, the Apostle Paul is approaching this, and he’s not going to give them a rule; he’s going to give them a principle. Do you know what the principle is? The principle is the principle of example. In verse 9, he says, “Don’t do anything that will be a stumbling block to your brother” (1 Corinthians 8:9). He says, “Eating meat—not going to make you any better, not going to make you any worse. But, if it causes somebody else to stumble, don’t do it.”

And so, you say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, that just offends me. All of you who voted for eating the meat,” you say, “that just kind of offends my intellect.” Well, go back to chapter 8 and verse 1: “*Now [in] touching things offered unto idols...we all have knowledge*”—but now, watch this—“*Knowledge puffeth up...charity [edifies]*” (1 Corinthians 8:1). It builds up. Now, as you go through life, don’t let your head run away with your heart. Knowledge puffs you up, but love builds up. And, we’re here to operate by love. There are some things that I don’t do—not because I think in the doing of them

I would be harmed. There are certain things I don't do because in the doing of them, somebody else would be harmed, somebody else would be caused to stumble, somebody else may think less of me than they would have if I didn't do it. You can't just ask yourself, "Well, will it hurt me? Will it hurt me?" You have to ask this bigger question: "Will it hurt somebody else?" It's very selfish simply to ask, "Well, will it hurt me?"

Now, let me give you a couple of verses for your margin. Put in the margin "Romans 14, verse 13"—listen to it: "*Let us not therefore judge one another*"—you're not to judge me, and I'm not to judge you about doubtful things—"*Let us not therefore judge one another...but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way*" (Romans 14:13). Now, what that means is I'm to be very easy on you, and I'm to be very hard on me. I'm not to judge you if you do something that I think you ought not to do, but I'm not to do anything that would cause you to stumble. Listen to it again: "*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). Now, most of us do just the opposite, don't we? We're very easy on ourselves and very hard on others. But, this scripture says we're to be very hard on ourselves and very easy on others.

Now, I want you to listen to Romans 14, verse 21—and this is a key verse: "*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). That settles the issue of social drinking for me, right there. You're wondering about social drinking—is it right or wrong to socially drink? Well, the Apostle Paul says here, "*[It's] good neither to eat [meat], nor to drink wine, nor [to do] any thing whereby [your] brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak*" (Romans 14:21). Now, in America, the problem of alcoholism is a big problem. We've got an army of walking dead—millions who are, apart from the grace of God, incurable alcoholics. We've got homes that have been turned into hellholes, highways that have been turned into slaughter pens, because of beverage alcohol.

Now, the liquor people—they will tell you, you know, moderation is the answer: "just be moderate; be a moderate drinker." But, they never say, "Everybody starts out a moderate drinker." You know, they say, "Well, moderation—it's just like overeating. You ought not to overeat; you ought not to over-drink." Well, it's not just like overeating. I've heard of people being arrested for driving drunk; I've never heard of anyone arrested for driving fat. There's a difference, and they know there's a difference. But now, you listen to me: moderation is not the answer to the liquor problem; it's the cause of it. If everybody who ate got skunk drunk, then you could do something about it. But, you see, it's the man of distinction who encourages other people to drink.

You know why I don't drink? Well, there are a lot of reasons. One man said when he

was a little kid, he saw a drunk trying to get in a car. And, he said the drunk had one leg outside the car door, and he kept slamming the car door on his leg. He said, “I didn’t know anything about the Bible or anything else, but I made up my mind that I wouldn’t do anything that’d make me that stupid.” Wasn’t it Shakespeare who said, “What fools men are that put that in their mouths that steals their brains away?”

But now, suppose I said, “Look, I can handle it.” I cut the grass—I want to come in and knock back a cool one. I want to watch the ballgame and World Series, and I want to have a six-pack, enjoy it, have somebody over. “When we go out to dinner, we like to have a cocktail.” Or, you know, “Wine goes good with this food or that food. We’re not drunkards. We’re not bad people, Pastor. We’re just good folks. We drink in moderation. We don’t believe in drunkenness any more than you do.” Well, suppose I did that. Suppose I would go to a restaurant, order some beer, some wine, keep a little in my refrigerator, keep some up in the shelf for Christmas, and holidays, and New Year’s. Now, suppose you’ve got a boy or girl that comes to this church. That boy or girl says, “Mom, Dad, should I drink?” Say, “Well, honey, I don’t think it’s a good idea for you to drink.” “Well, Mom, Pastor Rogers does. He’s a good man. Pastor Rogers never gets drunk. Pastor Rogers loves God. He does. I believe I will.” Then that child becomes one of those alcoholics. Now, nobody knows who’s going to become one. Everybody thinks somebody else will. Nobody ever knows; no one ever starts out to be one. First, the man takes a drink. Then the drink takes a drink, and the drink takes the man. Nobody ever knows who’s going to be what.

Now, as far as I’m concerned, I’m not going to drink the stuff. You know why? Let me just give you this verse—listen to it: “*It is good*”—“it is good,” the Bible says—“*neither*”—“neither.” Listen to it—“*It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother [stumbles], or is offended, or is made weak*” (Romans 14:21). See, that’s the principle of example—that’s the principle of example. That’s the reason it grieves me to see these athletes: these athletes—they have a God-given ability, wonderful men with muscles that ripple, minds that work; they’re coordinated. And then, the beer people say, “Would you get on television and talk about our beer for us?” You know what that is? It’s a form of prostitution, where those marvelous athletes prostitute their God-given ability to somehow get in children’s minds that there is a link between being an athlete and drinking beer, which is sheer unmitigated stupidity—no link between that at all. But, you see, the world’s very clever, isn’t it? The world wants these kids to associate drinking beer with success. They never show them the drunk in a back alley, covered with vomit and flies, and rats running over his nose. They never show that—of course not!

Now, why don’t I do it? I’ll tell you why I don’t do it. Now, you may say, “I’m free to do it.” And, indeed, you are. As a matter of fact, you might search the Bible and try to

find...there's where somebody made Jesus turn water into wine. You don't even know what kind of wine that was. That's a generic word, which simply means "drink." It does not necessarily mean that it was intoxicating at all. I don't believe it was. But, you're looking—you're looking—for a loophole. Why don't you live by principle? Why don't you just simply take a principle and say, "This is a principle. I won't do anything that will cause somebody else to stumble." Now, is your life going to be ruined if you say, "I'm not going to drink this or this"? No, your life will be enhanced. But, I'll tell you, whether your life is hurt or better, there'll be a lot of others who'd be better if you'll just simply leave it alone.

Now, there's the principle—what's the first principle?—of expediency. Does it bring me on my way? There's another principle—the principle of enslavement. There's another principle—the principle of example.

IV. The Principle of Edification

Now, here's the fourth principle—and it's the principle of edification. Look, if you will, here, in 1 Corinthians chapter 10—1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 23: "*All things are lawful [unto] me, but all things are not expedient*"—we've already dealt with that—"*all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not*" (1 Corinthians 10:23). Now, what does the word *edify* mean? Well, what are we in? We're in an edifice. "To edify" means "to build up." An edifice is a building. Everything that you do is either building you up or tearing you down.

Now, you have to ask yourself about anything that you do, "Does this build me up, or does this pull me down? Does this pull me down? Does it tear me down?" So, every film you watch, you have to say, "Is this a builder, or is this a destroyer?" Every program that you enter into: "Does this build me up, or does this bring me down?" Every friendship... You know what a real friend is? A real friend is somebody that makes you a better person. Anybody that does not make you a better person by being in their midst is not truly a friend—anybody that pulls you down. Every conversation has to pass this test: Is this something that builds, or is this something that destroys?

Now, entertainment is legitimate. If you think that I'm one that doesn't enjoy entertainment, you don't know me. You think I'm one that doesn't enjoy sports, a good joke, a picnic, going fishing, rollicking with my kids, or anything like it? I love that. Vacations? Wonderful. That's a part of life. God made us that way. Recreation literally means "re-creation." That's where we get the term. You see, what does true entertainment do? It relaxes, refreshes, renews, and restores. It re-creates, and you need that. That's one of the reasons we're building a Family Life Center right here. Now, there are some people who say, "Well, I don't believe in all that entertainment down there." You know your problem? You don't know how God made human beings. Boys

and girls have a God-given instinct, and if we don't meet those needs, somebody else will, in a different context. And, I'm grateful that, as a church, we can help kids to have legitimate recreation that builds character and becomes a laboratory where we can work out what we teach in the Sunday School. Thank God for that. And, it's not just kids that need it—adults need it.

And, I'm going to tell you something else: there's a so-called kind of "entertainment" that debases and degrades. The devil is very clever. Let's go back again. Do you know what most of your situational comics are about today? Sex, alcohol, drugs, and now abortion and sodomy—that's come in. And, in the context of all of that, holy things are being laughed at. Do you know why? Do you think that just happened? No, that's a part of the plan. Whose plan? Satan's plan. Why? Because the devil knows that if he can get you to laugh at something, it would be very hard for you to take it seriously again. And so, we have a generation that is laughing its way into Hell—laughing its way into Hell—laughing at that which God has condemned, laughing at sodomy, laughing at adultery, laughing at fornication, laughing at drunkenness. You can laugh your way into Hell, but you can't laugh your way out once you get there. You watch certain things—they don't build you up. You feel kind of dirty after you've watched it, kind of grimy. It doesn't edify you. It doesn't refresh you. It doesn't restore you. It doesn't relax you. It degrades you. It debilitates you. It drags you down. Now, Paul said, "It may be lawful, but it doesn't edify." See, there's a principle of edification.

V. The Principle of Exaltation

Now, let me give you another principle. Look, if you will, in chapter 10 again and verse 31: "*Whether therefore [you drink or eat], or whatsoever [you] do, do all to the glory of God*" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Here's a big principle: it's the principle of exaltation—exaltation. Does this thing exalt the Lord Jesus Christ? "Well," you say, "Pastor, we're not talking about church now; we're talking about daily life." That's exactly what Paul was talking about. He says, "Whether you eat, or drink, or whatever you do"—"whatever you do"—"do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Everything you do either honors or dishonors the Lord—everything. Every conversation, every friendship, every vacation, every meal, every business transaction either honors or dishonors the Lord. You have to ask yourself this question: Is God glorified by what I'm doing? Is God glorified by what I'm doing? Whatever you do, in word or deed, do—what?—*A-double-L* to the glory of God.

The way you dress—do you dress to the glory of God? Some girls go out on a date in things they ought not to even come downstairs in—one of these gownless evening straps. I mean, would you go out if Jesus Christ were your escort? Is that the way you'd dress? I mean, would you tell that story if Jesus Christ were one of the guys in the

crowd? Can you say, “Lord Jesus, this is what I’m doing for Your glory”? Whatever you do, in word or deed, do all to the glory of God.

Now, I know there are people who are listening to me right now—you say, “That man is a fruit loop. He doesn’t know what life is all about.” I mean, you’re coming from a different paradigm than I am all together. See, I’m a Christian; I’m a believer in Jesus Christ. Christ is Lord—Christ is Lord. I’m not trying to teach Billy goats not to butt. You don’t have any understanding what I’m talking about. I am talking about people who know God, who love the Lord Jesus Christ, who are looking for practical principles for proper practice. I said it. All right. Now, listen—listen. There’s the principle of exaltation: whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

VI. The Principle of Evangelism

Now, let me give you the last one—and it’s the principle of evangelism. I’m in chapter 10, verse 32: *“Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved”* (1 Corinthians 10:32–33). The last principle is the principle of evangelism—the principle of evangelism.

Now, what determines how I’m going to live? Well, is there anything that keeps me from bringing anybody else to Jesus Christ? Then, for me, it’s wrong. Now, Paul said, “I’m not going to offend the Jews. I’m not going to offend the Church of God. I’m going to try to be as pleasant to all of these as I can possibly be—not that I’m going to compromise my convictions, but listen”—*“even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit”* (1 Corinthians 10:33)—“I am not asking what is best for me. But,” he says, “I’m doing this for *‘the profit of many, that they [might] be saved’*” (1 Corinthians 10:33). Every man, every woman, every boy, every girl that I meet—I ought to be moving them closer to Jesus. And, I can’t do anything, say anything, give anything, buy anything, go anywhere, eat anything, drink anything—anything—that keeps me from somehow bringing those people closer to Jesus Christ. See, that’s a guiding principle.

I’ve told our people this: there’s a man in Nashville, where we have our denominational headquarters. He loves God. He went in to a laundry to have his shirts done. He was one of these fellows—his collars had to be just right, cuffs just right. I don’t know whether he liked a lot of starch or a little starch, or starch here and no starch there, or whatever—but he had it just right. I mean, he had a formula. He took his shirts in to this cleaning establishment and said, “I want you to do these shirts this way.” When he came back to pick up the shirts, they were not done that way, so he just smiled. And, he said, “Hey, would you redo these shirts? You didn’t do them like I asked you to do them.” They said, “Yes, sir, we’ll redo them.” When he came back the next time to get

his shirts, they'd messed up again. He said, "Look, I brought them in the first time. I told you how. I brought them in the second time and told you how. Now, you're wasting my time. Let me explain it to you; this is what I want. Is that clear? Can you do this, please?" You know how we talk—"please." They said, "Yes, sir, we're sorry. Yes, sir—yes, sir."

Later on, this same man, living in that town, a member of a church that had a visitation program just like ours, went for visitation, and he got a card. And, on the card was a name, and the name matched the name of the cleaners. He called the person over who was distributing the cards—said, "I want to ask you a question: Are these the people that operate a certain cleaning establishment?" They said, "Yes." "Well," he said, "do you know them?" He said, "Yes, I know who they are." He said, "Well, may I ask you another question? Do they know me?" He said, "Well, yes, they do know you." "Have you ever talked to them about me?" He said, "Yes, I have." He said, "Oh no, you want me to go see them?" Said, "That's right." "Well," he said, "I want to ask you the big question: What do they think about me?" You know what the answer was? He said, "They think the most important thing on earth to you is the way your shirts are done." Do you know what I want people to think of when they think of me? That the most important thing in this world—the most important thing in life to me—is Jesus Christ; that's what I want people to think—that the most important thing on earth to that man is Jesus Christ. That's a principle to guide my life.

Conclusion

Now again, I want to say that if you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ or if you are an immature Christian, you're going to be looking for little rules, because you want to find loopholes in laws. But, these are six practical principles. You take these principles and live by these principles, and I believe when you meet the Lord Jesus Christ, you'll hear Him say to you, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Now, let me say this, and we're going to pray: no one can behave himself into the Kingdom of God. I'm not telling you to live this way so you can go to Heaven. You go to Heaven by repenting of your sin and receiving Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Christ carried your sins to the cross, and He died there for you. And, He paid your sin debt, and your sin has been paid for with His precious blood. And, the Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31). And, if you would pray a prayer like this—"O God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost. And, I need to be saved, and I can't save myself. But, right now, like a little child, with all of my heart, I trust You, Lord Jesus, to save me"—I promise Jesus will save you today, if you trust Him.

Lord Jesus, seal the Word to our heart. And Lord, may many today come to Jesus. Draw them, Holy Spirit. In Your holy name I pray. Amen.

Family Fitness

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 31, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Outline

Introduction

- A. There Is a Curse upon Creation
 - B. Some Violate God's Moral Law
 - C. Some Are Afflicted by Satan
 - D. Some Are Being Disciplined by God
 - E. Some Are Violating God's Natural Laws
 - I. Family Fitness Is a Matter of Discipline
 - A. Disciplined in Diet
 - B. Disciplined in Exercise
 - C. Discipline in Rest
 - II. Family Fitness Is a Matter of Disposition
 - III. Family Fitness Is a Matter of Devotion
 - IV. Family Fitness Is a Matter of Decision
- Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding in your Bibles 1 Corinthians chapter 6—1 Corinthians chapter 6. In a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 19. A few days ago, an unknown person paid 3,005,000 dollars for one baseball—3,005,000 dollars for one baseball. The thing that made it different is it was Mark McGuire's 70th homerun ball, and somebody valued that baseball so much—a baseball that could be bought for about \$9.00—that they paid 3,005,000 dollars for that one baseball. Well, let me ask you a question: Would you like to have it? Let me tell you something that you can have that is far more valuable, I think, that God wants you to have—and that is fitness—health.

Health is far more valuable than Mark McGuire's baseball. Would you agree with that? I hope so. The Bible says, concerning our bodies, that we are *"fearfully and wonderfully made"* (Psalm 139:14) and that our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 6:19). Look in verse 19: *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). God paid a greater price for you than that man paid for that baseball, and you are not your own. Therefore, God has enjoined you—yes, has commanded you—to glorify God in your body, as well as in your spirit.

Now, the psalmist said, concerning his body, that he was *“fearfully and wonderfully made”* (Psalm 139:14). Psalm 139 and verse 14: the psalmist said, *“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made”* (Psalm 139:14). Your body is a carefully crafted, finely tuned machine, and thank God it comes with a maintenance manual. We have the Word of God. Now remember, we are His purchased possession; and so, we are the temple of God.

Now, if we are the temple of God, don't you think that we need to look into some temple maintenance? I know some of us are in a temple-building program. What we need to think about is a little temple maintenance. The Bible teaches that our bodies do not belong to us; therefore, they are to be dedicated to God. Now, some people think that the spiritual thing is to take care of your spirit and your soul, but who cares about the body? They think that perhaps that the body is of no consequence or perhaps even evil. But, in Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, the Apostle Paul says, *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies”*—*“your bodies”*—*“a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God”* (Romans 12:1).

Now, is your body presented to God? Is it holy? Is it acceptable to God? Now, God is interested in the total person. God is interested, yes, in your spirit, and God is interested in your soul; but God is also interested in your spirit. First Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23 says, *“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23)—body, soul, and spirit—or, in the order that Paul gave it, spirit, soul, and body. With my spirit I have spiritual life and I know the world above me. With my soul I have psychological life and I know the world around me. With my body I have physical life and I'm related to the world beneath me. When my spirit is right, I am holy. When my soul is right, I am happy. When my body is right, I am healthy. And, a perfectly tuned person would be holy, happy, and healthy. Most folks I know are unholy, unhappy, and unhealthy. I mean, they are out of tune. They are out of whack. They are not what God really intended for us to be. Listen to that verse again—1 Thessalonians 5, verse 23: *“and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Now, God wants us to be blameless. That is, we ought not to do anything to our body, spirit, or soul that is blame worthy. It doesn't mean that we're going to be in perfect health. We won't have perfect health until we get to Heaven. There are a number of reasons why we have physical ailments. Let me just give you three or four of them before we talk about family fitness.

A. There Is a Curse upon Creation

First of all, we have to understand that there is a curse upon all creation. We live in a

world that has the curse of sin upon it. And, Romans chapter 5, verse 12 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). Now, in that sense, we all have a terminal illness, don’t we? The latest statistic on death is one out of one people die. We all have a terminal illness because of Adam’s sin, so we might as well admit that. Every so often, we say that so-and-so died a natural death. There is no such thing as a natural death; all death is unnatural. It is a result of sin. All right. So, that’s one reason that we’re sick.

B. Some Violate God’s Moral Law

Then, sometimes we are sick because we have violated God’s moral law. And, every kick has a kickback; every sin fascinates and then it assassinates. And, many people die just because of sin in their lives. For example, the church at Corinth—they were living with blasphemous ways. At the Lord’s Supper, they were not discerning the Lord’s body, and Paul warned them in 1 Corinthians 11, beginning in verse 29: *“For this cause many are [sick] and [weakly] among you, and [some] sleep”* (1 Corinthians 11:30). And, he meant by “sleep” some are “dead,” not discerning the Lord’s body. And, he says, *“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged”* (1 Corinthians 11:31). Sometimes sickness is the judgment of Almighty God.

C. Some Are Afflicted by Satan

Sometimes we’re sick because we are afflicted by Satan. Job was sick that way. The Lord said to Satan in the Book of Job chapter 2, verse 6, concerning Job, *“Behold”*—Satan—*“he is in thine hand; but save his life”* (Job 2:6). And, the Apostle Paul talked of a thorn in the flesh that was the result of Satan. So, sometimes we are under satanic attack, and that may be the reason that we are sick.

D. Some Are Being Disciplined by God

Sometimes we are sick as the discipline of God, and we know that to be true. David said in Psalm 119, verse 71: *“It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes”* (Psalm 119:71). Sometimes we have to be flat on our back before we can look up, and we see more clearly through eyes that have been washed by tears.

E. Some Are Violating God’s Natural Laws

And sometimes, however—and that’s what I want to zero in on today—our sickness is due to a violation of God’s natural laws. I mean, we just go out and flaunt God’s natural laws and expect to be well. Some... For example, a lot of people are poisoning their bodies with nicotine. Now, somebody says, “Well, will smoking... Can I smoke and go to Heaven?” The truth of the matter is, you may get there a whole lot quicker. *Smoking won’t send you to Hell; it’ll just make you smell like you’ve been there.* You violate

God's natural law. God made that nicotine to kill bugs, not people; but you take that into your body. One pastor was asked to pray for another pastor who was sick, and that pastor said, "I'm not going to pray for him. Why should I pray for him? He does the work of ten men and eats everything in sight." And then, you know, we just want God somehow to give us a pass to go ahead, and violate His natural law, and then think we are going to be well, and ask God to heal us while we continue to do the things that'll make us sick.

Now it's very, very important that we think—your family thinks—about your family being fit, because when you naturally, willingly violate the laws that God has laid down in the Bible—I'm talking about natural laws—if you're not careful, you will become a burden to yourself and a burden to your family; and your family will become a burden to other people. You see, God tells us that your soul is to rule your body, just as your spirit rules your soul. Your body really is a servant, but if you abuse that servant—if you abuse your servant; that is, your body—your body may rise up and smite you for it. Your body is very unforgiving.

Now, most folks value money more than they value health. Isn't that true? They value money more than they value health. We value things more than we value health until we lose our health. So many people spend the first half of their lives accumulating their wealth by wasting their health. Then, they spend the last half of their life spending their wealth trying to get their health back, and they are unhappy in both halves of their lives. Now, it's a funny thing about health—we value money more than health. Money is the most envied, but it is the least enjoyed. Health is the least envied, but it is the most enjoyed—that is, until you lose it. When the wealthy man loses his health, then he would give all of his wealth to get his health back; but he doesn't think about that health. I'm talking about the simple principles of family fitness. Now, I'm not a doctor, and I thank God for doctors. I believe in doctors. I have a personal physician that I love very much. And, Jesus said, "*They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*" (Matthew 9:12). Luke was called the *beloved physician*. And, I thank God for what doctors can do. But, you know what many of us are trying to do? We are trying to break God's natural laws and then go to the doctor and try to get him to put the scrambled eggs back in the shell. We're trying to get him to undo what we have done, and that's not the purpose of medicine. Now, let me give you four principles—again, four principles for family fitness. Are you ready for these?

I. Family Fitness Is a Matter of Discipline

Number one: family fitness is a matter of discipline. Write it down: family fitness is a matter of discipline. Now, we're called... We call ourselves *disciples*. Well, the word *disciple* and the word *discipline* are linked together. We cannot call ourselves a disciple

if we are not disciplined. We recently had a staff meeting, and one of our staff, Rob Mullins, that we love very much, talked about passion. And, he said, “We need to live our lives with a passion.” And then, he gave a description of passion, and this is what he said: “Passion is the degree of what one is willing to endure to achieve God’s purpose for his life.” I love that. Listen to it again: “passion is the degree of what one is willing to endure to achieve God’s purpose for his life.” Many of us are living lives without passion because we do not want to be disciplined; we don’t want to endure certain things.

A. Disciplined in Diet

For example, we need to be disciplined in matters of diet and the things that we eat. Now, I know that many of us have gone on diets, and we have failed miserably. I have a friend, Charles Lawry, who said, “I went on a Slim Fast liquid diet. It didn’t work well, either. I mean, it was very difficult—three shakes for breakfast, four shakes for lunch, and two sensible dinners. But, I still didn’t lose any weight.” Then, he said, “I tried many diets: I tried the mush diet—you eat while riding on a dogsled; the egg plant diet—you plant an egg, and whatever comes up you eat.” Well, we’ve tried all kinds of diets; they just don’t seem to work. I heard of a woman—somebody said, “She’s a light eater. As soon as it gets daylight, she starts eating.” Many of us fail to understand that we are breaking God’s laws concerning what we eat.

Now, you may think that the Bible doesn’t say much about what we eat, but the Bible has much to say about what we eat. And also, the Bible gives us an injunction in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 31, which says, “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Corinthians 10:31). That ought to be put in our kitchens—maybe on your refrigerator. Whatever we eat, whatever we drink—do all to the glory of God. Now, there’s a fad today: people are telling us that all foods are equal. “It doesn’t make any difference, that all foods are equal, that green beans and jelly beans are the same.” I mean, they really believe that. Friend, that’s absurd. If you believe that, you’re going to make your body a walking garbage can.

The Bible mentions healthy foods, whole grains, herbs, fish, fowl, clean animals—no eating of fat, no eating of blood. Blood in the Bible is a symbol of life; but also, God prohibited His people from the ingestion of blood. Why is it? Well, we know that the blood...it carries infections and toxins that circulate in an animal’s body. And, when you eat these things, you—when you eat and ingest animal’s blood—you are needlessly exposing yourself to these infections and these poisons. The Bible warns very clearly about the consumption of fat. Scientists are now just catching up with this—that we are to have diets that are low in fat. So many people have atherosclerosis because they have ingested this fat, and they have a higher death rate than other people. The heart diseases... It’s an old disease. They’ve actually done autopsies on Egyptian mummies

and found fat deposits in their arteries. The Bible has a lot to say about what we eat. The Bible makes a difference between clean and unclean animals. And, we say, “Well, that’s Mosaic law.” Listen, you’d better go back and read your Bible.

You talk about everybody... Everybody talks about how the animals went on the ark. How did the animals go on the ark? Two by two—two by two, two by two. Go read your Bible, and you’ll find out that some animals went on the ark by sevens. People, oh... Just go read your Bible. What animals went on the ark by sevens? The clean animals. They were there for food. That was before the Mosaic law; that was before any of these ceremonial laws. They are clean animals. What is the difference between the clean and the unclean animals? God puts all animals into two categories—those who are scavengers and those who are not scavengers. God says, “Don’t eat the scavengers. Those scavengers who will eat rotten, dead, decaying flesh—those scavengers who eat the off-scouring of other animals. You eat that, and then you are putting all of that into your body.” The Bible has a lot to say about what we eat.

The Bible even warns against junk food. You know, somebody thinks the three basic food groups are fast, fried, and junk. The Bible... Listen to this—Proverbs 23, verses 1 through 3: “*When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is [set] before thee*”—that is, the ruler is the guy who’s—he’s the high muckety-muck; he’s the guy with the...he can have all of his little dainties—“*And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite*”—and then, the Bible says—“*Be not desirous of his dainties*”—listen to this—“*they are deceitful meat*” (Proverbs 23:1–3). A lot of us are eating deceitful meat, dainties, and people are telling us, “Well, it makes no difference.” Do you know a sad thing? I was reading an article the other day that shows that Christians are fatter than ordinary people. That’s true; it’s in *Christianity Today*—January 11, 1999. Christians tend to be more overweight than pagans. Listen to this: “States with a high-rate religious affiliation—Mississippi, Michigan, and Indiana—have heftier citizens than such strongholds of secularity as Massachusetts, Hawaii, and Colorado.” Now, listen to this: “Among all denominations, Southern Baptists are the real heavyweights”—“Southern Baptists.” Maybe we ought to call ourselves *Southern Fried Baptists*. I mean, Southern Baptists have the idea that when we go to Heaven, Heaven is going to be a great big banquet table up there with fried chicken, buttered biscuits, and pecan pie.

I think sometimes our churches are guilty of encouraging gluttony—promoting gluttony. The Bible says, “If you are a man given to gluttony”—“put a knife to your throat, if you’re a man given to appetite” (Proverbs 23:2). I have a doctor friend who lives in Arkansas. His name is Rex Russell. Rex Russell says, “The average American consumes 150 pounds of refined sugar every year in this country, and some people eat as much as 350 pounds of sugar.” That’s a pound a day—that’s a pound a day. And, this is a deceitful dainty. It’s processed, which means that the nutriment is taken out of

it. All that is left is naked calories. That is a deceitful dainty. Somebody went through the supermarkets and found out that 92% of the items in the supermarket—92% of them—contain sugar—“deceitful dainties.” You see, we live off of half of what we eat; the doctor lives off the other half.

Now, what do we do? Well, find those foods that God created for food, and eat those and avoid the others. And, eat things as much as possible the way that God created them, before they have been poisoned, and preserved, and mutilated, and stabbed, and baked, and fried, or whatever else. And then, friend, only eat them in the right proportion. It’s what God says: “If you are given to appetite, put a knife to your throat” (Proverbs 23:2).

B. Disciplined in Exercise

But, not only do we need to be disciplined in what we eat—we need to be disciplined in our exercise. Put down “1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 8”: the Bible says, “*For bodily exercise profiteth little*” (1 Timothy 4:8). Now, some people have taken that as an excuse not to exercise, but that’s not what he’s saying. He is saying there is profit in exercise. He is saying that godliness is more profitable, but he is not saying that exercise is not profitable. I took the time to look this up in a number of different translations. The RSV says, “Bodily training is of some value.” Williams’s translation says, “Physical training indeed is some service.” It does profit. And, whether you’re a couch potato or pew potato, we need to understand that God wants us to exercise these bodies of ours. One thing about being in rotten physical shape—you don’t have to exercise to keep it up. No matter how much money you have—if you are a rich man—in matters of diet and exercise, you are going to have to learn to live like the poor man, or else you are going to kill yourself.

I have another friend, Dr. Kenneth Cooper—he is called the *father of modern aerobics*. I’ve been to the Cooper Clinic out in Dallas, Texas. He’s the man who’s changed America’s way of thinking about exercise. And, so many of us, when you talk about bodily exercise, want to go out and buy a gymnasium or something, put it in our attic, and start pumping iron. You’re just going to waste a lot of money if you do that, most of you. Here’s what Ken Cooper says—listen to this—and, by the way, he’s a godly man, believes in Christ: “Research shows that moderate intensive exercise at least three times a week can increase your life span by at least 22 years.” I have developed a five-day-a-week walking and toning program that takes less than one hour per day to perform. You don’t have to go to a gym to do it. That’s the only workout you need. Just walking is the perfect exercise; and if you want to do more, fine. But, there needs to be a discipline in the matter of diet—a discipline in the matter of exercise. You need to get your kids out; you need get out yourself, daddy.

C. Discipline in Rest

There needs to be a discipline in the matter of rest. Psalm 127 and verse 2 says, *“It is vain for you to rise up early, to [stay] up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep”* (Psalm 127:2). It literally says, “He’s given to you...while you sleep.” That is, you are taking care of business while you are asleep. Just think of those simple things: diet, exercise, and rest. Oh, that is so phenomenal. Friend, that’s the ABCs—that’s just the ABCs. We need to be disciplined in all of these things.

II. Family Fitness Is a Matter of Disposition

Now, here’s the second thing: family fitness is a matter of discipline. Number two: family fitness is a matter of disposition. That’s the second thing: it’s a matter of disposition. Hardening of the attitudes is just as bad as hardening of the arteries. Listen to Proverbs 15, verse 17: *“Better is a dinner of herbs”—that is, a vegetable plate—“where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith”* (Proverbs 15:17). A vegetable plate is better than a filet mignon, if you have that vegetable plate with love, rather than that hefty steak where there is hateful there—now, hatefulness there. Disposition, emotions, emotional health. *“I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord [and Savior] Jesus Christ”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23). Your soul is your psyche. The Greek word for soul is *psyche*. It’s the word we get psychology from—psychiatric, psychic from. You see, it’s the seed of your emotions. And, there are two kinds of emotions—positive and negative, healthy and unhealthy.

“Well,” you say, “I can’t help my emotions.” Yes, you can. You can choose your emotions like you can choose your friends. Listen to what the Bible says in Philippians chapter 4, verses 7 and following: he speaks of *“the peace of God, which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”*—literally, “Guard your heart; guard your minds—God’s peace.” And then, he says this—*“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”* (Philippians 4:7–8). You can choose your thoughts like you choose your friends. I woke up the other night with a negative thought. I said, “I refuse that in the name of Jesus. Lord Jesus, I praise You,” and went back to sleep. Why let the Devil mess with your mind? You can choose your thoughts. You can reject bad thoughts and choose your attitudes. To rejoice is a choice.

If your disposition gets upset, let me tell you what’s going to happen to you: you’re going to have an upset stomach, headaches, family arguments. You are going to have a dull memory. You’re going to cripple your thinking. You’re going to weaken your body. You’re going to reduce your efficiency. I’m talking about negative stress, not positive

stress. There's a good positive stress. You don't need to be just a dishrag. But, I'm talking about negative emotions. Stress does great damage to the temple. Eight to ten million Americans suffer from ulcers. Not every ulcer is caused by stress, but many are. Number one selling drug—Tagamet. It's a drug that treats ulcers, widely prescribed in America. And, not only can the stress bring on those ulcers, but heart problems. Cardiologists tell you that if you're a Type-A individual, you have a greater opportunity for a heart attack. What's a Type-A person? Well, he's ambitious, aggressive, self-demanding, competitive, constantly striving for success, driven by the clock. It doesn't have to be man; it can be a woman. **One man said, "I got up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom. When I came back, my wife had made up the bed."** Type-A people are seven times more likely to have a heart attack than Type-B individuals. Now, if you're a Type-A person, that's good, because you'll achieve a whole lot, but you need to learn how to rest in the Lord. Physicians have long suspected that stress brings on some cancers, and the mind is the center of stress.

My former doctor, Dr. Dave Dunavant, one of the great deacons and leaders in our church, told me one day—he said, "Pastor, all stress is self-imposed—all stress is self-imposed. I mean, you have to agree to it in order to have it." The doctors talk about a psychosomatic illness. *Psycho* is the mind; *soma* is the body. It is the mind making the body sick. Recent survey showed that two-thirds of the patients who went to a physician had symptoms caused or aggravated by mental stress—two-thirds, 2 out of 3 caused or aggravated by mental stress. You say, "Well, I don't believe my mind really affects my body." Oh yes, it does. What you think affects the amount of blood that flows to any organ. What you think affects the secretions of the glands in your body. What you think affects the tension in the muscles.

Let me illustrate what I'm talking about. Have you ever seen someone blush? What causes a person to blush? Because of what they've thought about. Embarrassment causes the blood vessels in the face and the neck to open up, and the face turns red. What they think has affected their bodies. If you have anxiety, you're going to cause blood to rush to your head. And, your skull is very hard, and it doesn't give; and you've got a headache there. Fear—it causes the salivary glands to dry up. Have you ever seen a speaker get up, and put a glass of water there, and talk, and drink, and talk, and drink. And, his mouth gets dry—kind of like a windmill pumping over a dry hole. And, he's just drinking and talking. Why? Because he is terrified of standing up there to speak. The mind is controlling the body. The muscles tighten when you are filled with fear, or frightened, or angry; and that causes pain. If you just take your fist and just clench it, you won't feel any pain; but just clench it and keep it there long enough, and you won't be able to keep it clenched very long. You're going to have to let it go, because it's going to begin to hurt, because you...pain in the neck. Do you have a pain

in the neck? Well, so often that's because you have a problem in your mind. Worry, they tell us, can cause arthritis. You can worry yourself stiff. Listen, it is a matter not only of discipline; it is a matter of disposition.

Douglas MacArthur—boy, give us some more men like Douglas MacArthur. Douglas MacArthur had this hanging on the wall of his office: “Youth is not a time of life; it is a state of mind. It is not a matter of red cheeks, red lips, and subtle knees; it is a temper of the will, a quality of the imagination, a vigor of the emotion. It is a freshness of the deep springs of life. Years may wrinkle the skin, but to give up enthusiasm wrinkles the soul. Worry, doubt, self-distrust, fear, and despair—these are the long, long, long years that bow the head and turn the growing spirit back to dust.” And then, the great general said, “You are as young as your faith, as old as your doubt, as young as your self-confidence, as old as your fear, as young as your hope, and as old as your despair.”

Why do we have stress? Stress is that gap between our strength and the demands that are put upon us, and we all feel that. That's the reason the Bible says in Isaiah chapter 40, verses 28 and following: *“Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not”*—God never passes out—*“neither is weary?”*—God never gets tired—*“there is no searching of his understanding”*—God is never perplexed—*“He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall. But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength”*—the word literally means, “They shall exchange their strength—their weakness for His strength”—*“they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint”* (Isaiah 40:28–31). I believe that what you need to do is to take your family and have a family conference. We are going to talk more about this later on. You need to sit down and say, “Are we a family living under stress? What is the disposition of our family?” And, you need to find those things that are stressing your family—those things that you're doing that are wrong. Repent of them. Turn your life over to the Lord; wait upon the Lord. That may sound simplistic; but friend, it'll work.

III. Family Fitness Is a Matter of Devotion

Now, here's the third thing—now, watch: family fitness is a matter of discipline. Family fitness is a matter of disposition. Thirdly, family fitness is a matter of devotion—devotion. It is a matter of devotion. That is, when you love God, when you serve God, you are going to be healthier.

You know, we've been told in the Bible that the fear of the Lord adds years to life and, and we need to understand that. I was reading recently an article by Mary Ann Herring. The title of the article is “Believe Well and Live Well.” I want to quote: “Pick out

any man out of a church pew on Sunday morning and liken him to a neighbor who is still at home pouring through the two-pound Sunday newspaper in his easy chair. Let's say the two are the same age and earn comparable salaries. Neither of them smokes, drinks, or plays the lottery. Both floss their teeth, collect baseball cards, and enjoy cheesecake. Which man will live longer and enjoy the benefits of a stable marriage? Answer: the man or woman in the pew. In recent years, scientific research is backing up what common sense has told us for years—mainly, that churchgoers live longer, stay married, and feel happier than those who say they don't believe in God. That's just a scientific fact they're telling us. Now, the secret is out: faith—religion—is good for your health, but science is just verifying what the scriptures have told us for years."

In a 1987 review by Levin and Vanderpool—*Social Science Medicine*, that's the title of the review—reported that in 22 of 27 studies, the more often a person went to church, the better his or her health. Just devotion, just coming to church, just praising God, loving God—makes your family fit. It's an amazing thing, but that's what the Bible has told us—that faith is good for family fitness. I have some more statistics here about that; but because of the press of time, I'm going to press through here a little bit, and I want you to follow me now. God wants your family fit. Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. You are a fearfully and wonderfully made machine. There are some reasons why you may be sick that you can't control, but there are other reasons—there are other things—that you can control and you should control.

IV. Family Fitness Is a Matter of Decision

Now, here's the final thing: faith is also... Family fitness is a matter of decision. Now, here I left this 'til last, because if you get these facts down and you don't make any decisions, so what? When I was in college, I heard the definition of a college education, and it is, "A college education is getting that which is in the professor's notebook into your notebook without going through the heads of either one." I don't want you to just get these facts down; I want them to get into your head and your heart, and there has to be a decision. And, I believe that you need to have a family counsel. Those of you who are parents with little children—you need to sit down; and if there's a father in the family, he needs to take charge. If there's not a father, then mother, you need to take charge.

But, listen to Joshua chapter 24, verse 15: Joshua is talking to the children of Israel, and he says this: "*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the [river], or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*" (Joshua 24:15). It's a matter of decision—it is a matter of decision. And, how do you serve the Lord? "*I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord [and Savior] Jesus*

Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). It deals with the body in discipline. It deals with the soul in disposition. It deals with the spirit in devotion. But, you have to make a choice. You have to say, “*But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD*” (Joshua 24:15).

Now, there were other gods who were calling upon the Israelites. There were the gods that they knew back in Egypt. Then, there were gods in the land of the Amorites—the gods of the Amorites, in whose land they dwelt. And, what Joshua is saying is, “Look around. Look at these other gods. Look at these other philosophies. Look at them. Then, look at Jehovah God. Do you know what God is saying? He’s said, ‘You bring your best gods out. I’ll beat them all—I’ll beat them all. You bring all these philosophies—all these other people round there...’” And, he says, “Now look—here’s what they believe; here’s what they do. Here’s what they’re like.” But, he says, “Listen, you’re going to have to choose—choose who you’re going to serve.” Remember what I told you about choice: you’re free to choose, but you’re not free not to choose. Not to choose is a choice. You’re free to choose; you’re not free not to choose, and you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice. That’s very important. You’re free to choose; you’re not free not to choose, but you’re not free to choose the consequences of your choice. Once you make a choice then your choice chooses for you. Okay, your choice then will choose for you.

Now, what you need to do is to look at your family and say, “Listen, what is this we’re eating? What is this we’re doing? What is this we’re thinking? Are we going to continue to live this way, or are we going to make a decision as a family—some family fitness so that we might be a testimony to our neighbors and those around us?” We ought to be different. Our families ought to stand out in matters of faith, in matters of fun, in matters of finance, and in matters of fitness. Our families ought to be different. Don’t you believe that? I do. But, you see, if you just simply don’t... If you just hear this and don’t make a decision, what good is it? What good is it going to do you whatsoever? Now, you are responsible as a family.

Conclusion

Our time is gone. I wish I had more time, but I don’t. We are going to try to give you some ideas. We’ll have a health clinic down here. We’re going to tell you some other things that I’m not able to tell you. They call me *Doctor Rogers*, but I’m the kind of doctor who can’t do you any good. We’re going to have some people who know what they’re talking about here to help you. But now, listen to me folks—if you think that I’m just talking to you about being healthy, and physically strong, and that’s all, you missed it 1,000 miles. What difference would it make if you lived to be a serene old man or woman with the bloom of health on you and then you died? What difference would it make if you died in a modern hospital with the aid of drugs—no pain at all—and died

with a smile on your face? What difference would it make if they had a big funeral and all of the high muckety-mucks of society came to your funeral, and there you are in a beautiful bronze casket, and the undertaker's done such a good job on you? What difference would it make if they carry you out and put you in a grave as beautiful as any park, and festoon that grave with flowers? I say, what difference would it make if you rise in the judgment and meet a God that you do not know with your sins un-confessed and un-forgiven? I am not talking about mere physical health, "*and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord [and Savior] Jesus Christ*" (1 Thessalonians 5:23). God wants you saved so much that He sent His darling Son to pay for your sin with His blood on that cross, and I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that if you will trust Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, He will forgive your sin. I promise you He will. And, He'll save you today, if you'll ask Him.

I want heads bowed and eyes closed—no one stirring around. Begin to pray for those round about you who may not know the Lord Jesus. And folks, right now, in this service, we can do business with God. I mean, right in this service today, you can receive Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. I invite you to pray this way, out of your heart, sincerely, fervently: "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"—would you tell Him that?—I do trust You, Jesus, right now, this moment, with all of my heart. Come into my heart. I invite You in. Take control of my life. I turn it over to You. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Help me to never be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

My Heart: God's Home

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 20, 2003

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Outline

Introduction

- I. God's Primary House: Adam
 - A. Body
 - B. Soul
 - C. Spirit
 1. A House Designed
 2. A House Desecrated
 3. A House Desolated
 4. A House Destroyed
 - a. He Died Immediately in His Spirit
 - b. He Died Progressively in His Soul
 - c. He Died Ultimately in His Body
- II. God's Pattern House: The Temple
 - A. A House Designed
 - B. A House Desecrated
 - C. A House Desolated
 - D. A House Destroyed
- III. God's Perfect House: The Lord Jesus
 - A. A House Designed
 - B. A House Desecrated
 - C. A House Desolated
 - D. A House Destroyed
- IV. God's Permanent House: The Church
 - A. The Lesson Concerning Salvation
 - B. The Lesson Concerning Security
 - C. The Lesson Concerning Sanctification
 1. You Are Justified Immediately in Your Spirit
 2. You Are Sanctified Progressively in Your Soul
 3. You are Glorified Ultimately in the Body

Conclusion

Introduction

Amen! Praise God! What wonderful music. Lisa, that's just glorious. First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19—find it in your Bibles. And, look up here for just a moment, and let me ask you this question: Do you know where God lives? Well, if you wanted to write

Him a letter, do you have the address? Do you have the zip code? Where is God's house? Now, when we come to church, we say we're going to God's house. Well, is this beautiful building—is this God's house? Where does God live? What is His address? Well, you know, the truth of the matter is that as you study the Bible, God has been living in a series of houses. God has been moving in, and moving out, and moving in, and moving out. He doesn't seem to stay put, until recently, in one particular place. He moves from house to house. And, what happens is that God moves into a house, the house gets defiled and dirty, and God moves out because God will not live in a dirty house. Now, you may live in a dirty house, but God won't live in a dirty house.

I heard about some college boys that wanted to keep the team mascot that happened to be a goat in the college dorm. And, they said, "You can't do that. What about the smell?" "Oh," they said, "the goat can get used to that smell. We did." Now, college boys will live in a dirty house, but God will not.

Where does God live? Well, look—1 Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's*" (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Where does God live? God lives in Adrian. God lives in you. God lives in Randy. God lives in Ken. God lives in us. In the Old Testament, God had a temple for His people. In the New Testament, God has a people for His temple. God lives in us. Our hearts are a royal residence. Now, I want you to notice some various houses that God has lived in and moved out of.

I. God's Primary House: Adam

For example, God's primary house was a man named Adam—God's primary house was Adam. The Bible says in Genesis chapter 2 and verse 7: "*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul*" (Genesis 2:7). Now, you want to know what man is? Man is body, soul, and spirit. God made man's body from the dust of the ground. God gave man a spirit by the breath of life. God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; that's the Spirit of God. And, man became a living soul.

Now, the scripture that corresponds to that is 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23—a key scripture if you're going to understand the Bible, so jot it down. First Thessalonians chapter 5, verse 23: "*And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God that your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he [who] calleth you, who also will do it*" (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). So, sitting in your chair this morning is spirit, soul, and body. Let's put them in reverse order so it will be more easily understood.

A. **Body**

First of all, your body—you have a body: your hide, your hair, your skin, your bone, your sinew, that extra flesh—*avoiidupois*. That's your body. With your body, you have physical life and you know the physical world—roughly speaking, the world beneath you.

B. **Soul**

And then, the Bible says that you have a soul. Now, what is your soul? The Greek word for soul is the word *psuche*—a word we anglicize and get *psyche* from, *psychology* from, *psychiatric*. Your soul is the emotional part of you—the cognitive part of you—that lives in your body. It's your mind, your emotion, your will—all of those things that make you the wonderful person that you are in your personality, your intelligence, your sense of humor, your proclivities, your idiosyncrasies—all of those things that make you the person you are, mind, emotion, and will. That is your soul. Now, with your body you have physical life and you know the world beneath you. With your soul you have psychological life; you know the world within and around you.

C. **Spirit**

What about your spirit? I used to think soul and spirit were about the same—six of one, half a dozen of another. But, that isn't what our scripture says. Our scripture says, *“And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body”* (1 Thessalonians 5:23). God makes a differentiation between spirit and soul, doesn't He? What does Hebrews 4:12 say? *“For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword...dividing asunder [between] soul and spirit.”* So, God divides between soul and spirit. What is your spirit? Your spirit is that part of your nature that enables you to know God, for *“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him”*—how?—*“in spirit”*—hello, worship Him how?—*“in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). And, when we get saved, God's *“Spirit...[bears] witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* (Romans 8:16).

Now, plants have a body, but they don't have a soul. Animals—it may surprise you, but they have a soul. Soul—the word *soul* means “conscious life.” In the Book of Genesis, the Bible speaks of living creatures have “*nephesh*,” or, “soul.” Your dog has mind, emotion, and will. But, what makes man more than a clever animal is he has a spirit. Dogs never pray—some may, but not most. I had one I thought might have. Dogs don't pray. Dogs don't think of eternity. You see, plants have inanimate life; animals have animate life, but humans have spiritual life. God put into you a spirit. God breathed into your nostrils the breath of life. You became a living soul because God's Spirit is in you. It's the spirit that is the organ of spiritual knowledge. And so, God made man to live in. Adam was a house of three rooms.

Do you know God loves threes, because God is a triune God: Father, Son, and Holy

Spirit. And, God just likes threes. Everything God made reflects His tri-unity. Space is what? Height, width, and depth. Now, height is not width; width is not depth, and depth is not height. They're all different, but they're all the same. They are distinguishable, but inseparable, like Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Not only space, but time—time is past, present, and future. The past is not the present; the present's not the future. The future's not the past. They are all distinguishable, all inseparable. You can't have one without the other. And, everything God has created is time and space in the natural realm. It reflects the tri-unity of God. And, when God made a man, like Randy over here, God made him body, soul, and spirit. *"And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Now, when God made Adam, when Adam came off the assembly line, Adam was to be a royal residence. God was to live in Adam's spirit. When the Bible says that God walked with Adam, do you think God, in physical form, took Adam by the hand and walked with him? No, God was not on the outside; God was on the inside. God was in Adam's spirit, and Adam walked and fellowshiped with God in the Garden of Eden. Adam was God's primary house. But, I want to give you four words that start with the letter D, because the whole message is going to be built around these four letters. And, I want you to see the first letter is design—or, the first word is *design*. The second word is *desecration*. The third word is *desolation*, and the fourth word is *destruction*. Now, I'm going to be disappointed if you can't give me those words back when I meet you in the hall in just a few moments. All right, all right—first, design; then, desecration; and then, desolation; and then, destruction. Now, you're going to see a pattern, and it's going to go through all of these houses.

1. A House Designed

First of all, God made Adam, and Adam was to be a house of three rooms. That innermost room, the spirit, was where God dwelt with Adam. The Bible says God will walk with him, live "with him that is of a humble and a contrite spirit" (Isaiah 57:15). And so, here was a house designed. God designed His house of three rooms. A primary house—that was Adam.

2. A House Desecrated

But, not only was that house designed; that house was, secondly, desecrated. Adam sinned. He sinned against God. And, when he sinned against God, he defiled, he dirtied, he desecrated the house. Genesis chapter 3, verse 6: *"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat"* (Genesis 3:6). Plain English: they sinned. They transgressed the law of God, and sin is a transgression of the law. They

disobeyed God. And so, here was a beautiful house that God had made; and now, they have desecrated—they have dirtied—the house.

3. A House Desolated

Well then, when they did that, what's the next step? The house is desolated. God moves out. God said in Genesis 3, verse 19—well, let's...well, yeah, that'll be good...Genesis 3:19: *"In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it thou wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."* Now, what happened is this—that when Adam sinned, God moved out. And now, Adam is minus God in his spirit, and his spirit is dead; but his soul and his body are still alive. Adam now has a house that is desolate; it is minus God. Now, rather than being God-centered, he's self-centered. And, rather than the spirit having dominance over the soul, the soul has dominance—the mind, the emotion, and the will. Pay attention now. Don't let your mind run off. I know what you're thinking, mister. Give me your mind again. Now, here's a house designed. Here's a house desecrated. And then, it's a house desolated. God moves out. Adam is now minus God in his spirit; and rather than being a spiritual man, he's a soulish man.

4. A House Destroyed

And then, what happens is the house designed, the house desecrated, the house desolated is a house destroyed. God says in verse 19: "In the day that you eat"—or, God says that you're going to return to dust (Genesis 3:19). You're going to be destroyed. Now again, I want you to think with me. I'm getting technical now, but it'll all come together. Don't cut out on me. All right.

Now, listen—how did Adam die? God had warned Adam and Eve, "In the day that you eat, you'll die" (Genesis 2:17). Well, did they die that day? If you read the Bible, Adam went on to live for 900 years, had children, and yet God said, "Adam, in the day that you eat, you'll die" (Genesis 2:17). Well, did he die or didn't he die? Well, let me tell you how he died. He died immediately in his spirit. He died progressively in his soul. He died ultimately in his body. Now, it's very important. I'll bring that back to you in a little bit, so don't forget it. And, if you do forget it, you're in bad trouble.

a. He Died Immediately in His Spirit

All right. Now, listen to me: he died immediately in his spirit. What does it mean to be lost? Do you have to be a bank robber, a rapist, an axe murderer? No. To be lost is to be minus God. How much sin does it take to be minus God? One-half of one sin. God won't live in a dirty house. God just moved out of Adam. He's just minus God. Now, he is ungodly, without God. God is on the outside, and no longer is Adam a royal residence. And so, God moves out. The minute Adam sinned he died immediately in his spirit. 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). Now, right now, there are some people listening to me in this auditorium. Your heart is thumping; your mind is working, but you're dead. The Bible says, "*She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she [lives]*" (1 Timothy 5:6). There are a lot of walking dead people in the city of Memphis. Adam died immediately in his spirit.

b. He Died Progressively in His Soul

Adam died progressively in his soul. What's his soul? The mind, emotion, and the will. His mind, meant to be centered on God, becomes a garden of weeds. Fears, and neuroses, and disappointments, and sorrows come into his heart, into his mind, into his soul. He dies progressively in his soul.

c. He Died Ultimately in His Body

And, he died ultimately in his body. Now, the seeds of death were in him the minute he sinned. Many of us at Christmastime buy what we call a *living tree*. It's not. You go down there where they have all those trees stacked up. That's not a living tree; that's a dead tree. And, when did it die? The minute that man cut it down. It's dead. Now, it may look alive, but wait until about New Year's—wait until about New Year's and it's dead already. Now, people come to church and, like that tree, you're all decorated. You look so good, so fresh, but you're separated from the life of God; and just given enough time, what happened when you sinned against God, which we have all done...you're separated from God. So, you died immediately in the spirit, progressively in the soul, and ultimately in the body. Your body is winding down to the grave.

All right. Now, watch—a house designed, a house desecrated, a house desolated—God moved out—and a house destroyed. That's God's primary house. That was Adam.

II. God's Pattern House: The Temple

Now, second house God moved into—and this is what I want to call *God's pattern house*, which was a temple. God built a temple for His people in the Old Testament. First of all, it was a tabernacle, which was just a tent. Later it became a more stately structure. But, it's the same idea—the same principle: the tabernacle, or the temple. Again, it was a house of three rooms. If you know anything about the tabernacle and the temple—three basic rooms. There was the outer court. That's a place of sacrifice. There was the inner court. That's where people met together and fellowshiped together. And then, there was the innermost court called the *Holy of Holies*. That's where the Shekinah glory of God was.

A. A House Designed

Now, what was that temple? Friend, that temple was nothing more, nothing less, than a gigantic pattern. As a matter of fact, the Book of Hebrews calls it a pattern—just a

pattern. It's an object lesson. It corresponds to the human body. The outer court was the place of sacrifice, where the brazen altar was. We're to "*present [our] bodies*"—what?—"*a living sacrifice*" (Romans 12:1). The inner court was a place where the people met, and worshipped, and had fellowship together like we're having in this church, and that represents the soul. We fellowship with one another on a soulish plane. But then, that innermost place represents the human spirit—that Holy of Holies. Well, this was God's pattern house. God used the temple to teach a colossal lesson, and I don't want us to miss the lesson. First of all, a house designed—God designed the temple of three rooms, and God said, "See that you do it according to the pattern that I gave you because it's a lesson" (Hebrews 8:5)—house designed.

B. A House Desecrated

A house desecrated—notice, if you will, in Matthew 21, verse 13 what Jesus said about the temple: "*And [He] said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves*" (Matthew 21:13). Now, a house designed, a house desecrated.

C. A House Desolated

And then what happens? A house desolated. God won't live in a dirty house. Look in Matthew 23, verse 38: "*Behold, your house is left unto you desolate*" (Matthew 23:38). Do you see that? Now, He doesn't call it *my Father's house* anymore. Before, he said, "*My [Father's] house shall be...[a] house of prayer*" (Matthew 21:13). No longer is it "my Father's" house. Now, it's *your* house. Now, the strange thing is that after they'd taken the holy temple and made it a den of thieves, they continue to worship in it. But, God was a thousand light years away. It's no longer God's house; it is your house. A house designed, a house desecrated—a den of thieves—a house desolated. "*Your house is left unto you desolate*" (Matthew 23:38).

D. A House Destroyed

And then, what next? A house destroyed. Look in Matthew 24, verses 1–2: "*And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down*" (Matthew 24:1–2). Designed, desecrated, desolated, destroyed. God's moved out, and God moves on. And, you can go to where that beautiful temple was once, and you will find not one stone upon another. There are other temples that have been preserved, but not this one—not this one. Jesus's Word is fulfilled. Now, are you catching a pattern? There's a primary house. There's a pattern house. Now, God is moving on.

III. God's Perfect House: The Lord Jesus

Here's the third house that I want you to see that God moved into, and it's what I want to call *God's perfect house*. Do you know what God's perfect house was? It was Jesus Christ Himself. Now, notice what Jesus said about Himself here in John chapter 2, verses 19 through 21: "Jesus answered and [saith] unto them, Destroy this temple"—can you see Him pointing to Himself?—"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?"—but now, notice this—"But he spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:19–21). Jesus knew that His body was the temple of God. And, it was a perfect temple.

A. A House Designed

First of all, a house designed—Jesus said, "*A body [thou] hast...prepared me*" (Hebrews 10:5). A house designed—He was the second Adam, body, soul, and spirit. He was totally perfect. A house designed—He could point to anyone and say, "*Which of you convinceth me of sin?*" (John 8:46). This is why He was born of a virgin—to be perfect. He's not a son of Adam. "*In Adam all die*" (1 Corinthians 15:22). He came as He did, born of a virgin, to be what He was—sinless. He was what he was—sinless, to do what He did, to die for our sins. Only a perfect sacrifice could be acceptable before God.

B. A House Desecrated

Now, follow with me—a house designed. But now, a house desecrated—you say, "That house? That house—Jesus? Was His temple desecrated?" Absolutely. Read in Isaiah chapter 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*"—on who? On Jesus—"the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:6). First Peter 2, verse 24: "*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed*" (1 Peter 2:24). "Him who knew no sin"—that's Jesus—"God hath made to be sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). "*All we like sheep have gone astray*" (Isaiah 53:6). But, God took my sin, your sin, our sin—all the rotten, filthy, dirty, perverted sin of this world—and put that sin upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus never sinned, but my sin, your sin, our sin, their sin, all sin was laid upon Jesus Christ. A house designed—a house desecrated.

C. A House Desolated

What's the next D? A house desolated. Notice in Matthew 27, verse 46: Jesus is nailed to that hellish machine called a *cross* in agony and blood, and He cries out, "*About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*" (Matthew 27:46). I'll tell you why:

God can't live in a dirty house. And, when Jesus was willing to become our substitute, when Jesus was willing to take our sins upon Himself, then that perfect house was desecrated. And, God the Father turned His back upon God the Son, for the Bible says of God the Father, *"Thou art of purer eyes than to behold...iniquity"* (Habakkuk 1:13). And, here's Jesus, bearing the sin of the world on that cross, and God Himself turns His back on the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you remember when I said earlier today Jesus died instead of you? You ought to love the Lord Jesus for what He did for you. When David died, David said, *"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me"* (Psalm 23:4). Friend, I want to tell you that Jesus walked that dark valley all by Himself. He could not even say, "Lord, My God, My Father, be with Me." *"Why [hath] thou forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46). A house designed. A house desecrated—a house desolated.

D. A House Destroyed

And then what? A house destroyed. Jesus knew that that temple would be destroyed (Himself). John chapter 2, verse 19: *"Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"* (John 2:19). Jesus knew that He would be destroyed. And, who would be the One who would destroy Him? God the Father. You say, "Now, wait a minute. I thought we crucified Jesus." Well, in a sense that He died for our sins, we did. But, the Bible says, *"It [hath] pleased the LORD to bruise him"* (Isaiah 53:10) in Isaiah 53, verse 10. When Jesus took my sin, when Jesus became my substitute, God had to treat Jesus as He would treat me. A house designed, a house desecrated, a house desolate, and a house destroyed. The Bible says in Romans 8 that *"[God] spared not his [only] Son"* (Romans 8:32).

Now, come up here and let me ask you a question: If God did not spare Jesus when He was bearing our sins, what makes you think God is going to spare you if you reject the sin-bearer? If there were ever a time when God would have been lenient on sin, it would have been when that sin was upon His Son, Jesus. If God could not overlook the sin that was on Jesus, I'll tell you, my friend, God cannot overlook your sin. Now, God's pattern house—excuse me, God's primary house—was Adam. God's pattern house was the temple. God's perfect house was the Lord Jesus—design, desecrate, desolated, and destroyed all of them.

IV. God's Permanent House: The Church

That brings me to the final point, and the final point is God's permanent house. Did you know that God has stopped moving? Did you know that God has moved and He is not moving out again? First Corinthians chapter 6, verse 19: *"What? know ye not that your*

body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which [you] have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price”—oh, what a price—“therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). You want to know where God lives? Right here. God lives in me, and God is never moving out—God is never moving out.

Now, you say, “Pastor, are you certain that He’s not moving out?” I’m absolutely certain that He is not moving out. Notice John 14, verse 16. Well, let’s look in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 16: “[For] what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them”—and the word *dwell* means “to settle down”—“and walk in them”—just like He walked with Adam—“and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16). And then, look, if you will, in John 14, verse 16: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you”—how long?—“for ever” (John 14:16). Look in Ephesians 3, verse 17: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:17). When God moves in, He is not moving out. Now, sometimes we come to church and we say, “Well, we’re coming to God’s house.” No, you’re bringing God’s house to church. You see, God lives in you. Now, sometimes we think, “Well, been to church. Now it’s 12. We’re moving—we’re moving—out of God’s house.” Friend, your heart is not a hotel with checkout time 12:00 noon. God comes into you to live in you, to stay in you once for all. Now, having said that, I want to draw several lessons and we’ll be finished.

A. The Lesson Concerning Salvation

First of all, the lesson concerning salvation. What is salvation? Salvation is not getting man out of earth into Heaven. That’s what most people talk about. Don’t you want to be saved so can you go to Heaven? Well, I want to go to Heaven, but that’s not what salvation is. That’s just a by-product of salvation. Now, if you don’t hear anything else, you listen to what I’m saying: *salvation is not getting man out of earth into Heaven; it is getting God out of Heaven into man.* That’s what it is. Being saved is getting God back in your heart, helping you to understand that you are now a temple of the Holy Ghost. And, it’s so wonderful when God does that.

This past week I received this letter: “To the wonderful people at Love Worth Finding Ministries: Hello, my name is Vanessa”—I’ll leave off her last name because of the nature of this letter—“I am a single mother of three children. I am writing to let you know how much your program has been touching my life. I want to thank you for your daily broadcast. Currently, I have been blessed to have a new job as a receptionist. I sit in the back area office section. I listen to your program here in Milwaukee on VCY program regularly every day. Thank you for blessing my life and showing me things I

need to know in my new walk with Christ. Since I've given my life to Christ, to make a long story short, my life has been changed from being a prostitute and drug addict to a devoted mother with a full-time job. I have learned to trust God in every area of my life. It has been one year, and my life has been completely turned around. Thank you. I just want you to know that your radio program is being heard and is touching lives. I know now that God loves even the worst people, and He sends His word to heal our diseases. I thank Him for changing my life. I will forever be grateful because God is so good. Keep preaching God's Word. Don't stop. God bless you. Keep on keeping on." Now, this is not a woman who is concerned about going to Heaven. She is a person who said, "I have life in the Lord Jesus Christ"—not a prostitute anymore, not a drug addict anymore.

What is salvation? It is not getting man out of earth into Heaven. Thank God for Heaven. I'm going to Heaven. I hope you are. See you there. But oh, it's getting God out of Heaven into man.

B. The Lesson Concerning Security

Now, not only the lesson concerning salvation but the lesson concerning security. Did you... You see, friend, God has stopped moving. God is not moving around anymore. God dwells in our heart by faith, and God is never, never, never, never, never going to forsake us. He says, "*I will never leave [you], nor forsake [you]*" (Hebrews 13:5). And actually, the Greek language is, "I will never, never, never, no never, ever, never leave you"—He keeps piling up the negatives—"nor forsake you." He's moved in to settle down. Well, you say, "I thought you said God wouldn't live in a dirty house, and I'm not perfect." No, friend—I'll tell you what happens now: because of Calvary's sacrifice, no sin will ever be imputed to you. Romans 4 says, "*Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin*" (Romans 4:8). If God were to put one-half of one sin on your record, He'd have to move out. But, sin is never imputed to you. "Well, what happens, then, when I sin?" God will carry you to the woodshed and beat the tar out of you—that's what'll happen. "*Whom the Lord [loves] he [chastens], and [scourges] every son whom he [receives]*" (Hebrews 12:6). But, you are secure.

Some people don't believe in eternal security. They believe you get saved and then lost, and saved and lost, and saved and lost. You become a spiritual neurotic if you believe that. If you didn't know the next day whether you're going to have a place at the table, a bed, a room, or whatever, as a little child, after a while, you'd become a nervous neurotic. Some people say, "Oh, I believe in security. I believe in security when I get to Heaven." You think, "Boy, I'm going to jump into Heaven, slam the door behind me, and say, 'Whooo, I'm safe now.'" Well, wait a minute—what makes you think you'll be safe up there if you're not safe down here? The angels fell from Heaven. Friend, security is

not in a place; it's in a person—and His name is Jesus Christ. Oh, I thank God... And, the lesson concerning security—He has moved in never to move out again.

C. The Lesson Concerning Sanctification

And, there's also a lesson concerning sanctification. Now, listen to me. I told you how Adam died, and I told you not to forget it; but you've forgot it, so I'm going to remind you. Adam died immediately in his spirit. He died progressively in his soul. He died ultimately in his body. Got it? Say, "Got it." All right. Now, listen—when you get saved, God puts all that in reverse—puts all that in reverse.

1. You Are Justified Immediately in Your Spirit

When you get saved, you are justified immediately in your spirit. The Bible speaks of *"the spirits of just men made perfect"* (Hebrews 12:23). You are justified immediately. The moment you say "yes" to Jesus Christ, that moment—hallelujah!—you are justified in your spirit. And, every sin, every blot, every blur, every blemish, every stain is buried in the grave of God's forget-forgive-forgetfulness.

2. You Are Sanctified Progressively in Your Soul

Now, not only are you justified immediately in your spirit—you are sanctified progressively in your soul. Adam died progressively in his soul, but you are sanctified progressively in your soul. God is working you day by day to make you more like the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, we're not totally sanctified yet, are we? Philippians 1:6 says, *"He [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it."*

3. You are Glorified Ultimately in the Body

Justified immediately in the spirit, sanctified progressively in the soul, and glorified ultimately in the body. Ultimately, I'm going to be glorified. One of these days, the Bible teaches, He's going to change my vile body, that it might be like unto His glorious body. That's the reason the psalmist said, *"I [will] be satisfied, when I awake, [in] thy likeness"* (Psalm 17:15). What I'm going to be like I don't know, but I know one thing: I'm going to be like Jesus, and that's good enough for me—and it ought to be good enough for you. A three-year-old can ask questions about Heaven that nobody can answer. But, there are some things we know and there are some things we don't know—some things we can be dogmatic about, and some things we can't be dogmatic about, and some things we can be bull-dogmatic about. *"It doth not yet appear what we shall be [like]: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him"* (1 John 3:2). I am going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Adam died immediately in his spirit, progressively in his soul, ultimately in his body. I am justified immediately in my spirit, sanctified progressively in my soul, glorified ultimately in my body. What a day it's going to be when the reddening shadows of this life mingle with the purpling dawn of eternity and Jesus comes. And, we'll rise to meet

Him in the air. Oh, how we'll praise Him! You know, we have a great salvation, don't we? He has moved in, settled down. He's never moving out. *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which...[you] have of God, and [you] are not your own?"* (1 Corinthians 6:19). And, therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit.

How many of you would light up a cigarette in here? Please don't answer if you would. You say, "I wouldn't do it." But, you can hardly wait to get out. Hey friend, if you're going to defile anything, it would be better to defile this than to defile the body. See what I'm saying? Your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost of God. How many of you would use language out there that you wouldn't use in here? Oh, no. We are temples of God. Every day is a holy day. Every place is a sacred place. God lives in me. Isn't that neat? Isn't that wonderful? I hope you get in on it.

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. If you're not saved and you want to be saved, let's get it settled today. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God that Jesus, who saved this precious girl that we talked about, will save you. You say, "Well Adrian, I'm not a prostitute and a drug addict." You know what Jesus said to the Pharisees who were self-righteous? He said, "Prostitutes and tax collectors"—that means those who abuse the people—"are going to Heaven before you because they saw that they were sinners." (Matthew 21:31)

Now friend, there's no one so bad they can't be saved and no one so good they need not be saved. If you want to be saved, I want you to pray this prayer: "Dear God, I am a sinner. I am lost. I need to be saved. I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me. Lord, You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. I believe You shed Your blood on the cross for me. I believe that God raised You from the dead, and I receive You now"—pray it—"I receive You now, this moment, as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus"—pray it from your heart—"Save me, Lord Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Then, pray this way: "Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. I don't look for a feeling or ask for a sign. I stand on Your Word. And now, Lord Jesus, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You. I will make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen."

"Pastor, why did you ask me to pray I will make it public?" Because the Bible says, *"Let the redeemed of the LORD say so"* (Psalm 107:2). Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of Me in this sinful and adulterous generation, I'll be ashamed of you when I come again" (Mark 8:38). So, here's what we're going to do: we're going to sing an invitational hymn. Now, listen very carefully—no stirring, no moving, no leaving. This is the most

important part of the service. The ministers of our church are going to be standing at the head of each of these aisles, all the way across the front to welcome those of you who'll be coming. If you're in the balcony, there'll be a minister under that banner up there that says "Redeemer," or that one over there that says "Messiah" for those of you in the balcony. And, when we begin to sing, "Lord, I Believe; Lord, I Receive; Lord, I Confess You Now," you step out and come. And, come to one of those ministers and just say, "I'm trusting Jesus."

What will happen? We'll rejoice with you. We'll give you some scripture to stand on. We'll answer any questions that we can answer and seal it in prayer. It'll take just a few moments. If I could do it for you, I would, but I cannot. I've preached as best I know how. You prayed. And, if you meant business—if you meant business—then without delay, as soon as we begin to sing, if possible, you be the first one down here, and you say to the minister, "I'm trusting Jesus." And, we want to seal it in prayer with you. Others of you who are saved, and you know that you are saved, and you need a church home, I want you even to lead the way for these others. I want you to step out, and come down this aisle, and say, "I want to place my membership here." And, he'll tell you how you may become a member of this wonderful church. Others of you—if you have a special need and need somebody just to pray for you, you come and we'll pray with you and pray for you. Respectfully, I'm going to ask that no one leave it unless it is an emergency. If you're with a friend that needs to make a decision, you may volunteer to come forward with your friend. How beautiful it is to see one friend bring another to Jesus!

Let's pray together: Father God, bless the invitation. Open hearts, I pray, and may this be a glorious hour for many. In Jesus' dear name. Amen. Let's stand together. You step out and come on the first stanza.

The Cure for Carnality

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 23, 1977

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Outline

Introduction

- A. The Natural Man
- B. The Spiritual Man
- C. The Carnal Man
- I. Aware of the Savior's Purchase of Us
 - A. The Anticipatory Sufferings of Calvary
 - B. The Physical Sufferings of Calvary
 - C. The Spiritual Sufferings of Calvary
- II. Awakened to the Spirit's Presence in Us
 - A. The Holy Spirit Is the Substance of Your Life
 - B. The Holy Spirit Is the Strength of Your Service
 - C. The Holy Spirit Is the Secret of the Christian's Victory
 - D. The Holy Spirit Is the Seal of the Christian's Security
 - E. The Holy Spirit Is the Source of the Christian's Knowledge
 - F. The Holy Spirit Is the Sustainer of the Christian's Faith
- III. Available for the Father's Purpose Through Us

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bibles, please, and turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, as we're continuing our journey through 1 Corinthians. Our text today is a well-known text—well-known, because of the truth that it has for us, and the implication it has for our lives. First Corinthians, chapter 6, and beginning in verse 19— and we're speaking on this subject: "The Cure for Carnality": *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's"* (1 Corinthians 6:19).

A. The Natural Man

You will remember that, already, we have preached that there are three classes of men. There is the natural man. *"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Corinthians 2:14). The natural man is an unsaved man—a man without Christ, without God, without life, without hope, and without Heaven. He's a

natural man, and he's just doing what comes naturally.

B. The Spiritual Man

And then, there's the spiritual man. This is a man who has been saved, who has been filled with the Spirit, who is controlled by the Spirit, and who is walking in the Spirit. His life is a supernatural life—not a natural life, but a supernatural life—so he's not doing what comes naturally. He's doing what comes supernaturally.

C. The Carnal Man

But then, there's another class of persons. This time, he's a very strange person. He has been saved; he's been born again; he has received Christ into his life; he has been made a partaker of the divine nature; and, when he dies, he's going to Heaven. But, he's not filled with the Spirit; he's not living a victorious life, because he's what the Bible calls a carnal man. He has received Christ, but he's still a babe in Christ. I'm afraid that he is an average Christian, but not a normal Christian. Remember that there's a vast difference between the average and the normal. The normal is what we ought to be; the average is what probably most of us are. He's like the average person—he's not doing what comes naturally, and he's not doing what comes supernaturally—he's doing what comes unnaturally. It's unnatural for a Christian to act and to behave like he does. He is not doing what he ought to do; he is a carnal Christian.

What are you going to do about it? What is the cure for carnality? May I tell you that our text tells us what the cure for carnality is. First of all, the cure for carnality is to be aware of the Savior's purchase of us. Number two: We should be awake to the Spirit's presence in us. Number three: We must be available for the Father's purpose through us. Now, I want you to see that in this text.

I. Aware of the Savior's Purchase of Us

First of all, we need to be aware of the Savior's purchase of us. Look at our text: *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God,"*—now, watch it—*"and ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price"* (1 Corinthians 6:19). Jesus Christ purchased you. You cannot say, "Well, I am mine," because you are not. You belong to Jesus Christ. You are not your own. With his rich, red, royal, and ruby blood, Jesus has purchased you, and I want you to consider the price that was paid for you.

Do you know what a carnal person is? A carnal person is a selfish person. He is living as though he belonged to himself; and so, what he wants to do, what he wants to think, what he wants to feel, what he wants to say, what he wants to buy, where he wants to go, how he wants to act—he does. He acts as though he owns himself, when he does not. The cure for carnality is to be aware of the Savior's purchase of you, to see

the price that was paid for you. And, I'm going to speak, for just a few moments, about Calvary—the price that was paid for you.

I want to tell you that it is with a deep feeling of inadequacy that I try to describe Calvary. When I try to describe Calvary, I always feel that I am walking on holy ground and somewhat, or somehow, profaning that holy ground; so, I want you to take the shoes from your feet and come quietly with me as we consider Calvary.

A. The Anticipatory Sufferings of Calvary

First of all, I would like for you to consider the anticipatory sufferings of Calvary—the price that was paid. You're not your own—you're bought with a price, and that's what we're talking about—the anticipation that Jesus Christ had at the cross. Have you ever thought about that? Have you ever thought about how Jesus Christ anticipated the cross? He did. You see, the Bible says, concerning Him, in Psalms, chapter 88, and verse 15: *"I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up"* (Psalm 88:15)—from His youth, Jesus Christ faced bloody Calvary. If you took a teenage boy in this congregation, and told that teenage boy that, at the age 33, he was going to die a death indescribably horrible, and nothing could stop it, then how do you think that boy would live the rest of his life—knowing that, at age 33, he would die an indescribably horrible death? The anticipation. Aren't you glad that God doesn't tell us the future? Aren't you glad that we don't know the future? But, Jesus Christ did. He said: *"For this cause came I into the world"* (John 18:37).

Anticipation, sometimes, is not good. I remember well when I was a boy, and we used to go for Sunday afternoon drives. Sometimes, my brother and I would get into a fight in the backseat, or do something that we ought not to do, and my dad would say, "When we get home, I'm going to whip you." That's all. And brother, it was like the law of the Medes and the Persians. It would not be changed. He said it, and that settled it: "When I get home I'm going to whip you." And, I want to tell you: Something that used to be a Sunday afternoon ride turned into something that was very terrible for me, because every turn of that wheel meant that we were getting closer and closer and closer. It's going to happen, because he said it, and there's nothing going to change it. "When I get home—when I get you home—I'm going to whip you."

Oh listen, friend—have you ever considered that Jesus Christ lived in the shadow of that cross? And, when Jesus Christ was working there, in Joseph's carpenter shop, and he handled those huge beams, don't you know that they reminded Him of that cross that one day He would hang upon? Can you imagine there, in the carpenter's shop, when he would take one of those big iron spikes and drive it in, He thought of the searing nails that would be driven through His quivering flesh? Can you not imagine that, even when

Jesus Christ saw a rose, He looked past that rose to the thorns and knew that, one day, Jesus—He Himself—would be crowned with thorns.

William Holman Hunt, the great artist, has painted a picture, and it shows Jesus Christ after a day's work in the carpenter's shop. He's obviously tired, and he comes to the door of that carpenter shop. He's stretching out, and he's yawning—just a ruddy lad yawning—but the sun is setting in the west, and on the back wall is the shadow of a cross. Jesus Christ lived in the shadow of that cross.

I say to consider the anticipatory sufferings of Jesus. Consider the sufferings in Gethsemane. Have you ever thought about Gethsemane? When I think about Gethsemane, it breaks my heart—Jesus Christ praying in agony. Jesus Christ is praying, so that the minute capillaries rupture, and He sweats great drops of blood in agony—praying for me and praying for you. Jesus had asked His disciples to watch with Him—to watch and pray—but they sleep and the city sleeps, but Jesus' eyes will not close in sleep until they close in death. Have you considered Gethsemane—dark Gethsemane—where Jesus Christ had to pray, “Father, Father, if You don't stop this, then I'm going to die ahead of time.” The Bible tells us, in the Gospel of Mark, that He feared that He would die prematurely. He said: “*My soul is exceeding sorrowful unto death*” (Mark 14:34).

I want you to consider, with me, His mock trial. They lied; they cursed; they blasphemed—and there has never been a greater miscarriage of justice. Jesus Christ spoke not a word, because He could not have proven Himself innocent without my being proven guilty. And, since Jesus Christ was taking my place, since Jesus Christ took my shame, and since Jesus Christ stood speechless—just as I would have to stand speechless had He not stood speechless for me—Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, lost an election to a common criminal, and they cried out, “Give us Barrabas and crucify Jesus!”

B. The Physical Sufferings of Calvary

I want you to consider the indecencies that were perpetrated upon the Lord Jesus Christ—all of this to buy you, all of this to purchase you. They took the Lord Jesus Christ and stripped Him, and then they took some barrel-chested, psychopathic, dungeon keeper, who was probably a volunteer for the job, who took along a *cat of nine tails* with little bits of bone, glass, and lead embedded in the end of each of those leather thongs, and they whipped Him until his back literally hanged from his ribs in ribbons and shreds. His back looked like raw hamburger meat that had been ground. It would hang in flayed ribbons from His back. Many a man would die from simply being beaten with a *cat of nine tails*.

They stripped Him; they shamed Him; and they put a purple robe upon His back that

sticks and clots to the blood there. They spit in His face; they took clubs and beat Him upon the head; they smote Him; they loosened His teeth; and they took great handfuls of His beard, and they jerked it from His face. Isaiah said that His visage—that is, His countenance—was so marred that you could not recognize Him as a human being. He looked like some sort of an animal or some sort of a beast, they had so brutalized and so beat the face of the Savior. We see these pictures of Jesus hanging on the cross with a little blood trickling down from a crown of thorns. No, that was not it—I am telling you. Strong soldiers hit Him with their fists in the face; they loosened His teeth; they pulled His beard; and they spat. What I'm trying to tell you is this—you were bought with a price, and you are not your own.

Then, they took a rough timber; they ripped that purple robe from His back, now, that has clotted; and they hung Him there, upon that cross. They stretched Him out on that hellish machine, and, with long spikes like railroad spikes, they nailed His quivering hands and His quivering feet to that cross—the splinters not regarding His wound. Every nerve in His body becomes a path, upon which the feet of pain run up and down. His body is in convulsions; He's hung there—a mangled form on a bloody cross.

“Blessed Redeemer”—that's what they sang—“Precious Redeemer, seems now I see Him on Calvary's tree,” but I wonder if any of us really have. I wonder if any of us really have.

Blessèd Redeemer! Precious Redeemer!
Seems now I see Him on Calvary's tree;
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading,
Blind and unheeding—dying for me! (Avis M. Christiansen)

C. The Spiritual sufferings of Calvary

But, it's not over. His greatest suffering was not His physical suffering—it was His spiritual suffering. The heavens darkened at noonday, and the glowing face of the sun veils. His friends have forsaken Him. He is there alone, suspended between Heaven and earth. His friends have deserted him. His enemies castigate Him, and God the Father—mystery of mysteries; I cannot understand it, and I cannot explain it—but I know that God the Father forsook God the Son on the cross. The Bible says that God is of pure eyes and can't behold iniquity. Jesus Christ, when He took my place, had to take all of the Hell that I would suffer, and a part of the Hell that I would suffer would be separation from Almighty God. And so, God the Son was separated from God the Father. It was, as it were, that God the Father turned His back on God the Son, and Jesus cried: “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46).

King David also suffered. King David knew what it was to walk that narrow valley—that lonesome valley—but he was not all alone. For King David said: “*Yea, though I*

walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me" (Psalm 23:4). But friend, Jesus couldn't say that. Jesus walked that lonesome valley all by Himself. *"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* (Matthew 27:46). Jesus died suspended between Heaven and earth—friends forsaking Him, enemies accusing Him, and God the Father turning His back upon Him. Alone, alone, alone, Jesus took the sin of the world, drank that bitter cup, and died in agony and despair of utter midnight. You cannot imagine. Thousands of angels crowded over the battlements of heaven with their swords drawn, and said, "Lord Jesus, say the word. We'll destroy them all." The only words He did say were: "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing" (Luke 23:34).

What I'm trying to say is that, folks, we're bought with a price. We're bought with a price. You are not your own. How can I be carnal and understand that Jesus died for me? That's the reason why the songwriter said:

Love so amazing , so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all. (Isaac Watts)

A carnal Christian is someone who needs to be aware of the Savior's purchase of him. See? That's the cure for carnality—to awaken and to be aware of the Savior's purchase of you.

II. Awakened to the Spirit's Presence in Us

Secondly, the cure for carnality is not only to be aware of the Savior's purchase of you, but also to be awakened to the Spirit's presence in you. A carnal Christian not only has forgotten that he's been bought with a price, but he's also forgotten that he has been inhabited by the Holy Spirit. Paul said: *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God"* (1 Corinthians 6:19). God's Holy Spirit is alive in me right now. How can I be a carnal Christian? How can I do my pleasure when I don't belong to myself anymore, and furthermore, when I have been inhabited by the Holy Spirit?

Someone has well said that the sin of the Old Testament was the rejection of God the Father. The sin of the New Testament time, of the Gospels, and of the time when the Bible was written, was the rejection of God the Son. But, the sin of this age is the rejection of God the Holy Spirit. So many people have failed to understand that, now, our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit of God. Why should you be awake to His presence in you? May I tell you how important the Holy Spirit is to you? You want me to tell you what the Holy Spirit is to do in your life? Get your pencil and list them.

A. The Holy Spirit Is the Substance of Your Life

First of all, the Holy Spirit is the substance of your life. He is the substance of your life.

Now, the Bible tells us, in 1 Peter 1:4, that when we are saved, we are made partakers of the divine nature. That is, when I become a Christian, the Holy Spirit comes into me, and He is the substance of my life. Somebody says to me, “Your religion is a crutch.” Well, you’re wrong, mister; it’s an iron lung. In Him I live, move, and have my being (Acts 17:28). He is the substance of my life. Without him I have no life—I merely have existence. In Him is life. You need to be aware, because he is the substance of your life.

B. The Holy Spirit Is the Strength of Your Service

But, not only is He the substance of your life, the Holy Spirit is also the strength of your service. How am I going to serve God? I would no more try to go to the moon in a Model T Ford, than I would to try to stand up here and preach in the strength of my flesh. The Bible says, in Acts 1, verse 8: *“But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me”* (Acts 1:8). He—the Holy Spirit—is the strength of my life.

Billy Sunday used to lay his sermon notes on Isaiah 61, verse 1, which says: *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach”* (Isaiah 61:1). Ha! No wonder God used him! The secret of Billy Sunday’s life—the strength of Billy Sunday’s life—was the power of the Holy Spirit. Oh, you know, if you’re not awake to this, then no wonder you’re going to be such a carnal Christian—you’re trying to do it in your own life.

I think that Stuart Briscoe said that there are four stages in the Christian’s life. The first stage is after he gets saved, and he says, “Man, this is easy.” Oh, he’s rejoicing in the Lord. But then, after a while, he starts reading “The Demands of Discipleship,” and he feels the onslaughts of the devil. He says, “This is hard.” But, he goes a little bit further, and he comes to the third stage, where he says, “This is impossible; nobody can do this.” And then, he discovers the dynamo that God has put in him, and he says, “This is glorious, glorious.” Which stage are you in right now—the easiest, the hard, the impossible, or the glorious? You’ll move right on, until finally, you will come to the place where you’ll say, “This is wonderful. It’s not me—it’s Christ. He is the strength of my life.”

C. The Holy Spirit Is the Secret of the Christian’s Victory

But, not only that—thirdly, He’s also the secret of the Christian’s victory. How are you going to overcome the devil? Remember what we said: If you haven’t met the devil, then it’s because you and the devil have been going in the same direction. How are you going to overcome him? Only by the Holy Spirit in your life. That’s what the Bible means, in 1 John 4:4, where it says: *“Greater is he than is in you, than he that is in the world.”*

A little girl got saved, and somebody said, “Now that you’re saved, honey, what are

you going to do if the devil knocks at your heart's door?" She said, "I'm going to say, "Jesus, would you please go answer the door?" Isn't that great? "Greater is he that is in you"—greater, greater—"greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4).

D. The Holy Spirit Is the Seal of the Christian's Security

The Holy Spirit is the secret of the Christian's victory. Friend, the Holy Spirit is the seal of the Christian's security. He is the seal of your security. The Bible says, in Ephesians, chapter 1, and verse 13: "*After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise*" (Ephesians 1:13). I don't keep Him—He keeps me. It's not that I hold onto God—it is that God holds onto me. I am secure in the Lord Jesus Christ. I tell you, I'd rather be a saved sinner than an innocent angel. Adam was simply innocent, but I am righteous. Adam could lose what he had, but I can't lose what I've got. Glory to God! Angels never knew the joy that my salvation brings.

E. The Holy Spirit Is the Source of the Christian's Knowledge

Sealed with the Holy Spirit. He is the seal of the Christian's security. Friend, He is the source of the Christian's knowledge. That's the way that you're going to understand. Remember that passage that we preached on, a while back, about the three types of men? We said, concerning the natural man, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, and verse 14: "*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*" (1 Corinthians 2:14). And remember, 1 Corinthians, chapter 2, and verse 9, says: "*Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him*" (1 Corinthians 2:9). Oh, so many times we use that as a funeral text. Oh, we're going to see all these things when we get to Heaven. But friend, God's not talking about Heaven—He's not talking about the sweet by-and-by—He's talking about the nasty *now-and-now*.

Listen, it says: "*God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 2:10)—not He *will*; it is not something that we're just going to see when we get to Heaven. The Holy Spirit, my friend, is the source of your knowledge. How are you going to know Jesus Christ? How is Jesus Christ going to be real to you? The Holy Spirit, who lives in you, makes Jesus Christ real to you, and that makes a difference. You don't pray at Jesus, then—you pray to Him. What a difference! Oh listen, He is so real to you. He is real, real, real, because the Holy Spirit takes the things of God and makes them real to you. He is the source of your knowledge.

F. The Holy Spirit Is the Sustainer of the Christian's Faith

Not only is He the source of your knowledge, but He is also the sustainer of your faith.

How is it that you can keep on trusting the Lord? The same Holy Spirit that made Him real to you keeps Him real to you, even in hard times. First Peter, chapter 4, and verse 14: *“If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified”* (1 Peter 4:14).

How are you going to face the hard times? They’re coming. Did you know—did you know—that in the past 30 years—Dr. Stephen Olford told us this in Florida last year—more Christians have given their lives for Christ, more martyrs have died for Jesus in the last 30 years, than have died for Jesus Christ in all of the centuries prior to that time—in the last 30 years? Don’t you think that the age of martyrdom is past, and don’t you think that you may not be given a chance to seal with your bun what you say with your lips.

When we stand and sing “Jesus is All the World to Me” or “Faith of our fathers, Holy Faith, We will be true to thee till death,” will you? Huh? Will you? You won’t even come back Sunday night, and I know some of you can’t come, but I’m talking about those of you who will be turning up your toes and watching “The Wonderful World of Disney.” You won’t even tithe. What are you going to do? I’ll tell you one thing: If you do not awaken to the Spirit’s presence in you, then you’re going to have it hard. He will be the sustainer of your faith. Stephen was a man filled with the Holy Spirit and when they stoned him, his face shone like the face of an angel. Somebody has said that the trouble with Christians in America today is that nobody wants to kill them anymore. Well, maybe we’ll wake up, and they will too—we’ll see.

What I’m saying is this, friend: that the cure for carnality—the cure for carnality—number one, is to be aware of the Savior’s purchase of you; number two, it is to awaken to the Spirit’s presence in you. If the Holy Spirit is all of these things to you, then you need to awaken to that. You need to awaken to that, and let the Holy Spirit do what He wants to do. *The Holy Spirit, who is a resident, needs to become president; the Holy Spirit who is dormant needs to become dominant; and the Holy Spirit who is present needs to become preeminent.* We need to be filled with the Spirit, aware and awake.

III. Available for the Father’s Purpose Through Us

But thirdly and finally, the cure for carnality is not only to be aware of the Savior’s purchase of us, and awake to the Spirit’s presence in us, but also, we need to be available for the Father’s purpose through us. What is the Father’s purpose through us? Look at our text again: *“Therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (1 Corinthians 6:20). What is God’s purpose for Adrian Rogers? What is God’s purpose for you, for Elmer Bailey, or for Jim Whitmire? What is God’s purpose for this choir? That He, through you, will get glory. Now, that’s what it’s all about. That is what

it's all about—that God will get glory. Now friend, God is in the business of getting glory for Himself, and God says, “My glory will I not share with another.” You see, God did not buy you with the blood of His Son and fill you with His Holy Spirit to have you serve your own carnal ambition.

A carnal person is a person who is seeking his own welfare. A Spirit-filled person—a spiritual person—is a person who is seeking to glorify God. I've heard all kinds of formulas for being filled with the Spirit; but may I tell you, that there is just simply one way to be filled with the Spirit. You see, the Holy Spirit is very singular-minded. I say, “God, I want to be filled with the Spirit, that I might be a great preacher.” God says, “I'm not interested.” I say, “Well, well, God, I want to be filled with the Spirit, so that I can serve humanity.” God says, “I'm not interested.” I say, “God, I want to be filled with the Spirit, so that I can understand Your Word.” God says, “I'm not interested.” “Well, God, I want to be filled with the Spirit, so that I'll be a great soul winner.” God says, “I'm not interested.” “O God, I want to be filled with the Spirit, so that I can pray better”. God says, “I'm not interested.” “O God, I want, by life or by death, that You be glorified in me.” God says, “I'm interested. I'm interested.” Do you know what the Holy Spirit is interested in, dear friend? *“He shall glorify me”*—that's what Jesus said—*“He shall glorify me”* (John 16:14). When I say, “O God, I want, more than anything else—I want more than life itself and more than breath itself—O God, I want, by life or by death, by success or by failure, I want my life to glorify you,” the Holy Spirit says, “Is that what you want? Huh? That's what I want. Let's get together.”

Oh, you see, when I bring my life into line with the will of God, what is God's purpose? What is God's purpose? *“Therefore glorify God in your body”* (1 Corinthians 6:20). God's purpose is not to make me a great preacher. God's purpose is that I'll glorify Jesus. God's purpose is not to make you a soul winner—it is to glorify Jesus. You may glorify Jesus on a sick bed. I'm not saying that there's anything wrong with Bible study, preaching, praying, understanding, and all of that. Surely, the Holy Spirit helps you to do that, but I want to tell you, dear friend, that sometimes people want to be great preachers so that everybody will say, “Look, a great preacher!” He can be just as ego-filled doing that as anything else. If a person wants Bible knowledge—if he wants to understand the Bible so he'll know it, then that will not glorify God. My dear friend, when a man says, “I want Jesus Christ glorified in my life. I want God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit to be glorified in my life”—in that moment, he ceases to be a carnal Christian.

Did you know that there are a lot of carnal Christians who carry around Bible notebooks and study their Bibles? Carnal as they can be, and they can split a theological hair into 16 equal divisions; but brother, they are not trying to learn that Bible to glorify Jesus Christ. They can talk spiritually; but I tell you, the cure for carnality is

this—you see, Paul has just been talking about carnality in the earlier chapters, and now, he comes with the cure, and he says: *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s”* (1 Corinthians 6:19–20).

Conclusion

What is the cure for carnality? Be aware of the price paid for you, be awake to the presence of the Spirit in you, and be available for the purpose of God through you, which is that God may be glorified. You see, God is not going to share His glory with another. He is not content to be King for a day. God will not be a moonlighting king on a part-time throne, and His palace will not be a duplex. He wants all, and He’ll say, “I will not share my glory with another.” That’s the cure for carnality.

Survival for the Family

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 30, 1977

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 6:19–7:9

Outline

Introduction

- A. As a Church, We Need to Have Compassion upon Those Who Have Been Wrecked Along the Road of Life
 - B. As a Church, We Need to Work on the Road of Life
 - C. As a Church, We Need to Train Those Getting Ready to Take This Journey
 - I. The Sanctity of Marital Love
 - II. The Selflessness of Marital Love
 - A. *If* Love
 - B. *Because of* Love
 - C. *In Spite of* Love
 - III. The Security of Marital Love
- Conclusion

Introduction

Now, would you open your Bibles, please, to 1 Corinthians—the last several verses in chapter 6—and then on into chapter 7—1 Corinthians, chapter 6, and verse 19. We're thinking today on this subject: "Survival for the Family": "*What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that. I say therefore to the unmarried and widows, it is good for them if they abide even as I. But if they cannot contain,*"—or, if they have no self-control—"let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn" (1 Corinthians 6:19–7:9).

I want you to use your imagination this morning, and I want you to imagine that you're on a very high mountaintop. And, down from this mountaintop is a winding road that is quite treacherous, for on the one side are sheer mountain cliffs and on the other side are crevices over which you might fall. And, the road is crooked and angular, and there are no guardrails, and there are boulders and many things that might cause you to wreck going down this road. But, down at the end of this road is a beautiful, lovely, peaceful valley of happiness.

Now, I want you to imagine that, at the very top of this mountain, there is a row—a very long line of automobiles—and they're each waiting their turn to go down the mountainside, and in each of these automobiles are two people with a very happy look on their face. But, as you watch them, and as they start out and start down toward the peaceful happy valley, you are amazed, shocked, and appalled to find out that one out of every three automobiles that starts this journey ends up in a terrible, awful, tragic wreck. And, not only are those who are in the automobile's front seat often maimed and disfigured for life, but also the passengers in the back seat—little children that they picked up along the way—are often crushed, maimed, and mangled, also.

Seeing this, you would see something of what is happening today in America in the situation that we call marriage. For indeed, one out of every three marriages is being wrecked, ruined, and hurt in America. We live in a crisis—I am saying—in a real, genuine crisis. America has the highest divorce rate of any nation on the face of the earth. More than 50% of the divorces of the world take place in America, which holds less than 6% of the world's population.

We are in a crisis—a genuine, serious crisis. Only twice in history have we seen a total disintegration of the family: once in 300 B.C., in the Greek civilization, and it was not long until that civilization was completely destroyed with its culture; again, in 300 A.D., in the Roman culture—the Roman civilization—and again, soon after there was the total disintegration of the family, there was the breakdown, the ruin, the demise, and the destruction of that civilization and of that culture. No nation can long endure while its homes are being hurt.

A. As a Church, We Need to Have Compassion upon Those Who Have Been Wrecked Along the Road of Life

And so, survival for the family really means revival for the family. Now, what can our reaction be, and what should our reaction be? Well, let me say that, first of all, as a church, we need to have compassion upon those who have been wrecked along the road of life. And, it's not enough for us just to throw up our hands in holy horror at the statistics. It is one thing to count statistics, but I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, that people are more than statistics. And, right here in the city of Memphis, Tennessee, there are multiplied hundreds and thousands whose lives are just hard. They are

hurting, and they don't need our judgment, and they don't need our condemnation. They need our help; they need our love; they need our support and our hearts, and our doors need to be opened to these people. And, if we don't have a message for those with a broken home, then we might as well close our doors. For, if we don't have a message for anybody, and if the gospel of Jesus Christ cannot help them to minister to these people, then we had better admit it: There's something wrong with the gospel that we preach.

And so, we need to show love. We need to show understanding. We need to show kindness. I don't mean that we take a soft view on divorce or broken homes; but, I want to tell you, dear friend, that the world is waiting for compassion, and all of these need our compassion.

B. As a Church, We Need to Work on the Road of Life

But, not only must we show compassion to those whose lives have been wrecked and hurt; secondly, it's our job to work on that road. I said that the road down the mountainside was winding and treacherous, and there were boulders and no guardrails. We need to remove the boulders, and we need to place up some guardrails. It's our job, as a church, to preach the gospel. It is our job to hold a standard. It is our job to help people, that they might make their lives and make their marriages successful—that's our job. We need to do some more work. We need to do some building on that road, because there are many others who are going to be going down it very shortly.

C. As a Church, We Need to Train Those Getting Ready to Take This Journey

And, I want to say that, thirdly, dear friend, we need to have some Driver's Ed courses. Amen? We need to be training our young people—we need to be training these people who are getting ready to take this journey. We need to prepare the driver. And, that's the reason why I'm so grateful for you, for this church, for our wonderful youth workers, for our retreats, and for our conferences, and our family life conferences. And, even the sermon that I'm preaching today is a way to help us to prepare those who are getting ready to start this journey that may end in the happy valley or may end a wreck on the roadside.

Now, having said all of that by way of introduction, I want you to notice what Paul has to say about this matter of marriage and the matter of the single life. First of all, I want you to notice that Paul speaks of the highway of happiness for the married life. And, I am reading here, beginning with chapter 7, and verse 1: *“Now concerning the things about whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband”* (1 Corinthians 7:1–3). Now here, Paul is

talking about the relationship of a husband and wife, and he is saying, in effect, that a happy marriage doesn't just happen. You have to have a roadmap; you have to have a guide; and you have to have a plan, if you're going to get down off of the mountaintop to where you wish to go. And, *if your home is not on the rock—Jesus— then it will soon be on the rocks.* You're going to end up in a wreck, because you have not taken God's roadmap—God's guide to happiness. And so, when you get married, folks, I want to tell you that, without this Bible, you're not going to be on a highway to happiness—you're going to be on a turnpike to torment, if you don't have the Word of God to guide you.

I. The Sanctity of Marital Love

And so, Paul is giving some instruction for what marriage ought to be, and he sets three definite guideposts along this route. What are they? First of all, he speaks of the sanctity of marital love—the sanctity of marital love. Look again at verses 1 and 2: *“Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband”* (1 Corinthians 7:1–2).

Now Paul says, and he's saying by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the physical expression of love—the marriage act—has some definite boundaries. The Bible knows nothing of free love or of free sex, but the Bible speaks of definite boundaries: *“To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband.”* God has put up some boundaries.

Now, these boundaries are not to hurt you—they're to help you, like a guardrail. Someone says, “I don't want to drive down a road with a guardrail on it.” Well, dear friend, the guardrail is not there to harm you—it is there to protect you. You see, there must be boundaries if there is to be success.

What good—what fun would it be—to play in a football game where there are no boundaries? Even little boys, when they go out to play, sandlot football, the first thing that they do is they say, “This is out of bounds over here, and this is out of bounds over there. And, that's the goal down there by that tree, and that clothesline over there—that's the goal.” And they make their goals, because they know—even little boys know—that you can't play a game if it doesn't have any boundaries to it. Immediately, the fun is gone.

Suppose that you went to a football stadium and there were no sidelines, and the fullback starts and goes right over the side, over the bench, and up through the stadium. It would be kind of silly, wouldn't it? He'd get hurt, and so would you. And, there are a lot of people who are being hurt, because they're trying to play the game of life without any boundaries, and it wouldn't be long before there would be no such thing as the game of football. And, when you take away the rules that God has laid down for this thing called

marriage, dear friend, it is not long until there is no such thing as what we call marriage. And so, God has given some boundaries not to hurt us, but to help us and to guide us.

You see, within the boundaries that God has given—every man having his own wife, and every wife having her own husband—within those boundaries is something indescribably wonderful, indescribably glorious. The Bible tells us that when God made woman, He took her from Adam's side. He took one of Adam's ribs, and He made the first woman. And, it has been said many, many times that God did not take woman from man's head—that is, to rule over him—nor did He take woman from man's foot—that is, to be his slave and to be stepped on and trampled on by him, like a bug—God took woman from man's side to be his companion, and to be equal with him, near his heart to be loved by him, and under his arm to be protected by him. That's what woman was made to be and created to be, and that's why we have husbands and wives.

The old rabbis used to say that when God took that rib out of Adam—and the Bible says, in Genesis, chapter 2—that He closed up the place; that is, there was something missing. And, you see, Adam is just searching for that part of him which is missing, and man, without his wife, is, in a very real sense, incomplete. And so, the old rabbis used to say that man is restless while he misses the rib that was taken out of his side, and that woman is restless until she gets under man's arm from whence she was taken. You see, God makes us incomplete without the other.

Now, we have a generation who've forgotten that; and, I can give you three steps to disaster: Adam's rib, Satan's fib, and woman's lib—one, two, three—and we have gotten away from what God has planned in His Holy Word.

You see, God has a beautiful and a wonderful plan; and, folks, the boundaries are not to spoil the game, but they are to make the game. You can't play the game without the boundary and without the goals. God has a plan—a glorious plan. Over here, on one mountainside, there bubbles up a pure stream, and it starts to flow and cascade down the mountainside. Over here, on the other mountainside, unknown, at first, to this stream is another stream, and it bubbles up and starts to flow, and to cascade down the mountainside, until those two streams meet. And, when they meet, they begin to mix, to mingle, and never again, are there two streams. Now, they are one. That's what God intends for our lives—for two lives to become one. And, if you look back up in verse 16, Paul says: *"What? know ye not that...two, saith he, shall be one flesh"* (1 Corinthians 6:16)—that's what he's saying. The two become one, and that river flows on, ever widening, ever deepening, and ever rushing forward to fulfillment.

This is what God has planned for you, ladies and gentlemen; and so, He gives us—first of all, when he speaks of the highway of happiness for the married life—he speaks of the sanctity of marital love. It is something to be set aside. That's what the word *sanctity* means; that's what something that is sanctified is—it is set aside.

II. The Selflessness of Marital Love

But, not only does he speak of the sanctity of married love, he also speaks of the selflessness of marital love—the selflessness of marital love. Notice verses 3 and 4: “*Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence:*”—or, as some may have it, her due—“*and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife*” (1 Corinthians 7:3–4). Here, the Lord is speaking not only of the sanctity of marital love, but of the selflessness of marital love. True love is marked by the spirit of giving; and, that’s the reason why Paul said to let the husband give what is due. You see—that’s the difference between true love, upon which a real home must be built, and the false love that we have today. Do you want me to tell you why so many wrecks occur along the road of life? I’ll tell you why: Because, there are many people who do not understand what the Bible teaches about real, genuine love.

A. *If* Love

There are bogus kinds of love—false love. For example, the kind of love that I would call *if* love—“If you’ll do this, then I’ll love you.” Do you ever hear that? “If you’ll...” Sometimes, a boy will take a girl out on a date and start to pour the sugar in her ear and tell her all of these things, and then, he’ll say, “Now, if you’ll do so and so, then I’ll love you.” He doesn’t love her—he loves himself. *If* love is not real love, at all. Sometimes, parents are guilty of using *if* love. “If you eat your vegetables, then mommy will love you.” Well, I’d hate to have that kind of a mommy. I want my mommy to love me, even if I don’t eat my vegetables. Now look—*if* love is a bogus type of love. That’s one kind of love that is a bogus type of love, and you can’t build a home on *if* love. And girls, don’t you fall for the fellow who wants to offer to you *if* love.

B. *Because of* Love

There are other people who want to offer you *because of* love, and that’s just as bad. “I love you because... I love you because you’re so handsome. I love you because you’re so sweet. I love you because you’re so rich. I love you because you’re so strong. I love you because you make me feel secure.” Well, *because of* love is not the Bible kind of love, and if that’s the kind of love that you have, then I also feel sorry for you. *Because of* love won’t last. What’s going to happen when the *because of* goes? I mean, you love her because she’s pretty. What’s going to happen if she’s not pretty anymore? Sure, you love her now, but what are you going to do when she’s fat and forty, or when he’s bald and bulging, for that matter. What’s going to happen then? I mean, you love him because he’s rich. Well, what if he loses his money—will you still love him? You see, there’s something wrong with *because of* love. *Because of* love always makes you feel that you’re in competition. If she loves me *because of*..., I’m always afraid that

somebody else may come along with more *because of*... than I've got. And then, I'm in a mess, you see.

There's an old fable of a knight on a white horse with shining armor. He rode up, and he saw a beautiful, gorgeous maiden, and he fell in love with her. So, he thought that he had *because of* love—she was so beautiful. He said, "Fair maiden, thou art the fairest creature I've ever seen. I want to marry thee and be thy loving husband for life. I pledge to you my faithfulness." "Oh," she said, "handsome knight, you're so beautiful, and so, so handsome, and so strong, and so courageous, and I appreciate your encouragement of me, and your appreciation for my beauty. But, before we're married, you had better see my sister, because she's even lovelier than I." And so, he said, "Well, wait just a moment." And, he rode off to look at the sister and came back, and he said, "Oh, fair maiden, no, she's not the one I want. You're the one I want. Thou art twice as fair as thy sister. I desire thy hand in marriage." She said, "You'll not have it." She said, "You said that I was the fairest of all women on earth, and you desired none else but me, and at my first suggestion, you rode off to look at another woman." That's *because of* love—that he rode off to look at another woman. That's because *because of* love is constantly being threatened.

C. *In Spite of Love*

Listen, friend—that's not the kind of love that Paul is talking about here, when he's talking about rendering due benevolence. What is he talking about? It is *in spite of* love—I love you with no condition, no condition; I just simply love you. Ladies and gentlemen, that's how God loves us; He loves us in spite of our sins, doesn't He? "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8), and a husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. And, if you've got *if* love, and if you've got *because of* love, then I feel sorry for you. Only Jesus Christ can make a home what it ought to be. Dear friend, you might as well try to catch moonbeams in a butterfly net, as to try to build a successful home—a genuinely successful home—without the love of God in that home.

All right now, let's notice something. Notice here when we're talking about the right kind of love—and we're talking about the selflessness of marital love—notice that the main burden is upon the husband. Notice that the husband comes first. Notice, in verse 3: "*Let the husband*"—the husband—"*render unto the wife [her] due*" (1 Corinthians 7:3). You see, in the Bible, the husband is always the initiator. It is the wife that God made to be the responder.

Now gentlemen, the Bible does say that your wife is to be in subjection to you, but it says to be so as the Church is in subjection to Christ. It is not your job, nor your duty, to force her to obey you. Nowhere in the Bible does it say that you're to make your wife

obey you. The Bible says that you are to love her as Christ loved the Church. Jesus does not force us to obey Him. He draws us with the cords of love, and thus we're bound to Him; and, that's the way that you're to love your wife.

Let me tell you something, sir: If your wife doesn't want to be in submission to you, and if your wife doesn't want to obey you, then perhaps it says far more about you than it says about her. *Most* women *don't have any* difficulty responding *to a* man *who is* willing *to be* crucified *for her*. You are to love your wife as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. She is to respond to you, as the Church is to respond to Jesus Christ. Jesus has given us something wonderful to respond to. What have you given your wife to respond to? Have you given your wife something wonderful to respond to? If not, then you're going to have a bitter and a frustrated wife, perhaps.

One woman hit her husband with a pot of geraniums. Someone asked her why she did it. She said, "Because of that advertisement—'say it with flowers.'" What got into her? Perhaps she "said it with flowers," because he failed to say it with words. Folks, I want to tell you: Flowers are no substitute for words. You'd better learn how to say it with words. You'd better learn to say, "I love you."

A couple was celebrating their golden wedding anniversary, and they were living a very wonderful and happy, glorious life. Somebody asked the husband, "What is the secret of the happiness of your home?" He said, "When I got married, my wife's father gave me a beautiful watch, and on the face of that watch it said, 'Say something nice to Sally.'" And, he said, "Every time that I looked at the time, it says, 'Say something nice to Sally.'" Sally was his wife. He said, "I guess the success of our marriage is just that I've learned to say something nice to my wife." Have you learned that?

You know, so often when we read this passage of Scripture—"*Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence*"—to the wife her due—all that we think about is the physical act of love (1 Corinthians 7:3). But, this word *benevolence* is not talking about the physical act of love; it is talking about the psychological and the spiritual aspects of love. He gets to the physical part later; but, dear friend, you cannot have the physical unless, first of all, there is that psychological part, that tender part, that romantic part that God wants your home to have.

And so, when you don't give your wife something wonderful to respond to, she's going to respond in a wrong way. And, you may blame her; but, sir, it may be more your fault than you realize. She's going to be going out to look for a job to get some fulfillment. Now, I don't have anything against a wife who works in order to put bread on the table, in order to help through a crisis, in order to help when there's a genuine need—and that's often the case today. I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen, there are some mothers who are making an awfully bad bargain when they leave their children in the hands of someone else to raise those children, and they go out just

simply because they want wall-to-wall carpet, or longer vacations, or a bigger television set—then you’re making a terrible mistake. Now, if that makes you angry, then I’m sorry, but I must say it—I must say it. God gave you precious children, and I know that there’s a time when a woman must work, but I believe that there are some times when women don’t need to work—they just want somebody who will appreciate what they can do. And, their husband has failed to give them anything to respond to. Or, they may turn to the bottle, or they may turn into a *clubaholic*—you know, these women who join all these clubs all over town. Somebody put on the tombstone of one woman: “Here lies the body of Mary Jones; she was clubbed to death.” Well, maybe that’s what will happen to her, because she is not having the husband who is rendering to her due benevolence—that is, what he owes her—that love that he owes her.

Oh, dear friend, I’m talking to you about the selflessness, the selflessness, the selflessness of marital love—of rendering the due benevolence, the husband to the wife, the wife to the husband. The sad thing about it is, when the car wrecks, there are little kids often in the back seat. That’s the sad part—that’s the sad part—and I would say, sir, as a general rule—as a general rule, not always, but as a general rule—if your home is wrong, then it’s because you are wrong. Let me say it again, in case you misunderstood me. As a general rule, sir, if your home is wrong, then it is because you, sir, are wrong. You ought to be the pastor; you ought to be the priest; you’re to be the protector; you’re to be the provider; and you’re to be the power that your wife needs. She is to respond to you, and you’re to render to her that selfless love.

III. The Security of Marital Love

So, we’re thinking about the sanctity of marital love—God has set aside a woman and a man. We’re talking about the selflessness of marital love. And, let me talk about the security of marital love. Notice, as we continue to read in verses 4 and 5: *“The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not the one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency”* (1 Corinthians 7:4–5).

Your home is to be secure, and this security comes through a love that is set aside, and is selfless, and then, that is expressed. Now here, Paul is telling how to keep a home from being broken up by marital infidelity—how to keep your home secure—and he is saying that there is to be tender and warm physical relationships between husband and wife. And, the tense of the verse means it is to be a continual thing—a steadfast thing. Now, let me say something about the marriage act. May I say something about the physical relationship between husband and wife? And, I want to be

clearly understood. Sex is not primarily for recreation, nor is it primarily for procreation—it is primarily for communication, communication.

In the Bible, when a husband and wife would come together, the Bible would say that thus and such a person *knew* his wife. He *knew* her. Isn't that a strange way to speak of the marriage act? To *know* someone. What is God speaking of? God is saying that the marriage act is a form of communication—it is a way of saying “I love you” that cannot be put into words. And, when you fail to express that kind of love, the home loses its security. You see, this is the reason why the Bible says that there may be moment—times of agreement—where the husband and wife agree to set aside these rightful privileges, that they might give themselves to fasting and prayer. But then, he goes on to say: but “*come together again, that Satan tempt you not...*” (1 Corinthians 7:5).

Many homes are being broken just simply because of the coldness, the frigidity, the indifference, the lack of love, and the lack of romance—either on the part of the husband, or on the part of the wife. The security of a home is a home where a person is being satisfied at home, so he's not going around looking for another place to be satisfied. May I put it that plainly? You see, dear lady, your husband has certain definite needs, and if you don't satisfy those needs, then somebody else will, or a part of him will die. It's that plain. And so, the Bible says that you don't have the power over your own body. He doesn't have the power over his own body, but you are to show tenderness; you're to show love; and you're to show affection, lest the devil tempt you.

Sometimes someone will come to me and say, “Well, you know, I just think my husband is running around on me.” This is not always the case, but sometimes it's like this. Now, there are different reasons, but sometimes it's like this. She says, “I just believe that my husband is running around on me.” Now, you know, she doesn't take care of herself. She doesn't fix herself up. He's off at the job, and he sees these women all dressed up and so forth, you know, flitting around on their high heels. And, he comes home, and she meets him at the door looking like something Kaiser made when Frazer wasn't looking. She's got coat hangers in her hair and meringue on her face, wearing a faded housecoat. I know that it's not easy to be cooking and cleaning house, and still look like Miss America when your husband gets home, but you listen. You listen. She says, “You know, I just don't understand. I just... I just don't understand.” Well, lady, you might just need to read 1 Corinthians, chapter 7.

It might be just that simple. Maybe you don't need a marriage counselor. You might be surprised what a little loving and some hot biscuits will do. It might be far more practical than you realize. There is, dear friend, the security of married love—the security of married love. You see, let me tell you what the Bible's secret for married happiness is: The Bible's secret for marital happiness is to earnestly try to satisfy the

desire of your partner. Now, isn't that simple? Earnestly try to satisfy the desire of your partner. In doing that, you will find an abundance of satisfaction for yourself.

Conclusion

Let me just tell you this story, and I'll be finished. It's just a story. A man dreamed that he went to Hell. He was wondering what Hell would be like, and there in Hell, he was amazed to see tables groaning with sumptuous foods. People were seated at those long banqueting tables, and there were the smoking meats, the pies, the cakes, the vegetables—all of it—but the people were lean, and gaunt, and they were snarling, and hateful, and they looked like they'd never had a meal in their life, sitting at the tables. But, each of them sitting at those tables had long forks and knives strapped to them, and their elbows were so fixed that they could not bend their elbows. And, these people were trying to eat, but the food could never get to their mouths. The man was amazed; he said, "I never knew Hell would be like that." Then, in his dream, he took a journey to Heaven. And, in Heaven, he was not prepared for what he was about to see, for there was the same long table groaning with sumptuous food, but there, sitting around that table, were happy faces, satisfied people, well fed, with flesh glowing with health. The difference was this: In Heaven they had the same forks and knives, but they were feeding one another across the table.

Now, do you want to be satisfied? Do you want joy? Ladies and gentlemen, I do not know of a better illustration—not a better illustration—of what Paul is talking about here. The secret of happiness in the married life is not to try to feed your desire, but to satisfy the desire of your heart; and in so doing you will be sumptuously fed. The Bible's secret for marital happiness is to earnestly try to satisfy the desire of your partner. In doing that you will find abundant satisfaction.

Now, this morning, I have spoken on the highway of happiness for the married person. Tonight, I want to speak on the highway of helpfulness for the single person, because this chapter also has much to say about the single person. And, it may surprise you to know that God does not want everybody to be married, and that some people may be far better off single than they are married. And, we'll talk about that tonight, from this same passage of Scripture. Let us bow in prayer.

Being a Family of Friends

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 12, 1993

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 9:14–22

Outline

Introduction

- I. There Is a Certain Responsibility
- II. There Is a Complete Availability
- III. There Is an Adaptability
 - A. How This Church Can Be a Better Church
 1. Learn to Be Approachable (Leadership Sets the Tone)
 2. Learn to Personally Greet People
 3. Learn to Write Notes
 4. Learn to Laugh and to Smile
 5. Watch the First Impressions We Make
 - B. How to Make People Feel at Home Here
 1. We Need to Have Greeters
 2. We Need to Have Hosts and Hostesses
 3. We All Need to Be More Welcoming

Conclusion

- A. We Are Going to Have a Friends Day
- B. We Are Going to Have a Family Night

Introduction

I want to talk to you about being forever friends and our church being a family of friends. I got a letter last week that I was happy to receive. You ought to see the pastor's mailbag sometime. You ought to see the kind of mail I get—and believe me, I get all kinds. And, here's one that rejoiced my heart, really made my day. I got this letter last week. I'm going to leave the personal names out of it, but:

“Dear Rev. Rogers, I live near Baton Rouge, Louisiana. I was a visitor at Bellevue Baptist Church early in August. I was attending with members of your church, but I did not complete a visitor's card. Meeting these members has been a blessing in and of itself. These are truly people of God. One doesn't come across people like this very often. The Lord in His sovereignty had me in Memphis and at Bellevue for a purpose and blessed me in more than one way during this weekend. As I came in view of the church, I was overwhelmed with its size and beauty, but as I came into the building, I was in awe of the people of such a large church and how many people knew my friends by name, and how they greeted them and myself, and how they were genuinely

interested in my friends and in my friend's wife's condition. As we went through Sunday School, before the service and after the service, people were continually showing their Christian faith and love to the family of my friends. I was extremely impressed. Before this weekend, I knew nothing of Bellevue or its pastor. Then, my friend told me of what a man of God you are, and I was anxious to hear the message. I enjoy going to different churches and hearing the Lord speak through people. I would like for you to know personally how much I enjoyed and was blessed by the service and the message on this day. You spoke on eternal security, a subject I've heard before but needed to be reassured of at that very moment: nothing can separate me from God's love. God knew where I needed to be. I continued to enjoy the message as I have studied my notes, and on several occasions, on occasions already, I've been blessed by the message every time. Because I've only been in the Baptist church for two years, it wasn't until I got back to my home and spoke of you and your church that I realized how many people know of Adrian Rogers and Bellevue. I can understand why the church is the size it is. If all churches were like this to all people, each would be filled to overflowing, drawing people to Christ. If I had any reason to move to the Memphis area, I would do it in a second. I would not have to look for a church. I've already found it. At this point, I'm looking for reasons to go back to Memphis to visit my friend's church, to visit Bellevue. It was truly a blessing from God. Thank you for welcoming me into your church and, most importantly, for sharing Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit. I look forward to visiting again when the Lord wills."

Isn't that a nice letter? See, I like that. Yeah, just go ahead. Now, you know, if I could sum up what tonight is all about, I think this letter has already summed it up. Here was a person who was invited by somebody who was living the Christian life. And, when they came here, they were loved by the people, and they heard the Word of God, went away blessed, and strengthened, and wanting to come back. Now, that's what we're going to be talking to you about tonight: being a family of friends.

I'm going to read this scripture and make a few comments on it and then move into some other matters. But, I want you to see what motivated the Apostle Paul. Look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians 9:14: *"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel"*—and then, he goes on to say—*"But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of"*—now, notice this next phrase—*"for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in*

the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:14–18).

Now, I want to talk to you about the Christian's four abilities tonight.

I. There Is a Certain Responsibility

And, the first one is your responsibility—your responsibility. There is a certain responsibility that we all have. Now, what Paul is saying here in plain English is that a pastor ought to be paid, and I believe a pastor ought to be paid. And, it's all right to pay the pastor, and it's wrong if you don't pay the pastor. I heard of a country preacher who went to cash his check, and the banker said, "Preacher, I'm sorry to have to give these old dirty bills. It's all I have." He said, "It's okay. No germs could live on my salary."

Paul is saying, "Look," to the folks at Corinth—he said, "I'll not let you pay me. The reason I'll not let you pay me is that you might take away my glory for preaching the gospel." The preacher ought to be paid, but Paul said, "I'd preach if I weren't paid." Then, he said, "I'd even pay for the privilege of preaching." Now, don't you tell our Finance Committee that I said that, but that's the way I feel. I've preached on street corners. I've preached on bus benches. I've preached in trailer parks. And, I'll preach 'till I die, and I'm not a hireling; *"the hireling [flees]"* (John 10:12). *"The good shepherd [gives] his life for the sheep"* (John 10:11).

But, what God says to all He says to each. And, Paul said to himself, *"Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (1 Corinthians 9:16). We have a responsibility, and nobody can do that for you. You can't hire me to do that for you. You can't pay me to do your soul winning. I've got to do my soul winning, and you must do your soul winning; and we're all responsible. So, put the first thing down: there is a certain responsibility. That's your first ability.

II. There Is a Complete Availability

Secondly, there is to be a complete availability. Look in verse 19 of this same chapter now: *"For though I be free from all men, yet [I] have...made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more"* (1 Corinthians 9:19). Now Paul, though he was a Jew, was a Roman citizen. And, being a Roman citizen, he was free. But yet, he said, "I have made myself a slave to every man. I have laid down my rights, and I have taken up my responsibilities." And, Paul said, "I'm a slave to the Greeks. I'm a slave to the Barbarians. I'm a slave to the wise. I'm a slave to the foolish. They're all precious to me, and my job is to present every man to Jesus Christ." We're to influence every man that we meet for Christ.

Let me illustrate something here. Brother Bob, you stand right here, if you will—right here. I'm going to let you represent the worst sinner that ever lived. Just stand right there. All right, and Brother Phil, you stand over here. You represent the most saintly,

godly person who ever lived. Good choice, wasn't it? All right now, listen. Over here—now, you get a little further away, where all the sinners belong. You get down there. All right now, he represents the worst sinner that ever lived. He is ungodly. He doesn't believe. Not only does he not believe; if he did believe, he would hate God. He has nothing to do with God. He doesn't believe one scintilla of an iota about the gospel. This man over here is completely, totally Spirit-filled, walking with God. He's one breath away from Heaven. He's more saintly than the Apostle Paul. He is the epitome, the best, that a man can ever be. Now, everybody that you will meet—everybody—will be somewhere between here and here, isn't that right? Everybody. This is as bad as you can get; this is as good as you can get. And, somewhere on a continuum is everybody that you're going to meet, whether you work with them or whether you go to school with them, whether you play ball with them, whether you go to church with them. Everybody is somewhere between Bob and Phil; they're somewhere on the line.

Now, what is your job as a child of God? Your job is to be moving people down this line. All right now, let's suppose he's right here. All right now, he's not as bad as Bob, but he's not as good as Phil. All right now, I meet him. That...yeah, some things take care of themselves. All right now, he's not saved. Now, the pulpit right here in the middle—come here, Jamie. All right, he represents salvation. You're just the door to salvation, all right, right here. Now, Jesus is the door, but he's just standing there representing that. Now, this man—he's not saved yet. He's not quite as bad as Bob, but he's not saved. He's a long way from where Phil is. What is my job? My job, as I meet him, is some way, somehow, to move him down this line. I may not get him saved. I may not bring him to Christ. I may not be able to say, "Come on, don't you want to be saved? Come on over here and get in there like that." See, I can't do that. Some people just won't go that fast, isn't that right? Come on back. You didn't get saved. All right now, I just can't do that because some people can't be moved that way, but I have got to be moving him down this line.

Now, what I do—maybe I just come, and I meet him. I shake his hand—say, "It's good to meet you, enjoyed seeing you." Well, you know, he says, "I thought that was a Baptist preacher. He was halfway nice." He's a little impressed that at least I was kind to him. I didn't give him a verse of Scripture. Maybe I didn't have time to give him a verse of Scripture. I didn't witness to him or anything else. But, you know what I did? I was just nice. Now, maybe I could witness to him—I'm not saying not to witness. But, you know, if I just said something halfway nice to him, if I was just kind to him, if I just held a door open for him, if I just smiled at him, if I just said, "You go first," he might just say, "Well, you know, he was okay." And, maybe he just moved just this much—that's all. But, what I've done—I've begun to move him. Maybe I leave him alone and somebody else comes up him. Somebody says something to him good about Jesus. Maybe somebody is

singing a hymn in his presence. He just moves a little bit more, see? And, we just keep on moving him up this line. Every person you meet you're to be moving them up this line. Maybe the time will come, and he'll be right here by this time. And then, somebody comes and begins to tell him about Jesus. And, by this time, he's ripe, and he's ready. And, I say, "Don't you want Jesus as your personal Savior?" And, he says, "I do," and he gets saved. And, hallelujah, he's out of your crowd, Bob.

All right now, he's in our crowd. He has come all the way. He's been moved a step at a time along this line. But, he's way over here, and Phil's way over here. Am I finished with him yet? No! Now, every time I meet him, I've been loving Jesus and sharing a little bit more about Jesus, and continuing to love him, and continue to work with him. And, my job is just what? Just to work him on down this line. That's all that we're all about. You're as sanctified as you'll ever get; go back to your seat. All right now, you all be seated right back there.

Now listen, that means that everybody that you meet you have but one responsibility—I don't care where they are on this line; I don't care where they are—your responsibility is what? To be moving them that way, whether they're saved or lost. You just keep on moving them that way—that's all it is. Every person that we meet we are to be moving them that way. And so, Paul says in verse 19: "*For though I be free from all men...[I] have...made [himself] servant unto all, that I might gain the more*" (1 Corinthians 9:19).

III. There Is an Adaptability

The first ability is the responsibility. The second ability is that availability. And now, here's the third ability, and it is adaptability. Look in verse 20: "*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law*"—now, Paul says—"*(being not without law to God, but under the law [of] Christ)*"—Paul didn't say, "I became an outlaw to be a soul winner. If they weren't Jewish and under the Jewish law," he said, "I didn't try to come to them with that angle"—"*that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak*"—now, here's the key. Look in verse 22—"*I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some*" (1 Corinthians 9:20–22). That is adaptability.

Now, Paul learned something I want the members of Bellevue Baptist Church to learn: he learned to accommodate himself to others without compromising his convictions—he learned to accommodate himself to others without compromising his convictions. *Do you know what we could call some Sunday School classes and some fellowships in some churches? SSSS—"Sacred Societies for Snubbing Sinners."*

Now, we ask our people some time—we're going to have a revival crusade—"Bring your unsaved friends." They say, "I don't have any unsaved friends. Aren't I wonderful? I just have saved friends." Well, no, you're not wonderful. You're failing. You ought to have some unsaved friends. You say, "Oh, no, I want to be like Jesus." Oh? Well, Jesus was a friend of what? Sinners—Jesus was a friend of sinners. You don't put the salt in one barrel and the fish in another. Every now and then, somebody will say, "Praise God, I moved into a neighborhood and everybody's Christian. Isn't that wonderful?" No, it's not wonderful. It would be a lot better for God to put you in an area where you could witness and bring some of those people to the Lord Jesus. Now, if you've got some Christians in your neighborhood, good. That gives you a team. But, you see, you are to be a friend of sinners.

Now, listen to me: the sinners are not the enemy; they are victims of the enemy—they are victims of the enemy. They need our help. We are to relate to them. We are to separate from sin, not from the sinner. So many churches have become mutual admiration societies, waiting for the next bus to Heaven. **They remind me of a department store where everybody reports to work; then, they close the doors and lock them and begin to sell merchandise to one another.** I mean, we get inside these places, and we fail to understand that God has put us here in this city of Memphis, Tennessee, and in our world, to reach people for the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know why they crucified Jesus? Because He was a friend of sinners.

Now, I'm not saying that you ought to compromise. I said you can accommodate without compromise. I'm not talking about beer and Bible, for example. There are certain places you can't go and certain things that you can't participate in. But remember, you're salt, and you're light. And, salt is needed in places where there's corruption, and light is needed in dark places, because light illuminates and salt penetrates. And, when Daniel was in Babylon, as we preached last Sunday night, he didn't form a holy club, but he took on the dress of Babylon. He went to work in Babylon. He had neighbors in Babylon, and he won his Babylonian friends to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Did you know that every believer is a priest of God? We're a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5). Do you know what the Latin word for *priest* is? It's *Pontifex*. Do you know what that is? It means "a bridge builder." Many of us are wall builders. We are saying, "You stay away. We're the good people. We're the holy people." But, God never called us to be wall builders; He called us to be bridge builders. It's easier to build walls than it is to build bridges, but it's better to build bridges. And so, we are to be adaptable.

Now, let's tighten the focus. I want to tell you what I told our workers, our Sunday School workers, two Sunday nights ago. How many Sunday School workers? Lift your hand; let me see you Sunday School workers. All over. Praise God, there are many of

them. Sunday School workers, stand. I just want everybody to see you. Just stand. These are our workers. Stand up, worker. Give them a hand. Look at them. Praise the Lord. Amen. These are the workers. I want to tell you in their presence what I told them, and I want to tell you what we're going to do to make ourselves a family of friends.

A. How This Church Can Be a Better Church

How can this church be better than we are and more the kind of a church that this woman who wrote this letter said that we were?

1. Learn to Be Approachable (Leadership Sets the Tone)

The very first thing I want you to know—and those of you who are standing—that it is leadership that sets the tone—leadership sets the tone. And we, as leaders, need to be approachable. We need to be real, and we need to so be real to people that they see the warmth and love in us. Did you know that you can witness for Jesus and move people down this line just by the way you look? Just by the way you look—just by your countenance.

I've told many times about a man who wrote me a letter and said, "I was saved from suicide by the smile on one of your member's faces"—saved from suicide—"I was going home to kill myself, and I saw in my mind the smile of this lady who stopped in her car and let me go past on Sunday morning." You know, there are folks sitting in church that look like they're having a gall bladder attack, and they wonder... Listen, one little boy got saved, and he turned to a man standing there with a grim look on his face and said, "Mister, do you want to get saved?" He said, "Young man, I'm a deacon." He said, "Mister, it don't matter what you've done—God will save you." Now, it's leadership that sets the tone.

2. Learn to Personally Greet People

Learn, number two, to personally greet people. Learn and memorize people's names. Call them by name. When you meet somebody, try to touch them—a handshake, a pat, a hug, a touch. Jesus touched people so much that we've written a song about it: "He Touched Me." Now, I'm not talking about undue familiarity. I heard about one leader in one church who had a way of overly hugging the beautiful young women, and some of the brethren decided that was wrong—he ought not to be doing that. And, they called on him, and he had a good answer. He said, "Well, I'm just enfolding the lambs." It sounded so spiritual. So, they had another meeting. And, they came back, and they said, "Okay, continue to do that, but from now on, just enfold the ram lambs." I'm not talking about undue familiarity—that's wrong. But, you know, everybody comes to this church—we ought to give them a look. Look them straight in the eye. Give them a touch, and give them a word—a look, a touch, a word. They are hungry for it.

3. Learn to Write Notes

Now, here's the third thing: learn to write notes. I cannot tell you how many people have come to me and showed me notes that Dr. Lee or Dr. Pollard wrote them years ago—that they have saved a note. Write the people in your class a note. Say, "It was good to have you here." It doesn't have to be long. As a matter of fact, it's better if it's short, but express something to these people.

4. Learn to Laugh and to Smile

Next, hey, folks, learn to laugh; learn to smile. Lighten up. There's nothing wrong with laughing. Jesus was full of joy. I can tell you one thing: I know that Jesus knew how to smile—and did often. You want me to tell you why? Because the Pharisees hated Him and children loved Him. Children loved Jesus. They don't sit in the lap of a Grinch. You know who the Grinch was? He bit himself when he saw any body having a good time. And, there are a lot of people who are just simply Grinches. A church needs to be full of laughter and full of joy.

And, you know, let people laugh at you. If you're a preacher, you're going to make plenty of mistakes. I have made plenty of them, but I tell you one thing I've learned: if you lay an egg, just stand back and admire it. I mean, just go ahead and laugh at yourself, and let people laugh with you. You know why? They already know you're not perfect, but they want to know that you know it. And, you know, we're not here to impress people; we're here to influence people. I know some people get upset when they come to a church or a Sunday School class, and there's a little joy, a little happiness, a little light-heartedness. They say, "That's not dignified." The problem is they don't know the difference between dignity and rigor mortis. And people, today, it's a grim world—it's a grim world—and we need to learn to laugh and have a good time. That doesn't mean that we don't have a burden or sorrow, but we are also to have joy in our heart.

5. Watch the First Impressions We Make

Now, next—and this is very important, and all of us need to learn this—if we're to be a family of friends, we need to watch our first impression that we make on people. They have done statistical studies, and one study has said this: that the average visitor makes up his mind in the first 12 minutes whether he likes it or not, whether he's coming back or not. You see, when a person comes to a church, any church... It can be Bellevue, a big church; it can be a small church. Suppose he's Joe Pagan. He's never been saved. He doesn't know the things that we know. He's not a Christian, much less a Baptist. And, he's heard all these horror stories about Baptists. And, somebody invites him to church, and he finally comes. I'm going to tell you something: he is scared stiff when he walks in here. You say, "What's he afraid of?" All right, let me help you.

How many of you have ever been to a Buddhist service? Let me see your hand. I

don't see a' one. All right now, let's suppose that you had some neighbors next door who were Buddhists, and they finally talked you to coming to a Buddhist service. Now, how would you feel walking into a Buddhist service? You'd be scared to death. And, your neighbor would say, "We'll pick you up." You say, "Never mind. We'll drive ourselves." You know why you want to drive? So you get yourself home. You wouldn't have to, you know, if you want to leave, you'll have a car to get there. And, when you'd walk in that Buddhist service, I mean, your eyes would be big as saucers. And, you'd be sitting in the back, and you would be saying, "I hope they don't know we're here. And boy, if they call on us, I don't know what we're going to do. Should we chant? How do you chant? What are they going to do? Are we going to have to wave incense or something? What—what?" They would be frightened to death.

B. How to Make People Feel at Home Here

Now, what we have to do when people come to Bellevue Baptist Church, where we're so familiar with it: we have to remove the fear quotient with these people. Now, how do we do this? How do we make them at home? How do we relax them? And remember, we've only got 12 minutes to do it.

1. We Need to Have Greeters

Number one: In your Sunday School class and in our church, we need to have greeters—not ushers, but greeters. They don't need to wear a big badge that says, "I am a greeter. I'm paid, or I'm trained, to be friendly." They are trained to be friendly. You don't want to get your choleric people out there. You want to get your sanguines out there—people who know how to smile and give people a warm handshake. And, get the sanguines to do this—the people who love to meet people. And, some people have that gift of doing that. We have greeters.

2. We Need to Have Hosts and Hostesses

Secondly, we have hosts and hostesses. These should wear a badge because these are the ones who say, "May I help you? You want to know where the nursery is? You want to know where the restrooms are? You want to know how to get to the sanctuary? You have a question? I am here to help you." Every class ought to have some greeters, and it ought to have some hosts and hostesses. And then, in the worship service, we have ushers. So, there are greeters, hosts, and ushers. What are we trying to do? We're trying to help these people.

Now, in an airline, who are the most important people? Well, the pilot and the president, the CEO, of the company. But, who makes the biggest impression on you? Well, probably the person who handles your baggage, and the person who takes your ticket, and the stewardess or the steward. Now, I tell you, it's a lot more important to have a good pilot than it is to have a good steward, isn't that right? But, you see, it's not

the pilot that makes the impression on you, unless he's one of these guys, you know, that has the monologue—and you've been on those. But, it's the stewardess; it's the person who handles your bags. It's those people that you meet.

3. We All Need to Be More Welcoming

And folks, I want to tell you something: before they ever get in this place, before they ever hear this choir, before they ever hear Jim Whitmire, before they ever hear me preach, they're already meeting you out there, isn't that true? Isn't that true? And, they come in here, and you don't smile at them, you don't welcome them, you don't give them a seat. You've got all your hymnals, and your wraps, and your things lying down on all these seats. "That's mine. That's mine. That's mine." Why are you laughing? I came in here the other day. There's a row. I said, "Is that seat saved?" They said, "Yes." I said, "Are you discipling it?" There's nothing wrong with saving a seat for a friend, but there's nothing wrong with giving a seat that you've saved to a guest and a visitor, that they might be saved and go to Heaven. Maybe if you're saving a seat for an unsaved person, that's something different. But, you know, we're not here for our own blessing; we're here to be a blessing."

Now listen, do you know what people's three biggest fears are? Do you know what they are—the three biggest social fears? Fear number one is to go to a party with strangers. Fear number two, according to sociologists, is to speak in public. And, fear number three is to answer a personal question in public. Those are the three biggest fears.

Have you ever been to a church or a Sunday School class where they say, "How many visitors do we have here? Would you stand?" Boy. You stand. Now, they say, "We're being friendly, you know. Would you stand? Give us your name. Where are you from?" The back of their neck is burning about this time. And, they're here with folks they don't know and they never met before, and now they're about to make a speech. And then, we ask them a personal question: "Are you a member of a church over there? Where do you go to church? You've been saved yet, brother?" They're dying—they're dying. We get them in and introduce them to their three biggest fears all at once. Let me tell you, friend, when they come, in today's society, they don't want to say anything; they don't want to sign anything, and they don't want to sacrifice anything. They haven't been taught to give. We have them stand up and make a speech and then pass an offering plate in front of them. Have you ever noticed I say, "If you're in this church, you're our guest"? We don't want them to think that we get them here so we can extract something from them. We're here to bless them. We're here to give them something. We're here to tell them about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, you know what some churches do? (And, I know they mean well.) But, they get in a worship service like this, and they say, "We want to show you how friendly we are.

All of our guests stay seated. All of our members stand up, and we're going to sing a welcome song to you." Do you like to be sung to by any body? "You're welcome here—you're welcome here." And, they're sitting. And, very frankly, folks, when you're seated and everybody else is standing, you're not getting the best view. And, they're dying! They're saying, "Everybody knows that I am different." That's the reason, as far as we'll go, we'll just simply say, "Lift your hand to get these materials. If you want to, you can wear that ribbon. If you want to, you can return that card." We're not here to manipulate or to gerrymander any body. We want them to be here—and to be here and to feel good about being here.

In your Sunday School class, work for a relaxed atmosphere—to make the people relax. Put nametags on everybody. And, if you put nametags on them, put nametags on them that guys my age can read without putting their glasses on. Put it in big, bold print. And, if you went to night school and don't know how to write in the daytime, get somebody else to print that big and bold. And, don't put one kind of tag on the guest and another kind of tag on the members, because what does that say? "Hey, I'm different. I don't belong here. I've got to wear this color tag, and the members wear the other kind of tag." Now, you might make some sort of a insignia that lets the insiders know that he's a guest and that the others are visitors, but outwardly, don't try to make them different.

Now, as many times as is possible and practical, serve refreshments. You say, "That's the problem with all you Baptists: all you want to do is meet and eat." Let me tell you something: follow the example of Jesus, and you'll find out how many times Jesus said to His disciples and those He was influencing—what? "Come and dine." And, do you know one of the things they crucified Jesus for? Number one: for being a friend of sinners. And, number two: They said He was a winebibber and a glutton. He was not a winebibber; He was not glutton. But, Jesus was a social person. Jesus knew how to socialize, and we need to learn how to socialize. We need to learn how to be friendly.

Now, many times we get the idea here at Bellevue we're friendly. You say, "Boy, I tell you, Bellevue is a friendly church." But, watch it—many times we are being friendly with one another, and we don't know the different between koinonia and koinonitis. I mean, we are just turned to one another, and here's the outsider standing off over here. Keep your eyes and your ears open for these people to show love to them.

Now, here's something else: at Bellevue Baptist Church, we need to practice non-judgmental love—non-judgmental love. That doesn't mean we lower our standards. But, Jesus said He came not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved (John 3:17). It's easy to condemn; it's easy to point your finger at people and condemn them. But, what they need is your love. I'm not saying that we lower the standards, but what did Jesus do with that woman caught in adultery? He said,

“Woman, where are your accusers? Does no man condemn you? Nor do I” (John 8:10–11). Jesus did not lower the standard. Jesus said, “Go and sin no more.” But, Jesus received that person. He was a friend of sinners. And, we have folks who are going to come to this church. They are going to have all manner of problems. And, if the decade changes in the next ten years as much as it has in the last ten years, folks, we’re going to have to say, “Come on in. You’re welcome.”

And, I’m going to tell you something: there is something wrong and wicked about a church that does not have carnal members. You say, “Wait a minute—I think the most wonderful church in the world would be a Spirit-filled—everybody Spirit-filled.” I don’t; I think it would be a miserable failure. Why? Because we’re here to help carnal people become spiritual. And, if there are none here that we can help, we haven’t succeeded; we’ve failed. *All we have become is a museum for saints rather than a hospital for sinners.* That doesn’t mean we lower the standard. *Just as a family has some little babies in it, does that mean the family has failed because the newborn baby can’t cut the grass? No, it means the family has succeeded because it had a newborn baby that they can help, and train, and grow. So, we want to have some spiritual, Spirit-filled giants in our church, but we want to have some babies and some strugglers in our church that we can love, and help, and learn.* And so, don’t look at any body and say, “What are you doing here among so many righteous and godly people?” I asked one of our members that here teasingly the other day—I said, “What are you doing here among so many people that are good and godly?” He said, “I thought it would be a good place for a guy like me to hide.”

Conclusion

Now, let me get very practical with you. Here are some things we’re going to do now in the gall program, okay?

A. We Are Going to Have a Friends Day

Number one: In this emphasis this year on friend to friend, a family to friends, we’re going to have Friends Day. Who knows when Friends Day is? How many of you already know what day it is? Let me see your hand. See, we’re getting through already. It is September 26th. On that day, we are asking our members to go out of their way to pray, to invite, and to bring their friends on that day—not just that day, but that’s the day that is going to be the beginning and a training day to help us bring our friends to Christ. I can promise you that when your friends come, they’re not going to be manipulated, they’re not going to be embarrassed, they’re not going to be harassed; they’re going to come, and they’re going to love Bellevue Baptist Church because we love them.

B. We Are Going to Have a Family Night

Here's the second thing—and this is very important that you learn this: we have seen that when we have the special events like the Singing Christmas Tree, and the Memphis Passion Play, and Celebrate America, and Vacation Bible School, we have an enormous, an inordinate, amount of people who come. But, we have been looking for a way to reach these people and involve these people for Christ and the Church. So, lend me your ears. This year during the Singing Tree we're setting aside one night that will be called "Family Night." It is for the Bellevue members and their friends only. And, in order for you to get a ticket... And, I want every one of you...I want all of our Bellevue members to come on Family Night if at all possible. Now, if you can't come on that night, you can come on another night. But, you will be given a ticket, a coupon, and we're going to give you that coupon tonight. You can take that coupon and bring it to the Events Registration Center, and with that coupon you can get a specified number of seats. And, this year, for all the performances of the Singing Tree, every seat will be numbered, and every ticket will be for an assigned seat. You won't have to stand in line anymore. If you've got a ticket, you'll have a ticket for that seat. And, if you invite friends who need Jesus, your friends can come and sit with you. You can walk right in, sit right down, and you know that you know that you've got a place and you've got a seat for that individual that you have been praying for and witnessing for.

And, when we have the Singing Tree and we present Christ on Family Night—not on the other nights, but on Family Night—we're going to give an invitation where we're going to ask people to leave their seat and come forward, make a public profession of faith in Christ. And, many of them, we trust, will be saved, and many of them will be placing their membership here in this wonderful church. And, you will be sitting with people that you have invited and people that you have prayed for. This is a radical and dramatic difference, and it's called "Family Night," during the Singing Christmas Tree.

Every Christian's Responsibility

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 7, 1983

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 9:14–23

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you.”

1 CORINTHIANS 9:23

Outline

Introduction

- I. Paul Had a Certain Responsibility
- II. Paul Had a Complete Availability
- III. Paul Had a Compassionate Adaptability
- IV. Paul Had a Coming Accountability

Conclusion

Introduction

Let's turn, if we might, for the first in this series of four messages on soul winning. First Corinthians 9, and we're going to begin in verse 14. Tonight, we're going to look at a passage that we have studied together in the past. But because of the importance of this passage, because it is such a key passage, we look at it again on this threshold of these four Bible studies on Sunday nights on the matter of soul winning. We're thinking tonight on this subject: "Every Christian's Responsibility."

Now Paul starts out in the Scripture that I'm about to read to you talking about the fact that preachers of the gospel should be paid. And he says in verse 14: "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; and to them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but

under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you."

Now there is no greater privilege, no greater joy, no greater responsibility, than that of bringing souls to Jesus Christ. I believe one of the greatest preachers who ever lived was Charles Haddon Spurgeon. Spurgeon said this: "Even if I were utterly selfish and had no care for anything but my own happiness, I would choose if I might under God to be a soul winner, for never did I know perfect, overflowing, uner, unutterable happiness of the purest, most ennobling order until I first heard of one who had sought and found the Savior through my means. No young mother ever rejoiced over her firstborn child, no warrior was ever so exalted over a hard won victory." Now here's a man who preached to multiplied thousands, who had his sermon printed in newspapers around the world, who has been called the Prince of Preachers. But he said, "The greatest joy, the greatest joy I have is that of being of personal soul winner." He says, "I cannot describe the joy that is mine." I want you to listen to this statement again because it's such a marvelous statement. Listen to it. "Even if I were utterly selfish and had no care for anything but my own happiness, I would choose if I might under God to be a soul winner, for never did I know perfect, overflowing, unutterable happiness of the purest, most ennobling order until I first heard of one who had sought and found the Savior through my means. No young mother ever so rejoiced over her firstborn child, no warrior was ever so exalted over a hard won victory." Then there was another great preacher. We preachers study about him. His name was Lyman Beecher. He was dying. And someone came to him and said, "Dr. Beecher, you know a great deal. Tell us on your deathbed what is the greatest of all things?" Now listen. Yo, you're listening to a preacher now, a renowned preacher, a man who has spent years and years and years in theology, a man who had seen and experienced so much. Now these are his last words. "Dr. Beecher, what is the greatest of all things?" This great theologian and minister replied, "It is not theology, it is not controversy; it is the saving of souls, the saving of souls." Oh friend, this is the Christian's greatest responsibility, the Christian's greatest privilege, the Christian's greatest joy. And, O God, give me the power tonight to lay upon your heart, my heart, our heart the privilege and the responsibility of bringing people to Jesus Christ. Now I believe that the world's greatest soul winner was a man named Paul. And I want us to see what motivated Paul. I want us to see what impelled Paul. I want us to see what drove Paul and made Paul the great soul winner that he was, for what motivated Paul ought to motivate us.

I. Paul Had a Certain Responsibility

Number one: Paul realized that he had a certain, a certain responsibility. Look again in verses 14-18: “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it be sh, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity (now underscore that), for necessary is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. What is my reward then? Verily that, when I mak, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in Christ.” Now what is Paul saying in this passage? At first it, it sounds a little convoluted. It’s a little hard to understand as we listen to it. But he’s saying several things. First of all, he’s saying in verse 14 that the preacher ought to be paid. I want to make certain you understand that. A preacher ought to be paid. That’s clear. “Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” Now why is that? Are we to pre, are, are we to free a preacher from work? No! We’re to free a preacher to work. And any preacher who is worth his salt will work as hard or harder than any of the businessmen in his congregation who are out there trying to make dollars. He’s not to be lazy. He is to work with every inch and every ounce and every nerve and every fiber. And as much as in him is, he’s to give it all to Jesus Christ. He’s not to be lazy. But he is to give himself to the ministry of the word and to prayer. It only makes sense that he is to be able to say, “This one thing I do,” and to bring everything into a burning focus. And for that reason it’s only logical, it’s reasonable that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But Paul says, a true man of God, a preacher of the gospel, a man who is God-called, is going to preach, whether he’s paid or whether he’s not paid. Now it’s dangerous for me to say that, isn’t it? But it is true. As a matter of fact, Paul came to the situation at Corinth, and there were some people who thought perhaps that Paul was just trying to feather his own nest. And Paul says, “When I was even with you, I wouldn’t let you pay me. I abuse none of these things,” he said in verse 15. “...neither have I written these things, that it should be done unto me. I’m not trying to get you to pay me.” He said, “It would be better for me to die than any man should make my glorying void.” Paul said, “I’d rather turn up my toes, close my eyes, and go to heaven for you to get the idea that I’m a hireling, that I do what I do because you pay me. Your pay, dear friend, is not going to cause me to preach,” he says, “and it’s not going to keep me from preaching. I’m going to preach, whether I am paid or not,” Paul said. Look, if you will, in verse 16: “For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel of Christ.” That is, “God has

called me. I'm not a hireling. The hireling fleeth; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep." I preached long before I was paid to preach, and I preach when I'm not paid to preach. God called me when I was in high school to preach the gospel. And during the lunch hour Joyce, the darling of my life that I love so much, who loved the Lord Jesus at that time, and myself, some others organized a meeting in our high school. And so we would not have any controversy, we, every, ah, noon day, would just step across the main road that went past our high school. We found a patio, ah, next to the school, and asked the owner of that patio, a little enclosure there, "Can you use that?" And we invited our high school friends to come, and we would step off and minister the gospel of Jesus Christ every day at noontime, sing and pray and praise the Lord and share the gospel and try to win souls for Jesus Christ, because God had called us to do so. When I was in college, I, at first, did not have a place to preach, but I wanted to preach. So we would go out to the street corners and preach. We would go, ah, to Daytona Beach, which would be 20 miles away. I've told you before that they would put me on the bus benches and make me preach, or allow me to ostensibly because I had the loudest voice. And I would, ah, stand there and preach and preach as people would come and go and see people passing by. I went into the jails and preached, and into reformatories and preached, and into children's homes and preached, and into nightclubs and preached, and into bar rooms and preached, and into any section of town, the good and the bad, anywhere. And into supermarkets or any place that we could find an audience who would listen to us preach. We had some unusual experiences in those days. Joyce and I, when we were going to college, ah, lived in a little trailer park. I bought a little trailer for \$1,000. We moved into that trailer and lived in it for a long while while I was going to Stetson University. We got a place out there by the shuffleboard courts and went through that trailer park and told the people in that trailer park, "We're having services here." We went and got a little podium and set up the podium there on the shuffleboard court and stood up and preached the gospel of Jesus Christ to those people. And, dear friend, I've always wanted to preach the gospel wherever, however I could. It didn't make any difference whether I was on somebody's payroll. I hear these preachers saying in the seminary, "Oh, I wish I had a place to preach." Fella, you've got one. You've got one. You want to preach, listen, they are all around. You can preach. There is a place to preach. I love to preach. I'm crazy. I preach too much. I preach six times without fail every week, every week. I love it. It's my life to preach the gospel. And you can't pay me to do it. And you take away your money, you can't stop me from doing it. The apostle Paul says, "Woe is me, woe is me, woe is me if I preach not the gospel of Christ." The preacher ought to be paid. Indeed, he should. And I thank God for your graciousness and your love and your care for me. For willingly or unwillingly, when in, in good seasons or in bad seasons, he ought to preach the gospel. "Woe is me," he says

in verse 16, “if I preach not the gospel.” Why? Because God has called me. Sometimes I think of what would I do if I didn’t preach, and I can’t even dwell on that subject long because my mind won’t even work on that subject, because I know that necessity is laid upon me. Were I to fail to preach and witness for my Lord privately and publicly, I would be guilty of high treason against my lord. But now, wait a minute. Not all have a pulpit ministry, but every Christian, every Christian, every Christian has been called to be a personal soul winner. And what our Lord says to each He says to all. And what He says to all He says to each. And that is, to go and make disciples. Now Paul says in verse 17 if we do this willingly, we have a reward. Now sometimes it’s hard, it really is. I heard of a preacher who said to his mother, well, I’m going to skip that story. The reason is that I blew the punch line. All right (laughter). If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward. If not, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me. Have you ever seen a picture of a little boy in a wagon, and he’s got a donkey out there pulling the wagon? And in front of the donkey he has a carrot dangling. And then the boy’s hand is a whip or a stick to beat the donkey if the donkey doesn’t go. If the donkey refuses to go, he’s going to get the whip. If he does move forward, there’s the carrot out in front of him. And that’s what the Lord is doing here. There’s the principle of the stick and the carrot. We happen to be the donkey. Now the idea is this, dear friend: That if we do preach the gospel, if we do it willingly, there’s a reward. There’s the carrot out there. God wants to reward His soul winners. And what a reward there is for those that win souls. But if not, there’s the dispensation of the gospel that is committed to us. There’s that certain, fearful, facing of that responsibility before the Lord. I want to tell you, dear friend, when our Lord saved me, and when He saved you, He did not save us to be members of Christians Anonymous. We were not meant to be reservoirs of, ah, truth. We were meant to be rivers of revival. We’re not meant to keep the faith. We’re meant to give it away. “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel of Christ.” And I want to tell you something, friend. If you’re not a soul winner, one of these days, when you face Jesus, Jesus Christ at the judgment seat, you’re going to say, “Woe is me.” It is, dear friend, a certain responsibility.

II. Paul Had a Complete Availability

Now the second thing I want you to notice. Not only a certain responsibility, but I want you to see that the apostle Paul had a complete availability. Look, if you will, in verse 19 now. “For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more.” Now when he’s talking about gaining the more, he’s not talking about gaining more money. He’s talking about gaining more souls. He, he’s talking about winning people. And he said, “I am a free man.” Paul was a Roman citizen. And Rome ruled the world. He was a free man. He had the status of a free man. And yet, he

willingly made himself a slave of all. You'll get something of the idea of what he's talking about here in Romans 1. Just keep your fingers there in 1 Corinthians and, and turn left to Romans 1, the next book to the left, and look, if you will, in verses 14-15. Paul says, "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 I Rome also." Now that's what he's saying. That's what he means over here in 1 Corinthians 9 when he says, "I've made myself a slave to all men; to the Greeks, to the Barbarians, to the wise, to the foolish." They were all precious to the apostle Paul. He didn't see people as other people saw them. He didn't see people divided into upper class, middle class, lower class. He didn't see them divided, ah, socially or economically or racially. He saw men divided into two categories – the saved and the lost. And you could point out a man to him, and you could say, "That man is a sinner." But in Paul's heart he would be saying, "That sinner is a man for whom Christ died. And God sent me to preach the gospel." And so what Paul is saying is that winning people to Jesus Christ is more important than my personal rights. That's what he's saying. Now look at it. "I had made myself a servant..." Look in verse 19: "For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all..." Now, you see, what Paul is saying is, "I have a right, I have a right to be paid for preaching the gospel. But I'm not going to exercise that right. I'm going to be a tent maker. I am going to miss sleep, and I'm going to work my fingers to the bone. I am not going to demand my rights." Why? "So I can win souls. I, I could have it easy." Listen. Paul had a phenomenal education. He had a sterling pedigree. He was one of those people who was born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and it got better. I mean, he had reached the zenith. And you talk about a man who could sit back and take it easy if he wanted to, it was the apostle Paul. And yet, he said, "I count all these things but dung. I, I lay them in the dust." Why? "That I might win him, and that I might win souls." And so what Paul is saying is that, that I, I don't demand my personal rights. I don't demand my personal privileges. I want to win souls to Jesus. He was like that cultured Mexican who pleaded, "I'm only a spark. Make me a fire. I'm only a restrained(?). Make me a liar. I'm only a drop. Make me a fountain. I'm only an anthill. Make me a mountain. I'm only a feather. Make me a wing. I am only a servant. Make me a king. I'm only a link. Make me a chain. I'm only a sprinkle. Make me a rain. Oh God, make me, use me. And so Paul here is, is, is having, ah, in his own heart and in his own life a, a situation where he's saying, "I am available, Lord. Whatever You want to do with me, and whatever it cost," a complete availability, a total expendability. Now the third thing. Not only did Paul recognize his responsibility. Not only did Paul express his availability.

III. Paul Had a Compassionate Adaptability

But I want you to notice his compassionate adaptability. Now look, if you will, as we continue to read in verse 20 and notice what Paul says here. “And unto the Jews I became as Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under the law of Christ, that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak...” Now notice verse 22 and put a star by it. “...I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” That is what I call a compassionate adaptability. Paul found himself fitting in. Paul found himself accommodating himself to others. You say, “Well, that doesn’t sound like Paul. I wouldn’t think that Paul would fit in anywhere.” Well, that’s where you’re wrong. If you study the life of Paul, Paul wasn’t one of these men swaggering around, talking about his stand, his separation, and all of this, looking down on other people. He was a compassionate man. He never compromised his convictions, but he learned to accommodate himself to those round about him. And I believe this is one of the greatest failings of the 20th Century church and especially fundamental, conservative churches: we have not learned how to accommodate ourselves to the lost. We wrap our robes of self-righteousness about us and we meet together in our holy huddle, and there’s a world out there that’s dying and going to hell. Paul knew how to accommodate himself to the lost. To the Jew he became like a Jew. To those who were under the law as under the law. To those without the law as without law. Not without the law of Christ, which is perfect love, but Paul said, “I have become all things to all men. I have learned to be a friend to the lost.” Do you know what’s wrong in so many of our Sunday school classes, so many of our churches, so many of our meetings wherever they be and whatever kind they are? They are fatal fellowships. They are sacred societies for snubbing sinners. And the Christians get together, and the lost are out there, and somehow we don’t get the salt and the meat together. And we get together even after church here and we think, Oh, what wonderful times we’re having. We gather up and go to a restaurant, and we go to peoples’ homes, and we have our fellowship, and we say, “Oh boy, it’s just so wonderful to be a part of Bellevue. Aren’t we having sweet fellowship?” Well, friend, I want to tell you that hugs and hallelujahs are not enough. Now you listen to me. There are people in this service tonight who will go away without Christ and without fellowship while other Christians go away to enjoy one another. And we’ve failed to reach out and to love these people, and include these people, and care for these people, and they need us, and they need the love that we have. Do you know why they crucified Jesus? Because He was a friend of sinners. I mean, that’s one of the great things they had against Him. Luke 7:34: “The Son of man came eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a

friend of tax collectors and sinners!" He was a friend of sinners. He wasn't a gluttonous man. He wasn't a mo, winebibber. But He's a friend of sinners. And I, for one, am infinitely glad that He is, because that means He's a friend of mine. He is a friend to sinners. That doesn't mean that Jesus compromised. Jesus could stand before them all and would say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Hebrews 7:26: "For such a high priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens." But while Jesus Christ was separate from sinners; that is, He never participated in their sin, He was a friend of sinners. He went to their homes. He fellowshiped with them. He ate with them. He loved them. He brought them to Himself. He went home with Zaccheus, the tax collector. They wanted to crucify Him for that. He talked with that fallen woman, that many-married woman there at the well when others would, ah, have nothing to do with her. He spent time with, ah, the Samaritans. They hated Him for that. But thank God for the compassionate heart of the Lord Jesus. Sometimes when we have a revival meeting, a revival crusade here at Bellevue Baptist Church, or some other thing, we say, "Bring your unsaved friends to the crusade." And you say, "I don't have any unsaved friends." And you think well, maybe that's good. It's not good. It's bad. And I want to challenge you and charge you and admonish you that you learn what the apostle Paul learned, and that is the art of adaptability. "To the Jew I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jew. To those that are under the law as under the law. To those as without law as without law." Yet Paul never compromised. Not one scintilla of an iota did he compromise anymore than his Lord compromised. We are the salt of the earth, as we preached last Sunday night. And I reminded you that salt heals, and salt preserves, and salt flavors. But, friend, remember that salt penetrates. It's time we got out of our ivory towers and it's time that we had this adaptability. Some of you ladies need to have some neighborhood fellowships, some coffees and teas, some evangelistic teas come the fall, come Christmas, come springtime. Some of you businessmen need to have some evangelistic luncheons. Don't call them an evangelistic luncheon. But two or three of you guys who are saved, get together with a guy who's not saved and invite him to lunch. And talk about Memphis State football if you need to if he loves football. Talk about basketball. Talk about some of these other things, and let him know that you're real and that you care for him. When the right time comes, give him the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some of you kids at school, ah, get into some of these clubs and, and, and, and, and penetrate with the gospel of Jesus Christ. You don't have to soil your robes to do that. You don't have to compromise to do that.

How, how foolish we've been for so long. We need that compassionate adaptability. Paul said, "I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." Now I'm not talking about going to nightclubs with them. I'm not talking about sitting

around drinking beer with them. You know I don't mean that. I'm not talking about participating in their vile stories. I'm not talking about that. You can be wise, wise as a serpent; harmless as a dove. Be as our dear Lord was. Now I want to mention one other thing about the apostle Paul that made him a great soul winner, and I'll be finished. Not only did he realize that he had a certain responsibility. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel of Christ." Not only was there a complete availability, that Paul said, "I have become a debtor to all. God, You can use me, whatever You want. I will not stand up for my rights. I will not demand what is rightfully mine. Though I'm a free man, yet I'm a slave. I'm available, Lord, available to You." A compassionate adaptability. "I have become all things to all men."

IV. Paul Had a Coming Accountability

Then one last thing: a coming accountability. I want you to notice, beginning in verse 24 of this same chapter now. Notice what he says. "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain." That is, we're in a race. Don't come in last. "And every man that striveth for the mastery..." That is, for the mastery of the athletic, ah, endeavor that he's in. Paul is using a spiritual figure of speech. But in, in the world, when a man is in the Olympics or Paul was probably referring here to the Isthmian Games that were held at Corinth every two years. He said, "Every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things..." What does that mean? It means that he doesn't overeat, he doesn't stay up late, he exercises his body. He says, "I want to win. And so, as an athlete, I am going to keep myself in rigorous, ah, training and bring myself into the maximum condition." Why? Verse 25: "...they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible." Friend, there's the soul winner's crown. Did you know that in heaven? And it is an incorruptible crown. "I, I therefore so run, not as uncertainly (that is, I know where my goal is); I fight, yet not as one that beateth the air." "I'm not shadow boxing," he says. "I know who the enemy is. And I know what the goal is. And, therefore, I keep under my body..." What he means by that is, "My body doesn't tell me what to do; I tell it what to do. My spirit gives directions to my soul. And my soul gives directions to my body. And within this fortress of mankind there is a chain of command. I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest by any means when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." Now what Paul is saying is this: "I don't want to be put on the shelf." Do you know what a castaway is? A castaway is something that's not used any more. Have you ever driven past a farm and looked out behind the barn and seen an old rusty plow? The farmer doesn't use it anymore. It's just a castaway. It's, it's not useful and it's not used, and there's other implements and machinery that he's using. There are people like this in my congregation tonight who were once used, but you didn't keep yourself under. You

didn't discipline your body. You didn't keep your eye on the goal. You did not know who the real enemy was. And you became spiritually soft, spiritually flabby, spiritually rusty, and you've become a castaway now. That old plow may still belong to the farmer, and you may still belong to the Lord, but you're a castaway out behind the barn, and God's not using you. And He can't use you until some changes are made. But Paul said this: "I know that when a runner runs, he runs because he knows there's going to be an accounting. He knows he is running for a prize." And Paul said, "I'm running for a prize. I'm running, that I might obtain. I want to hear my Lord say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'" I have been to the bedside of dying Christians many times. You could not preach the gospel and be a pastor without having been so heart-breakingly many times in the hospital. And hold the hands and look into the languid eyes of the children of God as they're about to meet their Lord. I want to tell you this: I have been into the homes of many Christians who were not afraid to die, but who were ashamed to die. I'm thinking of one who recently told me, "I am so ashamed to die. So ashamed to meet my Lord as I meet my Lord." Not afraid to die; ashamed to die, ashamed to meet his Lord. *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?* If I know anything about human nature and Baptist churches, most of you in this congregation, if you were die tonight would go to heaven empty-handed. Most of you have never, ever personally won a soul to Jesus Christ. That's not the worst indictment. The worst indictment is most have never tried, never tried. And yet, we claim that we're children of God, that we know the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior. I am telling you, ladies and gentlemen, there is a coming accountability. One of these days you're going to face your Lord. You're going to face your Lord. You are! And He's going to say, "Give an account of thy stewardship." Years ago, some immigrants had come from the old country and come to the eastern shores of the United States, decided that they were going to cross the United States back in the pioneer days and go out west and there find their fortune. They got their things together, their goods. They got some covered wagons. They got some horses. They gathered their wives, their children, their flocks, their chickens, and their, their bedding – all that they had – and they loaded it and they started across this great, great continent that we have. Times were hard and difficult, but they seemed to make it well until not having good directions and not having a good map and not knowing the way, they tried to cross that great American desert out there that some of you have driven through in an automobile, and you know what a waste it is and what a, what a hot and arid and dry area it is. And they got out in the middle and they, they were running low on water. They were lu, running low on provisions. And the children started to wine and complain, and the women became afraid, and the, and the horses, ah, were losing their strength, and the cattle was dying. They knew that they were going to perish in that wilderness if they

did not find water. And the head of that group of immigrants called them together and he said, "Now we've got to be wise. We're going to perish unless we do something decisive." And here's what they did. They found four of the strongest horses and four of the wisest men who knew the ways of the wilderness. They took those men and loaded them down with canteens filled with water. And they loaded the animals down. Ex, they, they watered the animals and gave them all that they needed, and gave the man enough water to keep the animals going for a while. This is what they said. They said to one man, "You ride in this direction." They said to another man, "You ride in that direction." To another, "You ride in this direction." And to another, "You ride in that direction. And when you find water, turn around and come back and lead us to the water. It's our only hope." And so the four men went out to the four quarters, the four different directions. One man headed out across the desert, and he rode under the broiling sun until his horse began to snort and to sniff because the horse had caught scent of water and of an oasis. The man saw the oasis, and he galloped toward it. And when he found that pool of water, he just jumped off the horse, let the bridle go, and dived into the water and set there in the water and soaked up the water into every pore of his skin. He took the water in his hat and poured it over his head, and, and bathed his body. His lips were cracked and parched and his tongue was dry. And he drank of his full. He took the water and splashed it on the horse. And the horse put his, ah, mouth down into the water and sucked up the water. Then the man loaded his canteens again and filled them with water and rejoiced that he'd found the water. And then he turned back to go back to the caravan and tell them where the water was. And then he thought to himself, *Why should I go back? I mean, nobody will ever know whether I found water or not.* Supposingly, he thought they would never know. *And I'm already so much further on my way because I'm headed in the direction to which we need to go. I'll just go on.* And so he did. According to the account that I read, later he was found out. But I want to ask you a question. What should be done to a man like that? I mean, you think about it. What do you think would be a fitting punishment for a man like that – a man who had loved ones, friends, relatives dying in the desert and he knew the source of water, the source of life, and he didn't share it? What kind of a punishment would be worthy of a man like that, or would he be worthy of? Well, let me ask you a question. What kind of an accounting am I going to have to give if I know where the water of life is, if I know who Jesus Christ is, and I do not share Jesus Christ? I want to tell you that I'm a greater criminal and a greater sinner than that man could ever have thought of being.

Conclusion

Now you may not believe that, but I believe it with all of my heart. And I believe there's a

day of reckoning coming. And those of us who say we know the Lord and love the Lord, if we're not soul winners, we're going to have to give an account of our stewardship. What made Paul the great soul winner that he was? There was a certain, a certain responsibility. There was, dear friend, beyond any doubt in his mind, a complete availability. A compassionate adaptability, because there was a coming accountability. "Woe is me if I preach not the gospel." Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. I've had you come forward to say, "I want to be a soul winner." I've had you make other indications that you want to be a soul winner. I'm not going to ask for any indication tonight. I'm not going to ask you to come forward and kneel. I'm not going to ask you to lift your hand, but I am going to ask you to get quiet and silent before God and say, "Oh Lord, Oh Lord, lay some soul upon my heart and win that soul through me. God, I realize that I'm responsible. Oh Lord, I am available. Lord, I am adaptable, because, Lord, I'm accountable. Lord, make me a soul winner. Make me a soul winner." He'll do it, friend. He'll give you a soul winner's heart if you'll just let Him. Father, in Jesus' name, as the pastor of this flock, give me, Lord, a soul winner's heart. Lord, I thank You that I have a soul winner's heart. And, Lord, I pray that You'll tune it up, fire it up, dear Lord. Give me a greater vision, a greater heart of compassion. Lord, take away my cowardice. Help me to be wise. Lord God, what I pray for myself I pray for this staff, and I pray for these deacons, for our teachers, for our leadership, for every person who is a member of this church. In Jesus' wonderful name, amen.

How to Bring Loved Ones and Family to Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 21, 1988

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 9:14–23

Outline

Introduction

- I. We Should Steadfastly Witness
- II. We Should Sacrificially Witness
- III. We Should Strategically Witness
 - A. Show the Person Your Heart Is Right with God
 - B. Show the Person Love
 - C. Show the Person an Appreciation for Their Good Character Qualities
 - D. Suffer, if Necessary, to Bring the Person to Jesus Christ
 - E. Refuse to Nag the Person About Jesus
 1. Wives, Love Your Unsaved Husbands Submissively
 2. Wives, Love Your Unsaved Husbands with Service
 3. Wives, Love Your Unsaved Husbands with Serenity
 - F. Soak the Person in Prayer

Conclusion

Introduction

I want to talk to you tonight about how to bring your loved ones and family members to Jesus. How many of you have loved ones and family members that are lost? Let me see your hand. Hold them up. And then, I want to look. Got loved ones and family members that are lost? All right. Take them down. Now, if I were to ask it the other way: How many of you have no loved ones or family members that are lost? I don't think any of us could lift our hand. If we could, that means that we have a very small family, or we don't have very many loved ones, or else we really don't know what the pastor was asking, or else God has been extremely, extremely good to us. Most of us—almost all of us—have loved ones and family members that are lost. And, I believe that most of us would say they seem to be the hardest to witness to. They seem to be the hardest to tell about the Lord Jesus Christ. I want us to see tonight, from two major passages of Scripture—one in 1 Corinthians and the other in 1 Peter—how we really might have that attitude, and then what plan ought we to have to bring our loved ones to Jesus Christ. No greater assignment and no greater joy could be ours than to bring our loved ones to Christ.

The great Spurgeon—I suppose, the greatest preacher who ever lived outside the Apostle Paul—said this: “Even if I were utterly selfish and had no care for any thing but my own happiness, I would choose, if I might, under God, to be a soul winner. For never did I know perfect, overflowing, unutterable happiness of the purest, most ennobling order until I first heard of one who had sought and found the Savior through my means”—that is, through my witness, through my testimony—“no young mother ever so rejoiced over her firstborn child; no warrior ever so exalted over a hard-won victory.” What the great Spurgeon said is, “The greatest joy that a Christian can have is to bring another soul to Jesus Christ.” I really believe that is true. You know, I get happier when I lead someone to Jesus than I did when I got saved, because I know more what is happening to them than I knew what was happening to me. And, it’s just exciting and thrilling to bring someone to Christ.

Another great minister of yesterday, Lyman Beecher, was asked, “Dr. Beecher, you know a great deal. Tell us, what is the greatest of all things?” Now, at this time, Lyman Beecher was on his deathbed, and this is what he said: “The greatest of all things? It is not theology. It is not controversy. It is to save souls.” Now, that is true, and that is doubly true. It ought to be in our hearts when we think of our loved ones without the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that the greatest soul winner who ever lived was the Apostle Paul—outside the Lord Jesus Christ Himself—was the Apostle Paul. You know, it’s interesting to read the heart of Paul as we read in the epistles. We get a penetrating insight into what made his heart beat, how this man was psychologically and spiritually wired, what his philosophical underpinnings were.

I. We Should Steadfastly Witness

I want us to begin reading here in 1 Corinthians 9, verse 14—here’s what the Apostle said: *“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel. But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void. For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel! For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me”*—then, verse 18—*“What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 9:14–18).

I wanted to put this passage in because Paul here is talking about a paid ministry. He’s talking about the professionals in the ministry. You see, I’m sort of a professional; I’m in the paid ministry, so some people expect me to do things that they may not expect you to do. See, I get paid for being good; you’re good for nothing. Paul here is

talking about a paid ministry, and what Paul says is that the pastors, the ministers, ought to be paid. Look in verse 14: *“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 9:14). That only makes sense that the minister, the preacher, ought to be able to concentrate and to give his full attention—heart, soul, mind, and body—to the dispensing of gospel truth. That is not to free him from work, but to free him to work. I believe he ought to work as hard or harder than any body in his congregation, but he is to concentrate on the gospel. That’s God’s plan—*“that they [that] preach the gospel should live of the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 9:14).

Now, he ought to be paid to preach, but, correspondingly, he should never preach for pay. Notice in verse 15: Paul says, *“But I have used none of these things”*—that is, “I wouldn’t let you pay me.” He was talking to the Corinthians—*“neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me”*—he said, “I’m not writing asking you to put me in your budget—*“for it were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void”* (1 Corinthians 9:15). Paul said, “I’d rather die than have you think that I’m preaching for money.” He said, “I would embrace death first than for you to think that what motivates me is preaching for money.” So, a preacher ought to be paid, but the preacher should never preach simply for pay.

But, the preacher should always preach whether he is paid or whether he is not paid. Look in verse 16: he says, *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16). Now, what Paul says is, “Whether you pay me or not has nothing to do with whether I’m going to preach, whether I’m going to share the gospel of Jesus Christ.” He says, *“Necessity is laid upon me”* (1 Corinthians 9:16)—“I must preach.” I feel the same way. I don’t want you to let our finance committee know it. But, dear friend, I’m grateful to be a pastor and to preach the gospel. But, not only would I preach for nothing, I would pay for the privilege of preaching. Now, you may not think I mean that, but I mean that with all of my heart. I’ve got a track record to prove it. I was preaching the gospel for a long time before any body paid me, before I was on any salary to preach the gospel.

When I was in high school, Joyce and I were high school sweethearts, and we got a group together every day at lunchtime. We found a patio across the street from Palm Beach High School, and we would gather our high school students and friends together. And, someone would open the Bible—most of the time it was yours truly—and would share from the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with our high school friends. When I played football, I was glad to share the gospel with my football buddies there in high school. Again, in college, so many times, I have gone over to Daytona Beach, or Sanford, or the streets of Deland, Florida, to preach the gospel on street corners. I have preached in taverns. I’ve preached on bus benches. I’ve stood in front of theaters and

preached to the people as they've come out. When we were going to school, Joyce and I lived in a little trailer. It didn't have a bath, but it had a path. We lived in a little trailer while I was working my way through college. There, in that trailer park, there was a little community hall. We organized a worship service in that little community hall and went up and down in the trailer park and invited people to come to that little community house there in the trailer park and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. I've always, always had a desire to preach. Now, I may one day retire from being the pastor of this church, but I can't retire from preaching. If I retire from being the pastor of this church, if God gives me strength, that just will enable me to concentrate, perhaps, more on preaching in a different way.

There are two ways that a preacher can preach: he can preach willingly or unwillingly. I must be honest with you: sometimes I don't feel like preaching. Now, I try to act like I feel like preaching all the time, but, you know, sometimes it's hard. I get tired—not of the work, but “in the work,” as the phrase goes. I'm kind of like that man that said, “I don't want to go down there to that church.” He said, “The people are not friendly, and nobody speaks to me. Folks are cold to me and indifferent to me. I just don't want to go.” His mother said, “Well, you ought to go. You're a member of that church, and you ought to attend. Besides that, you're the pastor.” Even the Apostle Paul said, “It's tough; it's hard.” He said, “If I do it willingly, though, and joyfully, I have a reward” (1 Corinthians 9:17). And so, the very first thing I want to say is this: that we ought to steadfastly witness—you, me, every one of us. Whether we're paid or whether we're not paid, we all have a responsibility to share Christ. No one is a member of “Christians Anonymous.” *We're not meant to be reservoirs of truth, but rivers of blessing.*

II. We Should Sacrificially Witness

Not only should we steadfastly witness, but we need to sacrificially witness. Here's the whole point. Look, if you will, in verse 19: Paul says, “[*But*] though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more” (1 Corinthians 9:19). Now, Paul had the status of being a Roman citizen, and being a Roman citizen, he was a free man. During this time, there were thousands and perhaps even millions of people who were slaves in the Roman Empire, but Paul was not one of them. Paul said, “I am a free man” (in verse 19), but he said, “I have made myself a slave, servant, to all” (1 Corinthians 9:19). And, you remember over there in Romans chapter 1, he said, “*I am [a] debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; [and] to the wise, and...the unwise*” (Romans 1:14). That is, “I have put myself in debt to these people. I don't stand on my rights.” He said, “I have a right to demand that you pay me to preach, but I'm not going to let you pay me because you think that I'm preaching for money. I'm not going

to let you pay me because you're not going to take away my joy; you're not going to take away my glory. I would die first. I am a steadfast witness." And then, he said, "I am a sacrificial witness." Now, he says, "I would rather do without than for you to take my joy."

Now, I want you to see some of the things that Paul had rights to do that he didn't do. For example, go back to chapter 9, and look in verse 4: he says, "*Have we not [the] power to eat and to drink?*" (1 Corinthians 9:4). He's saying, "Don't I have the authority"—the word *power* here means "authority"—"don't I have authority to eat and drink like the rest of you? Am I not a human being just like you? Don't I have a right to as good of food and as good of care as the rest of you have? Don't I have that right? Evidently, he did." But, he said later on, "I haven't used it." Look in verse 5: "*Have we not the power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as the other apostles, and [of] the brethren of [our] Lord, and Cephas?*" (1 Corinthians 9:5). By the way, who was Cephas? He was Peter. And, you know, we have some people who say he was the first pope. If he was, he was the first married pope—he had a wife! Peter had a wife. The other apostles had wives. But, at this time Paul didn't have a wife, and Paul remained single. He said, "I have needs just like everybody else for companionship, and love, and fellowship, but I haven't used that." He said, "I have done without my rights—my material rights and my matrimonial rights."

And then, he goes on to say in verse 12, "Not only do I have a right to the niceties of life, but I also have a right to have a salary." Look in verse 12: "*If others be partakers of this power over you*"—what power is that? The power to have a salary—"are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:12). Now, what Paul says is that "I'm not standing up for my rights. I want to be a soul winner." And, he says, "I'll be a soul winner even if it means that my rights are trampled on. The most important thing to me is getting out the gospel of Jesus Christ."

I tried to apply that to my own life, and I tried to say, "Adrian, are you more interested in your rights, or are you more interested in getting the gospel out?" I thought about that, and I came to the conclusion that I am more interested in getting the gospel out than I am my rights. Though what man truly knows his own heart? I want to be more interested in getting the gospel out than in my own rights.

I thought of an episode, kind of a silly thing. Joyce and I went out to lunch, and while we were having lunch in this particular restaurant, I began to witness to the waitress. We had a wonderful witness to this waitress, and she had a lot of difficulty, a lot of problems. It was not only a witness, but it turned into a counseling session, and I spent much time with this waitress, telling her about the love of Jesus. She finally had to go, and she was off, so she left the restaurant. Well, when I got the check, she had

overcharged me—she had overcharged me several dollars more than what she should have charged me. I didn't have enough money with me, and didn't have a credit card. I only had some cash, and I had just enough money to pay the bill and to leave her a tip. But now, I'm on the horns of a dilemma. If I go up there and, after all of this witness and testimony, tell the employer this woman has overcharged me, even though that would be the normal and natural thing to do... But, after I had witnessed to her and talked to her, I knew it would just embarrass her to pieces. I knew that because she was a woman who was already so unsure of herself, a woman already who felt that she was such a failure—that's part of what we were talking about—I knew it would devastate her if I had to go to her employer, and he were to say to her, "You overcharged this man."

So, I said, "Well, I'll suffer the wrong; I'll pay the overcharge." But then, I thought, "If I pay the overcharge, I won't have enough money to leave her a tip." So, I had to tip the woman who overcharged me. And so, I wondered, "Now, what am I going to do? I can't tell him and leave her a tip, but I can't leave her a tip if I don't tell him." You know, the crazy thing I had to do was this: I had to say, "Joyce, you sit here in the restaurant. I'm going out to the car, drive all the way home, get some more money, and come back here, so I can (a) give a tip to the woman who overcharged me, and (b) pay the overcharge and not say anything about it." Unless she's here tonight, she doesn't know anything about it.

I thought about that. I had a right to say I was overcharged, or I had a right not to leave a tip, necessarily, to a person who overcharged me. But, that didn't make any difference to me. I'd far rather be overcharged, and far rather her not know about it and no one else would have known about it, had I not told you, than to fail to get the gospel of Jesus Christ out. Listen, folks: we don't always stand up for our rights. I think Bill Gothard has well said, "When we stand up for our rights, we have a revolution. When we stand up for our responsibilities, we have a revival."

Now, what Paul is basically saying: "Look, I've got a steadfast concern for souls." And then, he said, "I have a sacrificial concern for souls."

III. We Should Strategically Witness

But now, let's look a little deeper into the heart of Paul, and we're going to get down to winning your loved ones to Jesus, because all of this is part of it. Paul's talking about his loved ones, his brothers in Christ, the Jews, in verse 20 and so forth, so let's continue to read: "*And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without the law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law of Christ,) that I might gain them that are without the law*"—when he's talking about those who are without the law, he's talking about those that don't have the Old

Testament, the Gentiles—*“To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel’s sake”* (1 Corinthians 9:20–23). Paul, who had not only a steadfast concern for souls, and not only a sacrificial concern for souls—he was willing to have his rights stepped on, that he might bring people to Jesus Christ—but he had, friend—and here’s where we’re going to narrow the focus—he had a strategic concern for souls.

Paul was a mastermind, and he used what was between his ears as well as what was beating under his breastbone, his heart, to bring people to Jesus Christ. He had learned the art of accommodating himself to others without compromising his convictions. And oh, how we need to learn this! You see, Paul said, “I know how to get out and mix with people, unsaved people. I know how to associate with them. I know how to fellowship with them without compromising my standard.” Paul didn’t get up in an ivory tower and say to his loved ones and his relatives, “I’m better than you are,” and just kind of throw the gospel down to them from an ivory tower. What Paul said is that “I am willing to accommodate myself to other people.” I don’t know whether you’ve learned to do that or not. So many times we don’t know how to accommodate ourselves to other people, to become a true friend to other people.

We do that so many times in our Sunday School classes here. We have some of the best Sunday School classes in America. But, there’s always a danger in a wonderful class, and here’s what the danger is: that that class becomes a sacred society for snubbing sinners without even realizing it. I mean, we have what I call “fatal fellowships.” We meet together—as someone said, “We meet it, eat it, and beat it!” I mean, we...this fellowship, we have this food, and then we have these farewells. And, we never, ever really think about the lost all around us.

The Apostle Paul said, “When I’m with the Jews, I act like the Jews. When I am with the Gentiles, I act like the Gentiles.” Now, here’s what Paul learned: Paul learned how to be spiritually distinct without being socially segregated. That’s very important because pretty soon we’re going to have in our church a campaign; we’re going to call it the “FRAN Campaign.” We’re going to ask you to bring, first of all, a friend; and then, we’re going to ask you to bring, on the next Sunday, a relative. On the next Sunday, we’re going to ask you to bring an acquaintance; and then, on the next Sunday, a neighbor. These are loved ones. So many times when we say, “Bring your friends to Jesus, or bring an unsaved friend,” so many Baptists, especially, say, “Preacher, I just don’t have any unsaved friends.” They think that’s a badge of honor. It’s not a badge of honor.

Now listen, my dear friend. Let me give you these verses about the Lord Jesus. In Hebrews 7, verse 26, the Bible says, *“For such an high priest [was fitting for] us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled”*—watch this now—*“separate from sinners”* (Hebrews 7:26).

Was Jesus separate from sinners? Yes, He was. But, when they crucified the Lord Jesus, you know what they crucified Him for? Luke chapter 7 and verse 34: *“The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of [tax collectors] and sinners!”* (Luke 7:34). They crucified Jesus for being a friend of sinners. Point: The Bible says He was separate from sinners, but He was a friend of sinners. Jesus practiced the art of insulation, not isolation. You don’t put the fish in one barrel and the salt in another, and we are salt for society. We’re to go out.

What Paul said to the Jews: *“I became as a Jew”*—he’s talking about unsaved Jews now—*“that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without the law, as without law...not without law to God, but [the Jews]”*—he said, “I didn’t live like a reprobate—*“but under the law of Christ”*—which is the law of love—*“that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”* (1 Corinthians 9:20–22). Paul had what I call “adaptability.” I need to learn that, and I want you to learn that.

Let’s leave the passage in 1 Corinthians, and I want you to fast-forward to 1 Peter chapter 2 for a moment. And, I want to go to a completely different author. Homiletically, this is not good, but practically, it’s real good. You just stay with me here for a moment in 1 Peter chapter 2, and I want to give you some very practical ways to put in practice what Paul did when Paul had a steadfast, a sacrificial, and a strategic concern for lost souls. You may have an unsaved member of your family—let’s say somebody who lives in your home, or somebody who is very close to you, a business associate, perhaps, or maybe a neighbor that you’ve known for a long time—and you have not witnessed to this person. You’re ashamed that you haven’t witnessed to them. As a matter of fact, you haven’t even lived right before them. Do you know why it’s so hard to witness to our loved ones? Hey, folks, they know us. They say, “Fine one you are to be telling me.” They’ve seen the temper tantrums. They’ve seen the selfishness. They’ve seen the inconsistency. That’s the reason why, so many times, it’s easier to witness to a stranger. Amen, or “oh, me”? Yeah, that’s why.

Now listen, what should we do, therefore? How do we bring these unsaved loved ones to Christ? Well, let me give you about four or five steps, and I want you to write these down. This is far more important than anything I’ve said to this point.

A. **Show the Person Your Heart Is Right with God**

Step number one: It is important that you get your heart right with God and let them know that you have got your heart right with God. Look, if you will, in 1 Peter 2, verses 11 and following: he says, *“[If,] dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims,*

abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles”—that means “your behavior among the lost people”—“that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation. Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or [to] governors, [or] as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing [you] may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Peter 2:11–15).

Now, the foolish men are those who argue against the gospel of Christ. How do you shut their mouths? How do you get them ready to hear the gospel? How do you get them ready to share the gospel of Christ? You must get right with God, and let them know it! If you have an unsaved loved one in your home and you haven’t been living the Christian life, I suggest that you get alone and you get 100% right with God. Then, you go to that loved one—and don’t try to witness to him right away; don’t try to witness to her right away—but ask this question: “Will you please forgive me?” And, they say, “Well, why should I forgive you? What have you done to me?” “Well, here’s why I want you to forgive me: you know, I’m a Christian; I’ve given my heart to Jesus Christ, and I have not lived a Christian life around this house. I am ashamed. I’ve asked God to forgive me, and I want you to forgive me.”

Put yourself in the mindset of an unsaved person. Right away, his mind is going to begin to move. He’s going to say, “That’s an unusual thing; it’s a different thing. He’s not putting me down; he’s putting himself down. That’s really unusual.” “Will you please forgive me?” You say, “Oh, sure, I forgive you; that’s okay.” But, I’ll tell you what else he’ll be thinking and what else he’ll be doing: he’ll be watching you like a hawk from there on. Right? She’ll be watching you. You then must walk in victory and live in victory. You must get right with God and let them know it—1 Peter 2:11 to 15 (1 Peter 2:11–15).

B. Show the Person Love

Then, the second thing you need to do for them—this first thing begins to soften them up—is begin to show that person love, and the kind of love I’m talking about is love in small things. Notice Peter says in verse 16: “[You’re] free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men”—he says here in verse 17—“Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king” (1 Peter 2:16–17). That is, begin to show thoughtful love. Think of what you can do for that loved one. Maybe make up the bed for them. Maybe, if you’re off on a trip somewhere, bring a gift. If you’re downtown and you see a tie that would match the new suit that he’s bought, buy the tie for him—or scarf for her dress. Show just a little courtesy in small things. People

will key on that so quick. “Why’d you bring this gift?” “Just saw it and thought of you, wanted you to have it.” “He’s really acting strange now. First, he asks me to forgive him for the way he’s been living, and now he’s bringing me little gifts. I wonder what he wants?”—“wonder what she wants?” But, you just keep on doing that; you become a servant. You see, you’re free; you don’t have to do it, but you do it as servants of God!

C. **Show the Person an Appreciation for Their Good Character Qualities**

Third thing: Begin to show your unsaved loved one appreciation for their good character qualities. Every unsaved person has some good character qualities. I didn’t say they were good. “[*There’s*] none...good, no, not one” (Psalm 14:3; Psalm 53:3; Romans 3:12). I didn’t say, “They are inherently good,” but they are, in the eyes of men, good, in that everybody has something good, some character qualities that you can brag on or that you can appreciate. Notice verse 17: “*Honour all men*” (1 Peter 2:17). All men—give honor! Have you honored the one that you’re trying to bring to Jesus Christ?

I was talking to my friend Howard Ball. Howard Ball was with Bill Bright, the leader of the lay division of Campus Crusade for Christ. Howard Ball is one of the finest soul winners I know anywhere. Howard told me something one day as we were driving down Poplar Avenue, just crossing Highland. I can remember the spot where he told me, because he was in my car and it made such an impact on me. He said, “Adrian, I want to share a testimony with you.” He said, “God has used me to win many, many people to Jesus Christ, but I was never able to win my daddy to Jesus Christ.” He said, “When I would have fellowship with my dad, we could talk about many things. My dad and I were in business together, and we just got on wonderfully well as father and son. But, I found the Lord Jesus, and my dad, though he’d been a church member, had never really known Christ. And, when I would try to speak to him about Christ, he just closed up—just like that.” He said, “I never could understand it, so I prayed over it. And then, one day the Holy Spirit gave me a revelation. He said, ‘Howard, the reason that your daddy is closed up to you when you begin to preach or share Jesus Christ is that he sees you as saying to him, ‘You have failed me in this way, Father. You have not been the spiritual leader in our home that you ought to be. Therefore, the son is having to do for the father what the father should be doing for the son; it’s a reversal of duty. It makes him feel like a failure as a father, and it’s your way of saying to him, ‘You have failed as a father, and now I’m going to try to set you straight as a father.’”

So, Howard got to thinking about that. He said, “I wonder if he thinks that he has failed me as a father. He’s a wonderful father. He took me on fishing trips. He’s been honest. He’s shared with me; he’s sacrificed for me. He’s been good to my mother. He’s done so many wonderful things. But,” he said to himself, “have I ever told my father this? Surely he knows how I feel, but have I ever told him? Have I ever really verbalized

it? Have I ever really put it in words?” Howard said, “I sat down, and I wrote my daddy a letter. I told my wonderful daddy, lost as he was, all of the wonderful things that he had done for me, and how much I appreciated it. I did what the scripture says: *‘Honor [your] father and [your] mother’* (Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:16). And, I wrote him a letter of honor. I didn’t say one word to him about being saved, one word to him about being a Christian. I just thanked my dear dad for the sacrifices that he had made for me. Adrian, I cannot tell you the effect that letter had on my daddy. The next time I witnessed to him about Jesus Christ, he fell off in my hands like an overripe apple, giving his heart to Jesus Christ.”

I wonder if some of you have unsaved parents who are just like that. Some of you kids, you’re almost talking down to your parents, and your parents have been so good to you. I wonder if you don’t have brother, sister, neighbors that you fail to honor. Listen to what this scripture says in verse 17: *“Honour all men”* (1 Peter 2:17). Learn to find that family member that you’re concerned about, and show them respect and appreciation.

D. Suffer, if Necessary, to Bring the Person to Jesus Christ

Next thing: Do what the Apostle Paul was willing to do, and that is suffer, if necessary, to bring those people to Jesus Christ. Begin to read in verse 18—and read with me: *“Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward”*—that means “to the un-good and the ungentle”—*“For this is thankworthy”*—now, watch—*“if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, [ye] suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For...hereunto were ye called”*—now, watch this—*“[for] Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps”*—how many of you want to follow Jesus? Let’s see your hand. All right, let me read that verse again—*“For...hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that [we] should follow in his steps”*—well, that means suffering, doesn’t it? To follow Jesus means suffering. Verse 22—*“Who did no sin”*—He wasn’t wrong—*“neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously”*—watch verse 24—*“Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls”* (1 Peter 2:18–25).

What does all of this passage say? It says that the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to bring us to Himself, suffered for us. And, my dear friend, you are to do the same thing. If

you live for Jesus Christ in an ungodly family, you're going to take abuse. Even when you get right and let them know it, even when you show thoughtful love, even when you show respect and appreciation, there comes that time when they're going to gig you; they're going to ridicule you. Why? Because they're testing you. They want to see if what you have is right or wrong, and you're going to suffer. Wives have often suffered at the hands of an unsaved husband, and they suffer patiently. They suffer to bring that husband to Christ. You say, "That's not fair!" Neither was Calvary. That's the whole point: it is not fair. The Bible says in verse 24 that Jesus—"*his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye [are] healed*" (1 Peter 2:24).

Are you willing to suffer to bring your loved ones to Christ? Are you willing to take abuse? To be reviled? To be overlooked? To be misused? Or, are you going to stand up for your rights? The Apostle Paul didn't. Peter said we shouldn't. Jesus didn't.

E. Refuse to Nag the Person About Jesus

All right. Now, here's the next step—number five: Refuse to nag your loved ones about Jesus. You're not going to win them by nagging them. Let's go right on to chapter 3, verse 1: "*Likewise*"—which refers to the suffering of Jesus in chapter 2—"*Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they may also without the word be won by the conversation*"—that means "the behavior"—"*of the wives*" (1 Peter 3:1). The Bible says here that if you are a wife and married to an unsaved man, do not nag that unsaved man about the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, no one has ever been nagged to Jesus. You are not to leave him if he's unsaved. You're not to lecture him if he's unsaved. You are to love him.

1. Wives, Love Your Unsaved Husbands Submissively

And, let me show you how you're to love him: you're to love him submissively—verse 1: "*wives, be in subjection to your own husbands*" (1 Peter 3:1).

2. Wives, Love Your Unsaved Husbands with Service

You're to love him with service—verse 2: "*they behold your [pure behavior joined] with fear*" (1 Peter 3:2).

3. Wives, Love Your Unsaved Husbands with Serenity

And, you're to love him with serenity—verse 3: "*Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of [the] plaiting [of] hair, [or the] wearing of gold, or [the] putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden [person] of the heart...that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and [a] quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price*" (1 Peter 3:3–4).

And, if a saved woman will put submission, and service, and serenity together, she's going to preach a dynamite of a sermon to her husband without opening her mouth. Will

that get his attention? You'd better believe it will! Notice verse 2: *"While they behold your chaste conversation"* (1 Peter 3:2). Look at the word *behold*; that means that he's amazed at it. He's saying, "What makes this woman tick? What makes her this way?" She is a woman who is committed to God, and she's willing to suffer, that her husband might come to Christ. *"Christ...suffered...the just for the unjust"* (1 Peter 3:18)—*"likewise, ye wives"* (1 Peter 3:1). I'm speaking to some women that I know personally—members of this church who have suffered a Gethsemane, a Calvary, and an Easter, and they've seen their husbands come to Jesus.

"Well," you say, "why does the woman always have to do that?" It's not always the woman. Skip on down to verse 7: *"Likewise, ye husbands"* (1 Peter 3:7). What Paul says to the wife he also says to the husband. The husband also is to suffer to bring his wife to the Lord Jesus if she needs Christ.

So, what you need to do is to refuse to nag. Nobody has ever nagged or argued anyone into the Kingdom of Heaven, and this is especially true if you have an unsaved loved one that you're living with.

F. **Soak the Person in Prayer**

All right, what's the next step? Number six—I hope you're writing these down so you can go back and review them—when you do this, when you get right with God and you let them know it, then you begin to show thoughtful love, then you begin to honor them and show respect, and you set yourself to suffer if necessary, then you refuse to nag, then the very next thing you do is begin to soak them in prayer. Notice verse 12: *"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers"* (1 Peter 3:12). God will hear your prayer if you begin to live this way. You take that unsaved boy, that unsaved girl, that unsaved husband, that unsaved wife, that unsaved brother, sister, neighbor, or business associate, and you soak them in prayer! Have a prayer list where you're praying for them—constantly praying for them—because the Bible says that God's ears are open to your prayers. If you will do all of that, here's what's going to happen: there's going to come a strategic golden moment when you're going to be able to bring your loved one to Jesus Christ.

Let me show you how it'll happen. Notice—you're praying for them; you've done all of this—then notice verse 13: *"And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye"*—what he's saying is that suffering won't harm you. Suffering will hurt you, but it won't harm you—*"But...if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts"*—now, watch verse 15—*"and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear"* (1 Peter 3:13–15). What's going to happen

is this: a crisis is going to come. God's going to perpetrate a crisis.

That person has seen you get right with God. They've seen you ask them for forgiveness for the way that you've lived. You have begun to show them little kindnesses. You have done acts of service to them. You have given them honor and respect. And, you have told them how much you appreciate who they are and what they have done. When they revile you, you don't revile back. When they ask you to do other things and take unfair advantage of you, for Christ's sake, and in the Spirit of Calvary, you take it—*"the just for the unjust"* (1 Peter 3:18). And then, you refuse to nag; you don't lecture. But, in a spirit of submission, and service, and serenity, you keep on smiling, you keep on singing, you keep on praising, you keep on praying. Then, you take that individual, and you soak that individual in prayer—just bathe them in prayer. And, I'll tell you, the time will come when they'll say, "Hey, what makes you tick? I don't understand you. Tell me of the hope that is in you." And, you'll have an opportunity to witness to that person when that opportunity comes, when God the Holy Spirit opens his heart.

Now, you can witness many ways. You ought to have some good books on hand to say, "Well, here's something you might read," or you might have a tape of a sermon. Or, it might be wise at that moment to sit down and go through the plan of salvation, and maybe, hopefully, it will be. It might be that you'll just invite him to come to church or come to your Sunday School class. Or, it might be that you'll invite him or her to go out with a group of Christian friends to dinner. You'll know—you'll know. You'll sense whether the door is open. Or, it might be that you'll just sit down and present the gospel—one, two, three, and four—and close your loved one out for Jesus Christ.

Now listen, folks: this matter of bringing our loved ones to Jesus Christ is so important. This church would double its membership in a year if each one of us just prayed this year, "Lord, help me to win my loved ones to Jesus." They're right near us, and they are our responsibility.

Conclusion

The Apostle Paul says, *"Woe is...me, if I preach not the gospel!"* (1 Corinthians 9:16). He had a steadfast concern. He had a sacrificial concern. But oh, the important thing is he had the strategic concern. He said, "I've learned to accommodate myself to people." It is accommodation and not isolation. He got in with these people, lived with them. "To the Jews, he became as a Jew; to the Gentile, like a Gentile; to those without law, like without—not without—law to Christ" (1 Corinthians 9:20–21).

Friend, the Bible is a wonderful sword, but it's a poor club. We need to stop beating people over the head with it and start showing the beauty of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Turning Temptations into Triumphs

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: August 22, 1993

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 10:12–14

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Subjects of Temptation
- II. The Source of Temptation
 - A. The World
 - B. The Flesh
 - C. The Devil
- III. The Seat of Temptation
 - A. The World Tempts You in the Area of Your Soul
 - B. The Flesh Tempts You in the Area of Your Body
 - C. The Devil Tempts You in the Area of Your Spirit
- IV. The Subduing of Temptation
 - A. Against the Flesh: Flight
 - B. Against the World: Faith
 - C. Against the Devil: Fight

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn with me today to 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and in a moment we're going to begin reading in verse 12. We are talking today on "Turning Temptations into Triumphs"—not simply how to overcome temptation, but how to actually use temptation as a means to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Look at the Scripture, if you will—verse 12: *"Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make the way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry"* (1 Corinthians 10:12–14). Well, what a wonderful passage of Scripture this is.

Man, in general, tries to overcome temptation, or deal with temptation, in three ways. Some people just simply give in to it. They're like the lady who said, "I can overcome anything but temptation." They just yield to it. And we have a philosophy today that says, "Don't worry about temptation. If it feels good, just do it. Whatever is natural is

beautiful, and whatever is beautiful must be right.” And so these people live like animals. The animals eat when they want to eat, and drink when they want to drink, and sleep when they want to sleep, and mate when they want to mate. An animal lives for self-gratification, self-preservation, and self-propagation.

We have a generation of people who are living just like animals. And why not? They’ve been taught in school that they evolved from animals. They’re just a more intelligent animal. And when we’ve taught them that they have come from animals and are animals, we ought not to be surprised when they try to live like animals, should we? So there are folks that just simply say, “Well, just give into temptation.”

Then, there are other folks who, on the opposite extreme, spend all of their time fighting temptation. But they fight temptation in the strength and energy of the flesh. And they fight and they fail, and they fight and they fail, and they fight and they fail. **They’re very much like the little boy who was sitting under the farmer’s apple tree. And the farmer saw him, and said, “What are you trying to do? Steal an apple?” He said, “No sir, I’m trying not to.”** But a lot of times, we try not to, but we do.

But of course, the way is neither simply giving in to temptation, nor fighting temptation in the strength of our flesh, but overcoming temptation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and “Turning Temptations into Triumphs.” Now I want to give you several things that begin with the letter *s*, as a memory device, to help you to remember them, as we think about how to turn temptations into triumphs.

I. The Subjects of Temptation

And the very first thing I want you to think about is this: the subjects of temptation. Who is tempted? Who are these folks who are the subjects of temptation? Well, the Bible tells us, in verse 12: “*Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10:12). Now that’s just simply a warning to all of us. We’re all subject to temptation.

You say, “Even you, Pastor Rogers?” Of course. You say, “Well, I didn’t know that preachers are tempted.” Well, the Lord Jesus was tempted. And certainly, Satan would aim his biggest guns at those in the ministry or spiritual leaders. The truth of the matter is that all of us are faced, every day, with unbelievable temptations in all kinds of areas. Pride, and materialism, and dishonesty, and greed, and the lust of the flesh, and all of these: They are there, and they’re there with all of us. And they are always with us. And being saved will not make you immune.

That brings me to say this: It is not a sin to be tempted. We know that, because Jesus was without sin. And the Bible says that Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. But this verse is a warning against pride. Verse 12: “*Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10:12). The proud

man tempts the devil to tempt him. And if you think that you cannot fall, you are headed for a fall. Now the man who is trying to fight temptation in his own strength also is a man who may be headed for a fall.

Well, that brings up an interesting question: If God really loves us, why doesn't God make it impossible for us to be tempted? If God really loves us, why doesn't God just kill the devil? Why doesn't God just remove every allurements so we would not be tempted? Well, if God did that, you would lose something, and I would lose something. You and I would both lose the power and the ability to become overcomers through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now I used to play football, back in the olden days when the earth's crust first hardened. And when I played football, I can tell you that it seems like I have deposited buckets of blood, and gallons of sweat, on that football field. And we would work, and practice, and connive, and hit, and do all of these things, go through all of these difficulties, in order to take a bag full of zipped-up air across a pasture and a white line on that field. Really kind-of sounds dumb, when you think about it. But when you finally get that piece of pigskin over that white line—they call that a *touchdown*—and everybody goes bananas. We have done it! We've taken that ball across that line! Well, we're trying to do that. And there's a group of fellows on the other side that says, "You're not going to do that. You're not going to." We're over here, saying, "Oh, yes we are!" And they're over there, saying, "Oh, no you're not!" That's what the game's all about, ladies. That's the whole thing.

All right. Now I have figured it out. That's really a foolish way to do it—just to come out there when those other guys are there. What we need to do is come up there about 2 a.m. in the morning, when the other team is not out there. And then, we can take that ball, and shove it over that white line as many times as we want, right? Well, yes, theoretically. We could do that, but why don't people do that? Because, that's no victory. That's no victory. If there's no opposition, there's no victory.

God has not called you to a life of ease, but He has called you to a life of victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. And "*thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ*" (2 Corinthians 2:14). So the subjects of temptation: We are all subject to temptation. Even the Lord Jesus was tempted, yet without sin.

II. The Source of Temptation

Secondly, I want you to notice the source of temptation. Now look in the next verse. The Bible says: "*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is*"—what?—"common to man" (1 Corinthians 10:13). You say, "Pastor Rogers, I have a very special temptation." No, you don't. You have a garden-variety temptation. All temptation is very common, and we all have the same kinds of temptations from the same sources.

Actually, there are only three sources of temptation: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Have you got it? The world, the flesh, and the devil. Now get that in your mind, because that's important to help you to understand later on. The Bible says, in 1 Thessalonians chapter 5 and verse 23: *"And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"* (1 Thessalonians 5:23).

Now the devil is going to tempt you in the area of the spirit, the soul, and the body. And how is the devil going to tempt you in the area of the spirit, the soul, and the body? He's going to tempt you with the world, the flesh, and the devil. Now this is going to seem complicated for just a few minutes. So just concentrate, and then, it will all come together.

A. The World

What is *the world*? When we say the devil is going to tempt you, or you're going to be tempted with the world, what is *the world*? Well, we're not talking now about the people of the world. That's not what the Bible means when it says *the world*—not the people of the world. *"God so loved that world, that he gave his only begotten Son"* (John 3:16). If God loves that world, you ought to love it. It's fine to love the people.

And he's not talking about the planet—the rocks, and the trees, and the birds, and the bees, and the fleas—he's not saying that these things are wrong. No, the material world is good and wonderful. Who made this world? This is my Father's world. When God swung this planet into space—when God scooped out the seas, and heaped up the mountains, and flung out the sun, moon and stars—God said, "That is good!" So never let the devil tell you that the material world is evil. It is not evil. Things are not evil. The material world is not evil. But the Bible says we are to *"love not the world"* (1 John 2:15).

Let me give you some verses. For example, just jot these in the margin: 1 John chapter 2, verse 15: *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him"* (1 John 2:15). Or, Romans chapter 12, verse 2; the Bible says: *"Be not conformed to this world"* (Romans 12:2). Or, James 4, verse 4: *"Friendship of the world is enmity"—or warfare—"with God"* (James 4:4).

You say, "Well, Pastor, if it's not the people of the world, and it's not the Earth, it's not the planet, what is *the world*?" Well, the word *world* is the word *cosmos*. *Cosmos*. And it means "a system, an order." Do you see? There is a system, an order, a philosophy, that the Bible calls *the world*. It is entrenched and systematized evil, and you and I are not to love it.

I think I can illustrate this. Over in 1 Peter chapter 3, verse 3, God is telling a saved wife how to be beautiful and attractive to her husband. And it says: *"Whose adorning, let*

*it not be that outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel, but let it be the hidden man of the heart” (1 Peter 3:3). And the word adorning in 1 Peter 3, verse 3, is the word that is translated “world” in over a hundred other places in the Bible. It’s the word *cosmos*. And he’s saying, “whose *cosmos*, let it not be the fixing of the hair, the putting on of jewelry, the wearing of clothes” (1 Peter 3:3). It’s the reason why a woman puts on her face—she puts on *what? Cos-metics*. See? What’s she doing? She’s putting her face *in order*.*

Now James is not saying it is wrong for a woman to wear cosmetics. *Sometimes people say, “Do you think it’s a sin if women wear makeup?” I think it’s a sin if some women don’t.* He’s not saying it’s wrong to wear cosmetics any more than it’s wrong to wear jewelry. As a matter of fact, God speaks of His saints as His jewels. He talks of that city in Heaven as a city made up of jewels. He’s not saying jewelry is wrong. If you say that it’s wrong to fix your hair, it’s wrong to wear jewelry, according to 1 Peter 3:3. You’d have to also say it’s wrong to wear clothes. Because, he said, “Don’t let your clothes be your adornment.” He’s certainly not saying, in order to be spiritual, we go around stark naked. And he’s not saying that a woman, in order to win her husband to Christ, should go around looking like an unmade bed, or a barn that needs to be painted. He’s not saying that. What is he saying? He’s saying, “whose *cosmos*, let it not be the world, the order, of the hairdresser, of the fashion store, of the jeweler. Don’t let that world mold you. Don’t let that world squeeze you in. Don’t let that be what motivates you, and guides you, and controls you. Don’t let that be your world.”

Now the guys are saying, “That’s right, tell ’em preacher.” He’d say to you, “whose world, let it not be the world of sports.” Or, “whose world, let it not be the world of business.” “Whose world, let it not be the world of politics.” Whatever it is, you name it, whatever the system is, if it’s not the kingdom of our Lord and His Christ, if number one in your life is not Jesus Christ, you’re loving the world. You have bought into a system. No matter what it is. It doesn’t have to be hideous. The world does not have to be the dive, the discotheque. It doesn’t have to be the gambling bin, the house of prostitution. Just the world. The word is the *cosmos*, a system. Now that’s one source of temptation: the world. I call the world the external foe. The external foe.

B. The Flesh

Now there’s another source of temptation: not only the world, but the flesh. Now what is the flesh? “Well,” you say, “I know what the flesh is. That’s what covers your bones.” No. I’m not talking about the flesh, in that sense. The Bible doesn’t use the word *flesh* to mean the muscle, and the skin, and the sinew, and the bone, and the corpuscles that are in your body. It sometimes does. But when it uses the word *flesh* to speak about temptation, it uses the word *flesh* in a different sense.

The Bible says, in Galatians chapter 5, that “*the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh*” (Galatians 5:17). What does he mean when he says *the flesh*? He’s talking about an inclination you have to do evil that is in you, an inherited predisposition to sin. We sometimes call it the *old man*. We call it the *old nature*, the *Adamic nature*. It is called *the flesh*. You have it, and I have it. We were born with it. We got it from our parents, who got it from their parents, who got it from their parents, who got it from Adam. I mean, it is the flesh. And it’s in you, and it’s in me. And there is, I want to tell you, a predisposition to sin. Now don’t look so holy; just nod your head. That is true. And the Bible calls this predisposition to sin *the flesh*.

Now so many times we want to say, “The devil made me sin.” Ha! The devil can’t make you sin. If the devil could make you sin, you’d have a perfect alibi. You see, sin is an inside job. It comes from your flesh. The devil will help you to sin; the devil will tempt you to sin; the devil will encourage you to sin; but the devil uses your flesh. And I’ve got news for you: If there were no devil, you would go on sinning. You could do it all by yourself. All by yourself.

A little boy called his little sister a bad name, hit her with a broomstick, and spit on her. The mother remonstrated with the naughty child and said, “You shouldn’t have done that. The devil made you do that.” He said, “The devil made me call her a bad name. And the devil made me hit her with the broomstick. But spitting on her was my idea.” I think we would be surprised how much of it is our idea. It comes from that old Adamic nature, that predisposition to sin.

C. The Devil

Now the third source of temptation is the world, the flesh, and the devil. I call the world the external foe. I call the flesh the internal foe. I call the devil the infernal foe. The infernal foe—the devil. There is a devil—a real devil. And the devil wants to get you to sin. And so the devil uses the flesh to tempt you to sin. **And here is the anatomy of a temptation: Think of the world as a match. Think of your flesh as a pool of gasoline. Think of the devil as someone who strikes the match and throws it. And there you have the anatomy of a sin. How the devil will use the world and the flesh to get you to sin.**

Now if you’re tempted, you’re going to be tempted either in the area of the world, the flesh, or the devil. The external foe, the internal foe, the infernal foe—those are the sources of temptation. Your temptation is very common. It’s common to man.

III. The Seat of Temptation

Now let’s think about the seat of your temptation. That’s the third s. Where will you be tempted? Not, *with what* will you be tempted? But *where* will you be tempted? Remember that Scripture I gave you, just a few moments ago? 1 Thessalonians chapter

5 and verse 23: “*And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). You are a spirit, a soul, and a body. Sitting in your seat this morning is a spirit, soul, and body. You are made in the image of God, and God is a triune God. And you have a triune nature. You’re a spirit, soul, and body. You’re one individual, but there are three parts to the human nature. And you’re going to find out that when you’re tempted, you’re either going to be tempted in the area of the spirit, or the soul, or the body.

A. The World Tempts You in the Area of Your Soul

It’s very interesting for you to understand this, because, if you don’t understand this, you won’t know exactly how to fight. Now we said the world is *what*? The external foe. Let me tell you where the world will tempt you: The world will tempt you primarily in the area of your soul. Now what is the word *soul*? The Greek word for *soul* is the word *psuche*. We anglicize it and say *psyche*. Your soul is your mind, your emotions, and your will—your psyche, your ego, your self. The person that lives inside this body—that is your soul. With your soul, you have psychological life. And the world, this *cosmos*—this system—will tempt you primarily in the area of your soul, in the area of your ego. That’s what it is to be worldly: You’re just on an ego trip. If you’re a worldly Christian, you’re on an ego trip.

Let me give you an example of that. You remember in the Bible, when Abraham and Lot, his nephew, were having a range war? At least, the cowboys were having a range war. And magnanimous Abraham said to his nephew, Lot, “Lot, listen. Let’s not have this strife. We’re brothers, Lot. We ought not to be arguing like this. Lot, I’ll tell you what: You just choose. If you want to go in this direction, I’ll go in that direction. The land is before us. Just choose. Just take what you want.” And the Bible says, there, in the book of Genesis, that Lot lifted up his eyes toward the well-watered plains. There, he saw that tall grass, and he knew that would be good for his cattle. And so Lot went east. He pitched his tent toward Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 13:10).

Now why did he do that? Was it because of the swinging cities, Sodom and Gomorrah? Well, did he want to go down there because of the sin in Sodom? Oh, no. That isn’t why he went down there. He went down there, because he wanted more grass. Why did he want more grass? For his cattle. Well, was he missing any meals? Was he hungry? Did he need more cattle? He didn’t need more cattle. He was already fabulously wealthy. He just wanted to be the biggest rancher in all Palestine, that’s all. He wasn’t trying to make more money; he’s just keeping score. He just wanted to be a big shot. And because he wanted to be a big shot, because he was on an ego trip, he said, “I want that.” And he was trying to feed his soul on the things of this world.

That’s a temptation. And many, many today are being tempted exactly that way. This

world system says, “You’ve got to have more, you’ve got to do more, you’ve got to be more.” That’s the world. *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world”* (1 John 2:16). And it wars against the soul.

B. The Flesh Tempts You in the Area of Your Body

Now what about the flesh? Now we said the flesh, the flesh is not the body. But the flesh wars against the body. The flesh is that predisposition to sin. But the flesh wars against your body. You see, your body will be subject to temptations—physical temptations. The area of appetite, lust, laziness, violence: the flesh. And we’re tempted that way. And the flesh uses the body as a vehicle of expression. That’s where so many young people are tempted today, isn’t it? Really, so many adults, also.

Let me give you an example of that kind of temptation: David—King David—looked over a parapet wall there from his palace, and he saw a beautiful woman taking a bath (2 Samuel 11:2). Her name was Bathsheba. And he watched her. And there was something inside of him, there was that old Adamic predisposition to sin, that lust rose up in him, that sexual temptation. And his pulse quickened. He felt that rush of sexual urge. And there was an incredible sexual temptation to David. Now his physical sensations, his sexual drive, which were given from God, were under bombardment from the flesh, his old Adamic nature. And he gave in. And he fell. Lot was not in that kind of temptation. Lot was on an ego trip. But David’s passions were under attack. His physical frame was under attack from the flesh. And so the external foe wars against the soul, the internal foe wars against the flesh.

C. The Devil Tempts You in the Area of Your Spirit

Now what about the infernal foe, the devil? What does he war primarily against? “Well,” you say, “the devil, he tries to get you to commit adultery.” Not primarily. “The devil, he tries to get you drunk.” No, not primarily. “The devil tries to get you on an ego trip.” Not primarily. The devil wars against your spirit.

Now what is your spirit? What is the difference between your *spirit* and your *soul*? Your *soul* is the sense of self-consciousness. Your *spirit* is the sense of God-consciousness. You know God through your spirit, don’t you? Plants have a body, but they don’t have a soul. Animals have a body and a soul. That means they have self-consciousness. But no animal has a spirit. Only man has a spirit. You see, that’s what makes man more than an animal. Man can know God. And the Bible says that *“God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”* (John 4:24). And God’s Spirit *“beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* (Romans 8:16). And the spirit in man is that vehicle of communication, and worship, and praise, and spiritual knowledge. And what does the devil want to do? The devil wants to

cut you off from God. And so the infernal foe, the devil, wars primarily against your spirit, against your spirit. You got that?

The devil doesn't necessarily want to get you drunk. Did you know the devil, maybe, had rather not get you drunk? If getting you drunk would take you away from God, then he'd get you drunk. But you know, he just may want you to stay sober. I've often thought the devil is ashamed of some drunks. I mean, here's a man in the gutter, covered with flies and vomit. Do you think that's a good advertisement for the devil? I'll tell you, a better advertisement for the devil is the man of distinction with that crisp white collar, sitting there, surrounded by beautiful women, maybe a racehorse somewhere. And he's got that cocktail out, there. He's not a drunk; he handles it well. He doesn't know God, though. He doesn't know God.

I'm not trying to say he doesn't know God because he has that thing in his hand. I'm just simply saying that the devil likes these successful people, these men of distinction, and so forth, who don't know God. The devil doesn't mind if you live in a nice house. The devil doesn't mind if you have nice manners. The devil doesn't mind if you're suave, intelligent. The devil doesn't mind if you belong to civic clubs. The devil doesn't mind if you attend church, if you worship. He doesn't mind whatever you do, so long as you don't know God. What the devil is trying to do is to cut you off from God. And so the devil is the one who puts those doubts in your mind. The devil is the one who tries to separate you from God.

Let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. Lot is an example of the world tempting the soul. David is an example of the flesh tempting the body. Simon Peter is an example of the devil tempting the spirit. Remember what Jesus said to Simon Peter, just before Simon Peter cursed, and swore, and denied Christ? Jesus said to him: *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy"—what?—"fail not"* (Luke 22:31-32). Your *what?* Your faith. I have prayed for you that your faith fail not. What was Simon Peter's temptation, when he denied the Lord Jesus Christ? He wasn't on an ego trip. He wasn't under sexual attack, or the lust of the flesh. His faith faltered. Satan desired him, to sift him as wheat. Primarily, what Satan wants to do is separate you from Almighty God.

IV. The Subduing of Temptation

Now let me just wrap this up, now, and talk to you, for a few minutes, about the subduing of temptation. How are you going to overcome temptation? Now the Bible says here, in our verse: *"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not permit you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will, with the temptation, also make the way to escape"* (1 Corinthians 10:13).

Now the late great Donald Grey Barnhouse has given us three very wonderful words

here, and here they are. And I want you to listen to them. The words are *flight*, *faith*, and *fight*. Get those words, and I'll tell you how to use them, now.

A. Against the Flesh: Flight

Against the lust of the flesh, the key word is *flight*. F-L-I-G-H-T. Flight. The lust of the flesh. What is the flesh? That's that old Adamic nature within us that's trying to use the flesh to tempt us. Now the Bible gives us these words. The Bible says: "*Flee fornication*" (1 Corinthians 6:18). Flee fornication. Again, the Bible says: "*Flee also youthful lusts*" (2 Timothy 2:22). You're not told to fight this kind of temptation. You're told to flee. Now if there's a kind of a temptation, a magazine, a friend, a movie, a program on cable television, that arouses things in you that are wrong, you're just told to get away from it, to flee fornication. Just get away.

When I was in college, I had a motto on my desk that said this: "He who would not fall down ought not to walk in slippery places." "*Flee fornication*" (1 Corinthians 6:18). You kids, when you date, you go to some secluded rendezvous, and sit in that automobile, that's not fleeing fornication. That's asking. It's like playing with matches in dry grass. You say, "Now Lord, keep us pure." Well, you've got to flee fornication. You can't put this garbage in your mind. You can't go to these filthy *R-rated* and *X-rated* things. You cannot watch that trash on television and expect to stay pure. If you're a man, and you say, "I watch that, and it doesn't bother me," I'll tell you why: I believe you're lying. Well, you may not be lying. Either you're no man, or you're superman, or you're a liar. But I believe you're just lying when you say, "It doesn't bother me; it doesn't affect me." The Bible says: "*Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?*" (Proverbs 6:27). You wouldn't put garbage in your mouth, would you? Why put garbage in your mind? You flee fornication.

You kids, when you go on a date, go to a football game with fifty thousand people around. And if you're going to have a kiss goodnight, do it on the front porch with the porch light burning and her father looking through the keyhole with a shotgun. What am I saying? I'm saying, "You don't put yourself into that kind of a situation." If alcohol is a temptation to you, stay away from it. If you've got any in the cabinet, pour it down the drain. It will burn the hair out of the sink. Just get rid of it. Are you trying to quit smoking? Don't keep that extra carton in the dresser drawer. Just throw it out. Don't give it to somebody. Just throw it out. You say, "Well, God made tobacco." He did. He made it to kill insects, not people. Now listen. Get rid of it.

"Flee fornication" (1 Corinthians 6:18). Learn to be a first-class coward. When Potiphar's wife tempted Joseph, Joseph was the servant in Potiphar's house. There was an ungodly woman in that house, who had a sexual desire toward Joseph, and she tried to get Joseph to commit fornication with her. When Joseph realized what was

happening, and when this wicked woman reached out, and took Joseph, and tried to pull him in bed with her, Joseph got out of there in such a way that he left his coat behind him. He just ran. He just saturated that place with his absence. He just got out of there (Genesis 39). Now we may laugh at that, but he kept his purity. I know some people today, who are so stupid that they would say, “Now Mrs. Potiphar, you ought not to act that way. Let’s just kneel down by the bed and pray about it.” No. You’re not told to fight this temptation; you’re told to flee. You’re told to flee.

B. Against the World: Faith

Now against the flesh, the key word is *flight*. But what about the world? How do you overcome the world? Against the world, the key word is *faith*. John tells us, in his epistle: “*This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*” (1 John 5:4). Again, you’re not told to fight worldliness. What does faith do? Faith makes God real to you, a bright living reality. Remember what the Bible says? “*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 John 2:15). Now pay attention. It doesn’t say that the love of the Father is not in him, because he loves the world. It says: “*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 John 2:15). The reason he loves the world is because the love of the Father is not in him. Worldliness is simply a symptom that the love of the Father is not in you.

So how do you overcome worldliness? Well, suppose you’re driving down the road, and the red light comes on the dashboard of your car that says there’s no oil in the crankcase. Well, how do you handle that? Can you take a hammer and just break that light, and it’s all settled? Oh, no. That red light on the dashboard just tells you there is no oil in the crankcase. What you need to do is pull into the service station, and put some oil into the crankcase. And the red light goes off, right? Of course.

Now “*If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him*” (1 John 2:15). If you find yourself being worldly, and this world is trying to squeeze you into it’s mold, I’m going to tell you what’s wrong with you: You have not fallen in love with the Lord Jesus Christ. You’re not seeing Christ, and that’s the reason you’re having problems with worldliness. Don’t fight the light on the dashboard; put some oil in the crankcase. Load up on the Lord Jesus.

Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace (Lemmel, Helen Howarth).

When you feed on Jesus, and you’re feasting on Jesus, and the devil offers you a plate of stale crumbs, you say, “No, thank you. I’m already satisfied.” Right? *When you load up on Jesus, you don’t have to be on the back alley, eating tin cans with the devil’s*

billy goats, when you're already satisfied with the Lord Jesus Christ. Now if worldliness is your problem, faith is your answer. Look to Jesus. See who Jesus is. Let Jesus Christ satisfy you. Okay?

C. **Against the Devil: Fight**

Now against the flesh, the key word is *flight*. “*Flee fornication.*” Against the world, the key word is *faith*. “*This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*” (1 John 5:4). Now what about the infernal foe, the devil? The key word against him is *fight*. F-I-G-H-T. The Bible says we are to “*fight the good fight of faith*” (1 Timothy 6:12). The Bible says, in the book of James, we’re to resist the devil, and he will flee from us (James 4:7). You’re not told to run from him. You’re told to fight—not in your strength, but His strength.

Have you ever thought of the devil fleeing from you? Most of us, we just kind of want to have a standoff. We just say, “Devil, if you’ll leave me alone, I’ll leave you alone.” But he’s not going to leave you alone. And he’s not going to leave, until you resist him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. You say, “Well, how can I do that?” “*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).

I want you to know that the devil cares nothing for your resolutions. He’s not afraid of your goodwill. He’s not afraid of your intentions. But he fears the blood of Jesus Christ. “*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). When the devil comes and he gets on your case, you bring the blood of Jesus against him. You bring the Word of God against him. You bring that commitment to the Lord Jesus against him. And when the devil knocks on your door, and the devil comes after you, you don’t have to take it. You don’t have to take it.

So many are like that cat that had his tail stepped on so many times. Somebody would come into the room, and he’d just turn around, stick it out, and wait. I mean, just expecting, just expecting, for the devil to do what he’s going to do. You don’t have to take that stuff from the devil. I’ll tell you what you can do, my friend. I’ll tell you what: You put your sin under the blood of Jesus, and understand the power of the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when temptation comes to you, don’t be on the defensive. You be on the offensive. And you say, “Satan, I bring the Word against you. I bring the blood against you. I bring Jesus Christ against you. I resist you in the name of God Almighty. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. It belongs to God. You’re trespassing on my Father’s property. And in the name of Jesus, you be gone.” “*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*” (James 4:7). And don’t tell me it won’t work until you’ve tried it.

Against the flesh, the word is *flight*. Against the world, the word is *faith*. Against the

devil, the infernal foe, the word is *fight*. “*Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*” (Ephesians 6:10). Satan does not want you to understand the power that you have to overcome temptation.

Conclusion

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Father, thank You for Your Word, today. And O God, I pray that You would seal it to our hearts. In Jesus’ wonderful name. Amen.

The Cup of Blessing

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 9, 1996

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:20–29

*“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup,
you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 11:26

Outline

Introduction

- I. Understand the Lord's Supper
 - A. We Congregate
 - B. We Consecrate
 - C. We Commemorate
 - D. We Celebrate
 - E. We Communicate
 - F. We Contemplate
- II. Prepare for the Lord's Supper
 - A. Take the Lord's Supper Willingly
 - B. Take the Lord's Supper Worthily
 - 1. It Is for the Redeemed
 - 2. It Is for the Reconciled
 - 3. It Is for the Reverent
 - 4. It Is for the Repentant
 - C. Take the Lord's Supper Watchfully
- III. Enjoy the Lord's Supper
 - A. Enjoy Your Forgiveness in Him
 - B. Enjoy Your Fellowship with Him
 - C. Enjoy Your Future with Him

Conclusion

Introduction

Tonight, we want to think on this subject: “The Cup of Blessing.” Do you want a blessing tonight? I'm going to tell you how to make the Lord's Supper tonight a tremendous blessing. First Corinthians 10:16: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? A cup of communion. A cup of blessing. Broken bread, broken bread that blesses. Are you ready for a blessing tonight? Ladies and gentlemen, the

longer I preach, the more I serve the Lord, the more I am seeing the importance of the Lord's Supper. Now I want to be very honest with you and tell you that as a younger minister I did not really look forward to the Lord's Supper because it was difficult to serve. And it took a long time, and I looked at it more of a necessity, and I wanted to do it, but I did not see the deep, deep abiding reasons for having the Lord's Supper. The longer I live, the deeper I get into the Word of God, the more I study the Bible, and the more I study church history, and the more I learn about human nature, the more I understand the deep, deep significance of what we call the Lord's Supper. I think there are two tragic mistakes that could be made of the Lord's Supper. The one mistake that people make is that they somehow turn the Lord's Supper into a sacrament that has saving efficacy. And they say that somehow in these elements: in this bread and in this fruit of the vine, there is something that somehow mystically, has some efficacy to forgive sin. We don't believe that. We don't believe that for one moment. We believe that it is the blood of Jesus shed upon the cross that takes away our sin. This may symbolize it, but this doesn't do it. And so we don't believe there's any saving efficacy in the Lord's Supper. And sometimes because we Baptists see through that sacerdotal type of theology, we back away from that and we come over here and we say, "Oh well, then since it doesn't save and it doesn't help save, it is not necessary to salvation, And, therefore," we say, "it is not important." And that, too, is a tragic mistake. Every road has two ditches, and the devil doesn't care which side of the road he wrecks your car in as long as he keeps you off the road. Now we're going to try to stay right on the main Bible road tonight. I heard of a one-eyed mule who was so afraid of the side of the bridge that he could see; he fell off on the side he couldn't see. And we're so afraid of priestcraft on the one side, that somehow we just fall off the bridge on the other side and don't understand the deep, deep spiritual blessing in this thing called the Lord's Supper, that the Bible calls a cup of blessing. And so tonight, I want us to think about three things that would be a blessing to us if we would be blessed in the taking of this Lord's Supper.

I. Understand the Lord's Supper

First of all, number one: You need to understand the supper. You need to understand the supper. And in taking the Lord's Supper, there are six basic things that we do.

A. We Congregate

The very first thing we do is that we congregate. Look, if you will, in chapter 11:20: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, or shame ye them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." Now what he is saying here is not that we ought not to

come together in one place, but he is saying that when we come together in one place, we come together not for some sort of a, a bacchanalian feast or a drunken orgy, but we come together, we congregate in one place because the Lord's Supper is a family meal. Every now and then somebody will say to me, "Pastor, we want to have the Lord's Supper at our wedding by the bride and I would like at the altar to share the cup. Can we do that?" I say, "Well, that would be beautiful." And it might be very sentimental, but it's not biblical. It's not biblical. What I mean by that is that the Lord's Supper is not something that some people do in front of everybody else. It's not some sort of little symbolism for a few people. The great, great meaning of the Lord's Supper is we are together. It is a family meal where the church comes together. We congregate. Look, if you will, in chapter 10:16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" Now watch, watch what he's saying. Look in verse 17: "For we, being many, are one bread and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread." Just as a loaf of bread is baked and mingled together, God says we're members one of another. And when we take this Lord's Supper, it is a time of communion. Not simply with the Lord, but it is a time of communion one with another. And the Lord's Supper is the great sign of our unity in Christ.

B. We Consecrate

We congregate. Secondly, we consecrate. Look again now in verse 23, chapter 11:23: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread." Now here the emphasis is on the Lordship of Christ, the Lord Jesus, that we are consecrated to Him. Again, I would have you go back to chapter 10 and look with me in verses 21 and following of chapter 10: "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" What does this Scripture mean? It means clearly and plainly, ladies and gentlemen, that not only do we congregate, but we consecrate. We say that Jesus Christ is Lord. We are one body and He is our sovereign Lord. The Lord Jesus said this. You cannot, you cannot take the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. This table tonight is for those who have bowed the knee to Jesus, who have clearly, plainly, openly, publicly, everlastingly said, "Jesus Christ is Lord."

C. We Commemorate

Now here's the third thing we do. Not only do we congregate, not only do we consecrate; we commemorate. Now look, if you will, in chapter 11:24: "And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. And after the same manner also he took the cup, when

he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” We commemorate the death, the burial of our Lord. You show the Lord’s death till He come. Now there’s one message that the Bible says we must keep forever in front of the church, and that is the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now God has given the church two ordinances: the Lord’s Supper and baptism. And in the Lord’s Supper and in baptism we have the gospel. In the Lord’s Supper we have the death of Christ. In baptism we have the burial and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. And 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. That, ladies and gentlemen, is gospel truth. And there is no other gospel but that. Now you can understand why the devil would love to take this out of the church, and you can understand why the devil would love to take that out of the church, can’t you. Thank God for these ordinances that show us and, and commemorate and keep ever vividly in our mind what the gospel is.

D. **We Celebrate**

But not only do we congregate, not only do we consecrate, not only do we commemorate, but we celebrate. Look again, if you will, in verses 24–25. He took bread and said eat. He took the cup. He said drink. This is not a funeral. It’s a feast. It’s a feast. It took place on the night of the Passover feast. And I want you to know, dear friend, that what we’re about to do tonight is not a moment of silence for a dead friend. It is a meal of celebration with someone who is alive, the Lord Jesus Christ. We celebrate. Therefore, if we want to laugh at the Lord’s Table, we’re not irreverent. If we want to praise at the Lord’s Table, we’re not irreverent. If our hearts are filled with joy, we are not irreverent, because He is not dead! He’s alive, and it is a celebration. He’s not behind us on a cross. He’s beyond us on a throne and within us in our heart. And thank God, when we come tonight, our Lord is here.

E. **We Communicate**

We celebrate. I’ll tell you what else we do when we come to this table. Not only do we celebrate; we communicate. Look, if you will, now in verse 26: For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do shew the Lord’s death till he come.” Every time we do this we communicate. We’re preaching a sermon. And I’ll tell you it’s a powerful sermon. Many, many, many times, and I trust tonight, after we have the Lord’s Supper we’ll give an invitation and there will be those who will come forward, saying, “I want Christ as my personal Savior,” for we show the Lord’s death till He come. And until Jesus comes again, the church shall be communicating the fact that Christ died for our sins. And what a vivid, visual illustration the Lord’s Supper is of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ.

F. **We Contemplate**

And so, we communicate. I'll tell you something else we do at our Lord's Table. We contemplate. Notice in verse 27 now, chapter 11:27: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Oh, we contemplate. We think. We examine. We search. We allow the Holy Spirit of God to come into our heart and look at our inmost being. And how good and how wonderful it is that we come to that place of contemplation, not only of His death, but of our life and the way that we live in the light of His great sacrifice.

II. **Prepare for the Lord's Supper**

So, first of all, if you would have a blessing tonight, understand the Supper. Secondly, prepare for the Supper. Prepare for the supper. And let me mention three ways that you should take this Lord's Supper. Now notice in chapter 11, verse 2, Paul says, "Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the ordinances as I have delivered them unto you." It's very important that you prepare for the Lord's Supper so that you can take the Lord's Supper as the Bible says that you're to take the Lord's Supper. I have three suggestions for you how you ought to take the Lord's Supper:

A. **Take the Lord's Supper Willingly**

Number one: Take the Lord's Supper willingly, willingly. Now what I mean by that is this: That the Lord's Supper is not a duty; it is a delight. It is a duty, but it is more than a duty. It is more than a command to obey. It is a blessing to enjoy. And I pray tonight that you would have a great willingness, an excitement, an anticipation about what you're about to do.

B. **Take the Lord's Supper Worthily**

Do it, number one, willingly. But do it, number two, worthily. Look, if you will, in chapter 11:27: "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord." I want to get very solemn with you. If, tonight, you partake of this Supper unworthily, you are guilty of nailing Jesus to the cross. You're making mockery of something so sacred and so holy. You might as well hold in your hand a hammer and be driving tonight spikes in the very quivering palms of Jesus. I would no more dare do that. I had rather die on the spot than do that. You will be guilty of the body and the blood of Jesus if you take of the Lord's Supper unworthily. You are to do it worthily. Notice, again in verse 28: But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning

the Lord's body. For this cause, many are weak and sickly among you, and some sleep." Some people are weak, some people are sick, and some people are dead because they took the Lord's Supper unworthily.

Take it willingly. Take it worthily. You say, "Well, Pastor, if it's that serious, please tell me how to take it worthily." All right. Four ways. Here's how to take it worthily.

1. It Is for the Redeemed

Number one: It is only for the redeemed. Chapter 10:20: "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I would not that ye should have fellowship with demons." Friend, either you're a child of God or a child of Satan. You must be redeemed. You must be saved. Verse 21: "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons..." You cannot do it. If you're not saved, if you're not born again, I beg you, I plead with you, I warn you do not, do not take this Lord's Supper. You'll be doing it unworthily.

2. It Is for the Reconciled

Secondly, not only is it for the redeemed, but, secondly, it is for the reconciled. Look, if you will, in chapter 11:18: First of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it." And Paul warns them about this. And then Paul tells them, "Don't you take the Lord's Supper unworthily." You see, the Lord's Supper is a symbol of our communion. It is a symbol of our oneness. Again, even if you are saved, if there is a division in your heart, if, tonight, you have a scintilla of an iota of a fraction of a divisive spirit in your heart, you get it right or you abstain. Do not, do not dishonor your Lord. Do not endanger your health by taking the Lord's Supper if you have ought in your heart against anybody.

3. It Is for the Reverent

It is for the redeemed. It is for the reconciled. And, dear friend, I want to say, thirdly, it is for the reverent. Look, if you will, beginning in chapter 11:20 again. "When ye come together therefore into one place, is this not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one taketh before the other his own supper: and one, excuse me. Let me reread that because I missed a phrase. Verse 20: "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." In other words, they were doing it in the wrong way. "For in eating every one cometh for, ever, every one taketh before the other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunk." Now what they were doing here was, was taking the Lord's Supper in an irreverent way. They were making a party out of it. They were making some sort of an orgy out of the Lord's Supper. Now I'm telling you, friend, that what we're dealing with tonight is a joyful occasion, and it need not be solemn, but it must be serious and with absolute reverence. When you take these elements into your hand, you dare not have a frivolous thought. You dare not

have a careless thought.

4. It Is for the Repentant

It is for the redeemed. It is for the reconciled. It is for the reverent. And it is for the repentant. If there's any unconfessed sin in your life, then you must confess that sin or forgo the Lord's Supper. Look, if you will, in chapter 11:29: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself (the, the King James says damnation to himself), not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." There are many people who are in hospitals and many people who are in graveyards because they thought they could stonewall God. And they'll sit in a church service like this, and when the communion plate is passed, they will know there's sin in their heart and in their life. But they say, "Oh well, no one else knows." Friend, God knows. God knows. You say, "Well, what's so bad about it?" You see, friend, for those sins He died! For those sins He died! And when you take these elements into your hand and into your mouth and ingest them into your body and harbor in your heart and in your life the very sins that nailed Him to the tree, can you think of anything that deserves judgment more than that? Oh, no. If you take this Lord's Supper irreverently, you are bringing the judgment of God upon you.

It is for the redeemed. It is for the reconciled. It is for the reverent. It is for the repentant. And if you don't fit in that category, leave it alone. Now I'm not saying not to eat, for the Bible says, "Let a man examine himself and then let him eat. Let us judge ourselves." That is, confess our sin. There's no one here tonight who should not eat if he's willing to confess and willing to get clean and willing to get right with Almighty God. But do not, do not take this Lord's Supper unworthily.

C. Take the Lord's Supper Watchfully

How should you take it? Number one: Willingly. Number two: Worthily. Number three: Watchfully, watchfully. Look again in verse 29: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." The word *discern* means to understand, understand what it's all about. Don't take it flippantly. Take it seriously. Discern the Lord's body. Don't just see the piece of bread. Look beyond the shadow to the substance. Don't just see the fruit juice. Look beyond that to the blood of Jesus. Discern the Lord's body. Know what it's all about. Do it with concentration. Do it watchfully. How important it is that you not miss the Lord. The Duke of Milan commissioned Leonardo da Vinci to paint that beautiful painting that we call "The Lord's Supper." Leonardo da Vinci was in his early 30s. He took three years to paint that painting. He thought about it. And so he said, "All right. Christ will be the

center. I'll group the disciples in three. I'll have three here and three here and I'll have three here and I'll have three here. And Jesus will be in the center. And in His hand, in His right hand, there will be that cup." And Leonardo da Vinci painted "The Lord's Supper" with that beautiful, beautiful cup, that chalice. When he had finished, after years of labor, he brought a friend, and said, "What do you think of the painting?" The friend said, "The cup is so realistic I cannot take my eyes from it." And when he said that, Leonardo da Vinci took his brush and drew it across the cup, and said, "Nothing shall take away from my Lord, from my Lord." I don't want you to be so concerned about the cup that you don't discern the Lord's body. I don't want you to be so concerned about the music or the serving or anything else that it takes you from the Lord.

III. Enjoy the Lord's Supper

How are you to take this Lord's Supper? You do it, my friend, willingly. You do it worthily. You do it watchfully. It is the Lord's body. Be careful that you discern it. Now the first thing I say, understand the Supper. Secondly, prepare for the Supper. And, thirdly, enjoy the Supper. Now you're ready to enjoy the Lord's Supper. Let me tell you what to do.

A. Enjoy Your Forgiveness in Him

First of all, enjoy the forgiveness that you have in Him. This Lord's Supper was instituted the night of the Passover. Now it is linked to the Passover. The Passover looked forward to the coming of Christ. Every Old Testament Passover feast was a prophecy that Jesus is coming again, and that He is coming, rather, to die for our sins. Now the Lord's Supper looks back. As the Passover looked forward to our forgiveness, the Lord's Supper looks back, and both of them testify to the centrality of the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. So tonight, when you hold those elements in your hand, thank Him one more time. Say, "Thank You, Lord, I am forgiven. Thank You, Lord, that my sins are beneath the blood of Jesus, and the blood of Jesus cleanses me from all sin."

B. Enjoy Your Fellowship with Him

Enjoy your forgiveness. And then enjoy your fellowship. I want you to know that Jesus is here tonight in this room. "Where two or three are gathered together, there am I in the midst of them." We are the guests; He is the host. It is the Lord's Table that we come to. Now suppose, suppose He had a literal house here. And suppose He were here in a literal body, and He invited you tonight to supper with Him. How would you feel? Well, friend, no supposing to it. He does have a house, and He is here, and we need to honor the presence of our Lord.

C. Enjoy Your Future with Him

Enjoy His forgiveness. Enjoy your forgiveness with Him, your fellowship with Him, and your future with Him. I want you to contemplate tonight His coming again, because not only does the Lord's Supper look back; it looks forward. We do show the Lord's death till He come. In an orthodox Jewish home, when they had the Passover feast, and remember that the Passover feast and the Lord's Supper are joined together. When they had the Passover feast, they always had an empty chair. They put it at the table, and it was called Elijah's chair. And in the middle of the Passover feast the eldest son would go to the door and look to see if Elijah was coming, because they were always expecting Elijah to come. Friend, when we take this feast, we're expecting Jesus to come at any moment. Sometimes I just think perhaps we'll have the bread down here and the cup up there. "For in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh."

Conclusion

Oh, listen. Enjoy your forgiveness in Him. Enjoy your fellowship in Him. Enjoy your future in Him.

Some years ago, I heard the story of a young girl who lived in a country where Christianity was outlawed. She had to meet underground secretly with the other disciples. They were going to have the Lord's Supper. And this young lady was on her way to meet with her brothers and sisters in Christ to have the Lord's Supper. A soldier stopped her, and the soldier interrogated her and said, "Where are you going?" She said, "Oh, I'll tell you where I'm going." She said, "You see, my elder brother has died," and said, "I'm going to meet with some friends and we're going to talk together about our love for Him and our part in His inheritance, and then we're going to have a meal in His honor." Amen. That's exactly what we're doing, friend, but our elder brother has also risen from the dead. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

The Lord's Supper: God's Ordinance

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 26, 1990

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1–2

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.”

1 CORINTHIANS 11:2

Outline

Introduction

I. Explanation

- A. We Congregate
- B. We Consecrate
- C. We Commemorate
- D. We Celebrate
- E. We Communicate

II. Examination

- A. It Is Only for the Redeemed
- B. It Is Only for the Reconciled
- C. It Is Only for the Reverent
- D. It Is Only for the Repentant

III. Expectation

Conclusion

Introduction

First Corinthians chapter 11. And notice what the apostle Paul says in the first two verses. He says, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Now some think Paul is saying, “You follow me because I’m following Jesus.” But what he’s saying is, “You follow me. Like I follow Jesus, you follow Jesus. The way to follow me is to follow Jesus like I do.” But then he goes in verse 2 and says, “Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them unto you.” Now what are the ordinances? The ordinances are the two institutions that our Lord has given us to keep us in spiritual focus. One is the Lord’s Supper and the other is baptism. These are the two ordinances of a New Testament church: the Lord’s Supper and baptism. And the apostle Paul says it is praiseworthy if we keep them, and

if we keep them in the same way that the Bible says we're to keep them; that is, Paul says, "...as I delivered them unto you." So it's very important that you keep the ordinances. If you've not been baptized, you need to be baptized. And it is very important that as a Christian you take the Lord's Supper. Do not minimize what God has emphasized. This memorial meal is necessary to your maturity, it is necessary to your fellowship, and it is a part of your witness. And you cannot be a successful Christian by eliminating or even minimizing or overlooking what the Bible has so ordained and emphasized. It is an ordinance because God has ordained it. God has ordered it, and, therefore, it is an ordinance. That is, God gives us this not as an option, but as a spiritual necessity. Now I want to give you three things that start with the letter E just to help you to tune your heart to get ready for this meal.

I. Explanation

The very first word is the word Explanation. What is the Lord's Supper? What do we do when we take the Lord's Supper?

A. We Congregate

Well, first of all, we congregate. Look in chapter 11 and verse 20: "When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." Well, does the Bible say that we're not to come together to eat the Lord's Supper? Well, rightly understood, he was scolding them for coming together in one place and not eating the Lord's Supper. What he is saying, ah, if you'll just take verse 20 and read it in, ah, context, he's saying, "When you come together as a congregation, then you're to have the Lord's Supper." The Lord's Supper is a family meal. Now sometimes people say, "Can I have the Lord's Supper at my wedding?" No, it's not something to be added to a wedding ceremony. It is a family meal. The emphasis is on the family coming together; those who know the Lord's, ah, as their personal Savior and Lord. And coming together is a sign of our unity in the Lord Jesus. Go back to chapter 10 and look in verse 16: "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: and we are all partakers of that one bread." So tonight, our family ought to be in unity as never before.

B. We Consecrate

So the very first thing we do when we take the Lord's Supper is we congregate. And then we consecrate. Look in chapter 11 now and verse 23: "For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." Now

the Lord's Supper when we take it is a token and a sign that we recognize His absolute authority over us. We are consecrated to the Lord Jesus. This table is only for those who have bowed the knee to Jesus and have crowned Him Lord. Again, if you would, go back to chapter 10 and verse 21. Look at this verse. "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils." And so, my dear friend, when you come to this table, if you have not given your heart to Jesus Christ, bowed the knee, and crowned Him Lord of lords and King of kings, this table is not for you.

C. **We Commemorate**

But not only do we congregate and not only do we consecrate, my dear friend, we commemorate. Go again to chapter 11 and look, if you will, in verse 24. The Bible says, "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me." So when we take this bread, this broken bread, it reminds us that Jesus was bruised, battered, and broken on that cross for us. When we take this ruby red blood of the grape, it reminds us that Jesus' blood was shed for us. And as you hold those elements in your hand, I hope you'll be saying in your heart, "*Blessed Redeemer, precious Redeemer, seems now I see Him on Calvary's tree. Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading, blind and unheeding, dying for me.*" So we commemorate.

D. **We Celebrate**

But what else we do is we celebrate. Look, if you will, in chapter 11, verses 24 and 25. He says we do this, "...in remembrance of me." And then he says in verse 25: "After the same manner also he took the cup when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood (or the New Testament in my blood): this do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." Now this tells us that our Lord is not dead; He's alive because He is coming again. And so, tonight, this is not a funeral; it is a feast. We have come as a celebration. There's nothing wrong with being happy and even joyful; even exuberant at the Lord's table. It is a feast, and Jesus is the host, and we are celebrating with Him. It is not a moment of silence for the dead; it is a meal with a friend, the Lord Jesus.

E. **We Communicate**

And then not only do we celebrate; we communicate. Look, if you will, in verse 26: "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come." I have noticed that many times in a service that is not an evangelistic service, but the Lord's table, that when we take the Lord's table, and when we talk about His death for sinners, there are always those or almost always those in the congregation

who come and want to be saved. Why? We show the Lord's death. In a very visual way by not only the Lord's table, but by baptism, we are preaching a sermon. We're communicating the story of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

II. Examination

So, first of all, prepare your heart with an Explanation. And then, secondly, prepare your heart with an Examination. Look, if you will, again in chapter 11 and verse 27. Paul says, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup." Now who should take the Lord's Supper tonight? I want you to listen very carefully because it would be absolutely dangerous for you, absolutely dangerous for you to take the Lord's Supper unworthily. And so you're to examine yourself. May I give you four things that must be true of every person who partakes of the Lord's Supper?

A. It Is Only for the Redeemed

First of all, it is only for the redeemed. Go back to chapter 10 and look in verse 20: "But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God, and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils." So that makes it very clear and very plain. Only the redeemed, only the blood-bought can take the Lord's Supper. If you have not been saved, if Jesus Christ is not your Savior and Lord, do not dare to take these elements into your body. Not only will it not do you any good; it will bring certain judgment to you. It is only for the redeemed.

B. It Is Only for the Reconciled

But, secondly, it is only for the reconciled; those who do not have any enmity with any other brother or sister in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look in chapter 11 and verse 18. Here's why the apostle Paul was scolding the church at Corinth. He says, "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it." And then the apostle Paul says in verse 30: "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep." That is, some are physically ill because they've been taking the Lord's Supper with division and hostility in their heart. If there is any brother or sister in the whole wide world that you have division and enmity and hatred toward, do not, do not take the Lord's Supper.

C. It Is Only for the Reverent

It is only for the redeemed. It is only for the reconciled. It is only for the reverent. Look, if you will, again in chapter 11 and verse 20: "When ye come together therefore into one

place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper." He's scolding them for coming together and not to eat the Lord's Supper. "For in eating every one taketh before the other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have ye not houses to eat and drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and shame them which have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not." Now what's the apostle Paul saying? Well, at Corinth, ah, they had turned the Lord's Supper into a, into a brawl and into a feast and some had even gotten drunk. They had, in connection with the Lord's Supper, an agape feast. And some would get there early with a big picnic spread and they would eat and feast and gorge and overlook other people, and there was no reverence and, ah, no, ah, awareness of the Lord and the respect for what this meal represents. And Paul again says, "Because of this, God has had to judge some of you." I want to say to every man, woman, boy, and girl. If you cannot with the utmost sincerity and total reverence lay your hands on these elements that represent the, the shed blood and broken body of Jesus, do not touch them. Do not touch them. You are simply eating and digesting judgment.

D. It Is Only for the Repentant

It is only for the redeemed. It is only for the reconciled. It is only for the reverent. And it is only for the repentant. Look, if you will, in chapter 11, verses 29 and following: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another," and so forth. What's he saying? He's saying, "When you take the Lord's Supper, you search your heart, judge yourself. If there is any unconfessed, unrepented-of sin, deal with that sin before you take the Supper."

III. Expectation

Now I have given you an Explanation, what it is for. I have talked to you about an Examination, and I've given you four points. You must be redeemed. You must be reconciled. You must be reverent. You must be repentant. Do not, do not, I say, do not take these elements into your hand, much less into your body, that represent the shed blood and the broken body of Jesus unless you meet these qualifications. Now, last of all, I want to speak a word not only of Explanation and a word of Examination, but a word of Expectation. Notice, if you will, please in verse 26 of this same chapter. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come." I'm expecting Jesus any day. And I've often said when we take the Lord's Supper, I wonder if not some day we may take the bread down here and drink the cup

up there, because Jesus is coming in a moment in the twinkling of an eye.

Conclusion

And so, when we take the Lord's Supper, we look backward to His death. We look upward to His presence. We look onward to His coming. And we look inward to our hearts to see if indeed we are trusting Him and loving Him. Now I want us to bow our heads together in prayer, and I want us to spend time with that examination. Now Paul did not say, "Examine yourself and then don't eat." He said, "Examine yourself and then eat." There is no need that any of you fail tonight to take the Lord's Supper. The only ones who should fail to take the Lord's Supper are those who refuse to get right with God. And so tonight, if you're not right, I want to give you some time to get right; to name that sin: any resentment, any bitterness, any sin of the flesh, any sin of the spirit, any sin of omission, any sin of commission. Deal with it. And once you've dealt with it, you can enjoy this meal with the Lord Jesus Christ. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. Take this time of examination and confession and repentance and cleansing and then we're going to have the Lord's Supper. Thank You now, Lord Jesus, for Your blood that cleanses. Thank You for heaven's bread that feeds and satisfies. Oh, how we love You, blessed Savior. In Your name we pray, amen.

When Bellevue Breaks Bread

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 9, 1998

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1–2

*“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things,
and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 11:2

Outline

Introduction

I. We Are to Prepare for the Supper

- A. Willingly
- B. Worthily
- C. Watchfully

II. We Are to Partake of the Supper

- A. Our Fellowship in Him
- B. Our Faith in Him
- C. Our Future in Him

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word, as we look into it tonight, and turn, please, to 1 Corinthians chapter 11; the title of our study: “When Bellevue Breaks Bread.” And we’re just going to think about our taking the Lord’s Supper tonight. We dare not minimize the Lord’s Supper.

We have a group of young people here tonight, boys and girls, who have graduated from our boys and girls new members class taught by my wife, Joyce. Many of these boys and girls are here tonight. And for many of them, this will be the first time that they will participate in the Lord’s Supper—actually taking the Lord’s Supper. I want those in the children’s new members class, would you stand here? Where are you? There. Just stand up right there. There they are, and many of them are taking the Lord’s Supper for the first time. And I’m just so grateful for these young people who have come to understand what some adults still don’t understand: the importance of the Lord’s Supper. We dare not minimize what God has so emphasized.

Notice what the Apostle Paul says here in 1 Corinthians 11, verses 1 and 2: “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.*” Now Paul wasn’t saying, “I follow Jesus,

and you follow me.” He said, “You follow Jesus like I follow Jesus.” That’s what he’s saying: “You be a follower of me; you follow Jesus like I follow Jesus.” That’s what he’s saying. And then, notice verse 2: *“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.”* (1 Corinthians 11:1–2) There are two ordinances for the New Testament church: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. And Paul said, “I praise you, that you have obeyed and kept the ordinances as I have delivered them unto you.”

The Lord’s Supper is necessary to maturity as a Christian. It is necessary to fellowship as a Christian. It is necessary to witness as a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. And so I want to be a little unorthodox tonight and give you a two-point message. But that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s shorter; it’s just two points. You know, you can have as many sub-points as you want. But I really just want us to think about preparation for the supper: how to prepare for the supper; and then, secondly, how to partake of the supper.

I. We Are to Prepare for the Supper

Now, how are we to prepare for the Lord’s Supper?

A. Willingly

Well, we are to prepare for the Lord’s Supper willingly. Now, look, if you will, in verse 23 of this same chapter. Paul says, *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.”* (1 Corinthians 11:23) Jesus took this supper with gratefulness and thanksgiving, and so should we. It is a delight as well as a duty. It is a duty, but the Lord’s Supper is more than a command to obey. It is a command to obey, but it is a blessing to enjoy.

Some of the greatest times that Jesus ever had with His disciples were when they would eat together. And often you find the Lord Jesus saying to those that He loved, “Come and dine.” Sometimes we as Baptists are criticized because we put such an emphasis upon eating together. But, friend, that is biblical. It is wonderful. And we are to take of this Lord’s Supper willingly. We’ve not come to mourn a corpse. I mean, He’s not dead; He is alive. Now this is not a moment of silence for the dead; it is a meal with a friend, and His name is Jesus. So we’re meeting with Jesus tonight. And so we want to do it willingly.

B. Worthily

But notice, number two, not only should we partake willingly, but we ought to partake worthily. Now, look, if you will, beginning in verse 27, and read through 32. Paul says,

“Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” That means if you take the Lord’s Supper unworthily, you crucify Him afresh: you are guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. *“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”* (1 Corinthians 11:27–29) And he goes on to say that if we continue in this way, God will judge us. (1 Corinthians 11:32)

If you were to take the Lord’s Supper unworthily tonight, you would be doing a dangerous thing. It would be far better for you to abstain than it would be for you to take the Lord’s Supper unworthily. You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, I am not worthy.” I agree: you’re not worthy. I am not worthy. He’s not talking about whether we’re worthy or not in ourselves—none is worthy. Through Jesus, all is worthy. The word is an adverb. You say, “Okay, I’ve forgotten now. Let me see. An adverb: what is an adverb?” Well, it modifies a verb. And he’s saying, “Don’t take the supper in the wrong way. Don’t take the supper unworthily. Don’t take it with un-confessed, un-repenting sin in your heart and in your life. Don’t take it flippantly, carelessly, not discerning the Lord’s body. Think about what you are doing. Don’t be careless. Don’t be carnal in taking the Lord’s Supper. Don’t take the Lord’s Supper if your heart is not clean.”

Now some people read this passage of Scripture and say, “Well, I don’t want to eat and drink damnation, so I am not going to take the Lord’s Supper.” That’s not what Paul is saying. He says, *“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.”* (1 Corinthians 11:28) He doesn’t say, “Examine yourself and don’t eat.” He says, “Examine yourself and do eat.” He’s not saying not to eat; he’s just saying, “Do it in the right way. Don’t do it unworthily; do it worthily.” So there’s nothing that you have done, no sin that you have ever committed, that you cannot put right right now by the blood of Jesus. I mean, it’s not like you are saying, “Well, I have sinned. I failed this past week. Therefore, I am not here to take the Lord’s Supper.” Oh, no—no! The Bible says, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* (1 John 1:9)

And that’s the reason I love the Lord’s Supper: because it gives us those times when we stop and we look ourselves right in the face and we say, “Am I taking these elements into my body and at the same time harboring the sin that nailed Him to the cross? Or am I taking the Lord’s Supper with hatred in my heart? I dare not do that.” Well, that doesn’t mean that you shouldn’t take the Lord’s Supper; it just means get the hatred out of your heart—just get the hatred out of your heart. Confess your sin. Be clean. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* That’s wonderful. *“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”*

(Isaiah 1:18)

C. **Watchfully**

So, take it willingly. Take it worthily. And take it watchfully. Notice again this passage of Scripture; look in verse 29. He says, *“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.”* (1 Corinthians 11:29) Now the word *discern* here means “to understand.” That is, if you just sit here and you go through a ritual and you don’t understand what it’s talking about, you’re not doing it watchfully. You need to see beyond these symbols: beyond this unleavened bread, and beyond this fruit of the vine. You need to see that that represents the broken, bruised, and bleeding body of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that that ruby red juice represents the rich, red, royal blood of the Son of God.

And so that’s preparation of the Supper. You do it willingly. You say, “Lord Jesus, what a joy to be here!” You do it worthily. You say, “I don’t want any un-confessed, un-repenting of sin in my heart and in my life.” And you do it watchfully: “Lord, I discern your body. I see what it is all about. I have a serious mind when I come to the Lord’s Supper.”

II. **We Are to Partake of the Supper**

Now, here’s the second point. That’s the first point: We are to prepare for the Supper. And now, next, we are to partake of the Supper. You know, Jesus said, *“This do in remembrance of me.”* (Luke 22:19) So He’s told us to do it; we ought to do it. This is not an incidental thing; it is not a meaningless ritual.

Now actually, when we partake of the Supper, there are three elements.

A. **Our Fellowship in Him**

First of all, there is our fellowship in Him. You’re in chapter 11; go back to chapter 10 and look, if you will, in verses 16 and 17. He’s talking about the Lord’s Supper there also, and he says, *“The cup of blessing...”*—isn’t that a wonderful term for it: the cup of blessing? Oh, friend, when you put that cup to your lips, it’s not the cup of damnation. If you do it unworthily, you eat and drink damnation; but if you do it worthily, it’s the cup of blessing—*“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?”* And then, notice in verse 17: *“For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”* (1 Corinthians 10:16–17)

Now what he’s saying is this: that in a mystical way, when we take these elements into our bodies, we’re having communion with the Lord. It is communion with the body of Jesus and with the blood of Jesus. We are fellowshiping with Him in a way—the most intimate fellowship that we can have with our Lord. It is communion. That is not

mere union, but *comm-union*: I in Him, and He in me. And we become mystically, wonderfully, one as we enjoy our fellowship with Him.

But, you see, it's fellowship with Him, and it's also fellowship with one another. He says, "We are one body, and we're one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:17) That loaf of bread is broken, but it represents each of us, and it represents all of us. As so the Church—the Church—is not an organization with Jesus as the president; it is a body with Jesus as the head. We are one body. And that's the reason we don't have the Lord's Supper in little groups and homes and things like that: because it doesn't represent that; it represents the Body of Jesus. "When you all come together in one place, is it not to take the Lord's Supper?" (1 Corinthians 11:10) And as many believers as possibly can gather, ought to gather.

Obviously, some can't come tonight, and we have an agape feast for our elderly people in the morning; but the idea is not a little group here, and a little group there, showing their independence. It is as many of us as can get together, to symbolize that we belong to one body in the Lord Jesus.

B. Our Faith in Him

So it symbolizes, first of all, our fellowship in Him; and then, our faith in Him. Look, if you will, in verse 26: "*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.*" (1 Corinthians 11:26)

Now the Passover was the precursor to the Lord's Supper. The Jews—and you can read about it in Exodus chapter 12 (Exodus 12)—had a wonderful ritual that was called the Passover. The Jews were slaves in the land of Egypt, and God was going to deliver them from the land of Egypt. And He did it on a night we call the night of the Passover. And God told Moses to tell the people to take a lamb—a little lamb without spot and without blemish—and to keep that lamb up for three days. And they examined that lamb to make sure that it has no blemish whatever. And then on the third day, they were to kill the lamb, put the blood of that lamb in a basin, and then the father of the house was to go out to the door in front of the house, and he was to put the blood of the lamb on the two side posts and on the lintel of the door, so anybody going out of that house would have to go out under the blood and through the blood.

And God said to the Israelites, "Be certain that you do this, because this night the death angel is going to come through the land of Egypt, and the death angel is going to pass by every house, and the death angel is going to look and see if there is any blood on the doorposts. And if there's no blood on the doorposts, the death angel will come into that house and he will slay the firstborn in that house. But," God says, "if I see the blood, I will pass over you." That's the reason they call it Passover. "When I see the blood, I will pass over you. The death angel will pass over, because the blood is there."

Now, friend, had they had a live lamb in the back room, there would be no passing

over. You see, some people say, “Well, I just want to follow the life of Jesus.” Following the life of Jesus will not save you. *Salvation is not learning lessons from the life of Christ but receiving life from the death of Christ.* The life of Christ can only condemn you. You could say, “I could never live that way.” It’s the death of Christ that saves you. So He says, “When I see the blood.” Now had they taken rubies and diamonds, and poetry and wonderful thoughts, and put them on the doorpost, that would have done no good. “When I see the blood, I’ll pass over you.” *“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.”* (Titus 3:5) It is the shedding of blood: *“Without shedding of blood is no remission”* of sin. (Hebrews 9:22) Why, friend, had they slain the lamb, and kept the blood in the basin, and not put the blood on the doorpost, the death angel would not have passed over.

You know, the Bible says Jesus says, “If you’re ashamed of me and of my Word before this sinful and adulterous generation, I will be ashamed of you when I come to the glory of the Father with the holy angels.” (Mark 8:38) You just can’t keep the blood in the back room. You just can’t be a secret disciple. *You cannot bootleg a blessing.* You cannot be a follower of Jesus and be ashamed of Him. Put the blood on the doorpost. Big and bold, there it is: “When I see the blood, I will pass over you.”

I can imagine the firstborn son of Pharaoh, the King of Egypt, coming to him and saying, “Dad, I’ve been down there in the marketplace. Moses is preaching to the people. And, Dad, you know what he’s saying? Dad, you would be interested. He is saying that tonight God is going to send judgment into the land, and he’s saying to all of those Jewish people that they need to take a lamb, and sacrifice a lamb, and put blood on the doorposts of their house; and if they don’t do it, tonight, the firstborn son is going to die. Now, Dad, you know, I’m the firstborn son. Dad, do you think we’d better get a lamb and sacrifice it?”

I can imagine Pharaoh saying, “Son, listen. The religion of Egypt is far better than the religion of that bunch of slaves. Why, we’ve got the most intelligent priests in the world. And we don’t have just one god; we’ve got thousands of gods. We have our own religion, son. Don’t let Moses get you all frightened about that “blood of the lamb” stuff. Son, don’t you worry. We have our own personal priest: he will take care of us. Go to bed, my son. Daddy loves you. Go to bed, and don’t you worry at all about the blood of the lamb.” And so that firstborn son goes to bed.

There’s another firstborn son. This son is in the company of the Israelites, and his dad brings him in and says, “Son, you heard what Moses said. We’re going to do exactly what Moses said.” And they kill a lamb, and they put the blood upon the doorpost of the house. And he says, “Come out here, son. You see the blood of the lamb? You see the body of that innocent lamb? He’s done no wrong, but his blood was shed for you, son. And we thank God that by the shedding of blood there is the

forgiveness, the mercy of God. And so we're not ashamed of this, and we put the blood on the doorpost. Son, Daddy loves you. Go to bed. Sleep well, son." And he goes to bed.

Another Jewish boy comes to his dad, and he says, "Dad, I've heard that we're supposed to put blood on the doorpost tonight, the blood of a perfect, spotless lamb. I'm the firstborn, Dad. Have we done it right?" The dad says, "Yes, we have, son. We've done exactly what God has commanded. We've taken a lamb without spot, without blemish; we've slain the lamb. Come out here and look, son. There is the blood upon the lenti. There is the blood upon the doorposts. Go to sleep, son, and sleep well." The boy lies there; he doesn't sleep. Pharaoh's son is asleep. The first Jewish boy is asleep. But this boy is tossing and turning all night long. He can't sleep. He says, "Tonight, the death angel is coming. I wonder—I wonder—will it work? He goes back out to look again to check. He wakes his dad up. He says, "Dad are you sure?" "Yes, son, we've done just what God has said." "Dad, are you sure you're sure?" "Yes, son, I am sure. Son, go to sleep." He may sleep fifteen, twenty minutes that night.

But when he wakes up, he is alive, and the death angel has passed over. And in the house of Pharaoh, there is a shriek, because Pharaoh's son is cold and clammy and dead. And in the house of the first Jewish boy, he wakes up: "What a mighty God we serve!"

Now some of you are like Pharaoh's son: you've never given your heart to Jesus. I want you to do that tonight, because just as surely as the death angel came to the land of Egypt, God's death angel will visit your house. And without the blood of the Lamb, you're going to die and go to hell. I can't say it any plainer than that. And I don't say it with malice; I say it with a broken heart: You're going to die and go to hell without the shed blood of the Lord. Others of you, thank God, are like the first Jewish boy. You have put your faith where God put your sin: on the Lord Jesus Christ. You have received Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior. The blood has been applied to the doorpost of your heart, your house, and you are resting in that, and you are under the blood of Jesus. And tonight you're as happy as you can be that you're saved. And some of you, bless your heart, you are saved also, but you're not enjoying it very much. You have salvation; you just don't have assurance. You're like that little boy who didn't sleep much. You're going to heaven second-class; you're going to get there, though.

Now, what was the difference between the two boys? Listen to me very carefully. The blood makes us safe, but the Word makes us sure. The blood makes us safe. Thank God for the blood. I mean, if you're under the blood, if you're saved, you're saved. And thank God for that, if you put your faith in Jesus Christ. But, you know, some of us are a little too nervous about it. We need to take the Word of God. It is the blood that makes us safe; it is the Word that makes us sure. *"These things have I written unto*

you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13) That’s good.

Now that was the Passover; they had the Passover. And they ate a meal from henceforth, because it was to be a memorial meal. And just before the Lord Jesus was crucified, He was having the Passover supper with His disciples. But now the Passover has transcended itself, and it has melded and moved over unto the Lord’s Supper, because now Jesus has become that Passover lamb for us. When John the Baptist saw the Lord Jesus, He said, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.”* (John 1:29) And we don’t need any more Jewish Passovers because we have the Lord’s Supper.

So when we partake of this meal, it shows, first of all, our fellowship in Him. It is communion—communion—with the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, and communion with brothers and sisters in Christ. But it also shows our faith in Him. We say, “Thank God! Hallelujah! The blood has made me safe, and the Word has made me sure. I’m under the blood.”

C. Our Future in Him

Now, here’s the third thing—and I’m going to mention that, and then we’ll take the Supper. It shows our fellowship in Him. It shows our faith in Him. And it shows our future in Him. For He goes on to say, *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come”—“till he come.”* (1 Corinthians 11:26)

You know, when the Orthodox Jews began to take the Lord’s Supper, they evolved a certain ritual. They would put an empty chair at the table. It was called Elijah’s chair. And at a certain time in the Passover, the Seder, the elder son is told, “Son, would you go look and see if Elijah’s coming?” because they believe that the coming of Elijah would typify the end of the age; and, “You go look and see if Elijah is coming.” And they have a little game that they play, and the elder son gets up and he goes and says, “No, I don’t see him.” And then they come back, and there’s an empty chair there at the table. Well, friend, we don’t have an empty chair. He has come—He has come! We’re going to have a meal with Him. There is no empty chair.

Now I’m going to tell you something else: He is coming again, literally, actually, bodily, visibly. As I’ve said before, sometimes I think maybe we will just eat the bread down here and drink the cup up there, because He’s coming in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. And each time we take the Lord’s Supper—each time we do—we are just remembering the past and looking forward to the future.

Conclusion

I read sometime ago about a young lady who lived in a country where it was against the law to do what we’re doing tonight: to assemble as brothers and sisters in Christ. She

was a member of a group of Christians that the state had not approved. And they had their soldiers to enforce the state religion. But she was going with a group to take the Lord's Supper, and a soldier stopped her on the street, and to check her out, he said, "Young lady, just where are you going, and what do you intend to do? Why are you out at night like this?" Well, she didn't want to lie, but she didn't want to deny, either. So she thought real fast, and she said, "Well, I'm going to meet with a group of friends. We're going to talk about our Brother's death, and have fellowship with one another, and talk about our Brother. And then we're going to talk about what part we have in His inheritance." He said, "All right, pass on." And she went on to have the Lord's Supper.

Well, folks, we're here to talk about our Brother. And we're to fellowship with one another. And we're here tonight to think just how rich we are because of Him. Praise His name.

Thoughts for the Lord's Supper

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 29, 1991

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1–2, 18–32

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

1 CORINTHIANS 11:28

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Purpose of the Lord's Supper
 - A. To Remember the Presence of the Lord
 - B. To Remember the Provision of the Lord
 - C. To Remember the Passion of the Lord
 - D. To Remember the Purpose of the Lord
- II. The Preparation for the Lord's Supper
 - A. It Is for the Redeemed
 - B. It Is for the Reconciled
 - C. It Is for the Reverent
 - D. It Is for the Repentant
- III. The Participation in the Lord's Supper
 - A. It Is a Time of Covenant
 - B. It Is a Time of Communion

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word, please, and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11. And tonight, I want to give you some communion thoughts and tell you what the Bible has to say about the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table.

First Corinthians chapter 11, verses 1 and 2: the Apostle Paul says, *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”*—now, Paul was not saying, “I follow Christ, and you follow me.” What Paul is saying is, “You follow Christ like I follow Christ. Be a follower of me. Follow Christ like I follow Christ.” And then, he says—*“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I [have] delivered them unto you”* (1 Corinthians 11:1–2) Now, a Christian who keeps the ordinances is praiseworthy. We've already had the ordinance of baptism, and now, tonight, we're going to have the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. And, the New Testament church has two ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. And, if you fail to keep these, you're not

praiseworthy; you're blameworthy. If you keep these ordinances, according to the Word of God, you are praiseworthy.

Now, in some churches, the Lord's Supper is over-exalted, and in other churches, the Lord's Supper is denigrated and lowly treated. Some churches have doctrines that I believe are not taught in the Bible. They have the doctrine of transubstantiation, where they teach that these elements—this broken bread and this blood of the grape—literally, actually, becomes the body and the blood of the Lord Jesus; and that each time we take the Lord's Supper, that the priest in some way transforms or presides over the transformation of these elements; and, therefore, a sacrifice is taking place and that Jesus is being sacrificed again—that His body and His blood one more time are being sacrificed for the forgiveness of sins. Now, not only do I believe that is a mistake; I reject that with all of the unction, function, and emotion of my soul. Jesus died once for all. It is done. It is paid in full. *"It is finished."* (John 19:30) I believe that with all of my heart, all of my soul. I believe it to be true. That's one side, and that is an error.

The other side is a grave error, also. There are Christians who deliberately neglect taking the Lord's Supper. They stay at home when they could come or they're casual or cavalier or indifferent about taking the Lord's Supper. They say, "Well, since it doesn't save and it doesn't help save, what difference does it make? It's only a ritual." Well, my dear friend, I want to tell you that taking the Lord's Supper is more than a ritual. It is necessary for obedience. It is necessary for maturity. It is necessary for testimony. It is necessary for growth in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, we don't want to be like that one-eyed mule who was so afraid of the side of the bridge that he could see that he fell off of the side he couldn't see. Now, we want to stay right in the middle and teach what the Bible teaches about the Lord's Supper.

I. The Purpose of the Lord's Supper

So, I want you to look in this eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians that tells us, first of all, what is the purpose of the supper.

A. To Remember the Presence of the Lord

The purpose of the supper, number one, is to remember the presence of the Lord. Remember that I spoke to you this morning about the Lord saying, "I will be with you"—*"I will never leave [you]."* (Hebrews 13:5) Look in chapter 11 and verse 20. The Bible says, *"When [you] come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and...drink in? or despise [you] the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say [unto] you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed*

took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:20–24)

Now, when we say, “in remembrance of the Lord Jesus Christ,” we’re not talking about remembering someone who has died and has gone from us but to remember someone who is now present with us. Jesus Christ was speaking to those who were in His presence, and He said, “*This do in remembrance of me.*” (1 Corinthians 11:24) It wasn’t that He was away from them when He said that. He was with them when He said that to them. Now remember this about the Lord’s Supper tonight: we are remembering His presence. What we’re doing tonight is not a moment of silence for the dead; it is an act of fellowship with a friend. Jesus Christ is here tonight. This is His table. He is the host. We are fellowshiping with the Lord Jesus Christ.

And, therefore, we need to see beyond these symbols to the Savior. Leonardo da Vinci was a great artist. At the age of forty-two, the Duke of Milan said to Leonardo, “I want you to paint for me a painting of the Last Supper,” and Leonardo da Vinci painted that marvelous, marvelous painting of the Last Supper. When he had finished, he felt it was a masterpiece, and he was grateful for it. And, he asked a friend—he said, “I would like for you to look at this painting, and I would like for you to give me your honest evaluation.” The friend looked at it for a while. He said, “It is magnificent.” He said, “I believe the most magnificent part of the painting is the cup, the chalice.” He said, “I can’t take my eyes from it. It is incredibly captivating.” When he said that, Leonardo da Vinci took his paintbrush, according to the account that I read, and drew it across the cup, and said, “Nothing in this picture shall detract from the face of my Savior.”

Think about it. Friend, it is not the cup; it is not the bread. These are emblems and symbols, and we need to look past the symbols to the Savior.

B. To Remember the Provision of the Lord

So, what do we take this supper for? Number one: to remember the presence of the Lord. Number two: to remember the provision of the Lord. Look again in verse 24: Jesus said, “*This is my body, which is broken for you.*” (1 Corinthians 11:24) Think what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for you and what He has provided for you. Why did He do it? He did it for you. We say, “Christ died for my sins,” and that is true. But, try saying it this way: “Christ died because of my sins.” We say, “Christ died for me.” Say it this way: “Christ died instead of me.” “*This is my body, which is broken [because of] you.*” (1 Corinthians 11:24)

O to grace, how great a debtor

Daily I’m constrained to be!

—ROBERT ROBINSON

How could I carelessly, or in a cavalier manner, take into my hands this cup and this

bread that represents such provision without bowing my head in the greatest of gratitude, without a heart that leaps up in joy and praise to say, “Lord Jesus, I thank you”?

C. To Remember the Passion of the Lord

But, not only do we remember His presence and His provision, but oh, we remember His passion. Look, if you will, in verse 26: the Bible says, “*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death*”—“*the Lord’s death*”—“*till he come.*” (1 Corinthians 11:26) We are taking in our hands bread that represents wheat that has been crushed and ground fine and put in an oven and baked. We take into and ingest into our mouths the grape juice, which speaks of the grape that has been pressed. And, the Bible calls this very grape juice the “*blood of the grape.*” (Deuteronomy 32:14) Yes, we need to anticipate. Yes, we need to meditate. Yes, we need to participate and think about what Jesus did. And tonight, don’t be careless. Say:

*Blessed Redeemer, precious Redeemer,
Seems now I see Him on Calvary’s tree,
Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading.
[They were] blind and unheeding, [but He was] dying for me.*

—AVIS CHRISTIANSEN

Years ago, back in the fifties, I heard a story that I cannot forget. A man had gone out fishing, and he had taken his dog with him fishing—just an ordinary dog. And, the man was an avid fisherman, and when it looked like the fish were about to bite, somehow the dog moved in the boat and made a barking sound. And, the man felt that the dog somehow had scared away or frightened the fish. The man was a vile man and a wicked man, and he cursed the dog. And again, the dog in this boat did something that irritated this man. This man took the dog, took one of the dog’s paws, and put the dog’s paw on the gunnel of that boat and took his woodman’s axe and chopped the paw from that dog, which fell into the water. Then, he put another paw up there and chopped that one off. And then, another—the hind paw, chopped that one off. And then, the last one—he chopped that one off, and then flung the dog, bleeding, with no paws, off into the water to try to swim. And, the dog drowned. And, that man told that story, and I sat there. And, I have to admit that I was repulsed and I felt my heart going out in pity toward that dog. And, I felt a sense of indignation toward that man. Then, that preacher said, “I have just told you, before I told you the story of that dog, the story of Christ dying on the cross, but I have seen more reaction in this congregation from the story that I told about that dog with his paws chopped off. I’ve seen more on your face—more grimaces, more revulsion—than I have seen when I told you the story of Christ dying on that cross.” Could it be, my dear friend, that the story of Christ on the cross has become so

old to us, or we've heard it so many times, that the story of a dog being mangled and massacred can tear our hearts more than the story of one who died on the cross?

D. To Remember the Purpose of the Lord

Why do we take this supper? To remember His presence—He's here with us—oh, my dear friend, to remember His provision—*“this is my body, which is broken for you”* (1 Corinthians 11:24)—to remember His passion—*“[we] do shew [His] death till he [comes]”* (1 Corinthians 11:26)—and to remember His purpose. Why did He do it all? Well, look, if you will, in verse 29: *“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation”—*that is, “judgment”—*“to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.”* (1 Corinthians 11:29)

Now, what body is he talking about? Is he talking about the body that walked with sandaled shoes on the shoes of Galilee? Oh, no. He's talking about the Church. You see, what had happened here was people had come to take the Lord's Supper, and rather than taking the Lord's Supper, they had made a drunken brawl out of it. And, one would bring a big feast, and they would eat a feast. And, some actually were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper—not with the communion but with wine that they had brought along. And, they would get drunk, and Paul said, “What you're doing when you do such a thing is you are eating and drinking judgment and damnation because you have not discerned the Lord's Body.” (1 Corinthians 11:29) What body is he talking about? He's talking about the Church—He's talking about the Church.

You see, what was the purpose of the suffering of the Lord Jesus? What does He want us to remember? Well, you see, dear friend, His passion and His provision deal with His purpose—that is, that He would have a new body, the Church. And, that's the reason that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance: it is here to bind us together, to say that we are one in the bond of love.

Go back to 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 17; look at it: *“For we being many are one bread”—*that is, “one loaf of bread.” All of the grains ground together make one loaf—*“and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”* (1 Corinthians 10:17) And, the word *partaker* means *“fellowshipping in that one bread.”* We—all of us, dear friend—are the Lord's Body. That's what he's saying.

Look in the chapter that follows chapter 11. Look in chapter 12, and you'll see the same thing in verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body.”* (1 Corinthians 12:13) That's why it's so important that you come together when we take the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is a church ordinance. It's not something that individuals do. It's not something nice that some people might do at a wedding. It shows that we are one in the bond of love. And that, my friend—these—are the purposes of the Lord's Supper.

II. The Preparation for the Lord's Supper

Now, let me talk to you, secondly, about preparation for this supper. Not everyone should take the Lord's Supper. And, the Bible tells us... Look, if you will, in verse 28: *"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."* (1 Corinthians 11:28) Are you ready for an examination? Not everyone here tonight is prepared to take the Lord's Supper. And some, if you do take it, you'll take it to your harm and to your hurt: you will be ingesting judgment, damnation, into your body, and I would beg you and warn you not to participate unless you are prepared. All right. You say, "Pastor, tell me how I can be prepared? Who is the Lord's Supper for?"

A. It Is for the Redeemed

Well, first of all, it is for the redeemed. Look in chapter 10 and beginning in verse 20. Look at it. He says here, *"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. [You] cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: [you] cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."* (1 Corinthians 10:20–21) Now, my dear friend, if you've not made a clean break with the world; if you have not given yourself over to Jesus Christ one hundred percent, lock, stock, and barrel; if you're not committed to His Lordship, do not—I say, I do not—take of this supper. It is for the redeemed.

B. It Is for the Reconciled

But, not only is it for the redeemed; it is for the reconciled. Chapter 11 and verse 18: but he says, *"For first of all, when ye come together...I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it."* (1 Corinthians 11:18) And then, he said, "As a result of that, God is going to judge you." And, my dear friend, if there is in your heart tonight any animosity toward any human being upon the face of this earth, do not take the Lord's Supper. If there's bitterness, haughtiness, a grudge, do not take the Lord's Supper. You are living in danger if you do. That does not mean that you have to agree with what others have done. It does not mean that you have to approve what others have done. But, I am telling you, my dear friend, that if, in your heart, there is a lack of reconciliation, a nonreconcilable spirit in your heart, you're dealing dangerously to take the Lord's Supper.

C. It Is for the Reverent

It is for the redeemed. It is for the reconciled. Thirdly, it is for the reverent. Look, if you will, in chapter 11 and verses 20 and 22: *"When ye come together therefore into one place, [there] is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before [the] other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken."* (1 Corinthians 11:20–21) And then, He remonstrates with them about it because of the careless way

that they were taking the Lord's Supper. I had rather take electric wires with high voltage in my hands than to carelessly, flippantly take the Lord's Supper. What we are doing tonight deals with the shed blood, the broken body, of the Son of God.

D. It Is for the Repentant

But, not only is it for the reverent; it must, therefore, be for the repentant. Look, if you will now, in chapter 11:28 and following: *“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning”*—or, “because he has not discerned”—*“the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and [some] sleep.”* (1 Corinthians 11:28–30) Perhaps your physical illness or perhaps your weakness has been caused because you have irreverently taken the Lord's Supper. Perhaps some in our church have died prematurely because they have irreverently taken the Lord's Supper. Verse 30 is one of the most challenging verses in the Bible: “For this cause”—irreverence at the Lord's Table—“some are weak, some are sick, and some are dead.” (1 Corinthians 11:30)

But, so what does He say? He says in verse 31: *“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged”*—now, you have the choice tonight to judge yourself or let God judge you—*“if [you] would judge [yourself], [you would] not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”* (1 Corinthians 11:31–32) God doesn't judge you because He hates you; He judges you because He loves you. God loves you just like you are, but He loves you too much to let you stay that way. And so, when you are chastened, it is so that you will not be overtaken with the world.

And so, who should take the Lord's Supper? The redeemed, the reconciled, the reverent, and the repentant. That, my dear friend, are those who should take the Lord's Supper. The preparation for the Lord's Supper.

III. The Participation in the Lord's Supper

Now, let me just say one last thing and talk to you about the participation of the Lord's Supper. Why should we do it? Well, in verse 2, the Apostle Paul says, *“I praise you...that [you]...keep the ordinances.”* (1 Corinthians 11:2) And then, also, in verse 28: *“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”* (1 Corinthians 11:28) He doesn't say to examine yourself and not eat. He says to examine yourself and eat. Why would we examine ourselves and then eat? Well, because when we examine ourselves, we can confess our sin, we can judge our sin. And, when we judge it, God forgives it. What we uncover God covers, but what we try to cover God uncovers. And so, the reason the Lord's Supper is such a blessing—it brings us to the place where we let the Holy Spirit of God do radical surgery on us and expose

anything in our hearts and lives that ought not to be there.

A. It Is a Time of Covenant

Now, the Lord's Supper is, therefore, a time of covenant and it is a time of communion. Look in verse 25: *"After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood."* (1 Corinthians 11:25) The word *testament* means "covenant." It is a covenant—a blood covenant. And, what it means is, it is an agreement with God and an agreement with one another. When I take this cup, when I take this bread, I'm saying to God, "Dear God, I am in covenant with you and I'm in covenant with all of these, my brothers and sisters."

B. It Is a Time of Communion

And then, it is a time not only of covenant, but it is a time of communion. Verse 26: *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."* (1 Corinthians 11:26) You eat what I eat. You drink what I drink. We are in covenant and communion because of our common love, our common respect, our common commitment to Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Now, I want you to bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want you to remember the presence of the Lord: He is here tonight. I want you to remember the provision of the Lord: His body was broken for you. I want you to remember the passion of the Lord: no one has ever suffered like Jesus suffered, and He suffered for you. And, I want you to remember the purpose of the Lord: that we might be one body, His Body, *"members one of another."* (Romans 12:5; Ephesians 4:25)

I want you to ask yourself this question: Are you redeemed? If not, don't take. Secondly, are you reconciled? Is there someone that you are holding resentment or bitterness toward? Then confess that to God and ask Him to forgive you and cleanse you right now. Again, I want to ask you, do you realize the seriousness and the solemnity of this supper? Are you reverent? And, last of all, are you repentant? How dare any of us take this supper into our mouths, much less into our hands, with unconfessed, unrepented-of sin—the same sin that nailed Him to the tree. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our [sin], and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* (1 John 1:9) So, the Bible says, *"Let a man examine himself."* (1 Corinthians 11:28) We'll take a few moments, and then we will have the Lord's Supper. Now, you're going to examine your heart as I will examine mine.

The Breaking of Bread

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: July 29, 1984

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1–2, 23–32

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Manner in Which We Are to Take the Lord's Supper
 - A. Willingly
 - B. Worthily
 1. It Is Only for the Redeemed
 2. It Is Only for the Reconciled
 3. It Is Only for the Reverent
 4. It Is Only for the Repentant
 - C. Watchfully
- II. The Motive for Taking the Lord's Supper
 - A. It Is a Means of Adoration
 - B. It Is a Means of Appreciation
 - C. It Is a Means of Celebration
 - D. It Is a Means of Anticipation
- III. The Message in This Taking of the Lord's Supper
 - A. We Proclaim Our Fellowship in Him
 - B. We Proclaim Our Faith in Him
 - C. We Proclaim Our Future in Him

Conclusion

Introduction

I want to call our study “The Breaking of Bread.” First Corinthians chapter 11, verses 1 and 2: *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”*—by the way, Paul wasn’t one of those preachers who said, “Don’t do as I do; do as I say.” He said, “Do as I do. You follow me because I’m following Christ”—*“Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you”* (1 Corinthians 11:1–2). Now, I want you to go to verses 23–32: Paul says, *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till*

he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world" (1 Corinthians 11:23–32). And, we'll cease our reading right there. I do not have words in my vocabulary, nor emotions adequate enough to express to you, the importance of the Lord's Supper.

Now, we know that the Lord's Supper is not a sacrament that adds saving grace—that is, we're not saved by taking the Lord's Supper. We do not agree with those who believe that the literal presence of the Lord is in the bread and in the fruit of the vine. We do not believe in that. Yet we believe that the Lord is present tonight. *"For where two or three are gathered...in my name, there am I in the midst of them"* (Matthew 18:20). And, while we do not believe that the taking of this ordinance is necessary in order to get us to Heaven, we do believe that it is necessary for fellowship, we believe it is necessary for maturity, we believe it is necessary for obedience, we believe it is necessary for our Christian witness. And, God forbid that we should ever minimize what God has so emphasized. Now, three things I want us to see tonight:

I. The Manner in Which We Are to Take the Lord's Supper

First of all, I want you to see the manner in which we are to take the Lord's Supper—the manner in the breaking of the bread.

A. Willingly

First of all, we are to do this willingly—willingly. Now, you see, the taking of the Lord's Supper is a duty, but it is more than a duty—it is a delight. It is more than a command to obey; it is a blessing to enjoy. This morning, I preached on friendship, and I told you that our best friend is the Lord Jesus Christ. And friend, when we come to this table tonight, we're not coming in a moment of silence for a dead person; we're coming to sit at a table with a friend. He is here tonight, and this is a celebration. What a delight! And so, we're to do it willingly. Our hearts ought to be grieved if we miss the Lord's Supper when we could participate in the Lord's Supper.

B. Worthily

But, not only should we take it willingly—we ought to take it worthily. Look, if you will again, in verse 27: *"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 11:27).

So, we're to take this supper worthily.

Now, that means there are certain requirements for taking the Lord's Supper, and I want you to listen, because perhaps not every one here tonight is worthy to take the Lord's Supper, if they do not take it worthily.

1. It Is Only for the Redeemed

Now, it is only for the redeemed. We're in chapter 11. Go back to chapter 10 and look, if you will, in verses 20 and 21: *"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils"* (1 Corinthians 10:20–21). It is only for those who have been saved. You cannot hold on to this world with one hand and try to hold on to the Lord with the other hand. You cannot have one foot in the world and one foot in the Kingdom, believing that you can, because you can't. It is impossible. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devil. No one is half saved. *To be half saved is to be altogether lost*. And, if you are not redeemed—if you're not saved, if you're not born again—I would tremble to take into my hands these elements, were I an unsaved person not redeemed. It is only for the redeemed.

2. It Is Only for the Reconciled

I want to say also, more than that, it is for the reconciled. Look, if you will, in verse 18. Go back to chapter 11 and verse 18. First of all... Or, let's get verse 17: *"Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse"*—I'm reading 1 Corinthians 11:18—*"For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it"* (1 Corinthians 11:17–18). Now, Paul said something else. He said, "Some of you are not better off for taking the Lord's Supper; some of you are worse off for taking the Lord's Supper. You have not come together for the better; you have come together for the worse." Why? He said, "Because it has been reported that there are divisions among you."

Are you listening to your pastor tonight? If there is, in your heart tonight, any malice, any division, any rancor, any locks or loss of fellowship between you and a brother or sister in Christ, do not take this Lord's Supper. It will not help you; it will harm you—that's what the Bible says. Don't do it—don't do it. This Lord's Supper is a symbol of the unity, the communion, of the Body of Christ. What mockery that an unsaved person should take of this supper! What mockery that a person who has malice and hate in his heart should take of this Lord's Supper! Ladies and gentlemen, it is for the redeemed. Ladies and gentlemen, it is for the reconciled.

3. It Is Only for the Reverent

And, ladies and gentlemen, it is for the reverent. Look, if you will, in verses 20–22 of this same chapter: *“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not”* (1 Corinthians 11:20–22). Now, what was happening at Corinth was this—that what was meant to be a reverent remembrance of the broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus had turned into a frolic, a feast, and a drunken orgy. They failed to be reverent at the taking of the Lord’s Supper. I’ll tell you something else: I would tremble to take these elements into my hand tonight if I did not do it with the utmost of respect and reverence. Never joke, never take lightly, never hold these elements in your hands loosely. It is for the redeemed. It is for the reconciled. It is for the reverent.

4. It Is Only for the Repentant

I want to say another thing: it is for the repentant. Look, if you will, in chapter 11, verses 29–32: *“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world”* (1 Corinthians 11:29–32). Now, what does all of that mean? Well, it simply means this—that when a person comes to this table with un-confessed, un-repentant sin in his life and he takes these elements into his hand—he imbibes of the fruit of the vine; he takes the precious broken bread and ingests that bread, and at the same time there’s un-confessed, un-repentant sin in his life—though he be saved and though he seemed to be reverent, all he’s doing is eating judgment—all he is doing is drinking judgment.

As a matter of fact, you’re increasing your judgment. You’re living dangerously. You may die prematurely. You may bring physical sickness and malady into yourself. Paul says in verse 30: *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep”* (1 Corinthians 11:30). And, when he says, “Sleep,” he didn’t mean, “Now I lay me down to sleep.” He meant, “Some are dead—some are dead.” Oh, how carelessly we handle holy things! It would be better to play with forked lightning than to carelessly, as a Christian, allow un-confessed and un-repentant sin in your heart and in your life and partake of these holy elements. I’m telling you, ladies and gentlemen, that when we take of the Lord’s Supper, we need to be careful. We need to take it willingly, because it is a tremendous blessing, but we need to take it worthily

Now, that doesn’t mean that we’re worthy in-and-of ourselves, but it does mean that

we're to examine ourselves. And, if we find any sin in our hearts and in our lives before we take the Lord's Supper, we're to judge that sin. For the Bible says, *"If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged"* (1 Corinthians 11:31). And so, before we take the Lord's Supper tonight, we're going to have a time of judgment, where you will judge yourself, where you'll say, "Lord, that attitude, that action, that thought, that habit, that deed was wrong. I judge it. I repudiate it. You don't have to judge me, Lord; I just did it—I just did it." It is for the redeemed. It is for the reconciled. It is for the reverent. It is for the repentant.

C. **Watchfully**

Now, not only should we take it, therefore, willingly, not only should we take it worthily, but we also ought to take it watchfully. Look, if you will now, in verse 29 again: *"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body"* (1 Corinthians 11:29). Now, look at that word "not discerning." What it literally means is "not understanding, not perceiving, not concentrating on the Lord's body." Now, what does he mean when he says "the Lord's body"? Is he talking about the actual, physical body that the Lord Jesus had when He was here on this earth, or is he talking about the Church? I believe he's talking about both. I believe that when we take the Lord's Supper, we should be watchful—we should be mindful—of the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus when He died in agony and blood upon the cross. And, we should be mindful of our brothers and sisters in Christ—that we're one in the bond of love. And, nothing—nothing—should keep us tonight from observing, from knowing, from being watchful about the Lord's body.

Leonardo da Vinci, when he was 43 years of age, was commissioned by the Duke of Milan to paint the masterpiece that we call "The Last Supper." He worked on it for almost four years with the great ability that he had. He divided the disciples into groups of three on either side of Jesus, and he put the Savior in the middle. And, when he painted the Savior, he had the Lord with His hands out straight. And, in the right hand of the Savior was a cup, and Leonardo De Vinci painted that cup with such realism, with such artistry, with such mastery that it was astounding. When he finished, he asked a friend, "What do you think of the painting?" The friend looked at it, and he said, "The cup is magnificent. I've never seen anything like it." Leonardo da Vinci took his brush, and drew a stroke across the cup, and said, "Nothing shall detract from the face of the Savior."

Oh, dear friend, listen—it just may be that you, tonight, can get wrapped up in the serving of the Supper. Maybe you can get wrapped up in the music. Maybe you can get wrapped up in all that we do—and your church attendance and everything else. Oh, my friend, tonight, you're to see the face of the Savior. You're to see Jesus in this—and not

all the elements and not all of the things that surround it. If you do not take this Lord's Supper willingly, if you do not take it worthily, if you do not take it watchfully, you're not ready—you're not ready—to take the Lord's Supper.

II. The Motive for Taking the Lord's Supper

Let's talk a little bit about the motive for taking the Lord's Supper. Well, let's look again in verses 23 and following: *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me"* (1 Corinthians 11:23–24)—the Lord's Supper. Therefore, the motive—it's not a means of salvation; it is a means of three or four things.

A. It Is a Means of Adoration

First of all, it is a means of adoration. Notice what Paul said in verse 23: *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you"*—and now, notice this next phrase—*"that the Lord Jesus"*—*"the Lord Jesus"*—it is a time of adoration—*"the Lord Jesus"* (1 Corinthians 11:23).

B. It Is a Means of Appreciation

It is a time of appreciation—verse 24: *"And when he had given thanks, he brake it"* (1 Corinthians 11:24). And, as the Lord Jesus gave thanks so long ago for those elements, how we ought to give thanks tonight. And how, not only should we adore Him, we should appreciate Him and give Him thanks.

C. It Is a Means of Celebration

It is not only a time of adoration, not only a time of appreciation—it is a time of celebration. Look in verse 26: *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup"* (1 Corinthians 11:26). Now, I'm glad that he chose a feast—I'm glad that he chose a supper—to illustrate the whole thing, because, dear friend, salvation is something glorious and something wonderful. You don't need to feel sorry for a person when they become a Christian. It is a time of adoration—yes. It is a time of appreciation—yes. It is a time of celebration. Hallelujah!

D. It Is a Means of Anticipation

I'll tell you something else: it's a time of anticipation. Look, if you will, in verse 26: *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come"* (1 Corinthians 11:26). Not only does it look backward—it looks forward.

III. The Message in This Taking of the Lord's Supper

Now, the last thing I want to say before we take the Lord's Supper... We've talked a little bit about the manner of taking it; we've talked about the motive for taking it (in remembrance of the Lord Jesus). Let's talk a little bit about the very message that's in this taking of the Lord's Supper. Notice what it says here again in verse 26: *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death"* (1 Corinthians 11:26). Now, look at that word *shew*. What it literally means is you "proclaim" the Lord's death. What we're doing here when we take the Lord's Supper is giving a message. There is a proclamation in the Lord's Supper. And, what are we saying tonight when we take the Lord's Supper?

A. We Proclaim Our Fellowship in Him

Well, number one: We are talking about our fellowship in Him. First Corinthians 10:17—go back to that again, and look, if you will: *"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread"* (1 Corinthians 10:17). That's the reason people sometimes say, "Pastor, will you do the Lord's Supper for us and just serve to my bride and I at our wedding?" I say, "No, no, I won't do that. That's not what the Lord's Supper is about. The Lord's Supper is that all of us are one body in the Lord Jesus. We're to take this supper together." And, what do we proclaim? What do we show? We show our unity. And, here are my brothers and sisters in Christ. The greatest thing that Bellevue has, other than her Lord, is her fellowship with one another. How the devil would love to divide us and separate us! And, we're coming together tonight and breaking of the bread, putting away the petty things. I know—I know—that had we a mind to do so, we could find fault with many here tonight, including the man...perhaps beginning with the man standing in the pulpit. But, those things don't matter. We are one in the bond, in the love. We are together in the Lord Jesus, and we proclaim our fellowship in Him.

B. We Proclaim Our Faith in Him

But, not only do we proclaim our fellowship in Him—we proclaim our faith in Him. We are saying that we believe that He is the Son of God. We're showing forth His death, His burial, His resurrection. The two chief feasts in the Bible are the Passover and the Lord's Supper. The Passover looked forward by faith through the death of Christ upon the cross. The Lord's Supper looked backward by faith to the death of Christ on the cross. And, both of them tell us of the centrality of the cross and of the gospel. And, what we're proclaiming is our faith and His shed blood. The cross is the center of our faith.

C. We Proclaim Our Future in Him

But, not only do we proclaim our fellowship in Him and our faith in Him—we proclaim our future in Him. As I have reminded you, in verse 26, the Bible says, “We are taking this supper until He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

In an Orthodox Jewish family, when they have the Passover, they always have one empty chair, and that’s called “Elijah’s chair.” And, in the Seder, they will take the firstborn son and say to the son, “Son, go look outside the door and see if Elijah has come. That unexpected guest is supposed to be coming.” Well, I want to tell you, dear friend, we have an empty chair tonight—not because the Savior has not already come. He has come. But, I think when we leave this place, every one of us ought to look outside the door to see if He’s coming again, for He is—and He’s coming soon. And, we say, “*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20).

Conclusion

Now, I want us to bow our heads in prayer—every head bowed, every eye closed. I want you to examine your heart tonight. I want you to ask yourself these questions: “Am I redeemed? Am I reconciled? Am I reverent? Am I repentant? Am I ready for the Lord to come?” Do it. The Bible says, “*If we...judge ourselves, we should not be judged*” (1 Corinthians 11:31). Spend just a few moments now in meditation and in prayer.

Breaking Bread at Bellevue

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 29, 1982

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1–2; 23–34

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.”

1 CORINTHIANS 11:26

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Manner of the Lord’s Supper
 - A. We Are to Take the Lord’s Supper Willingly
 - B. We Are to Take the Lord’s Supper Worthily
 - 1. It Is for the Redeemed
 - 2. It Is for the Reconciled
 - 3. It Is for the Reverent
 - 4. It Is for the Repentant
 - C. We Are to Take the Lord’s Supper Watchfully
- II. The Motive for the Lord’s Supper
 - A. Adoration
 - B. Appreciation
 - C. Commemoration
 - D. Dedication
 - E. Participation
 - F. Celebration
 - G. Anticipation
- III. The Manifestation of the Lord’s Supper
 - A. We Are Manifesting Our Fellowship in Him
 - B. We Are Manifesting Our Faith in Him
 - C. We Are Manifesting Our Future in Him

Conclusion

Introduction

Tonight, I want you to take your Bibles and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11—1 Corinthians chapter 11—and the title of our message tonight is “Breaking Bread at Bellevue”—“Breaking Bread at Bellevue.” And we’re going to read 1 Corinthians 11, verses 1 and 2, and then we’re going to skip on to some more verses in the later part of the chapter. First Corinthians 11, verses 1 and 2—Paul says, *“Be ye followers of me,*

even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them unto you.” (1 Corinthians 11:1–2)

Now, the ordinances are baptism and the Lord’s Supper. And Paul praised this church at Corinth because they kept these ordinances. Now I want you to go and look in verse 23 of this chapter, for he says, *“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.” (1 Corinthians 11:23–24)* And just underscore that phrase, *“this do,”* because Paul delivered the ordinances; Jesus commanded the ordinances.

And then, verse 25: *“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body”—that is, because he has not discerned the Lord’s body. “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.” (1 Corinthians 11:25–34)*

Now, there are two grave dangers that are made concerning the Lord’s Supper. There is the danger of those who hold to the doctrine of transubstantiation and its sister doctrine, consubstantiation, which are two big words, but they just simply believe that these elements become the body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ literally, and because they become the body and blood of our Lord Jesus in a literal sense, it is necessary for us to take them in order to have our sins forgiven—that is, they attach to the Lord’s Supper a saving efficacy; that is, that these things are sacraments in the purest sense of the word, necessary for the forgiveness of our sins, and therefore necessary for our salvation, and therefore necessary for our home in heaven.

Now, friend, that simply is not true—that simply is not true. There is no work of human effort that saves us, whether it be baptism or the Lord’s Supper or anything else, for the Bible says it’s *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according*

to his mercy he saved us.” (Titus 3:5) And salvation is not in the ordinances. There’s a danger that we feel that it is. Now we reject that totally, completely, one hundred percent.

Now, on the other hand, there are those who feel that since these elements have no saving efficacy, and since we are not saved and have our sins forgiven by taking communion and the Lord’s Supper, they tend to minimize the Lord’s Supper and say that it is not important. My friend, I want to tell you, that is a tragic mistake. The Lord’s Supper is vitally important.

Every road has two ditches, and the devil doesn’t care which ditch he wrecks the automobile in—whether on the one side you say it’s necessary for salvation, or if on the other side you say it is not necessary for salvation and therefore it is not important. I think we as Baptists perhaps have minimized the Lord’s Supper, because in a reaction against priestcraft we have sometimes even played down the Lord’s Supper a little bit. *We’re like that one-eyed mule who was so afraid of the side of a bridge he couldn’t see that he fell over on the side he could see.* And we just sometimes err by an over-reaction.

So I want us to see tonight what the Bible teaches about the Lord’s Supper. And I want to tell you that the Lord’s Supper is so very important to you. It is necessary for Christian maturity. It is necessary for Christian fellowship. It is necessary for Christian witness. What a sermon we preach with the Lord’s Supper! Just as we’ll preach a sermon by baptism tonight, we preach a sermon by the Lord’s Supper.

I heard of a little boy who got saved in a children’s worship service in a particular church, and they told him now he was to go to the big church and go forward and tell the pastor he’d become a Christian and needed to be baptized. And he went forward and took his pastor by the hand and said, “Pastor, I’ve been saved, and I need to get advertized.”

Well, that’s exactly what it is. When we go into that liquid tomb, it’s a way of saying, “I belong to Jesus Christ; I believe in Jesus Christ.” And we are witnessing and proclaiming when we’re baptized. And we’re also witnessing and proclaiming when we observe this Lord’s Supper.

Now, there are several things I want you to notice—three, exactly—about the Lord’s Supper.

I. The Manner of the Lord’s Supper

First of all, I want you to notice the manner of the Lord’s Supper. How are we to take the Lord’s Supper? We are to take the Lord’s Supper, first of all, willingly. We’re to take the Lord’s Supper, secondly, worthily. And, thirdly, we’re to take it watchfully. Now, let me explain why I’ve chosen these words.

A. We Are to Take the Lord's Supper Willingly

First of all, we are to take the Lord's Supper willingly. Paul says in chapter 11, verse 1, *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them to you."* (1 Corinthians 11:1–2) And then again, I want you to remember what our Lord Jesus said here in chapter 11, verse 24, where Jesus said, *"this do."* The Bible has commanded that we take this Supper.

But don't think, dear friend, just because it is commanded that therefore we must do it grudgingly or of necessity. It is a duty, but it is more than a duty; it is a delight. The Lord's Supper is not merely a command to be obeyed; it is a blessing to enjoy. But we are to do it willingly. Don't skip the Lord's Supper. Don't say, "Oh well, they're going to have that little bit of ritual: I'll stay away." Jesus said, *"Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46)

B. We Are to Take the Lord's Supper Worthily

But not only should we take it willingly; therefore, we ought to take it worthily. Look, if you will now, beginning in verse 27, at the warning that Paul gives: *"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."* (1 Corinthians 11:27) And so we're to take it in a worthy manner. This is an adverb, and it speaks not whether we in ourselves are worthy, but it says that there is a worthy manner in which we should take the Lord's Supper. We are to take it willingly, yes; and we are to take it worthily.

Now, how can we take it worthily? Well, let me mention four people who can take the Lord's Supper, or all of these four things must be true about you if you take the Lord's Supper.

1. It Is for the Redeemed

First of all, it is for the redeemed. Go back to chapter 10 and look in verse 20, if you will. The Bible says here in chapter 10, verse 20, *"But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils."* (1 Corinthians 10:20–21)

Now, friend, make up your mind: either you belong to Jesus Christ, or you don't. And this is the Lord's Table. And I tell you, I would be frightened not to be saved, but I would be doubly frightened to be an unsaved person and to partake of this table. What an affront! What an affront to a holy God that we try to hold onto Jesus Christ with one hand and to the world with the other, and put in one hand the cup of the Lord and in the other hand the cup of devils! It is for the redeemed.

2. It Is for the Reconciled

But not only is it for the redeemed. It is for the reconciled. Look in chapter 11 and verse 18 of this same chapter: *“For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.”* And then, Paul goes on to warn them against these divisions. He says, *“For there must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.”* And then, he goes on to scold them for their divisions. And so he’s saying not only must you be redeemed; you must be reconciled. There can be no division.

And if in your heart tonight you consciously have anything against any brother or sister in this church; if tonight you’re feeding a fever; if tonight you’re nursing a grudge; if there tonight is in your heart what you deem to be an irreconcilable difference, you need to make that thing right and not make a mockery of the Lord’s Supper.

3. It Is for the Reverent

You need to be redeemed. You need to be reconciled. And then again, you need to be reverent. Look again in chapter 11 and verse 20: *“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.”* And then, he scolded them for the way they had the Lord’s Supper: *“For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.”* (1 Corinthians 11:20–21)

Now, sometimes people say, “Oh, we need to go back to the New Testament church.” Well, friend, this is one New Testament church we need to get away from—and that was the church at Corinth. They had turned the Lord’s Supper into a drunken, bacchanalian feast. And what they did when they were having the agape feast and the Lord’s Supper and the breaking of bread, they turned it into a picnic. And some brought wine alone, and some were getting drunk. And there were other people who were hungry, who were left out. And the point of the whole matter is that it was done in such an irreverent matter.

4. It Is for the Repentant

And so, the Lord’s Supper, to be taken worthily, is for the redeemed. It is for the reconciled. It is for the reverent. And then, I want to say it is for the repentant. Look again, if you will, please, in verses 29 through 31: *“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation...”*—that word *damnation* doesn’t mean you’re going to die and go to hell; not in this instance, that’s not what it means. It’s a general word for judgment—*“he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh [judgment] to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”* And then he goes on to say, *“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”* (1 Corinthians 11:29–31) And God gives us the marvelous privilege tonight to judge ourselves.

I want to tell you something. If you take the Lord's Supper tonight with unconfessed and unrepented-of sin in your life, you're doing great damage to yourself. You are bringing sickness and possible death, premature death, upon you. *"He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, brings [judgment]"—"damnation"—"to himself... For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep."*

Now, the Bible says if we judge ourselves, we will not be judged. And God—yea, God—is ready to chastise that woman, that boy, that girl who takes this precious cup, this ruby red juice that represents the precious blood of the Lord, this baked and crushed wheat that represents the broken body of our Lord, and takes that carelessly and idly into his mouth and assimilates it into his body, and yet at the same time he is harboring within his bosom that which nailed Jesus to the cross. What an affront to a holy God that we would take the Lord's Supper without a repentant heart!

And so, how would you take it if you take it worthily? Who is it for? It is for the redeemed. Are you saved? It is for the reconciled. Do you have ought against someone else? It is for the reverent. Are you letting your mind wander around tonight rather than bringing a full burning heart's load of devotion to Jesus Christ? It is for the repentant who have judged themselves.

C. We Are to Take the Lord's Supper Watchfully

But, thirdly: Not only should we take it willingly; and not only should we take it worthily; we ought to take it watchfully. Now, look again in verse 29: *"For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself,"*—now, watch this next phrase—*"not discerning the Lord's body."* (1 Corinthians 11:29) Now, you see, if a person is not careful, if a person is not watchful, he's going to miss the whole meaning of the Lord's Supper. He will not discern what it is all about. Jesus said, *"This is my body, which is broken for you."* (1 Corinthians 11:24)

Don't miss it. Watch. You need to look beyond the shadow. This is the shadow to the substance. You need to look beyond the symbol to the Savior. And you need to take this Lord's Supper tonight watchfully. Be so careful, dear friend, that you do not miss the significance of what we are doing. Oh, what a shame it would be if you were to see these elements but not see the Lord Jesus!

When Leonardo Di Vinci, the great Italian artist, was forty-three years of age, the Duke of Milan commissioned him to paint that painting that we call "The Last Supper." He worked on it for a number of years prayerfully, carefully, skillfully, as only he could do, in preparing this painting of the Lord's Supper. Finally, when he had finished, he got a trusted friend. He drew back the veil, and said, "Look at this and tell me what you've seen, what you think." He had one group of disciples on one side, another group of disciples on the other side; in the middle is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. And in His

hand He held that cup, that chalice, and His hand is stretched out. And when his friend saw it and the magnificent detail that Leonardo Di Vinci had put into that painting, he said, “Look at the magnificence of that cup. Oh, I’ve never seen anything just like it.” And when he said that, Leonardo Di Vinci took his brush and drew it across the cup and blotted it out. And he said, “Nothing, nothing, in my painting shall detract from the face of my Christ!”

Oh, dear friend, I wonder if indeed we do not discern the Lord’s body if we get so wrapped up in how the deacons are passing it out, or what size the bread is, or how filled the cup is, or what this person is wearing, or what that person is thinking. Is there anything that draws you away from the face of our Christ? Then, put it away. We are to take this supper willingly. We are to take this supper worthily. We are to take this supper watchfully, that we might discern the Lord’s body.

II. The Motive for the Lord’s Supper

Now, not only do I want you to notice the manner of the Lord’s Supper; I want you to notice the motive for the Lord’s Supper. Why do we do it? Look again, if you will, in verse 24: “*And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*” (1 Corinthians 11:24) What is the motive for doing it? To remember Jesus Christ.

Now, let me give you a list of words. Let’s see how many I’ve jotted down: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven. Well, that figures. That’s the perfect number. Let me give you seven words. And I want to suggest that you take a card out right now, the back of your bulletin or something, and you jot these seven words down. And maybe you should just keep them in your Bible and use them every time we take the Lord’s Supper. And this will be just sort of a spiritual checklist.

You know, before a pilot takes off—an airplane pilot—I suppose he does this—he’s supposed to do it, anyway. He has a checklist. And he takes it out, and he checks this thing, and checks this, and checks this, and so forth. I want to give you a checklist that you might remember the Lord Jesus as you ought to remember Him. You see, remembering Jesus is not just a passive recollection of Jesus; it is a specific activity.

A. Adoration

Now, the first word is the word *adoration*. I want you to write it down. What should you do when we’re taking this Lord’s Supper? You ought to adore the Lord. Look, if you will now, in verse 23: “*For I have received of the Lord*”—just underscore the word *Lord*—“*that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus...*” (1 Corinthians 11:23) Friend, He is Lord. And Paul can say, “I received this of the Lord.” He speaks of the Lord Jesus. And so, tonight, adore Him as Lord. Worship Him as Lord. Extol Him as

Lord. Honor Him as Lord. Bow before Him as Lord. And I want you to spend some time tonight adoring Jesus Christ.

I don't mind telling you that I love Jesus Christ. And we all ought to love Him. And I know that you love Him. And we adore Him in a special way when we come. So the first word is *adoration*.

B. Appreciation

The second word is *appreciation*. Now, look in verse 24: "*And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body.*" (1 Corinthians 11:24) Jesus Christ gave thanks before this supper, and so should we with deep, profound appreciation. We ought to say, "Lord Jesus, as thou hast given thanks, tonight, we give thanks." And we add to our adoration our deepest appreciation. Thank you, Lord Jesus. Thank you, God the Father, for your unspeakable gift. Thank you, precious Holy Spirit, for making it real to us.

C. Commemoration

Now, the third word: not only *adoration*, and *appreciation*, but *commemoration*. Look again in verse 24. He says, "*This do in remembrance of me.*" (1 Corinthians 11:24) As you hold these elements in your hand, I want you to remember Jesus. As you take this bread, I want you to remember Jesus. And I want you to let God to sanctify your imagination till you can say, "Precious Redeemer, blessed Redeemer, seems now I see Him on Calvary's tree. Wounded and bleeding, for sinners pleading, blind and unheeding, dying for me." Jesus said, "*This do in remembrance of me.*" So write down the word *commemoration*.

D. Dedication

And then, the next word I want you to write down is the word *dedication*. For look, if you will now, in verse 25. The Bible says here in verse 25, "*This cup is the new testament in my blood.*" (1 Corinthians 11:25) Now, that word *testament* means "agreement." It literally means "covenant." This cup is the blood covenant. That's what Jesus is saying.

Do you know what a covenant was? In olden days, when people would make a covenant, one would cut his wrist here, another would cut his wrist, and they would mingle their blood together; and they would lift their hand to heaven and pledge one to another that before God and before heaven they were blood brothers. And what the other had—the other's wealth, and the other's strength, and the other's friends, and the other's power—became my power. And what I have—my wealth, my strength, my friends—becomes yours. We are now one blood. We are blood brothers.

That's the idea right here. Jesus said, "This cup is the new covenant, the new

testament.” The word *testament* and the word *covenant* mean the same. And what it means, ladies and gentlemen, is that after people would make a blood covenant in older days, they would drink together a cup of wine. They would both drink from that cup. And it was their way to seal that pledge. It was their way to say, “I now totally belong to you, and you totally belong to me.” And that’s what we’re saying tonight, friend: “I totally belong to Jesus Christ; I give it all to Him.”

Now, before you take that cup to your lips, I want you to think, “Have I made that dedication?” I tell you, before long, our long-range planning committee is going to report out. And they’re going to ask things from you that you may not be willing to give unless you say, “Lord, it’s totally yours. I give it all—*a-l-l*—to you.” Now He may not draw upon it all, but He has a right to ask for the shirt off your back. He has a right to ask for every cent in your bank account. He has a right to ask for your car, your clothes, your home, and the food out of your mouth, if He calls on it. I’m not saying He will. And, my friend, when you enter into a blood covenant, it means that everything you have is available to Him if He calls for it, if He asks for it—down to the last cent. Amen? That’s it! *“This cup is the new testament in my blood.”*

E. Participation

And so, there is adoration. There is appreciation. There is commemoration. There is dedication. And then, there is participation. Look, if you will, in verse 26: *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup...”* (1 Corinthians 11:26) Why do we eat? Why do we drink? How wise our Lord was when He gave us the Lord’s Supper, because in eating and in drinking we actually assimilate these elements into our body. They come into us. We ingest them. We digest them. We assimilate them. We gain strength from them. And it’s God’s way of saying, “Day by day, I must participate in the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as my body draws strength and sustenance from this food, I daily in the Spirit draw strength and sustenance from Jesus Christ.” “Bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more.” I am to feast upon the Lord Jesus Christ. There is to be participation. I am to share His life. I am to become a partaker of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4) I am to feast upon Jesus. This reminds me that day by day I am to be feasting on the Lord Jesus.

A little girl was called by the family to quote John 3:16 when a preacher came to visit. She did a pretty good job, but this is the way she quoted it: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but should have internal life.” (John 3:16) That’s not bad, because this eternal life is the internal life. It is life on the inside. It is by receiving Christ. And as our body receives these elements, we receive Christ. There is participation.

And so, in your checklist tonight, write down the word *participation*, and ask yourself,

“Am I participating in the life of Christ? Am I aware that my body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, that He dwells in me, that He is giving me strength, He is giving me vitality, He is giving me life; my soul, my spirit, is feasting and being nourished by the Lord Jesus Christ?”

F. Celebration

Now, the next word I want you to write down is the word *celebration*. Look again in verse 26: “*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup...*” (1 Corinthians 11:26) Again, I want to remind you, dear friend, that it was at a feast that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. And tonight, lest you think I’m being too stern, I’m not being stern. Friend, I want to tell you, when we come tonight, we come to this table to celebrate. It’s a feast, not a funeral. We haven’t come to mourn a corpse. We’ve come to hail a Conqueror. And don’t you forget that. He is no longer on the cross. We have come tonight to a feast with our brothers and sisters in Christ. And never get the idea, dear friend, that we have to sit around therefore with tears running down our cheeks. There may be, and sometimes they may be tears of sorrow; but I want to tell you, when we understand the full implications of the Lord’s Supper, it ought to so fill us with joy that we can hardly sit in our seats as we’re celebrating, celebrating, celebrating what Jesus has done for us! Eat and drink! It’s a feast, my brothers! It’s a feast, my sisters—not a funeral! Write down the word *celebration*. We are celebrating the Lord’s Supper.

G. Anticipation

Now, the seventh of these words that I want to give you is *anticipation*. Continue to read, for it goes on to say, “*For as often*”—verse 26—“*as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death*”—let’s say it together—“*till he come.*” (1 Corinthians 11:26) Let’s say it one more time: “*till he come.*” And every time we take this supper, these elements, we are anticipating the fact that Jesus Christ is coming again. And I told you a while back, sometimes when I take the Lord’s Supper, I think that one time I may take the bread down here and the cup up yonder: that Jesus will come in the interval between the two. Who knows? Jesus is coming at any moment. And what an anticipation there ought to be.

And so, just write these seven words in your Bible, or in a card, and keep them in your Bible. And the next time we have the Lord’s Supper, look at that word *adoration* and adore Him. Look at that word *appreciation* and thank Him. Look at that word *commemoration* and remember Him. Look at that word *dedication* and give all to Him. Look at that word *participation* and feast on Him. Look at that word *celebration* and rejoice in Him. Look at that word *anticipation* and wait for Him, for He is coming—He is coming.

III. The Manifestation of the Lord's Supper

Now, there's one last thing I want us to see about the Lord's Supper before we take this Lord's Supper tonight. We've talked about the manner of it: how we're to take it willingly; how we're to take it worthily; how we're to take it watchfully. We have talked about the motive for it: to remember the Lord. And we've told you how to remember Him. Now, let's talk about the manifestation of the Lord's Supper: what the Lord's Supper shows, what it pictures. It shows something.

Look again, if you will, as the Scripture gives it in verse 23. Paul says, *"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. And after the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."* And then, notice what Paul says: *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew..."* (1 Corinthians 11:23–26)

Now, that word *shew* literally means "ye do proclaim." What are we proclaiming? What are we preaching? What are we advertising tonight? What is the manifestation that those who watch and those who participate should see? Three things: number one, our fellowship in Him; number two, our faith in Him; number three, our future in Him.

A. We Are Manifesting Our Fellowship in Him

Now I know that there are some people who like to have the Lord's Supper at bedside. There are some people who try to have the Lord's Supper at weddings with just the bride and the groom participating. But that's not the purpose of the Lord's Supper. The purpose of the Lord's Supper is for us to take it together. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10 and verse 17—look at it, if you will, please—*"For we being many..."*—watch it—*"For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."* (1 Corinthians 10:17)

Now, the Lord said when you take this, you come together in one place, and you eat of it, and I eat of it, and they eat of it, and we all eat of it. And when we do, it shows our solidarity; it shows our unity. Ladies and gentlemen, as a church, together as pastor and people, together as brothers and sisters in Christ, we are about to enter a decade of destiny. We're about to take one of the biggest challenges a church has ever taken on the face of this earth. And I believe above all things we need to be one bread and one body and partakers of that one loaf. And what we do when we take the Lord's Supper together is we are showing our fellowship in Him. You see, there's no sweeter fellowship than at a table eating with one another.

B. We Are Manifesting Our Faith in Him

Now, tonight, we're all coming to the Lord's Table as brethren—as brothers and as sisters. That's one thing we're manifesting: our fellowship in Him. But not only are we manifesting our fellowship in Him; we are manifesting our faith in Him. Look again in verse 26—chapter 11 and verse 26: *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death”* (1 Corinthians 11:26)—our faith in His death.

Now, you see, the Lord's Supper was instituted the night of the Passover. Do you know what the Passover feast did? The Passover feast looked forward to the death of Christ. Do you know what the Lord's Supper does? It looks backward to the death of Christ. And the Passover in the Old Testament and the Lord's Supper in the New Testament converge around the cross of Christ. And we are proclaiming our faith. What is our faith? *“This is the gospel which I delivered unto you, first of all: how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–3) And we are proclaiming our faith in our crucified Savior.

C. We Are Manifesting Our Future in Him

One last thing: Not only are we proclaiming our fellowship in Him; not only are we manifesting our faith in Him; but we are manifesting our future in Him. Look again in verse 26: *“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”* (1 Corinthians 11:26)

Did you know in an orthodox Jewish home, when they take the Passover feast, they have a setting placed there at the table and an empty chair? And nobody sits in that chair. The place is set. It is for an expected guest. It is Elijah's chair, for they believe that Elijah is the forerunner of the Messiah. And as they're taking the Lord's Supper, the elder son must go out and he must open the door, and he must look to see if the guest is coming, if Elijah is coming. And if he does not come, they come and take the Passover, and again next year there's an empty place at the table; there's an empty chair. They're waiting for someone to come.

Oh, would that I could tell every precious brother in the world and every dear Hebrew friend in the world that He has come! He has come! And yet, tonight, there's a sense in which there ought to be an empty chair here tonight, for I want you to know He is coming again!

Conclusion

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.” “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” (Revelation 22:20)

The Ministry of Women

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 19, 1993

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1–16

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Secret of Spiritual Authority
- II. The Sequence of Spiritual Authority
- III. The Symbol of Spiritual Authority
- IV. The Seriousness of Spiritual Authority
- V. The Solidarity of Spiritual Authority

Conclusion

- A. Women May Witness
- B. Women May Worship
- C. Women May Have Wisdom
- D. Women May Have Works

Introduction

Take God's Word and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, one of the most enigmatic passages in the Word of God but one that is crammed full of blessing if we'll look at it carefully. And, we're dealing tonight with this subject: "The Ministry of Women." Now, I'm going to read sixteen verses in a row so you'll get the sweep of this passage of scripture, and I want you to listen to it carefully.

The Apostle Paul is speaking, and he says, *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you [to] know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is in the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head"—that is, authority on her head—"because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the*

man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God” (1 Corinthians 11:1–16).

Well, I don’t even think we need to explain that. Why don’t we just have the benediction and just sit down? It’s all so clear; it’s all so simply—enough said. No, in all seriousness, there is a lot packed into these scriptures, and we’re going to have to slow down and look at them as we talk to you tonight on this subject: “The Ministry of Women.” And, actually, it deals with this matter of authority and spiritual authority.

I. The Secret of Spiritual Authority

And, look, first of all, in verses 1 and 2—what I’m going to call “the secret of spiritual authority.” The Apostle Paul says, *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them [unto] you”* (1 Corinthians 11:1–2). Now, here’s the Apostle Paul, and anybody who can read black print on white paper knows that he is speaking authoritatively. He is speaking with authority; he is speaking as an apostle. He says, “Follow me. Remember me in all things. Keep the ordinances, as I have delivered them unto you.” No stutter, no stammer, no apology, with boldness and power—he’s God’s man with full assurance, as every man of God ought to be. He is speaking with authority. He’s not like some of these finger bumpers, you know, who say, “Well, I’m not so sure where I’m going. You come and follow me.” No, he’s not that way. He was a man who knew where he was going. He was a man who knew what he believed. He was a man who spoke with authority.

But, not only did he exercise his authority—in the same breath, he expressed his submission as a servant. Notice; look at it: *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1). Now, the Apostle Paul had learned the secret of spiritual authority. He said, “You can follow me because I follow Christ.” That is, he had learned that the only way any man, woman, boy, or girl can be over is to learn to be under. The secret of authority—of having authority—is being under authority. No one can say, “Follow me,” until he says, “I follow Christ.” *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also [follow the Lord Jesus] Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1).

You remember that story there in Luke chapter 7—and I won’t have us turn to it for time’s sake. But, there was a centurion that had a servant sick, and some said, “You ought to go, Jesus. Go heal that centurion’s servant, for he’s worthy.” But, while he was a long way off, the centurion, who was an army officer, sent word to Jesus and said,

“Look, You don’t need to come under my roof. I’m not even worthy.” He said, “If You’ll just speak the word, my servant will be healed.” And then, he gave his rationale because he said to Jesus, “I, too, am a man set under authority, and I have those under me. I have soldiers and servants, and I say to this man, ‘Go,’ and he goes. And, I say to this man, ‘Come,’ and he comes.” And so, he said, “Jesus, I know how You work. All you have to do, Jesus, is just say the word, and my servant will be healed” (Luke 7:8). And, you know, the Bible says that Jesus marveled at that man (Luke 7:9). He was a centurion. He was a Roman army officer. He was not even a Jew. And, Jesus said, “I haven’t found faith like this in all the land of Israel” (Luke 7:9). Jesus marveled because this man with a penetrating insight had understood how the Kingdom works: it’s just like an army. Here was the centurion, who said, “Jesus, I know how You work. I also am under authority.” That is, “I have got the officers over me. I have the colonels, and the generals, and all of these over me, and so, therefore, I have the lieutenants, and the sergeants, and so forth, under me. Because I stay in a right relationship to my authority, I have been given authority. And, I can say to this man, ‘Go,’ and he goes. I can say to this man, ‘Come,’ and he comes” (Luke 7:8). And, he said, “Jesus, I know how You work. God has given You authority because You are under authority.” That, my friend, is the secret of spiritual authority.

And, I want to say that God wants every one of us to live authoritatively. God wants to pour into all of us incredible power and make us useful, but we will never have authority until we learn submission. There are plenty of pastors today who assay to pastor churches, but they have no spiritual authority because they’re not submitted to the Word of God, the Lord of that Word, and the Word of that Lord. They’re not submitted. And, therefore, a man who is not bound by this book and under this book will have no real spiritual authority. But, a man of God who is under authority will have God-given authority.

I like what I heard about somebody: they asked him, “Would you follow your pastor?” She said, “Follow him? I would follow my pastor in an assault of Hell with a water pistol.” I like that. I believe that’s the way... We ought to have that kind of “follow-ship.” But, we cannot have that kind of “follow-ship” until we have the kind of leadership, who says, “You follow me, as”—to the same degree, in the same way—“that I follow Christ.” But, some pastors don’t have that authority. There are some Christians who don’t have any authority over the devil, and the reason they don’t have any authority over the devil is they’re not under the authority of God.

Now, you hear a lot here today about rebuking the devil, and resisting the devil, and standing against the devil. But, if you’ll read over there in the Book of Acts, there were seven men, sons of a man named Sceva, who assayed upon—took it upon themselves—to cast out devils. They were exorcists, and they were going to cast some

demons out of a man. And, they came to this man, and they said, “We adjure you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches, come out of him” (Acts 19:13). And, that man, full of demons, was given supernatural strength. He turned on those seven men, and jumped on them, and began to beat on them and strip the clothing from them—left them wounded and naked. They barely escaped with their lives—one demon-possessed man against seven. These seven were going to cast the demons out of that man, but they had no authority. And, what was the problem? They said, “In the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches...” (Acts 19:13). What they had was second-hand religion. They didn’t say, “In the name of Jesus, whom I know, and in the name of Jesus, whom I serve...” Friend, you can’t—you can’t—cast the devil out of anybody in the name of Jesus, whom Adrian preaches, but only in the name of Jesus, whom you know—in the name of Jesus that you’re submitted to. And, if you are not under, you will never have authority over the devil.

There are fathers here who don’t have any authority in their home. God has set the dads as the head in the home, but these dads don’t have any authority because they are backslidden. And, because they’re backslidden, they have no testimony, no ring of authority, when they teach, and preach, and lead in their home. I’m thinking of Lot. Lot was a dad. He lived in Sodom. Lot knew God. He was saved, but he was not submitted. He knew nothing of being under. So, when he said to his family, “Follow me. God’s going to destroy Sodom with fire and brimstone,” his daughters and his sons-in-law laughed at him and mocked him, and he had absolutely no spiritual authority.

There are wives sitting in this congregation tonight who wonder why you don’t have any persuasion with your children, why your prayers for your children are not answered, why you cannot lead your children, why you cannot mold their lives in Christ. I’ll tell you why: because you’re not submitted to your husband! And, because you’ve never learned to be under, God never puts you over and you don’t have the spiritual authority that you ought to have.

There are kids in this congregation tonight—you have no authority. You’re bombarded with sex, and lust, and dope, and pornography, and you wonder, “Why can’t I live a godly, Christian life? Why can I not be the kind of a teenager that Brother Newberry, my youth pastor, tells me I ought to be?” I’ll tell you why: because you’re not submitted to your parents! You are a rebel, and God does not give spiritual authority and God does not give spiritual power to rebels. And, the secret of spiritual authority is this: the Apostle Paul spoke as an apostle. He said, “You follow me. Keep the ordinances. Obey me. You follow me, as I follow Christ.”

Governments will have no authority until they submit to the authority of Almighty God—not the authority, not the God-given authority, that they ought to have. I’ll tell you, it is absolutely unspeakably ignorant for a man to lay his hand upon his book, and take

the oath of office, and then to flaunt what this book says. How do we expect—how do we expect—to have the authority of God in the ruling of a nation? No king, no leader, can be rightfully over until he learns to be under what God has said. He's not going to obey the Bible—just don't put his hand upon the Bible and take the oath of office.

II. The Sequence of Spiritual Authority

Now, I want you to notice not only the secret of this authority, but I want you to notice the sequence of this authority. Look in verse 3: *“But I would have you [to] know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God”* (1 Corinthians 11:3). Now, here is a direct line of authority, and God has established it. There's God the Father, God the Son, the man, and the woman, and God has given these in a sequence.

Now, when God says that *“the head of the woman is the man”* (1 Corinthians 11:3), that does not mean that the woman is inferior to the man, because the head of Christ is God. And, if you know your theology, you know that Christ is not inferior. God the Son is not inferior to God the Father. As a matter of fact, He is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. Is that not true? And, the Bible says in Philippians chapter 2: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who...thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But [that One who was equal with God found the place of submission, and He] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant”* (Philippians 2:5–7)—in Philippians 2, verses 5 through 7. Learn this about men and women: all Christians are equal in the sight of God, but all Christians are not the same! Equality does not mean sameness of function. Women are not inferior to men. Men are not superior to women. The only way that a man is superior to a woman is at being a man. The only way that a woman is superior to a man is at being a woman. We call women “the weaker sex.” They outlive us by about seven years on average. You've heard me say before, I've never been able to find out why they do that and why the weaker sex becomes the stronger sex, unless it is the weakness of the stronger sex for the weaker sex. But, anyway...

This headship—some people say, “Well, Paul was just talking about—Paul was just talking about—local situations. He was just talking about the way that it was in Corinth at that day, and this was not meant to be for all time.” But friend, if you will read the scripture carefully, you will find out that what Paul is talking about goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden in Genesis chapter 3, where God said that “your husband will rule over you” to the woman (Genesis 3:16). God put the man in headship.

Now again, I want to say, that does not mean that the woman is inferior to the man. And, I said this before and I want to say it again: in many ways—and this is true—my wife is superior to me. My wife made far better grades than I made in both high school

and college, and my wife does things in our home—has abilities—that I do not have, and I frankly admit that. She has abilities that I don't have. I have abilities that she doesn't have. But, it has nothing to do with who has what ability.

I've used this illustration before, but let's suppose that there is a football player who has extraordinary ability. He's one of these gifted athletes. I was just reading about one the other day in the paper. He signed a contract for millions and millions and millions and millions of dollars to play football for a professional team in Florida, and they were happy to have him. They signed him up. Now, the coach will never make as much money in a year as this boy will make. There are other players on the team who will not make as much money. Let's suppose he's a college player. And, the coach—let's say the coach is a high school coach. He makes a very nominal salary. Let's say this boy is playing football with other players who, after they play in college, they'll never play football professionally, but this boy is very, very good. Now, there's a quarterback that calls the signals and tells this football player what play to run. The football player is under the authority of the quarterback. The quarterback will never get paid all this money when he goes to play professional football. He won't play professional football, but he's the one who calls the play. Now, does the quarterback call the play because he is superior to this running back? No, he calls the play because somebody has to call the play. Well, who decides who's going to call the play? The coach does—the coach does. Who decides who's going to be the head of the home? God the Father does. When God says that the husband is to call the play, does that mean that the husband is superior to the wife? No, it just simply means that in the home, there has to be a head. You've heard me say before, *anything with no head is dead, and anything with two heads is a freak*. Isn't that true? And so, God just simply has put headship in the home—and just as there's headship in the Trinity. That does not mean superiority or inferiority; all it means is there is a divine difference, and there is a divine order.

Now, submission, therefore, does not demean a woman. Submission actually exalts a woman. You see, when you are in rebellion, you're like the devil. When you're in submission, you're like Christ. Now, who's more exalted—a person like the devil or a person like Christ? Obviously, the person like Christ.

III. The Symbol of Spiritual Authority

Now, let's get a little deeper. We've talked about the secret and the sequence. Let's talk about the symbol of spiritual authority. Look in verse 4: *“Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head”*—no man ought to pray with a hat on. He ought to take his hat off when he prays. And, the Bible says—*“Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered [dishonors] her head: for*

that is even all one as if she were shaven”—in Paul’s day, the prostitutes would shave their heads, and it was the mark of a prostitute that she had a shaven head—*“For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered”*—and then, he goes on to say—*“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is in the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man”* (1 Corinthians 11:4–9).

“Pastor, what does all of that mean?” Well, this is the symbol of authority—a covering (something over one’s head) symbolizes that that one is under something. Now, in the home, the man represents God. And so, since the man represents God in the home, he is not to have his head covered—verse 4 and verse 7 (1 Corinthians 11:4; 1 Corinthians 11:7). Now, a man, therefore, has the greater responsibility in the home. We talk about the authority that a man has. Let me just change the word from *authority* to *responsibility*, because in the home, the man is to represent God. And, I want to say, men, as a general rule, if the home is wrong, it is because you are wrong. And, how shameful it is for weak-willed men to fail to take the proper place that God wants them to have. It’s the root of the problems in most homes. It’s not primary rebellious woman—it’s drop-out dads and fathers who are shirkers, and slackers, and quitters, and cowards, who fail to take their place and who do not have the moral leadership of submission to God and, therefore, authority in their home that they ought to have.

Now, verses 4 and 7 say that the man, therefore, when he prays, he ought not to have any covering on his head (1 Corinthians 11:4; 1 Corinthians 11:7). But now, what about the woman? The woman is to wear a covering on her head as a sign of submission. Verses 5 and 6: *“But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head”* (1 Corinthians 11:5). And, verse 6: *“For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered”* (1 Corinthians 11:6).

Now, what is the covering? Well, very frankly, there are some people who think that the covering is a hat or a veil. And, I think all of us have seen people like the Mennonite women and others who wear a hat on their head when they come into church to worship. And, I have no—I have no—quarrel with that. These are very good, decent, godly women, and many times they will come and... In Russia, when we were there, and in Romania, as a general rule, the women would wear some sort of a covering on their head when they would come into the house of worship to worship. I have no quarrel with that, although I am not convinced that that is what Paul is talking about—wearing a veil on one’s head. Others say, “Well, it was a veil, but it was only a local custom.” And, we get into this discussion, and sometimes we lose the train of thought,

trying to determine what this is that the woman are to have on their head. I frankly think that the covering that Paul is talking about is the long hair that a woman should have.

Look, if you will, in verse 13: *“Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame [to] him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering”* (1 Corinthians 11:13–15). Now, what’s he saying? Now, what’s he saying? He’s saying that you ought not to have any mannish-looking women—that women ought to be feminine in their dress. They ought to be feminine in their style. A woman ought to look like a woman, and a man ought to look like a man. And, there’s something natural about seeing a woman with long hair and seeing a man with short hair. Now, the devil is in this unisex idea, and we see today men wearing their hair on their shoulders and women with their heads shaved. You know where that idea came from? It came out of Hell—it came out of Hell. The Bible is against she-men and he-women. The Bible teaches that a man ought to look like a man and a woman ought to look like a woman.

Now, I’m not going to get in any kind of an argument with you. If you believe it’s a doily or something you wear on your hair, that’s fine. I’m not going to get into you with an argument about how long is long and how short is short. But, I’m going to tell you one thing: you ought not to have to guess. Sometimes, in a restaurant, I wonder who’s who. I have to look, and I look for the Adam’s apple. If they’ve got an Adam’s apple, I say, “Well, maybe it’s all right.” I mean, you know, sometimes I perform weddings, and I feel like saying, “Will one of you kiss the bride?” I don’t know who’s who or what’s what. The Bible teaches masculinity; the Bible teaches femininity. The Bible says that men are to be men and women are to be women. And, there are certain things—there are just certain conducts—that are just a shame. And, hey, you don’t have to be a rocket scientist. Paul says, “Nature just tells you this—nature tells you this.” Now, don’t tell me and ask me to judge whether some guy’s hair is too long or whether some woman’s hair is too short. I just want to know, can you tell at a glance is that a woman or is that a man? Put on the softness, ladies. Put on the femininity. Men, don’t be afraid of your masculinity.

And so, there’s what I want to call just simply “the symbol of spiritual authority.” We are to show by the way that we dress, the way that we act, that we are under authority.

IV. The Seriousness of Spiritual Authority

Now, let me talk to you about the seriousness of spiritual authority. Look in verse 10: *“For this cause ought the woman to have [authority]”*—the word *power* here is actually maybe translated “authority”—*“on her head because of the angels”* (1 Corinthians 11:10). Now, what on earth does that mean? Well, the angels, some angels, rebelled

and fell from Heaven, and this is what made Lucifer, the son of the morning, Satan, the father of the night. He rebelled and threw all creation into chaos. And, Paul is saying, “Women, men, understand what happened to the angels. Understand the rebellion that took place that made this world a wilderness.” That’s the reason that Samuel told Saul, in 1 Samuel chapter 15, verse 23: *“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft”* (1 Samuel 15:23). When a person has a rebellious spirit, they are like a person practicing witchcraft, because it was rebellion that made the devil the devil to begin with and witchcraft is consorting with the demonic and the devilish. This is the seriousness of this matter. We’re not talking about something that is just ephemeral or casual.

V. The Solidarity of Spiritual Authority

Now, let’s talk not only about the seriousness of spiritual authority, but the solidarity of spiritual authority—and I love this part. Begin in verse 11: *“Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord”*—Paul is saying, “I’m not trying to start some gender war here. I’m not trying to get one of the sexes to lord it over the other”—*“For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God”* (1 Corinthians 11:11–12). Paul is saying, “Be reasonable. We’re all one in Christ.” Write in your margin “Galatians 3, verse 28,” and this is what Paul says: he’s talking about in Christ—he says, *“[For] there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28). The ground at the cross is level. It took as much of the blood of Jesus to save man as it does a woman and vice versa. Men and women are not in a race; we’re in a pilgrimage. It’s not a matter of who’s first on earth; it’s a matter of who rules in Heaven.

Now, we men need to thank God for the ministry of women. “The Triumph and Tragedy of the American Woman” appeared in *The Saturday Review*, and here is a wonderful statement by Ashley Montague. You think of the man who is of the woman. I want you to listen to this: “Women have great gifts to bring to the world of men: the qualities of love, compassion, and humanity—that is, beauty of spirit. It is the function of woman to humanize, since women are the natural mothers of humanity. Women are by nature endowed with the most important of all adaptive traits—the capacity to love. This is their principle function—to teach me. There can be no more important function. It could be wished that both men and women understood this. Once women know this, they will realize that no man can ever play as important a role in the life of humanity as a mentally healthy woman.” Now, listen to this again: “No man can ever play as important a role in the life of humanity as a mentally healthy woman—and, by mental health, I mean the ability to love and to the ability to work. Being a good wife, a good mother—in short, a good homemaker—is the most important of all occupations in the

world. It surely cannot be too often pointed out that the making of human beings is far more important than the making of anything else and that in the formative years of a child's life, the mother is the best equipped to provide these firm foundations upon which one can subsequently build." Isn't that a beautiful thing? *"The woman is of the man, [but also] the man by the woman"* (1 Corinthians 11:12).

Conclusion

Now, let me wrap this up. What can women do? What is the ministry of women? Does that mean, therefore, that women are negated and given secondary, and ancillary, and non-important functions? Again, Bellevue could not function as she does without the ministry of women. I want to mention four things that our women may do, and I want you to listen very carefully.

A. Women May Witness

Number one: They may prophesy—they may prophesy. And, this speaks of their witness. Look, if you will, in verse 5: *"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head"* (1 Corinthians 11:5). Here it speaks of prophecy, and it assumes that a woman will prophesy. And, I want you to turn, if you will, just backward to the Book of Acts here for a moment, and I want you to see what God prophesied Himself of the church age. Look with me in Acts chapter 2. And ladies, I want you to mark this, because it's a wonderful passage—Acts chapter 2, beginning in verse 17: *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, [that] I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh"—now, listen—"and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy"* (Acts 2:17–18). And, one of the ministries of women is the ministry of prophecy.

Now, that does not mean that they are prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel were prophets. Look in the context, and just turn over to 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and find out what prophecy is. First Corinthians 14, verse 3: *"But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort"* (1 Corinthians 14:3). A woman may stand in the public assembly, and a woman may exhort, a woman may edify, a woman may comfort if she is a woman under authority. The Bible makes it clear. The Bible makes it plain that women may prophesy. And, thank God for these women who have the gift of edification to build up, have the gift of exhortation to fire up, have the gift of comfort to shore up! Women may prophesy in public.

B. Women May Worship

What else may women do? Women may pray in public. Go back to our text again and

look in verse 5: *“But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered [dishonors] her head”* (1 Corinthians 11:5). But, it clearly taught that if her head is covered, if she’s under authority, indeed, she may pray. And, this last Wednesday night, we had a lovely young lady who stood on this platform and led the congregation in prayer. Verse 13: *“Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?”* (1 Corinthians 11:13). Of course not, but it would be comely that she would pray covered. In Acts chapter 1 and verse 14, the Bible speaks of the women who continued with the men in prayer there in that early church preceding, Pentecost (Acts 1:14). And so, we have here their witness: they may prophesy. We have here their worship: they may pray.

C. **Women May Have Wisdom**

And, we also have their wisdom—their wisdom. Women have been given incredible wisdom. While it is not referred to, I think, directly here in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, I want you to turn with me to Judges chapter 4, and I want to just show you something. Look, if you will, in Judges chapter 4 and verse 4: *“And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment”* (Judges 4:4–5). Now, not only may they pray and prophesy; they can plan. Not only can they witness and worship; they have wisdom. And, that’s the reason we put women on committees here in this church; that’s the reason we consult with women, and listen to women, and learn from women. I’ve learned an incredible amount from my wife. *And, I just told her today—and I wasn’t thinking about using it for a sermon illustration—I said, “Joyce, I’m glad God gave you to me because I need you.” I learn from her. And, God has given her discernment, and God gives women discernment.* And, we learn so very much in this church from the ministry of women. Thank God for their witness. Thank God for their worship. Thank God for their wisdom.

Now, even this girl back here in the Old Testament, Deborah, when she wanted to execute the plan, she still had to get a man. Even with the wisdom that God was giving her, she still was under the authority of the male leadership. When the battle began, she had to get a man to lead. And, indeed, he was willing to lead, but he was leading, leaning upon her wisdom. There are some people who think that because women are under authority that somehow we should negate the wealth of wisdom that God has given them. We’d be absolutely stupid—even more stupid—to do that.

D. **Women May Have Works**

And now, not only do we see their witness, and their worship, and their wisdom, but we see their works—the good things that God has given them to do. Look again in chapter

11, verses 11–12: *“Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things [are] of God”* (1 Corinthians 11:11–12). And then, look, if you will, in verse 3: *“the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man”* (1 Corinthians 11:3). Now, what does that mean? It means in the home that the man represents God and the woman represents the Church. And, as the Church is subject to Christ in all things, so should women be to their own husbands.

Well, I want to ask you a question: How does Jesus get His work done here on earth? Through the Church. Have you ever thought of the incredible responsibility that Jesus has given to the Church? And, the woman represents the Church. The work of God is done here on earth through the Church. The woman represents the Church. Thank God for the ministry of women. I tell you, if you were to take the ministry of women out of this church, we would be in a mess. Philippians chapter 4—this is the last verse, but I want you to turn to it—Philippians chapter 4 and verse 3. I want you to look at it. Here’s what the Apostle Paul said: *“I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel”* (Philippians 4:3). And, I just say to this church, “Help those women who help Pastor Rogers. Help those women who labor with me in the gospel.”

They can prophesy. They can pray. They can plan. They can perform. They can witness. They can worship. They have wisdom, and they can work. Yes, indeed, the Bible teaches that there are to be no women pastors, because that is an authoritative place. Yes, indeed, the Apostle Paul says, *“I suffer not a women to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man”* (1 Timothy 2:12). Indeed, God says that because God has put order in the Church, but that does not mean that our women have no place in this church. They have an incredible place. And, Marge, we welcome you. We thank God for you as you lead our women, this wonderful army of ladies, who are leading us and helping us to minister for Jesus Christ.

Let’s bow in prayer together. Heads are bowed. Father, help us to learn order from Your Word. Help us to learn, Lord, to appreciate, and to use, and utilize the ministry of women. For we pray in Jesus’s dear name. Amen.

The Priority of Authority

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 27, 1977

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1–16

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Secret of Spiritual Authority
- II. The Sequence of Spiritual Authority
- III. The Symbol of Spiritual Authority
- IV. The Seriousness of Spiritual Authority
- V. The Solidarity of Spiritual Authority

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, would you please, and turn to 1 Corinthians, chapter 11, as we continue our study in this wonderful book. First Corinthians, chapter 11, and our subject is “The Priority of Authority”: *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for this is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head,”*—ought not to cover his head—*“forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power”*—or, more aptly translated, “authority”—*“on her head because of the angels. Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man hath long hair, it is unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God”* (1 Corinthians 11:1–16). Well, there’s the Scripture. Now, we shall

preach on it.

I want to introduce you to *Garbage Mary*. I read about her in the newspaper the other day, and here's what the paper said—this is an Associated Press report: She dressed in rags, lived in a smelly apartment amid mounds of garbage, and spent much of her time rummaging through garbage cans. The neighbors from whom she begged cigarettes had no idea that she was a millionaire. Police said that Cathleen Nelson Collie, known to the neighbors as *Garbage Mary*, was in a private psychiatric hospital Thursday. She was taken there after police, who stopped her for questioning last weekend, were amazed to find stock certificates and bank books in her apartment that indicated that she was worth at least 1 million dollars. Officers said Miss Collie, 47, was questioned by police after she had been seen sifting through a garbage can in a shopping center. Before committing her for treatment, officers searched her battered automobile for information about her financial condition. Among food, papers, and melting candy they discovered several small stock dividend checks. At her \$150 a month apartment, police found Mobile Oil stock worth more than \$400,000; documents indicating ownership of oil fields in Kansas; stock certificates from such firms as U. S. Steel, Uniroyal, and Squibb; and passbooks from eight hefty bank accounts. They also found mounds of garbage. There were cans of food sitting around that had putrefied. There were things that she had saved, gathered, and stashed all over the place. There was garbage stuffed in the refrigerator, the stove, the sink, the cabinets, and the bathtub, and there were paths between the garbage. Other than the kitchen, there were no chairs to sit in, because stuff was piled on everything else. After being taken to the hospital, the woman was found to be disoriented, undernourished, and suffering from a fungus, which had destroyed much of the skin around her fingernails, and on and on the story goes. *Garbage Mary*. Now, the strange thing is that dear *Mary* was a millionaire, but she was living like a pauper.

Did you know that sitting in front of me are some *Garbage Charlies* and some *Garbage Marys*? There are some of you who have all of the wealth of Heaven at your disposal, but you're not using it. Did you know that when the Lord saved you and put His Holy Spirit in you, that the Lord wants you to live a life with authority and a life of victory? Did you know that the Lord Jesus Christ wants you to reign—not someday in the sweet by-and-by, but now in the nasty now-and-now—as a child of the king? Did you know that? Did you know that you are to reign in this life? Did you know that Jesus said that He places his authority in us? But, most Christians I know are living more like *Garbage Mary*. They are just having lives that are cluttered with garbage. They are sifting through the devil's garbage cans, rather than feasting on the manna that God has set before them. They have never discovered the priority of authority; they have never learned to live with spiritual authority.

I. The Secret of Spiritual Authority

Now, I want us to notice five or six things from this passage of Scripture before us. The first thing that I want us to notice is the secret of spiritual authority. Do you have that down? That's point one—the secret of spiritual authority. Notice verses 1 and 2: *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you”* (1 Corinthians 11:1–2). Oh, what a clarion call of clarity. As Paul stands up, with no stammer, no stutter, he says, “Follow me... ‘keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.’” Paul speaks with authority.

He is a man of God. They know it, and he could stand before them as God's man—as God's mighty apostle—and claim the authority that God has given him. He wasn't like one of these modern finger bumpers that stand in the pulpit and say, “You know, I don't know where I'm going, but don't you want to go with me?” Ha ha! No, he was a man who knew where he was going. He was a man who knew what he believed and when he spoke. He spoke with the unction, function, and authority of Heaven upon him. He was God's man. The breath of Heaven was upon his ministry, and he could stand up and clearly say, “Follow me.” I wonder how many of us would feel like telling our brothers and sisters in Christ, “Follow me. Do what you see me do. Live like you see me live. Be ye followers of me.”

There was no doubt about it—Paul was a man of great authority. Why was he a man of great authority? Because he was a man of great submission. Look at that verse again: Follow me, even as I also follow Christ. *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 11:1). The reason that Paul could say, “You follow me,” is that Paul could say, “I am following Christ.” Now right here, ladies and gentlemen, we learn the secret of spiritual authority. God wants you to have authority. There is no enemy that is supposed to be able to stand before you. You are to be victorious in all things. You are to live a life of victory. You are to reign as a king. You are to preach, speak, teach, sing, and minister with authority, but here is the secret of authority. Don't miss what I'm about to say; this is the crutch of the whole matter. One of the greatest spiritual lessons you will ever learn is this: *You cannot be over unless you're willing to be under.* Now, please get that. Paul said, “You be a follower of me, even as I also am of Christ”; that is, “The reason that I can exercise my authority over you, is that I have submitted to His authority over me.” You cannot be over unless you're under.

I think that all of us are familiar with that passage in Luke, chapter 7—most of us, anyway—if not, you need to mark it. Go home and read Luke, chapter 7, verses 1 through 10. In Luke, chapter 7, verses 1 through 10, there's a story there, in the Scripture, of a centurion who had a servant, and that servant was ill. And, the centurion—who was not a Jewish man, but a Gentile—sent for Jesus, and he said to

Jesus, “I want You to heal my servant.” And, when Jesus was approaching the house, the centurion sent word, and said, “I’m not worthy that You should even come into my house.” “But,” he said, “Jesus, if You will just speak the word, even without coming into my house, then my servant will be healed.” And then, in verse 8, he said one of the most remarkable things. He said, “For I too am a man set under authority, and I say to this man, ‘Go,’ and he goes; and I say to this man, ‘Come,’ and he comes.” And, the Bible says that when Jesus heard that, Jesus marveled, and Jesus made a remarkable statement. Jesus said, “I have not seen such great faith in all of the land of Israel” (Luke 7:1–10).

What was there about this man’s faith that caused Jesus to marvel—that just astounded Jesus? This man had learned how the Kingdom of Heaven works. You see, a centurion was an army officer—that’s what he meant when he said to Jesus, “I too am a man set under authority.” You see, in the army, there is a chain of command. The centurion had a general who was over him, and he was under the general. And, as long as he was under the general, he was over the corporal. Do you understand what I am saying? He was over the private. As long as he was under, he was over. He said, “I’m under authority, and because I’m under authority—because I’m properly related this way—then I can say to this man, ‘You go,’ and he goes. And, I can say to this man, ‘You come,’ and he comes.” And, the reason why this man had authority is because he was under authority. You see? Do you understand that? And, he said, “Jesus, I know how You do what You do. I know how You have power and authority over demons. I know how You have power and authority over disease. I know how You have power and authority over death. The reason that You’re over, Jesus, is because You’re under. You’re subject to Your Father. You have submitted Yourself to the Father, and because You’re under, you’re over.” Jesus said, “You’ve got it. Ha! You have figured it out. I haven’t seen this kind of faith in all of Israel.”

That man learned one of the greatest spiritual lessons that anybody can ever learn: You will never be over unless you’re willing to be under. That’s the reason why some of us are being beat up by the devil all the time. We have never had a submissive spirit to the authority that God has placed over us, and therefore, we have lost our authority. No wonder Paul could stand up and say, “Follow me, as I also followed Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1)—“the reason I’m over is because I’m under.”

Oh, *there are so many* pastors *today in churches who have no* spiritual authority. *Someone has described them as a mild-mannered man, standing in front of some mild-mannered people, exhorting everybody to be milder mannered.* That’s just about all that they have. Then, there’s no reign of Heaven—there’s no power—and why? Because, these men have not submitted themselves to the authority of the Word, the

Lordship of Christ, and the authorities that God has placed over them. And, because they're not under, they'll never be over.

I think the same thing of some Christians. I know that there are some of you Christians who ought to have authority over Satan, but you don't have any authority over Satan. Satan just beats up on you anytime that he wants, and yet Jesus said, "I give you authority over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). Why is it, when Jesus has given us authority, that some people don't have it? You want me to tell you the secret of overcoming Satan? The Bible says: "*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you*" (James 4:8). "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7). There's no good trying to resist the devil until you've drawn nigh to God. Do you understand? You'll never be over Satan until you're under the Father. You might as well throw snowballs at the rock of Gibraltar and try to remove it.

The devil has whipped up on some folks here today so much so that you just think that's normal and natural. You're like the old cat that had his tail stepped on so many times that, when someone would come in, he'd just turn around and place it out and just wait. I mean, he's just expecting it. That's you. You just don't think that there's any way that you can ever really have authority and victory over the devil. And yet, Jesus said: "*Resist the devil, and he will flee from you*" (James 4:7).

And, my dear friend, the devil laughs at rebels—at rebels: people who do not place themselves under spiritual authority. There are husbands here who have no authority in their homes. Do you know that the husband is to rule his home? That's what the Bible teaches—he is to rule his home. But, there are some husbands who don't have any authority in their homes at all. Do you know why they don't have authority? Because they are not under authority. And, if you're not under, then you can't be over.

I think of ole backslidden Lot when he tried to leave his family; the Bible says he seemed as one who mocked. The reason that Lot lost his authority is that he refused to be under. There are some of you mothers who wonder why you have wild and rebellious children! "Why won't these children obey me? Why is it that I have no authority over my children?" You're supposed to have authority over your children. But do you know why you're not over? You're not under. You're rebelling against your husband. And, when you rebel against your husband, you lose your authority over your children. You will never be over unless you're willing to be under.

There are young people today who have no victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, who are being sucked down in to the swirling sewers of sin—young people who are not living victoriously—and I'll tell you why. I'll tell you why the devil beats them every time, even though, in their heart of hearts, they love Jesus Christ: because they're rebels against their parents. They have a rebellious spirit toward their moms and their dads. And, the Bible says that he that mocks his mother or his father—the eagles will

pluck his eyes out (Proverbs 30:17). What does that mean? It means that, when you get out from the umbrella of protection of your mother or your father, you place yourself in the sphere of Satan, and he can do to you just anything he wants to do to you. The secret of spiritual authority is this: You will never be over until you're willing to be under. *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ"* (1 Corinthians 11:1)—that's the secret of spiritual authority.

II. The Sequence of Spiritual Authority

Now, the second thing that I want you to notice is the sequence of spiritual authority. Look in verse 3 for the sequence of spiritual authority: *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Corinthians 11:3). Now, God has given a definite chain of command. God the Father, God the Son; the man, and then the woman—that means that God the Son has taken a place of submission to God the Father, that the man is to be submissive to God the Son, and that the woman is to be submissive to the man whom God has placed as her head.

Now, when I say this in this day of woman's lib, I know that there are some people who would say, "Oh no, we don't...we don't agree with that." A woman is not inferior to a man, and I agree with you. A woman is not inferior to a man. We're not talking about inferiority or superiority here, at all. If you know anything about Christian theology, then you already know that God the Son is not inferior to God the Father. Don't you know that? Don't you know that? I say, don't you know that? The Bible says that our Lord Jesus Christ thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant (Philippians 2:6–7); and His submission had nothing—absolutely nothing at all—to do with inferiority. God the Son is not inferior to God the Father. He could say, *"I in my Father are one"* (John 10:30), and yet, in all things, He was subject to the Father.

When the Bible says that a woman is to be subject, that doesn't mean that she's inferior. *Everybody knows that a woman is infinitely superior to a man... at being a woman; and a man is infinitely superior to a woman... at being a man.* But, God has given a chain of command, and it has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. They call woman the weaker sex, and yet they outlive us by seven years. I've never been able to figure that out. Someone has said that the weaker sex is the stronger sex, because of the weakness of the stronger sex for the weaker sex; and I think that's probably true. But, God has given a definite chain of command.

Now, somebody says, "Well, that was a local situation." No, not a local situation. Somebody says, "That was a historical custom." No, it roots all the way back to the Garden of Eden—all the way back to the Garden of Eden—and God said, in Genesis,

chapter 3, and verse 16, to the woman: “*Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee*” (Genesis 3:16). Now, someone says, “That is demeaning.” Friend, do you think being like Jesus is demeaning? *You are never more* like Jesus *than when you’re* submissive. *You are never more like the devil than when you’re* rebellious. Submission does not demean—it exhausts. All Christians are equal, but all Christians are not the same. *Sameness* is not equality. Would to God that we could learn that in society, and would to God that we could learn that God has given a definite chain of command, and so, there is the sequence of spiritual authority. Now, you can protest against it all you want, but you’ll never be able to change the Word of God.

III. The Symbol of Spiritual Authority

All right now, the third thing: not only the secret of spiritual authority and the sequence of spiritual authority, but I would have you to learn from this passage of Scripture this morning the symbol of spiritual authority. Begin reading in verse 4: “*Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man*” (1 Corinthians 11:4–9).

Now here, the apostle speaks of head covering. And, what does he mean? Well, a covering—something over our head—is a symbol of authority. In spiritual matters, when someone wears a covering on his head, or her head, it would show that they are under—that’s just a symbol. The covering shows that they’re under, and the covering represents the authority that is over them.

Now, why does God say that the man is not to pray or prophesy with his head covered, but the woman is to do so with her head covered? Well, on earth, the man represents God. He is not God, and I think that you well know that. He simply represents God. The woman represents the Church. You see, husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Wives are to be in submission to the man as the Church is to Christ in all things. And, since the man represents the Lord, he doesn’t have a covering on his head, but since the woman represents the Church, she has a covering upon her head—it is a sign of submission.

Now, men are probably the biggest failures here. You know, most of the time, when we talk about submission, we just like to tell women how they’re to be submissive and all of that; but it’s in my observation that the problem in the average home is not a

woman who has a rebellious spirit, but a man who fails to exercise the authority that God wants him to exercise. And, I think that the problem is primarily with the man—not a wife demanding leadership, but the refusal of the husband to assume the responsibility. Sir, you are to represent God in your home. You're to be the priest and the prophet in your home. You're to say, *"As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD"* (Joshua 24:15). You're to show that you are to be one with God. You are created in the glory of God, for the glory of God, to represent and show forth the glory of God.

And, the woman is to picture, before her children, and all of the world, the submission of Church to Christ. And, this is the reason that a woman is to wear a covering on her head—it is sign of submission. Look in verses 5 and 6: *"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her be shorn"* (1 Corinthians 11:5–6). What is that talking about? Right here, at Corinth, to whom Paul wrote this scripture—and I've been there and stood there to see up on the Acrocorinthus—was a pagan temple, and in that pagan temple were prostitutes who worshiped the God of fertility through prostitution; and these temple prostitutes shaved their heads. This was a mark of their brazenness; this was a mark of their lack of submission to God, to man, and to anything else. It was a mark of shame. And, that's what Paul is talking about when he says, "If a woman refused to be covered, let her be shorn"—he's just simply saying, "Be out-and-out; show that you're a rebel. Don't try to play both ends against the middle."

Well, what on earth is the covering? Are we to wear a hat on our heads when we come to church? Some think so. In some communions, if a lady would come to church without a hat, then she'd perhaps take a piece of Kleenex or a doily or something and place that upon her head. I think that some of you have seen that, and some very precious people do this. Some other people say, "Well, they did that in the Bible, but that's talking about a veil—not a hat—and that was a local custom." Well, if that's the way you feel, then you ought to wear a doily—perhaps even a veil. But I don't think that's what Paul is saying here.

What is the covering? The covering is her hair. Look in verses 13 through 15: *"Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering"* (1 Corinthians 11:13–15). Now, I think God is making it clear what covering He's talking about: *"Her hair is given her for a covering"* (1 Corinthians 11:15). What is he saying? He is saying that from time immemorial God has made a distinction between man and woman. God created them, in the beginning, male and female. And, God is saying that

a woman is to look like a woman, a man is to look like a man, and that the unisex idea, and the merging and the blending of the sexes, is an idea that was hatched in Hell. That's what God is saying.

Now, we could get into a big long discussion about how long is long and how short is short—we really could. You know, somebody would say, “Well, I know certain churches where if your hair touches your collar, then you're out of fellowship, you know. And, I know some people who teach that if a woman ever were to cut her hair at all—I mean just cut it—then she's sinned against the Lord.” I don't necessarily buy that, but I tell you this much, mister—I'll tell you this much, dear lady—God wants men to be masculine, and God wants women to be feminine. And, when you see a man going down the street, you ought to have no difficulty saying, “There goes a man.” We used to have either *she* or a *him*; now, they're *shims*.

One poor preacher, after performing a wedding, said, “Would one of you please kiss the bride?”

A woman's femininity—her long hair—is a sign that she's not trying to be mannish; she's not trying to say, “I refuse this place that God has given me.” Her hair is her glory. I want to say that your submission to Jesus Christ is your glory, and never ever let it be thought that that demeans you. It makes you like Jesus, and being like Jesus—being submissive—is not wrong. We are never more like the devil than when we have a rebellious spirit. And oh, ladies, if you just knew how pretty you are when you look feminine. If you just knew how God puts something in a man that just makes him want to see a soft, frilly, and feminine sort of a person. I just think that this idea today, that we have, that boys ought to halfway look like girls and girls ought to halfway look like men, and we obliterate the difference, is born of Hell. The sign—the symbol—of spiritual authority.

IV. The Seriousness of Spiritual Authority

Now, let's go on and mention another thing: the seriousness of spiritual authority. Someone may think that this is just the difference between twiddle-dee and twiddle-dum—but it is not. Look, in verse 10, where we left off reading: “*For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels*” (1 Corinthians 11:10)—because of the angels.

Now, what on earth does that mean? The angels first rebelled. It was Lucifer, the son of the morning, who became Satan, the father of the night, when he rebelled against God. And, he led a third of the angels with him, and there was a rebellion when those bright, shining, holy angels refused to be under. Then, they lost their privilege of being over them. They were to administrate the affairs and the glory of God. But now, they've been cast down in perdition. And, God is saying that when the spirit of rebellion

rises up in you, think about the angels; you think about what happened to the bright, shining, glorious angels when they rebelled—this cosmos was turned into a chaos, and earth was turned into an upheaval.

You know, that's the reason why the Bible says that rebellion is like witchcraft. Do you remember what Samuel said to Saul, in 1 Samuel, chapter 15, and verse 23, when King Saul refused to be submissive to the command of God? Listen to it—1 Samuel 15, verse 23: *“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry”* (1 Samuel 15:23).

Now, why would rebellion be like witchcraft? When you kids—listen—when you kids rebel against your mom and dad, God says you're practicing witchcraft. When you rebel against your husband, you're practicing witchcraft. When you rebel against your pastor, you're practicing witchcraft. When you rebel against your government, you're practicing witchcraft. When you rebel against God's Word, you're practicing witchcraft. Why? You see—it was rebellion that caused the devil to come into existence. Witchcraft is nothing but trafficking with Satan. You place yourself in the sphere of Satan when you have a rebellious spirit. You open yourself up to demonic influences when you have a rebellious spirit. You will never exercise your spiritual authority if you've got a rebellious spirit. The secret is that you can't be over unless you're willing to be under. Rebellion is witchcraft. “The seriousness of this thing,” Paul says, “is because of the angels, because of the angels, because of the angels.” What ruined our world? Rebellion, rebellion.

Now, we are seeing something today that's very hellish indeed. Gloria Steinem, former Playboy bunny, in a speech given in Houston, Texas, in 1973, said—and I quote: “For the sake of those who wish to live in equal partnerships, we have to abolish and reform the institution of legal marriage.” That's one of the woman libbers for you. Here's a quotation from the *Houston Tribune*, from 1974, speaking of the aim of the N.O.W.—the National Organization of Women; I quote that the aim of the N.O.W. “is a radical change away from a mother/ father, family-oriented society”—did you hear that?—“to create a society in which feminists' and humanists' values will prevail.”

Betty Freidan, the organizer of the N.O.W., said—now listen to this; I want you to see—I want you to see—the spirit of rebellion that's in the air now. Listen to this: “The changes necessary to bring about equality were, and still are, very revolutionary indeed. They involve a sex role revolution for men and women, which will restructure all of our institutions: child-rearing, education, marriage, the family, medicine, work, politics, the economy, religion, psychological theory, human sexuality, morality, and even the very evolution of the race.” Do you see the movement that is abroad in our land today, where people are saying, “We don't care what Paul said; we don't care what God said; we're going to have our rights.” But, rights are never rights when they become wrongs.

V. The Solidarity of Spiritual Authority

Let me close this message by speaking not only about the seriousness of spiritual authority—because of the angels—let me speak about the solidarity of spiritual authority. Continue to read, and look in verse 11: *“Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God”* (1 Corinthians 11:11–12). Do you know what he is saying? Folks, men need women, and women need men. There’s to be no warfare—there’s to be no warfare. We’re not in a race; we’re on a pilgrimage. It’s not a matter of who was first on earth; it’s who’s first in Heaven. All things are of God—that’s what he’s saying.

You see, the Bible makes it very clear, in Galatians, chapter 3, and verse 28: *“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28). In Christ, we’re all one. There is the solidarity—there’s the oneness—in the Lord Jesus Christ. It’s not a matter of who is in front of whom. We are not talking about superiority and inferiority. We’re just simply talking about the way that God Himself has arranged things in Heaven: God the Father, God the Son, the man, and then, the women. But, notice what he is saying—look at it again; listen to the Scripture again. Listen, in verse 12: *“For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God”* (1 Corinthians 11:12). When I find my proper place of submission and get in it, I am rightly related to Heaven. And, I have the smile of Heaven upon me. It doesn’t really make much difference who is over me and who is under me, if God is pleased. That’s what it is all about.

Conclusion

This has been an interesting passage of Scripture this morning, hasn’t it? Now, someone reads, *“If any man seems to be contentious, we have no such custom”* (1 Corinthians 11:16), and they say, “Does that mean that you don’t have to pay attention to this if you don’t like it?” No, that isn’t what he is saying. He is saying that if you want to contend about it and try to put it away, you can’t. We have no custom of overlooking this; this is the way that it’s going to be—that’s what he is saying.

Don’t misinterpret that. He is saying that we have no custom of overlooking the Word of God—that’s what he means. It’s right there. Now folks, let me say this word: *garbage!* Would you like to quit being a *Garbage Mary*? Would you like to live with authority? Would you like to have authority over Satan and over temptation? Would you like to have authority, as a husband, in the home? Would you like to have authority, as a wife? Would you like to have authority, as a businessman? As a minister? Would you? Would you, right now, submit to the Lordship of Christ? Would you? Would you place yourself

under Christ? If you would, place yourself under the Lordship of Christ. *“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). Today, if you will repent of your sin and make Jesus Christ the Lord of your life and submit to that Lordship in every area, then God will infuse your life with unbelievable authority and power. And, for the first time in your life, all of the power of Heaven will be in you, because you will properly be related to the authority over you.

You will never be over unless you are willing to be under. The first step is to receive Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Now, if I could do it for you, then I would, but I cannot. I’m just a messenger boy. But, I want to invite you today, with all of your heart, to trust Jesus Christ—trust Him to save you. When you do, He will forgive your sin. He will come into your heart, and give you a new nature. And, when you die, He will take you to Heaven.

Women in Ministry

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 07, 2000

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:1–16

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Principle of Spiritual Authority
 - A. Apostolic Authority
 - B. Pastoral Authority
 - C. Governmental Authority
 - D. Authority in the Business World
 - E. Authority in the Home
 - F. Authority Between Husband and Wife
 1. Women Can Teach Younger Women
 2. Women Can Teach Children

Conclusion

Introduction

Tonight, I told you I'd be speaking to you on the subject "Women in Ministry." And, would you be finding, please, in the Bible, 1 Corinthians chapter 11? If you don't have a Bible with you, look in the pew rack. You'll get, I think, 25 percent more out of any message if you have an open Bible in front on you—that is, if the preacher is preaching the Bible. And, get an open Bible. We're interested tonight in not opinion but what God has to say. There has been a little flap in our city that, in my estimation, has created far more heat than light, and it deals with the ministry of women in the Church.

Now, I chair a committee. We have a document that we practice—that we operate by—in the Southern Baptist Convention, and it's called "The Baptist Faith and Message Statement." It was first written in 1925; it was revised in 1963. A motion was made in last year's convention to do an update and a revision of "The Baptist Faith and Message Statement." It's a very, very critical statement—a very important statement. And, yours truly was given the privilege to be the chairman of that committee. And so, we're stating those beliefs that we hold together as Baptists and to give guidance to our professors and our agency heads. And, there was one article in that statement that dealt with the Church, and I'll read that. There are a number of articles in the statement; this is only one of them. And, the statement deals with the Church, and here's what it said, and what it says, and will be presented to the convention next week for ratification:

"A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local

congregation”—*autonomous* means “self-governing”—“autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel, observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation, each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men, as qualified by scripture.”

Now, it’s that last phrase that caused a consternation of some—that says, “The office of pastor is limited to men, as qualified by scripture.” Now, you would think that this is something new or something radical. Of course, it is not. It’s something that we Baptists have believed and practiced historically from our foundation as Southern Baptists—or our beginning as Southern Baptists—in 1845 up until the present time. There are about 42,000 Southern Baptist churches. Less than 100 of them have women pastors—I said less than 100 out of 42,000. If my arithmetic is correct, that’s about one-fourth of one percent. We’re not talking about something that’s radical or different but something that is historic, and practiced, and uniform, by and large, across our convention.

Now, there has been some controversy. And, how’s it going to be settled? Well, it’s not going to be settled by modern culture. We’re not trying to conform the Church to modern culture. It’s not going to be settled by political correctness. It’s not going to be settled by people who don’t believe the Bible or who don’t accept the Bible—Bible doubters and Bible rejecters. I believe that when we look at the Bible, which is our rule for faith and practice, we’ll see that there’s no quibble and no contradiction. And, it’s pretty plain—black paper on white print.

Now, there are those who don’t accept the Bible. As a matter of fact, I heard of a man who was called upon to read the Bible in a liberal church. And, he has also been presiding over a business meeting. After he read the scripture, he said, “And now, if there are no additions or corrections, the scriptures stand approved as read.” Well, there are no additions or corrections.

Now, in order to understand all of this, you have to understand a principle that we would call the *principle of spiritual authority*. Now, for many people, *authority* is a dirty word. They don’t like the word *authority*. As a matter of fact, you’ll see bumper stickers that say, “Resist Authority.” But, let me share with you what the Word of God has to say.

Let’s go back again to 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and I want to read for you the first 16 verses. And, if you have a Bible, follow along with me. I’m reading from the *King James* passage of scripture. The Apostle Paul says, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I*

also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you. But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even as even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered”—now, we’ll talk about that a little bit more later—“For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels”—we’ll talk about that later, also—“Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things [are] of God. Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering. But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God” (1 Corinthians 11:1–16).

Well, I will be the first to admit that that’s a scripture that we need to look at clearly and carefully, because it’s not casually discerned. But, it is easily discerned if we look at it very carefully.

I. The Principle of Spiritual Authority

Now, the very first thing I want to lay on your heart tonight—and this will not be an alliterated outline—but I want you to see what I call the *principle of spiritual authority*.

A. Apostolic Authority

And Paul, for example, in this chapter, begins in the first two verses, and he exerts his authority as an apostle. And, he says, “You follow me, as I follow the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:1). He said, “I am delivering to you the ordinances” (1 Corinthians 11:2). That is, Paul, as an apostle, is speaking to the church at Corinth with authority.

B. Pastoral Authority

Also—and we don’t find it in this particular passage before us—but God has given churches pastors, and pastors are to have spiritual authority in the church. The pastor is not just one more of the boys. Some scripture you might put in your margin—Hebrews chapter 13, verse 7: the Bible says, “*Remember them [that] have the rule over you, who*

have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation—“Remember them [that] have the rule over you” (Hebrews 13:7). A pastor is to lead. He is to guide. He is to rule in the church. Hebrews 13, verse 24 says the same thing: “Salute all of them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you” (Hebrews 13:24).

C. Governmental Authority

Now, there is apostolic authority. There is pastoral authority. There is governmental authority. Put this verse down—Romans 13, verses 1 and 2: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers”—and the word *powers* here literally means “authority.” It’s the higher authorities—“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” (Romans 13:1–2). God gave us kings, governors, princes, rulers, sheriffs, councils. These are God’s gift—the policeman on the street, the authority. And, we could not live in society without authority—governmental authority.

D. Authority in the Business World

And then, God not only has done that—not only has He given apostolic authority, pastoral authority, governmental authority—but God even has authority in the business world. Ephesians 6, verses 5–7: “*Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ; Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men*” (Ephesians 6:5–7). When you go to work tomorrow, you work for your employer. Get under the authority of your employer, and serve him as if he were Jesus. And, if you do that, people will start believing what I preach on Sunday.

E. Authority in the Home

And now, not only that, but there’s authority in the home. Children are to be under the authority of their parents. We live in a generation today where everything in the home is run by switches, except the kids. Ephesians 6, verses 1 and 2: “*Children, obey our parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise*” (Ephesians 6:1–2). Children are to be obedient to their parents.

F. Authority Between Husband and Wife

And then, there’s authority between husband and wife. The husband is the head in the home—God said so. First Corinthians 11, verses 7 (1 Corinthians 11:7–16) and following—I just read it to you. Let me just come back to that a little bit later and go on

down to Ephesians 5. Put this in your margin—Ephesians 5, verses 22–24: *“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church”*—now, no home should have two heads; no church should have two heads. Anything with two heads is a freak; anything with no head is dead—*“Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in every thing”* (Ephesians 5:22–24).

Now, husbands and wives are equal. “In Christ, there’s neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, bond or free” (Galatians 3:28). That’s what Paul told us in Galatians 3, verse 28. Husbands and wives are equal, but they’re not the same. And, equality of worth does not mean sameness of function, as we’re going to see. In the home, God has given the husband headship. That doesn’t mean greater privilege for the husband; to the contrary, it means greater responsibility for the husband. While God requires that the wife submit to the husband, as the Church does to Christ, God requires that the husband love his wife, as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself up for it (Ephesians 5:28). The husband is to live sacrificially for his wife, even to the point of dying for her.

Now, this is not being taught today, and the failure is that we’ve missed a generation who have not taught this to the younger generation. We had a generation in the ’60s that came up; they’re the boomers of today. And, somehow their watchword was *rebellion*. But, here’s what God says in Titus chapter 2, verses 3 and following: *“The aged women...that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home”*—that doesn’t mean can’t go out of the house; it actually means a housekeeper—*“good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed”* (Titus 2:3–5). When I do a wedding and I say, “Do you promise to obey?” I see heads snap around. You know, people look up like, “Good night! What did he just ask her to do?” Just what the Bible says—just what the Bible says. The Bible says, *“That the word of God be not blasphemed”* (Titus 2:5).

And so, there is authority: there’s apostolic authority; there’s pastoral authority; there is governmental authority; there is business authority; there’s the authority of parents over their children; there is authority in the home, husband and wife, and all of this.

Now, let’s think what that has to do with a woman being a pastor in a church, if the office of a pastor is one of spiritual authority. And, I want to remind you again that this is not going to be settled by opinion. It’s not even going to be settled by logic. It’s not going to be settled by observation. It’s not going to be settled by pragmatism. It’s going to be settled for us, here, by the Word of God. Sometimes a woman may say, “But I feel God

is calling me to preach. That is my feeling; that is my emotion.” Well, the Bible says in 1 John chapter 4, verse 1: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits”—test the spirits—“whether they are of God: because many false prophets [have] gone out into the world”* (1 John 4:1). Let me tell you this about the Bible: the Bible never contradicts itself. The Bible is given by divine inspiration, and you cannot pit one verse of scripture over against another verse of scripture.

Now, I want you to look to a key passage of Scripture, and all of this will come together in just a moment. But, I’d like for you to leave 1 Corinthians, and I’d like for you to go to 1 Timothy—that’s further right in your Bible—chapter 2, and I want to read verses 11 through 15 for you: Paul says, *“[But] let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man”—* now remember, we’re talking about authority that God has placed in the Church—*“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety”* (1 Timothy 2:11–15).

Now here, God very clearly and plainly says that the woman is *“not...to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man”* (1 Timothy 2:12). And, he says—he roots this all not to culture, not to political correctness, not to what was happening in Paul’s day that he was accommodating himself to, but he roots this all the way back to creation (that Adam was created first, and then Eve—that Eve went into sin and was deceiving by the serpent) (1 Timothy 2:13). Adam was not deceived; he sinned, but he sinned with his eyes wide open, not by deception. That’s the reason that God holds Adam more culpable for the sin than He did Eve. You see, Eve was tempted by Satan, but God had given to Eve Adam to protect her. Adam was in the place of authority. What did God tell Adam to do? He told Adam to dress the garden and to keep the garden (Genesis 2:15).

Provision and protection are the two chief assignments to the man for the home. He is to provide for the home; he’s to be the breadwinner. Somebody said, “He’s going—he’s supposed to go out, and kill something, and drag it back to the cave?” He is the provider, and he’s the protector. He’s supposed to keep the garden. When God put Adam and Eve there in the Garden of Eden, He said, “I have given you dominion over all the beasts of the field” (Genesis 1:26). When the serpent came into the garden, Adam had complete dominion over the serpent. He should have been protecting Eve. He should have told the serpent—taken authority over the serpent, banned the serpent from the garden. He should have protected and provided for Eve. He did not do so. So really, the Bible, even though Eve was deceived, Adam is the one that is held more responsible. So, the Bible says, *“In Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made*

alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22).

Now, Paul’s injunction here is... When he says, *“I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man”* (1 Timothy 2:12), he’s not saying that a woman cannot teach; he’s saying that a woman cannot teach with authority over men. She is *“not...to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man”* (1 Timothy 2:12). Women teach. We have a great host of women teachers here in our church, and I thank God for them.

1. Women Can Teach Younger Women

Let me give you some scriptures that show that women can teach. Titus 2, verses 3 and 4—I’ve already given those: “That the aged women are to teach young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children” (Titus 2:3–4). So, women are to teach younger women.

2. Women Can Teach Children

First Timothy...or 2 Timothy 1, verse 5—you remember there that the mother and grandmother of young Timothy taught him: *“When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also”* (2 Timothy 1:5). How wonderful when women teach children! But, a pastor or a bishop—and the word *bishop* means “overseer.” I am a bishop as well as a pastor. The words elder, pastor, and bishop are interchangeable—is one that teaches with spiritual authority. And, he is to be to the Church what a father is to a home.

First Timothy chapter 3—you’re in 1 Timothy chapter 2; just go over to 1 Timothy chapter 3 and look in verse 5: Paul says, *“(For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the [house] of God?)”* (1 Timothy 3:5). Just as the husband is to be the head in his own home, the pastor is to take care of the house of God. If I cannot be a good husband to Joyce, if I cannot lead and guide my children, I’ve disqualified myself from being a pastor. *“(For if a man know not to [take care of] his own house, how shall he take care of the [house] of God?)”* (1 Timothy 3:5). It is clear in the Scripture that a pastor is to be to a church what a father—a husband—is to a home.

Now remember, God has put headship in the home. The husband is the head of the wife. He is the male figure in the home. Correspondingly, the male is to be the figure in the Church. Now, what, therefore, is the ministry of women? Can women minister if they cannot have spiritual authority or usurp authority over the man? Obviously. We’ve already told you that women can teach. They can teach the younger women. They can teach the children. As a matter of fact, if women teach women and children, they’re teaching three-fourths of everybody that lives. That’s a pretty big assignment, if you ask me.

What does the New Testament say? Does anybody know a New Testament church where they had a female pastor? Obviously not. Were any of the apostles women? No.

Did any woman write any book of the Bible? No. In the Old Testament, were the priests women? No. This is not something new.

Now, in the Bible, you have many wonderful women, as we have in this church, who are gifted, bright, intelligent, committed, trained. Bellevue Baptist Church could not operate without the ministry of women. Thank God for them. You study in the Bible and find out the great women in the Bible. I've already mentioned Lois and Eunice who taught young Timothy, and he became a mighty pastor and a man of God. I think my wife has done a great job raising up some children to serve the Lord, also. I think of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Thank God for her. I think of Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist. I think of Mary, the sister of Lazarus, and Martha, who sat at the feet of Jesus. I think of Phoebe, who, in the Bible, was called a "*servant of the church*" (Romans 16:1). Romans 16, verses 1 and 2: "*I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, [who] is a servant of the church*" (Romans 16:1). Actually, the word *servant* there is the word "deaconess." She was a deaconess—not with a capital D. The word is a generic word. She was a servant in the church. You can read in the Bible of a woman named Priscilla who was married to a man named Aquila. She and her husband did some team-teaching. She, under the guidance and egress of her husband, taught one of the most gifted preachers in the Bible, a man named Apollos. Thank God for the ministry of Priscilla.

You can find many gifted women in the Bible, but turn to the New Testament, go home and study it, and you will not find one woman pastor. You will not find that. You will not find a woman apostle. You will not find women who wrote any of the books of the Bible. Now, someone says, "But Adrian, were there not prophetesses in the Bible?" Yes, there were. I'm going to give you a number of verses. By the way, I've already copied these out to save you time and to help me. There's nothing more embarrassing than trying to preach and can't find something in the Bible, especially if you're doing a lot of it. So, I've copied these scriptures out. You want to copy them down. Well, let me give you the list of some prophetesses.

For example, Miriam, the sister of Moses, was a prophetess. Exodus 15, verse 20 says, "*And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron*" (Exodus 14:20) did thus and such. Deborah was a prophetess. Judges 4:4: "*And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time.*" Huldah was a prophetess. Second Kings 22, verse 14: "*Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asahiah, went unto Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum*" (2 Kings 22:14). So, Huldah was a prophetess. Anna was a prophetess in the New Testament. Luke 2, verse 36: "*And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel*" (Luke 2:36). There were four daughters of a man named Phillip who were prophetesses. Acts 21, verse 9: "*And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy*" (Acts 21:9). Now, the

Bible does not say they were preachers; the Bible does not say they were pastors. They were prophetesses.

Well, what is a prophetess or a prophet? It's somebody who has insight and a revelation—a God-given revelation. There was a special need for prophets and prophetesses as the New Testament was being written. If a person spoke as a prophet or a prophetess, they'd better make certain that what they were saying was the Word of God. Deuteronomy 18, verse 22 says, *"When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but [that] prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou [should] not be afraid of him"* (Deuteronomy 18:22). That is, don't give him any reverence. As a matter of fact, in another passage, it says put him to death.

Now, the gift of a prophet or a prophetess was given both to men and to women. Acts 2, verses 17–18: *"And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens will I pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy"* (Acts 2:17–18).

So, what do you have? You have women who can teach. You can have women who can prophesy. You can have women who can serve. But, never, ever do you find a woman as a pastor, with spiritual authority, leading a church as one who rules of the Church. You just don't find it. Contrariwise, you find the Apostle Paul saying clearly and plainly, *"I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man"* (1 Timothy 2:12).

Now, let's see if we can wrap this up, because we've got a ballgame coming up here pretty soon, which, by the way, the staff will win. But, I'm not saying that as a prophet 'cause I don't want to get stoned.

All right, what do these people say? What are some of these arguments that we hear? How does this come off? Well, somebody says, "But I know a woman preacher, a godly woman, who's done much good." I don't doubt that. I know some very godly women who purport to be pastors. I think they're mistaken. I think that, very frankly, that they are out of the will of God, but I don't doubt their motivation. I'm certainly not here to judge their spirituality. They may do good, but I do not believe for one moment that ultimately we do good by disobeying the Word of God. It's the bottom line. Some say they've been called and, therefore, they must obey. Well, I think we ought to obey the dictates of our heart but never if we clearly and plainly contravene or contradict the Word of God. We must admit that it is possible for both men and women to think they've been called when they haven't. The country preacher said, "Many has went when they ain't been sent." And, I think there are many people think they have the gift of

preaching—nobody else has the gift of listening. There are people who may think that they are called; they're not necessarily called. Again, I'm not trying to be smart about it, but we cannot go by subjective emotion. If subjective emotion or feeling and say, "Well, I know in my heart"...contradicts the Word of God.

Somebody wrote me a kind of a nasty letter. I get those every now and then. And, this person accused me of unfair, hateful discrimination against women. Now, first of all, let me say that I don't hate women; I love them. And, there's one I really do love. And, we, around here, don't hate women; we honor them. We put them on a pedestal. My wife says she doesn't want to be equal with me—she's not coming down for anything. When you talk about unfair discrimination, have you ever heard of anybody accuse God of not being fair or something? Listen, God is not fair—God is not fair. God is righteous; God is just. When a person talks about fairness, they think they're owed something; and when they get it, therefore, they're not thankful. They say it was coming to them. And, as a matter of fact, they're angry if they didn't get it sooner—and especially if somebody gets more than they got. No, God is not fair. God doesn't owe us anything. Everything that we have is by grace. Thank God He's a God of grace! But, it's not unfair discrimination against women. God has given women many wonderful privileges that He's not given men and vice versa.

And, somebody says, "Well Adrian, you pick and choose scriptures. You don't obey all the scriptures. You just pick some that seem to put the women down." No, that's not true. For example, someone says, "Well, what about all that scripture you just read about the hair covering, and praying with your head uncovered, and all that?" Well, let's just revisit that for a few moments, because I know I saw some, some quizzical looks on your face. Go back to 1 Corinthians 11, where we started, and look at it: *"But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God"* (1 Corinthians 11:3). Let's look in verse 3. Now, let me just pause there and say parenthetically, are God the Father and God and Son co-equal? Say "yes." Is there headship in the Trinity? Say "yes." That does not denigrate God the Son. God says of God the Son—God the Father says of God the Son that He's *"given him a name which is above every name"* (Philippians 2:9); and yet, the head of the Son is the Father. And, there is this chain of authority or line of responsibility even in the Trinity.

Now, notice verse 4: *"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head"*—have you ever noticed that a man, just by instinct, will take his hat off when he prays? He dishonors his head—*"But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she [was] shaven"*—now, in this day, the temple prostitutes would shave their head. And so, if a woman prays with her head uncovered, it's a dishonor to her, a disgrace—

“For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered. For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man. For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man”—that is, Eve was made out of Adam’s side. By the way, somebody told me the other day that when God made Eve, He took the very best rib—the one that holds this in—and I have to say “amen” to that. All right, enough of that foolishness. But, the woman is the glory of the man—*“For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man”* (1 Corinthians 11:4–9).

Now, the Bible teaches that a man is to have mannish hair, a woman is to have feminine hair. A woman is not to be shorn, shaved like a man. I know I’m walking on thin ice when I’m trying to tell women how to fix their hair, but I want to tell you something—and listen to me very carefully, carefully: the devil is doing all he can do to blur the distinction between the sexes. The Bible is against she-men and he-women. I was in a restroom the other day; and one came in, and I got frightened. I didn’t know who or what... It was a very... I couldn’t tell. I looked for an Adam’s apple. It’s hard to tell whether it’s a she or him. I call them *shims*. God made them, in the beginning, male and female (Genesis 1:27). And, the Bible says that—even nature teaches you that—it’s a shame for a man if he has long hair.

Now, what is this covering? Some people get the idea that the covering is a hat. Used to be—women would come to church and they would wear hats to church on Sunday morning. And, you will see women today... Mennonite women, for example—they would not go to church without wearing some covering on their head. We have people come to our church. I’ve seen them even put a handkerchief on their head or a doily on their head so their head would be not uncovered. And, I don’t make fun of that, but that’s not what this verse means, in my estimation. It’s not what he’s talking about here at all.

What is the covering that she’s supposed to have on her head? Notice in verse 15: *“But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering”* (1 Corinthians 11:15). That’s the covering—the long hair. Now, I’m not going to get into a discussion as to how long is long and how short and short, but I’m going to tell you something: the Bible wants men to look mannish, and the Bible wants women to look feminine. Now, you put that down. The devil is doing all he can do to make men look effeminate and women to look hard. Listen to 1 Corinthians 6—you’re in 1 Corinthians 11—1 Corinthians 6:9: *“Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers”*—now, watch this—*“nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall*

inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9–10). God doesn't want effeminate men. God does not want masculine women.

Let me just look at another verse with you here while we're here. It's kind of...and people say, "Well Adrian, you don't preach that and you don't practice it." I do preach it, and I do practice it. If you've been around here long enough, you'll know that we do preach that. And, we try to teach our young men to dress and look and take care of themselves so that they will look like a man, and to teach our women to be soft, to be feminine, so that you don't have to look several times to find out, "Is that a man or is that a woman?"

Now, it is a very interesting verse here, and there's just so much here. But look, if you will, in verse 10: "*For this cause ought the woman to have [authority] on her head because of the angels*" (1 Corinthians 11:10). Now, what on earth does that mean? Well, how did the angels fall? How did Satan, Lucifer, the Son of the Morning, become Satan, the father of the night? He rebelled. He said, "*I will be like the most High [God]*" (Isaiah 14:14). "*I will exalt my throne [over] the stars of God*"—"above the stars of God" (Isaiah 14:13). And, he took a third of the angels with him, and it was sheer rebellion. Paul is saying that a woman is to be under authority. See what happened to the angels because of rebellion that is in the universe?

Well, I come—yes, I do come—to a conclusion. Look in verse 16 of this same chapter: he says here, "*But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God*" (1 Corinthians 11:16). What does that mean? Does it mean it's not our custom to teach submission? No. He means we're not going to argue with you. We have no custom of arguing about these things. This is the Word of God. Now, it's not anti-woman. You see—look, folks—we did not write the Bible; we're here to obey it. If it's not politically correct, I'm sorry. If people think it's discriminatory, I'm sorry. If it hurts people's feelings, I'm sorry. But, I tell you, this church is built on the Word of God. And, as long as I have breath in my lungs, whether the people like it or they don't like it—I hope they'll like it—but I'm bound by the Word of God, and so are you.

Thank you. And, I know you're not applauding me; you're applauding the Word of God.

Conclusion

Father God, we pray that You'll seal all of this to our hearts. And Lord, help us to be gentle with those who don't understand; and help us not to be pushy or arrogant, but to be loving. And, I thank You, Lord, for many people who do not agree. We pray, Lord, that You'll give us a sense of wisdom, a sense of conciliation and love, as we deal with these. In the strong name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

The Body Called Bellevue

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: November 12, 1989

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 11:29

“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.”

1 CORINTHIANS 11:29

Outline

Introduction

I. The Function of the Body

- A. A Motivating Power
- B. A Ministering Purpose
- C. A Mutual Program
- D. A Manifested Person

II. The Formation of the Body

III. The Fellowship of the Body

- A. We Belong to One Another
- B. We Need One Another
- C. We Must Care for One Another

Conclusion

- A. Accept Yourself
- B. Be Yourself
- C. Give Yourself

Introduction

I want to talk to you tonight about the body called Bellevue. And the reason I'm doing this is to prepare our hearts to receive the Lord's Supper. Because if you don't understand the body called Bellevue, then you're not ready to take the Lord's Supper at Bellevue. Now look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians 11 and verse 29: "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily (now that's an adverb, and it speaks of the manner in which you eat or drink), eateth and drinketh damnation (that means judgment) to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." Now that says that if you don't understand the Lord's body, that you're not ready to take the Lord's Supper. You have to understand, you have to discern the Lord's body. If you take the Lord's Supper and you don't understand, you don't discern the Lord's body, you, you're oblivious to the Lord's body, then you are unworthy, or at least you take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner. Well, you say,

“What do you mean, the Lord’s body? Do you mean the body that He lived in when He was on earth almost 2,000 years ago?” No, I don’t mean that body. I mean the body that He lives in right now, the body called Bellevue. Now just go right on to the next chapter, chapter 12 and look, if you will, in verses 12 and 13: “For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” Now there are many figures of speech that describe the church. The church is described as a building. The church is described as a bride. But the church is also described as a body. Christ is the head, and all of us corporately are members in that body to do His bidding. Now I want you to understand and discern the body called Bellevue because this is a significant occasion. Not only are we taking the Lord’s Supper, but we’re taking the Lord’s Supper for the last time in this building and getting ready for the greatest endeavor that I’ve ever known anything about in my ministry. And, indeed, if there were ever a people that needed to be one body, we are the people that need to be one body in the Lord Jesus Christ. Now there are three things I want you to notice as we think about the body called Bellevue and as we prepare our hearts for the Lord’s Supper.

I. The Function of the Body

First of all, the function of this body. Now look, if you will, in verse 12: “For as the body is one (this is 1 Corinthians 12:12), for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.” That means so also is the body of Christ. And then verse 13: “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body....” Now when you think of a body, the very first thing that you think of is this:

A. A Motivating Power

That body has to have a motivating power. That is, there has to be something that energizes and motivates and gives life to the body. Bellevue Church is not like the Kiwanis Club or it’s not like the Boy Scouts, or it’s not like the PTA or any other meeting, as good as they may be, any other organization. You see, a church is not an organization; it is an organism. That is, it has a motivating power. It has life. You see, the Holy Spirit is the life of this body. The Holy Spirit in me and the Holy Spirit in you makes us one body in Christ. You see, a body without a spirit is a corpse. And a spirit without a body is a ghost. But the Holy Spirit in us makes us a body powerful. We have that motivating power in our hearts and in our lives. Now if the Holy Spirit is not present, then we’re just an organization. But when the Holy Spirit is in us all, then we’re an organism.

B. A Ministering Purpose

Now the second thing. Not only must there be a motivating power; there must be a ministering purpose. What is the purpose of my body? My body only has a purpose in that it makes me known and expresses me and, and serves me. My body is to minister to me. My body is not me. My body is to minister to me and for me. My body is my servant. Somebody told me yesterday that you can tell when you're getting old when your body, when your mind makes contracts that your body can't fulfill. And, that may be true. But no body is to have plans of its own. A body that has plans of its own is out of control. It's dangerous. Sometimes bodies have spasms and things like that, and that's a problem. But, you see, the body is to take impulses from the head, and the head is the Lord Jesus. Bellevue Baptist Church may, must never, as I said this morning, get in the business of doing things for Jesus. We must always be available for Him to do things through us. Now, friend, that sounds so simple that it just goes in one ear and out the other, and you say, "Well, that's a little cliché that pastors say." No. Friend, that is so vital. That is so true. The body doesn't come and say to the head, "I'm going to do this and that." The body is available to the head.

C. A Mutual Program

All right. So there must be, there must be a motivating power, the Holy Spirit. There must be a ministering purpose. The body is to express the, the, the desire of the head. And then there must be a mutual program. Look in verse 14: "For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" You see, we have many members, but all of us are to have one agenda. A healthy body is coordinated. An unhealthy body is disorganized. Never ever be so unwise as to speak against organization. A body must have organs to function. Therefore, it is organized. And the Bible says, "God hath set every member in the body as it hath pleased Him." I was asking my grandchildren the other day, I said, "Wouldn't you like to have an eye on the end of your finger? Wouldn't that be neat? You could see who's coming behind you. You could look in your ear if you've got trouble in there. Stick your hand in your pocket and count your change. Look around the corner. Stick your finger through a knothole and watch a ballgame." Now that all, that all sounds good, but I'll tell you, dear friend, if you work much with your hands, you'd be glad that you don't have an eye on the end of your finger. God put everything just where He wants it in your body. He has set every member in the body as it has pleased Him, and we're to work together. Now, thank God through the ministry of Phil Weatherwax and Bob Sorrell and many of those who work on our committees, you'll never find a better organized church. I don't know of one on the face of the earth. Probably there is one, but I've never really in all of my ministry ever come up to a church that has the kind of an organization that we have here at Bellevue Church. Well,

you say, “I’m not so much aware of the organization.” And that’s wonderful, that’s wonderful. You see, the best organization is the kind of an organization that you’re not so aware of. Now, folks, an incredible amount happens around here. Do you ever wonder why it just happens? You watch that duck just gliding across the pond. You go under water and look. He’s paddling like crazy underneath the water. But on top he’s just gliding along. And so it is with the church. There are people in the woodwork or back behinds the scenes that are doing all of this work, and they are doing it in a way, the Bible says, that God is not the author of confusion. Everything is to be done decently and in order. Do you know what good organization is like? Good organization is like good digestion. When it’s working right, you never think about it. When it’s not working right, it’s the only thing you think about. Isn’t that right? See. And, you see, we are a body that is organized. And so, what is God saying? Here is a body that is to have a motivating power, the Holy Spirit. It is to have a ministering purpose. It is to serve the function of the head, whatever the head says for it to do. It is to have a mutual program. It is to be organized together. You see, one member of the body cannot function apart from the rest of the body. For example, what if we were to say to my hand, “My hand is so gifted, we’ll just cut it off and send it off on a missionary journey.” Wouldn’t that be ridiculous? You see, the hand cannot function unless it is a part of the body. The Bible never ever uses the word saint – not one time. It is always saints. The Bible says we are members one of another. You see, dear friend, if my ministry causes problems for your ministry, either I’m doing something wrong or you’re doing something wrong or we’re both doing something wrong. You see, a body is where the members of that body work together. Hear a plea from your pastor. Please, in the name of Jesus, let’s love one another and cooperate together, for we are one body in Christ. We are members one of another.

D. A Manifested Person

There’s a fourth thing I want you to see. Not only a mutual program, but a manifested person. Notice again verse 12: “For as the body is one and hath many members, and all members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ.” Now what’s He saying? He is saying that the church expresses the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you know Adrian Rogers? Well, you say, “Yes, I know you, Adrian.” I some of you have listened to me preach for seventeen years. You’ve heard me talk about everything from my dog Tawny to everything else. You know all about. And, of course, Tawny – well, I’d like to say she’s in heaven, but if ever a dog could go, she did, but you know all about me. You know all about me. But you know how you know me? Do you know how you know me? Through my body. That’s the only way you know me. You say, “Oh no, I know your spirit. I know your soul. I know the way you think.” How do you know how I think? ‘Cause my body told you. How do you know how I act? Because you see my body act.

The only thing you know about me is what my body says or what my body writes or what my body does. That's all you know about me. You cannot know me apart from my body. You say, "Well, I can read about you." But whoever wrote that wrote what he saw or heard or felt or discovered in my body. And, friend, I'm going to tell you something. The only thing this world will know about Jesus is what the world sees in His body, which is the church. The Bible says, "So is Christ." Do you know what we're here for? We are here as a church to show Jesus to Memphis, Tennessee and Jesus to this world. If the world looks at Bellevue Baptist Church and doesn't see Jesus, folks, we have failed. We are the body of Christ. And as a body, we are to manifest the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the invisible part of the visible Christian and the Christian is the visible part of the invisible Christ.

II. The Formation of the Body

Now that's the function of the body. Let's talk a little bit before we have the Lord's Supper about the formation of the body, for look, if you will, now in verses 13 and 14: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body (and, literally, the Greek language says, 'For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body), whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." How is the body of Christ formed? How do people get into the Bellevue body of Christ? You are placed into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. You are baptized into the body of Christ. "For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one body..." Now the word *baptize* means "to be placed into." When you baptize somebody in water, you place that person into that water. You immerse them and put them into that water. Now to be baptized into Jesus Christ is to be immersed or put into the mystical body of the Lord Jesus Christ. There's a lot of confusion today about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And some of our Pentecostal friends and charismatic friends teach that you can get saved at one time and then you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit at another time. Oh no. My dear friend, when you get saved, at that time you receive the baptism of the Spirit. "For by one Spirit have you all been baptized into one body..." Not some have and some haven't. We all have already been baptized by one Spirit into one body. Now if you don't get anything else straight tonight, let's get your theology straight in this last meeting we have here together. Who is the baptizer in the baptism of the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit Himself. "For by one Spirit have you all been baptized..." Who is baptized? The believer is baptized. Into what is he baptized? He is baptized into the body of Christ. And when is he baptized? He is baptized into the body of Christ when he got saved. Now water baptism doesn't save you, but believing on Christ saves you. And when you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, at that moment you're baptized into the body of Christ spiritually. And water baptism is only a symbol and an emblem of what

has happened when you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. You receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. Now let me tell you something. You will not find one verse in the Bible that ever commands a believer to be baptized with the Holy Ghost – not one. Why? Because he already has been. The command to believers in the New Testament is not to be baptized with the Holy Ghost, but to be filled with the Holy Ghost. Now you say, “What difference does it make?” Well, friend, if you work your theology out, it makes a tremendous amount of difference. You see, listen. When I am baptized by the Spirit, that means that my body belongs to Christ. Excuse me. Let me back it, back up and say that, that I belong to the body of Christ. When I am baptized by the Spirit, that means that I belong to the body of Christ. When I’m filled with the Spirit, that means that my body belongs to Him; that I have yielded everything to the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Fellowship of the Body

Now there’s a third thing I want to say and then we’re going to have the Lord’s Supper. I’ve talked to you about the function of the body. I have talked to you about the formation of the body. **Let me talk to you now about the fellowship of the body.** And that’s the important thing. This is what Paul was saying to these people at Corinth. They were trying to have the Lord’s Supper and they weren’t in fellowship with one another. They were carnal and there was divisions and, and spats and disunity and arguments. And Paul said, “Oh, listen. You’re taking the Lord’s Supper unworthily. You haven’t discerned the Lord’s body.” And then Paul talked to them about the function of the body, and he talked to them about the formation of the body, and then he ended it, talking to them about the fellowship of the body. And so I want you to notice when he talks about the fellowship of the body, beginning in verse 14: “For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye...” Wouldn’t that be ridiculous? - a great big eyeball up here preaching. “...where were the hearing?...” Of course, if I were an eyeball, all I could do is look you over. I couldn’t say anything. “If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary. And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have

more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one of another.” Now let me just say three things here and I want you to get it in your heart.

A. We Belong to One Another

Number one: According to verses 15 and 16, we belong to one another. The foot and the hand should never be in competition. No part of the body can function as it ought apart from the other. Now Paul talks here in verses, 15 and 16 about the foot and the hand. Do you see it there? He says, in verse 15: “If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?” Why would the foot say that? Well, in the first place, feet are not very beautiful. Hands, we think of hands as beautiful. People write poems about hands and talk about holding hands, and they put rings on hands and so forth. Hands, generally, are never covered, but feet are generally covered. Hands have an exalted place; feet have a lowly place. So Mr. Hand might say to Mr. Foot, “Hey, I don’t have any need of you.” But, dear friend, God has made every member of the body dependent upon one another, and we belong to one another. And if my hand wants to go anywhere, my feet have to take my hand there.

B. We Need One Another

We belong to one another and, therefore, we need one another. And that’s verses 17 through 24. I can’t say that I don’t need you, and you can’t say that you don’t need me. Do you know why God made us different? Do you know why God made some of us ears, some of us eyes, some of us noses, some of us hands, some of us feet, some of us heels? Do you know why did that? Ha, ha. Some of us heels. Do you know why God did that? God did that, God made us different (listen to me) that He might make us one. God has it all rigged, folks, that we cannot be lone ranger Christians. We need one another.

C. We Must Care for One Another

And then, therefore, because we belong to one another, because we need one another, then we must care for one another. And that’s verses 25 and 26. He makes is very, very plan there should be no schism in the body, “...but the members should have the same care one of another.” Do you know that you’re to minister to those people round about you and they’re to minister to you? The thing I don’t want in Bellevue Baptist Church, and please, God, never let it happen, that there be any arrogance, that there be any envy, that there be any rivalry, that there be any self-sufficiency, that there be any disunity.

Conclusion

Folks of Bellevue, listen to me. We are in this thing together. When we take the Lord's Supper, you know what we're saying? We're now the body of Jesus. And because He died for us, we're in it together. Let me give you three suggestions and I'm finished.

A. **Accept Yourself**

Number one: Accept yourself. Just accept yourself. God put you in the body, and whatever He put you in the body pleased Him. Now maybe you are not a shoulder to bear burdens. Maybe that's not the strength that you have. Maybe you're just an ear to listen. Maybe you're not an eye to spot trouble, but maybe you're a hand to help. Just accept whatever God made you to be. God brought you here and you have a function to fulfill, okay. Accept yourself.

B. **Be Yourself**

Number two: Just be yourself. Just relax. Don't try to imitate others. When I first started preaching, I, every preacher I heard I wanted to be just like him if he's a good preacher. And I'd try and preach like him. I'd try to preach like Billy Graham. And I'd try to preach like W. A. Criswell. And I'd try to preach like Hyman Appleman. And I'd try to preach like this one and that one. It finally dawned on me that all I could ever be would be a second-rate Billy Graham. But you know what I discovered? I could be the best Adrian Rogers there is. And, you see, that's what you can be.

C. **Give Yourself**

Just, dear friend, accept yourself and then be yourself. And then this last, last thing – give yourself, give yourself. You see, all of the parts of the body have to give to live. They have to give to live. The lungs give. They take, but they give. The heart gives. It takes, but it gives. Every part of the body is receiving and giving and receiving and giving. And that's why God put us together so that we might live for one another. We are members one of another. And learn to give yourself. Now when you are only a receiver and you don't become a transmitter, when a cell in your body in this body or any body becomes selfish, it becomes destructive and they call it cancer. It will soon destroy the body. And if you're only a receiver and you're not a giver, you're a cancer in the body of Christ. You're a selfish cell or a selfish part of this body. Now I come back to where I started from. The Bible says that when you take the Lord's Supper, don't do it unworthily. If you do, you'll bring judgment to yourself because you did not understand the Lord's body. And that's the reason, brothers and sisters in Christ, when we take this Lord's Supper tonight for the last time, we need to be just like this in Jesus, amen. Oh, if there's even a hint of a resentment, bury it in the grave of God's forgetfulness and be clean and pure and full of love. Let's pray together. Oh our God and our Father, I pray that as this body functions, that the live of the Lord Jesus will be seen, and the glory will

not go to the body but to the Lord Jesus who lives in this body. Lord God, I pray that You'll help each one of us to find our place and to function; to receive and to give as we ought in Your body. In the name of Jesus, amen.

Are You a Gifted Child?

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 7, 1985

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1

Outline

Introduction

I. The Description of the Gifts

- A. These Gifts Are Spiritual Gifts
- B. These Gifts Are Supernatural Gifts
- C. These Gifts Are Service Gifts
- D. These Gifts Are Sovereign Gifts
- E. These Gifts Are Salvation Gifts

II. The Diversity of the Gifts

Conclusion

Introduction

Don't you marvel at the giftedness of some people? I look at Jim Whitmire. You know, I've known Jim Whitmire since he was just a, a little boy, really. He was twenty-two-years old when I first started working with Jim Whitmire. And really, Jim, after all the preaching you've heard, you ought to be a better man than you are right now. But I've known Jim for a long time, and I've been just amazed at the gifts and the ability that he has. And not only the gifts and abilities that he has, but the way that he's able to find gifted people. I look at these musicians, and it's just a marvel to me that they can pick up these instruments and do what they do. And I, and I listen to the pianist and the organist, and I see so many people who are so gifted. They have so much talent. Sometimes if you look at people like that very long, it will give you a little bit of an inferiority complex. Have you ever felt like you were just kind of behind the door when the gifts were handed out, and, and, and somehow other people seemed to have talents and they seem to have abilities, and you can't even walk and chew bubble gum at the same time? And you just don't have any talents. You don't have any abilities at all. Well, dear friend, I want to tell you tonight that you are a gifted child. You are a gifted child. And I want to help you to understand what the Bible has to say about your spiritual gift. Now the Bible teaches that every one of us has a spiritual gift. That gift is of the Lord,

and we cannot afford to be ignorant of that gift. Look, if you will, here please in 1 Romans, excuse me, 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Did I tell you 1 Corinthians chapter 12? Well, then why is my Bible open to Romans chapter 12? All right. First Corinthians chapter 12, beginning in verse 1: “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.” And may I say, dear friend, that the Bible warns about ignorance concerning the Second Coming of Jesus. The Bible warns about ignorance concerning the devices of the devil. And the Bible warns about ignorance concerning spiritual gifts. And it seems to me that the average, modern congregation is saturated with ignorance in those three areas – ignorance concerning The Second Coming of Jesus, ignorance concerning spiritual warfare, and ignorance concerning spiritual gifts. Now the apostle Paul says we are not to be ignorant concerning spiritual gifts. As a matter of fact, in the Pastor’s Discovery Class, I teach all of those who come into the Discovery Class what they ought to know about spiritual gifts. And if you’re in that class, you may recognize some of what I’m saying tonight, because it is so very, very important that our members learn how, first of all, to discover their spiritual gift and then to develop their spiritual gift and then to deplore their spiritual gift. That is, to put that gift into action. Now we’re going to look at spiritual gifts tonight.

I. The Description of the Gifts

And, first of all, we want to understand just what are spiritual gifts. What does the Bible mean when it says spiritual gifts?

A. These Gifts Are Spiritual Gifts

Actually, in this passage of Scripture in 1 Corinthians 12:1 it literally says in the Greek language, “Now concerning the spirituals, brethren...” The word *gifts* is not there in this first verse. It’s just the pneumatica, the, the spirituals. It is concerning spiritual things. Have you ever heard it said that somebody is so heavenly minded they’re no earthly good? Well, that’s a cute little cliché. But, dear friend, I would turn it just around. Most of the people I know are so earthly minded, they’re no heavenly good. If I were to talk to you tonight about how to win a brand new Cadillac or a vacation home or to receive a gift like that, you’d be sitting on the edge of your seats. And some of you who are not even taking notes would begin to take notes. If I were to tell you how you could have a new swimming pool in your backyard, if you could have, retire at the age of forty, or some...you’d say, “Hey, if he really knows what he’s talking about, I want to listen, I want to listen.” We’re interested in the materials, aren’t we? But here he’s talking about the spirituals. He’s talking about the things that really matter. And don’t you let the devil keep you from discovering your riches in the Lord Jesus. The apostle Paul says, concerning these things, “...I would not have you ignorant.”

B. These Gifts Are Supernatural Gifts

Now what are these gifts? Well, number one: They're spiritual gifts. Number two: They are supernatural gifts. Look, if you will, here in verse 4. The Bible says, "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit." Now the word *gifts* here is a different word. Actually, the word *gifts* in verse 1 is italicized. It's not even there in the Scripture. It's just supplied by the translators to make it read more smoothly. But now here the word is printed. "Now there are diversities of gifts...." And now there's a different word used here, the word *charismata*. It's the word we get *charismatic* from. Have you ever heard the word *charismatic*? You say, "Well, that's a charismatic congregation," or, "That's a charismatic person," or "Here's a person who has a charismatic gift." Well, th, that's what he's saying here. There are differences of *charismata*. The word *charismata* means literally a grace gift. *Charis* is the Greek word for grace. And so these gifts are grace gifts. Now what that means is you can't earn them. You cannot attain them by yourself. It is something that God gives you. You see, grace is the supernatural work of God. Grace is not what you do for God. Grace is not an attainment. Grace is not an achievement. Grace is just simply a gift. God gives you your spiritual gift. It is a supernatural gift. Now gifts are to you spiritually what talents are to you naturally. When you were born, any talent you had was there in the genes and the chromosomes. It was there naturally. It was there innately. And you received it from your parents, and you were born with those talents. Now you had to discover those talents. Indeed, you have to develop those talents. Indeed, you have to put those talents to work. But you, you, dear friend, did not decide what talents you would have. Those talents were yours. You received them by your natural birth. Your spiritual gift you receive by your supernatural birth. What talents are to the natural man, spiritual gifts are to the saved person. Natural gifts come through a natural birth. Grace gifts come from a new birth. Now there's not a one of us here that does not have some natural talent. You may not yet have discovered yours, but you have one. And there's not a person here who does not have a supernatural gift from God if you're saved, if you're born again.

C. These Gifts Are Service Gifts

These gifts are spiritual gifts. These gifts are supernatural gifts. I want to say, thirdly, that these gifts are service gifts. Look, if you will, in verse 7: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal." Now what does that mean? Well, in plain English it means this: That God gave you your spiritual gift to make you a blessing to other people. You know one of the problems with us so many times? People want a spiritual gift, and they want to use that spiritual gift as a toy. These gifts are not toys. They're tools. They are not used for your own personal edification primarily, but they are given to help you serve one another. When the Bible says, "The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," it means to profit all around us, everybody

around us. God, if God has given me a gift, God has given me that gift to be a blessing to you. It's not just a matter to make you feel good. It's not just a matter to give you excitement. Your gift is given to you not for enjoyment; it is given to you for employment. It is not even an evidence that you have been filled with the Holy Spirit. You can have a spiritual gift and not be spiritually filled. You can have a spiritual gift and be carnal. As a matter of fact, this church, the Corinthian church, was a very carnal church. I hear people say, "Oh, we need to be like the New Testament churches." Well, friend, I hope our church is not like this one. There was strife and division and envy and rancor and immorality and all kinds of things in this church, and yet Paul said they came behind in no gift. You can even be carnal and have a spiritual gift. As a matter of fact, if you're a carnal Christian, if you're any kind of a Christian, you do have a spiritual gift. And so, the gift is not there as evidence; it is there as, as equipment. It's not evidence that you've been that you're right with God. It is your equipment to get the job done for the Lord Jesus Christ.

D. These Gifts Are Sovereign Gifts

Now the next thing I want you to notice about these gifts is that these gifts are sovereign gifts. Look, if you will, in verse 11 now. We're in chapter 1 Corinthians 12:11. "But all these worketh that self, that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally, or individually, as he will." Now what does that mean? Well, it means that the Holy Spirit of God decides what spiritual gift you're going to have. That one Holy Spirit of God....There's only one Holy Spirit. There are many members in the church. And that one Holy Spirit says, "This man shall have this gift. That lady shall have that gift. This young man shall have that gift. This deacon shall have that gift," and He just divides the gifts up that way. He divides the gifts as He will, not as you will. Now you cannot choose your spiritual gift anymore than you could choose your natural talent. You couldn't choose musical talent, for example. Either you have it or you don't. You couldn't choose athletic prowess. Either you have it or you don't. I mean, look, folks. There are some people who are just naturally going to be coordinated and some folks who are naturally not going to be coordinated. Now you can take an uncoordinated person and make him more coordinated than he was by practice, but you'll never make a world class athlete out of him. And, and you might go to the spa and work out, but, friend, if your natural physique is like a Coke bottle, there's not a lot that you're going to do about it. I don't care how much you work out. You can, you can be a little better, but it's all down there in the genes and the chromosomes, and it was decided when you were born. And God sovereignly decided what you were going to be like naturally. I mean, you are the way that God designed you naturally. You're also the way that God designed you supernaturally. And these gifts God has given to you and they are sovereign gifts. You do not choose the spiritual gift that you will have. God Almighty has already chosen it for

you. It is a sovereign gift given by the sovereign Spirit of God who gives to everyone individually as He decides what gift they shall have.

E. These Gifts Are Salvation Gifts

Now the next thing I want you to notice about these gifts is that they are salvation gifts. When did you get your gift? Well, when did you get your natural gifts? Your natural gifts came with your natural conception and your natural birth. When do you get your supernatural gifts? When you're born again. At the moment of salvation you receive your supernatural gift. I want you to look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians 12 and look in verses 12 and following. He goes on to say, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ (that is, so also is the body of Christ). For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into that one Spirit, for the body is not one member, but many." Now what does that mean? Well, listen. When you got saved, you were baptized into the body of Jesus Christ. Now we're going to baptize a number of people tonight, but what we do is water baptism. Water baptism does not put you into Jesus Christ. Spirit baptism puts you into Jesus Christ. Now, friend, water, a spoonful or a tankful, can't put you into Jesus Christ. It is the Holy Spirit that puts you into Jesus Christ. "For by one Spirit have we all been placed into the body of Christ..." That is the supernatural work that puts you into the body of Christ. Now when does the Holy Spirit put you into the body of Christ? When you are saved. Now notice what the Scripture says there. It says, "For by one Spirit have we ALL, all been baptized into the body of Christ..." Now our charismatic friends (I'm using the word according to common usage) say that you can get saved at one time and then later on down here you receive the baptism. No! My dear friend, if you are saved, you have been baptized into the body of Christ. You have been baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, for the Bible le, makes no exception. "For by one Spirit have ye all (not some, but all) been baptized into the body of Christ..." When you ask Christ to come into your heart, when you repented of your sin and trusted Jesus, God's Holy Spirit came into you and that Holy Spirit put you into Christ. We drink into that Spirit, and we are baptized into that body when we receive Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. And when you are baptized into the body of Christ, when you are put into the body of Christ, you're put into the body of Christ to do a certain function. Now the body is one body, but it has many members. And the members of my body have different functions. My eye does one thing. My ears do one thing. My tongue does one thing. My esophagus does something else. My toes do something else. I have all these different members, and they're all part of one body. Now these members were a part of my body through my birth. Now, my dear friend, listen. When the Holy Spirit puts you into the body of Christ, He puts you into the body

of Christ to do a particular function in the body of Christ. Now He put me in the body of Christ to do one thing. He put you in the body of Christ to do something else. He just placed you when you were saved into the body of Christ. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, when you're put in the body of Christ, takes place when you are saved. And so, if anybody asks you, "Do you have the baptism of the Holy Ghost?" if you're saved, you ought to say, "Yes, I do." Did you know (now you listen to me, friends, because if you don't listen, you're going to get confused by a lot of preaching and, and things that are on television and radio). There are people telling you that you need to seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost. I challenge anybody, here or anywhere else, to show me one verse of Scripture that says that a Christian ought to seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost. Show me one verse. You won't find it. The Bible says, "For by one baptism, for, for by one Spirit have ye all been baptized..." Sure, Jesus prophesied that that would happen. It happened on the Day of Pentecost. And now, my dear friends, since it has happened, since we have been, the, the baptism of the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, and that, that infant church was born there. And since that time, every person who repents of their sin and trusts Christ as his personal Savior is baptized into the body of Christ. Your spiritual gift is a birthday gift. When you were born again, the Holy Spirit came into you, and that Holy Spirit put you into Jesus. When the Holy Spirit came into you, He came in with a birthday gift. And when He put you into Jesus, He put you into Jesus to do a particular function. And the function that He put you into Jesus to do corresponds to your spiritual gift.

II. The Diversity of the Gifts

Now let's think not only about the description of the gifts, but let's think about the diversity of the gifts, because right now you're saying, "Well, if I have a gift, what is my gift, because I don't have the foggiest, pastor, as to what it may be." Well, there are many, many gifts. As a matter of fact, and I'm going to give you two lists that total fifteen gifts right now, and I want you to listen very carefully because we just may find your gift right now. Look in 1 Corinthians 12:4: "Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." Now God didn't give us all the same gift, and I'm delighted that God didn't give us all the same gift. Do you know why God didn't give us all the same gift? Because, my dear friend, we need one another. And God made us different that He might make us one. God made me where I can't function without you as I ought, and God made you where you can't function as you ought without me. And so many times we have people today who are trying to make us the same. God doesn't want us to be the same. He wants us to be one, but He wants us to be different. He made us different that we might be one. It is our differences that

bring us together and make us depend one upon another. And so, he says here that there are diversities of gifts. I have one gift. You have another gift. But the Holy Spirit that's in me is the Holy Spirit that's in you – the same Spirit. There are differences of operation, but it is the same Lord. “There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all.” And, by the way, here is a marvelous illustration of the Holy Trinity – the same Spirit, the same Lord, the same God. There is God the Holy Spirit, God the Son, and God the Father. Now what are some of these spiritual gifts? Well, first of all, look in verse 8: “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom...” Now maybe the word of wisdom is your spiritual gift. What a wonderful gift that is. Did you know that God has given some people supernatural wisdom, and God just gave it to them? They didn't, they did, they don't have wisdom because they've gone to school. Have you ever seen a person educated beyond his intelligence? A lot of people are. I mean, they have a degree, but, folks, I tell you, I'd just as soon go get advice from a doorknob as get advice from some. I, I'm not putting down education. I believe a person ought to study. But I am not talking to you about education. I am talking to you about wisdom that is supernatural that comes from God. As a matter of fact, there is a, there is a, an earthly wisdom that the Bible calls sensual and devilish. Well, you say, “Oh, I know what wisdom is. Yeah, I know lots of folks who have that. That's common sense.” No, that's not wisdom, friend. What I'm talking about is uncommon sense. What is wisdom? Wisdom is a penetrating insight into the ways and the will of God. Some people have it. And if those people have that wisdom and you have a problem, find one of those people and counsel with them, because they can tell you the ways of God. They have an insight into the things of God. It is not because they have figured it out, but because they have supernatural wisdom. It is a gift from God. Maybe that is your gift. If it is, thank God for it and prize it. Now there's another gift here mentioned in verse 8, and that is a word of knowledge. Now, again, this does not come by education. This does not mean that you're able to memorize facts. Thank God for that if you can do this, but this is God giving you knowledge, God giving you the ability to know and understand things that you could not know, that you could not understand except God revealed it to you supernaturally; that God just gives you knowledge. And you, there's no way to say how you know what you know. You just know it. It is a revelation from God. It doesn't mean you know everything. It literally says here “a word of knowledge.” It doesn't mean you have all knowledge. You'd be omniscient. You'd be like God. But you have a word of knowledge. Just like you go to a lawyer and you get a point of law. God gives you a word of knowledge. I've had this happen to me on some occasions, and I really don't even understand it. I don't think I have the gift of knowledge, but I can remember certain times in my life where God just showed me something. I don't know how I knew it. I just knew it. I can remember one time preaching in a revival crusade in Georgia. And in the

middle of my sermon, a man came down the aisle and tapped a man sitting on the aisle, right about there, on the shoulder and said, "Come." The man who was sitting there was the sheriff. Right in the middle of my sermon I felt impressed to say this, "There goes the sheriff. There's been an accident, or most likely been an accident, I think." I qualified it. "Somebody has been killed. Alcohol has been involved." I didn't intend to say that. It was a silly thing for me to say. Why should I say that? How did I know what happened? What impelled me to say that? I don't even know. The man went out. He was an unsaved man. That night at about 11:00 he came to the motel where I was, knocked on the door, had to see me. He wanted to be saved. There had been an accident. An automobile had hit a logging truck head on. There was a broken whiskey bottle in the automobile. The man in the automobile was killed, and the man in the automobile was the man that ran against this other man for sheriff of that county. It so startled him and so moved him. He said, "I don't know how you knew that," but he said, "I know one thing. I need to be saved and I need to be saved tonight." Now I don't, that's, that's not a common occurrence with me, but that was a gift, an insight into what the gift of knowledge is. How did Simon Peter know on that particular day when Ananias and Sapphira came in and pretended that they gave so much money to the church? And, and Peter said, "You've lied! You've lied to God! You've lied to the Holy Spirit!" How did Peter know that? God told him. He had a word of knowledge. Now let me tell you there's another gift, and that's the gift of faith. "...to another faith by the same Spirit..." Now what is the gift of faith? Now this is not ordinary faith. All of us have ordinary knowledge. All of us have ordinary wisdom. All of us have ordinary gifts like this. But what is the gift of faith? We have ordinary faith. You couldn't have faith, you couldn't be a Christian without having, having faith. As a matter of fact, the Bible says, "God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith..." But what is the gift of faith? Well, if you'll study a text with its context, you'll find out that there is sort of a, a gift of faith. For example, Paul mentions it there in the next chapter, the love chapter, where he says, "Though I have faith so that I could remove mountains..." Hum. That's the kind of faith He's talking about, in the same context. He's talking about mountain-moving faith. Now some people have that kind of faith. Have you seen people, have you known people who are just able to believe God supernaturally for things? I mean, they just seem to know how to trust God. And you wish that you could have that kind of faith. Now all of us have some faith, and all of us can develop faith, but, folks, I want to tell you there are people who are gifted of God in the area of faith. It's a charismatic gift from God to have that kind of mountain-moving faith. George Mueller of Bristol, England was that kind of a man. You can read the biography of Mueller. Mueller was a man who knew how to believe God. He ran an orphanage where he raised literally millions of dollars to feed little children, never one time asking for money. It is not wrong to ask for money. It is not wrong to make needs

known. As a matter of fact, many times in the Scripture we see the example where we should do that. But God told this particular man not to do it. That was God's instructions to George Mueller. He said never ask. And without his asking, God sent millions of dollars in to feed those orphans. He was a man who just knew how to believe God and take God at His Word. I was reading a story about George Mueller. It's an interesting story to me. He was on a ship one time going to preach. And the ship stopped in the middle of the ocean. And so, Mueller went to the captain and said, "Why is the ship stopped?" And the captain said, "We've had to stop the ship because of the fog. It's unsafe to proceed until the fog lifts." Mueller said, "The ship must proceed." He said, "I have a speaking engagement. God has called me to preach at a particular place and I must be there." The captain said, "Well, I'm sorry. Whether God called you or not, I cannot move the ship until the fog is lifted." He said, "Very well. Let's go into the chart room and ask God to take away the fog." That's what Mueller said to the captain. Well, the captain thought he would humor the old man. Knowing the ways of the sea and the ways of the fog, he certainly didn't expect it to happen. But he went in there with George Mueller. Later on, the captain himself told this story. He said, "Mueller got down on his knees and he prayed a prayer so simply that a little child might have prayed it. It was something like this: 'Now, Father, You know that I'm supposed to speak at thus and such a place. And, Father, You know that the captain says that he will not move the ship until the fog is lifted. Now, Father, You're able to take away the fog. So, Father, I ask You to take away the fog, and I thank You for taking away the fog. Praise Your name, amen.'" Well, the captain said he started to pray, and Mueller said to him, "Never mind. Don't pray." The captain said, "Why not?" He said, "For two reasons." He said, "Number one," he said, "you don't believe He'll do it. Number two, He's already done it." And the captain said he got up and went out and looked and the fog was gone. Now, friend, I don't have that kind of faith. I wish I did. But, very frankly, I don't incriminate myself because I don't have that kind of faith. There, that, the, God gives that faith to some kind of people. And if God has given you that kind of faith, thank Him for it. It is a gift from Almighty God. Now let's go on down through this list of gifts. There's the gifts of healings. Look, if you will, in verse 9: "To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing." Notice it is not the gift, but the gifts – plural – the gifts of healing. That is, God does anoint some people to heal. "Pastor, do you believe in supernatural healing?" Yes! "Pastor, do you believe that some have the gifts of healing?" I do. "Pastor, do you believe that thus and such an evangelist has the gift of healing?" God has given me permission not to answer you.

I believe there are a lot of fakes. I believe there are a lot of quacks. I believe there are a lot of charlatans. But if I can read black print on white paper, there are gifts of healings. God gives some people that gift. And I'm not talking about medicine. I'm not

talking about doctors. I believe in medicine. I believe in doctors. Jesus Christ Himself said, "They that are whole need not a physician, but they that are sick." I believe that God heals by medicine. I believe that God uses hospitals. God uses doctors. I thank God for them. But, friend, you can have a medical degree and not have the gifts of healings. But there are people that are gifted of God. Now God heals without healers. He heals in answer to prayer. He heals instantaneously. He heals in time. He heals naturally. He heals supernaturally. He heals through healers, and He heals without healers. He uses doctors, and sometimes He heals without doctors. But listen, friend. Don't you develop a doctrine or develop it very carefully if you develop a doctrine of what God will not do. Don't say, "Oh, God won't do that." God just may surprise you as to what He'll do. One of these days you may want God to heal you. So don't go around talking about what God won't do, because God is God and God can just do anything He wants without our permission, amen? He certainly can. And there are gifts of healings. And God has gifted some people in the past and for all I know right now. I do not know anybody, frankly, that I think has this gift, but I will not deny that some may have it, and I would to God that God would put somebody in our congregation who has this gift. But if you think you have it, I'm going to look you over real good. All right. Now there are gifts of miracles. Look, if you will, in verse 10: "To another the working of miracles..." Now God enables some people to work supernatural miracles. These are gifts of God. "You mean miracles like Bible-time miracles? Of course! Yes! Well, you say, "The age of miracles is past." I'll say the burden of proof is on you, my friend. I don't believe the age of miracles has past. I believe every time God answers prayer, in a sense you could call that a miracle, because the supernatural is moving into the natural. But I want to say this about miracles: Be careful, less you have a miracle mentality. Be careful, less you become a miracle monger. In the Bible, miracles generally came in clusters. When God was inaugurating a new age, there were miracles, of course, around the creation. There were miracles around the exodus. There were miracles around the ministry of Elijah and Elisha. There were minicle, miracles around the ministry of our dear Lord as He began His ministry. There were miracles clustered around the ministry of the apostles. But there were long period of time where there was no open vision. There were long periods of time where God did not ordain to move in miracles. For all, for all I know, these last days, if indeed we're living in the last days, may be marked by miracles. But there are people, there are people who say, "Oh, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could just have some miracles to happen at Bellevue Baptist Church." Well, it might be wonderful. I don't know that it would be wonderful. I know this: that there are a lot of people who get excited about miracles who don't get excited about souls being saved. I mean, for example, if I were to come down here tonight and I had the ability to heal or to perform a miracle, and somebody came down here and got healed, did you know that the word

would go all over this city, and there'd be a lot of people down here next Sunday because someone got healed or thought they got healed? Did you know that? Because there are people who are far more interested in the material than they are the spiritual. They're far more interested in the physical than they are the supernatural. And there are people who are miracle mongers. The Bible said there were those who followed Jesus when they saw the miracles that He did. You read it in John 10. But the Bible says, "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, for He knew man and needed not that any should testify what was in man." Again, the Bible says "There were many who followed Him because of the miracles of the loaves," there in the book of John. But when Jesus Christ began to talk to these people about the deeper spiritual truths about eating His flesh and drinking His blood, about believing Him and following Him, these same people who saw those miracles left Jesus like rats leaving a sinking ship. He had to turn to His disciples and say, "Will you also go away?" But what I'm telling you this, my dear friend, is what you catch them with is what you have to keep them with. Isn't that true? And, and people who come because of miracles – they want a miracle a day. You know, a miracle a day keeps the devil away. Let me tell you something, friend, let me tell you something. You read in the 10th chapter of John one of the greatest tributes ever written about a man. The Bible says about John the Baptist that John did no miracles. And do you know what Jesus said about John? "There's never a greater born than John the Baptist." That's what Jesus said. "Not a greater born of woman than John the Baptist." And yet the Bible says John did no miracles. But then the Bible says in the last part of John chapter 10, "...but many believed on Jesus through his word." Isn't that beautiful? I'll tell you this, and God in heaven knows it: I had rather have the ability to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ so people would get saved than to have the ability to lay hands on the sick so they would recover. I mean that with all of my heart. To bring souls to Jesus Christ. John performed no miracles, but many believed on Him through his word. And Jesus said there was not a greater born than John the Baptist. But I want to tell you, my dear friend, there are the gifts of miracles, the charismatic gifts of miracles. Now we must hurry because I'm just going to get through this list and then we'll stop right here. There are gifts of healings. There are gifts of miracles. There is the gift of prophecy. Look to another in, in verse 10: "To another the prophecy..." What is prophecy? Prophecy is the ability to speak for God. Prophecy includes foretelling. A prophet can sometimes see the future. And it includes forthtelling. It is the ability to declare the Word of God with unction and power. Now this gift is a very important gift, and so God describes it a little more over here in the next chapter if you'll turn to the next chapter for just a moment here and look, if you will, in chapter 14:3: "He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification and to exhortation and comfort." Now, you want to know what a prophet does. Here is the result of a prophet's ministry. Edification,

exhortation, and comfort. Now there's an entire chapter, the fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is given to show why, why prophecy is more needful than speaking in tongues. And entire chapter is given to show where prophecy is superior to speaking in tongues. That's what the fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is in the Bible about. And he describes what prophecy is. "He that speaketh unto men unto men unto prop, pro, in prophecy speaketh unto men unto edification, exhortation, and comfort." Do you know what prophecy does? It does three things. Edification means it builds you up. Exhortation means it fires you up. Comfort means it shores you up, it holds you up. And, folks, that's what people need. People need to be built up. They need to be fired up. They need to be shored up and strengthened in the faith. That is a gift that is greatly needed. It is one of the speaking gifts, the ability to build people up, to fire people up, to shore people up in the Word of God. What a gift is the gift of prophecy. And oh, would to God that He would give many of us the gift of prophecy, or has already given it, and would send those into our church who have that gift. Now there's another gift here, and we're almost finished now. The discerning of spirits. Look, if you will, go back to chapter 12 and verse 10. Look at it again. "...to another the discerning of spirits..." Now what he's talking about here are demon spirits and angel spirits. You see, there's a great world of spiritual hosts. There are good angels and fallen angels. There are holy spirits – not the Holy Spirit, but spirits that are holy and spirits that are unholy. There, there, there a warfare in the heavenlies. And I'll tell you, the devil is so clever. Listen to me. The devil is so clever. The Bible says, "If it were possible, he would deceive the very elect." Many of you would not know whether something that is a manifestation, a spiritual manifestation would be of God or of the devil. The devil is so clever that there are some demon spirits whose name is Jesus, did you know that? The name of those demon spirits is Jesus. You read it there in 2 Corinthians 11. There is another Jesus. There is another spirit, an unholy spirit. That's the reason the Bible says, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, test the spirits, whether they are of God." And how we thank God that God has given some people the ability to know not only the hand of God, but the hand of the enemy, and not to have their veil of darkness pulled over their face. This discerning of spirits. We need to learn, dear friend, that demons are masters of deception, and that not all that is spiritual is good. Now getting down to the end of the list is the gift of tongues. And he says, "...to another divers kinds of tongues..." The word tongue is *glwssn*. It's the word we get our word glossalalia from, and it means a language, a foreign language, a language having never learned. It is a grace gift that God supernaturally enables you to speak a language that you've never spoken before. This is not to be used in the prayer closet as some think. He's talking here about service gifts, public gifts that are used for the edification and the blessing and the conviction of others. The Bible says, "Tongues are not for a sign to him that believes (in 1 Corinthians

14), but to him that believes not." God supernaturally enables some people to speak in languages they've never learned. The gift of tongues is not some gibberish. It is not some nonsensical sound. It is a known, learned language given as a sign to unbelievers. I am convinced that 99 44/100% of what comes on the scene today called tongues is not the biblical gift of tongues, not at all. That is not to say there is not a biblical gift. We'll spend some time on that later on. But let me just simply say, dear friend, that if you have this gift, it will be the ability for you to speak supernaturally in a language that you've never learned, but anybody who knows that language will be able to recognize it right away. And then, last of all, at least last for tonight, the last gift that I want to mention tonight is the interpretation of tongues. Now let's suppose that God gave me the gift of tongues. And let's suppose here that that choir from Sagamore Hills, let's suppose that they are not from Sagamore Hills; let's suppose they're from Russia. And let's suppose they've come over here on a Russian airplane and they are visiting the United States, and, and that airplane lands at, at Memphis International Airport. And the guide says, "All right, we're going to show you a little phenomenon. We're going to show you the superstition of the Mid-south. We're going to take you to one of those fundamentalist churches you've been reading about. And you're going to go down there and see how crazy those people are. We'll sit up in the balcony. They'll rope off a place. They'll be glad to have the Russians there." And so, the Russians come in and they sit down. And I don't know Russian. I've never spoken Russian. But I stand up. And when I greet the people and the Russians are here, I begin to praise God in fluent, beautiful Russian, and give God the glory and the praise. They're going to say, "Where did you learn to speak Russian that way?" I never learned it. I've never spoken Russian before naturally in my life. That is of God, and I speak Russian because God enabled me to speak it. And the illustration would be all the better if they were Russian Jews, because the sign is given primarily to the Jews. Well, suppose I stood up here and spoken Russian. Do you know Russian? Do you know Russian? How about you, Mary? All right, now. Mary, I thought you knew Russian. All right, now, listen. Suppose I'm up here welcoming the Russians and praising God in Russian, and you don't know Russian. So what's happening? You're sitting in the dark, right? As far as you're concerned, it's just, you don't know what's going on. Well, therefore, if that gift is exercised, then God's got to give somebody else another gift. What? The interpretation of tongues. And so, Phil has to have the interpretation of tongues. He has to stand up here and say, "This is what the Pastor said." Now the Russians understand and now you understand also, you see. So nobody is sitting in the dark. Any time you're in a service and somebody is sitting in the dark, God didn't engineer that, dear friend. The Bible says everybody is to know. It is to be done to edify the body. And you're in a service and somebody stands up and starts to say, "Abba, dabba, do," and nobody else knows what's going on, dear

friend, you read in the Bible. The Bible says, “God is not the author of confusion.” He’s not the author of confusion. That’s not the way God works. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit the entire body. And tongues are not for a sign to them that believe, but to them that believe not, those folks from Sagamore.

Conclusion

Now listen, folks. Let me tell you we need to understand that God has given to every one of us a spiritual gift. You say, “Well, Pastor, you didn’t even get close to mine tonight.” There’s another list in Romans 12. Next Sunday night, if the rapture hasn’t come, we’ll take up there. Perhaps your gift is in that list. Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Father, I pray in the name of Jesus that you’ll help us, Lord, to understand Your Word clearly. And, Lord, to understand the gift that you’ve given us. And, Lord, to take our gift and put it into service for your glory. In the name of Jesus, amen.

The Distortion of Spiritual Gifts, Part 1

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 21, 1985

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1

Outline

Introduction

- I. Spiritual Gifts and Spirituality Are Not Necessarily Synonymous
- II. If You Have a Spiritual Gift, That Spiritual Gift Is Going to Operate Under Your Control
- III. The Holy Spirit Always Honors the Lordship of Christ
- IV. You Don't Decide What Spiritual Gift You Will Have
 - A. God Gives Spiritual Gifts for Cooperation
 - B. God Gives Spiritual Gifts for Coordination
 - C. God Gives Spiritual Gifts for Compassion

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, I want you to take your Bibles, if you will, and open to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Then look up here when you find it. Now I have a dream. I have a dream concerning our buildings out at Canaan. I've looked at the plans. I've looked at the land. I've walked over it. I've prayed over it. I've wept over it. And I can see in my mind's eye that building right now. I can see all of us in it together praising the Lord. I can see souls, hundreds of them, thousands of them, coming to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. I can see the shekinah glory of God in that building and just blessing us together as we meet together, brother and sister, friend and friend, pastor and people, and I have a vision. But I have a greater vision than that. And the vision that I have that is greater than that is not primarily the land, not primarily the building, but the people. That vision deals with each of you. And my vision is that one day we're going to have a church where most of the people have discovered their spiritual gift. But not only have discovered their spiritual gift, but have found a place to put it into service. Now, choir, you'll have to admit that's an impressive sight looking that way, isn't it? It really is. Now when I stand

up here Sunday by Sunday, not only one time, but four times, and look at those people, sometimes my heart almost jumps out of my throat, and I think, *Oh my God, what uncapped power there is out there*. When these people learn that Christianity is not a spectator sport, but when they somehow understand that God has placed every one of them in the body as it has pleased Him, and that God has a ministry for every person here tonight who knows and loves Jesus. Wouldn't it be wonderful if everybody of this body could discover that spiritual gift that God has given them and also have a place in the body to exercise that spiritual gift? What a blessing, folks, that's going to be. And when that happens, I'll tell you this church will rise up like a mighty army and make an impact upon this city, and I daresay, make an impact upon the world. Now I said tonight I'm going to be speaking on the subject of spiritual gifts, and really on the distortion of spiritual gifts, because everything good, great, and holy that God does the devil distorts, defiles, and counterfeits. And, ah, as I looked at my notes and the things that I had to say, I have done something tonight....I'm getting a, kind of a feedback there.....I've done something tonight that I frequently do. I've overprepared. I've got far more material than I'll be able to share with you tonight. So I tell you, folks, no matter when it is, when the times comes, I'll just quit, okay. But I'm going to go as far as I can. And we may not even really get down deep to the matter of the distortion of spiritual gifts because I do so want to get the platform laid. There are certain principles that I want you to understand.

I. Spiritual Gifts and Spirituality Are Not Necessarily Synonymous

Now the first principle I want you to understand is this: that spiritual gifts and spirituality are not necessarily synonymous. Spiritual gifts and spiritual people are not necessarily linked together. Now look, if you will, in chapter 12:1: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." Now look at your Bible very carefully and you're going to see that the word gifts is italicized if you have the King James Version of the Bible. And really what it says is "Now concerning the spirituals or the spiritualities..." The word is *pneumatica*. And, ah, it, it has to do with the spirit or breath. Pneumonia is what? A breathing disease. A pneumatic tire is one that has air in it. And, and wind and air is the Bible word for the Spirit of God, the breath of God. And he's here talking about the pneumatica. In verse 1 he's not talking about spiritual gifts per say; he's just talking about spiritual matters. He's saying, "Now, brethren, concerning the spiritual matters." Because you know what he's been talking about up until now? He's not been talking about the spiritualities; he's been talking about the carnalities. For eleven chapters he has been talking to this church about their carnality. Now I hear people say every now and then, "Oh, we need to have a New Testament church." Well, be careful when you say that. You need to specify the church. If you say, "We want a New Testament church," you ought to say, "Well, a church like the Philadelphian church or the church

like the Ephesian church.” Or I suppose, what do you think Paul’s favorite church was? Probably the Philippian church. He said, “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you...” That was a church that just brought me great joy. I don’t think he’d thank God upon every remembrance of the Corinthian church. I’ll tell you what, folks, this church was as carnal as a church can be. Now I want to show you something very interesting. Would you turn with me to 1 Corinthians 1. Now just put your bookmark there in 1 Corinthians 12, but go back with me in chapter 1. And I want you to look at something here very interesting. Look in verse 7. Paul says to this church, “So that ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Now, folks, here was a church that was saturated with spiritual gifts, knowledge of spiritual gifts. They weren’t standing behind anybody when it came to the matter of spiritual gifts. “You come behind,” he says here, “in no gift.” That is, you’re just out ahead in the matter of spiritual gifts. This was, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, a church that understood much about spiritual gifts and made much about spiritual gifts. So, you say, “Well, if they had spiritual gifts being manifested in the congregation, they must have been a very spiritual people.” They were not! They were a very carnal people. I want you to take time tonight just to see how carnal they were. Look at the division in the church, chapter 1:10: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment.” Here was a church that had divisions. And with the divisions there came contentions. It wasn’t just that they had a difference of opinion. They were actually at one another’s throats. Verse 11: “For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them that, which, which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you.” They were divided. They were contentious. Now they were not spiritual at all. Look in chapter 3:1: “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.” Now if you’ll put this verse with chapter 1:7 and chapter 3:1, you’ll find out that a person can have spiritual gifts and be a pass master in spiritual gifts and not be spiritual, you see. Paul said, “I couldn’t speak to you as unto spiritual. You’re a carnal church!” And yet he said to this church, “You come behind in no gift.” There were divisions among them. There were contentions among them. They were not spiritual. He says in chapter 3:1 they were like little babies. He says in chapter 3:3 they were carnal. “For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?” Look in chapter 4:14. It’s in almost every chapter. “I write these things to you, I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.” Now here they’re having to be warned. Ah, and, and verse 15 Paul has to defend his apostleship. They didn’t even have enough spiritual un, unction and gumption to recognize the greatest of all of the apostles. For he says, “For though

ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be followers of me." Here was the mighty apostle, had to tell this hard-headed church, "Follow me!" He had to tell them later on, "If any of you think that you're spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I say to you is the Word of God." But then he had to go on and say, "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." Here was a mulish, stubborn church. Didn't even have enough sense to recognize the mighty apostle Paul. And all through this book and the next book, 2 Corinthians, he has to defend his apostleship before them. And then, look in chapter 5:1. I, I, I blush to even read this. He said, "It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife." Now here was a man who was living in an incestuous relationship with his father's wife. That is, he was committing, evidently it was his step-mother. And he, a member of the church, was committing fornication with his father's wife. Well, what do you think? You'd think the church would be on their face weeping before God and, and crying out before God about the terrible, horrible sin in their midst. Oh no. They were proud of their tolerance. Verse 2: "And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you." They, they were kind of proud about it. They, they thought, *Well, we're certainly a broadminded congregation.* And so there was open, flagrant immorality and it was joined with pride. Look in chapter 6:1. Here was a church were brother was suing brother at law. They were going to law against one another and before pagan judges. He says in verse, chapter 6:1: "Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?" And, ah, verse 6: "But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another..." What a terrible thing they were doing. And if you think that was bad, go on down to chapter, ah, 6:15. There at Corinth, and some of you have been to Corinth, as I have, there at a Corinth was a mountain called the Acrocorinthus. And up on the top of that mountain was a temple to a goddess of sex. And up there were prostitutes. And those people who worshipped the goddess of sex would go up into that temple and have, ah, sexual intercourse in order to worship the god of fertility or the goddess of fertility. It was right there at Corinth. You can go today and see that mountain, that Acrocorinthus. You can go to the ruins of Corinth. Some of these people had, had, had, were so close to paganism that evidently they were still doing that. And, and so, ah, Paul has to warn them about that. And he says in verse 15: "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I take then the members of Christ and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? Know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? For two, said he, shall be one flesh." And so he has to warn them

against the terrible immorality, ah, with the temple prostitutes there. Then in chapter 8:1-2 you'll find then that they are abusing their liberties that they have in Christ. "Now as touching things offered to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. But knowledge puffeth up, charity (or love) edifieth. If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing as he ought to know." They were talking about their liberties in Christ, but they had turned their liberties into license. And then, again, in chapter 9:1, again Paul has to defend his apostleship. "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord?" It, it's, I, my heart just breaks for the apostle Paul before this carnal church, that the apostle Paul had to stand up and defend himself and defend his apostleship before these ungodly, carnal people. Then again in chapter 10 he gives them a warning, a solemn warning. Verse 1: "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that our fathers, ah, were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea," and so forth. And then, ah, verse 5: "But with many of them God was not well please: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them..." And so, ah, as God judged ancient Israel in the wilderness, the apostle Paul says, "Oh listen, listen. God is going to judge you if you don't get right. If you don't repent, God is going to judge you." And in the rest of the chapter he, he tells how they were trying to drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils at the same time. And it, it's, it's a terrible situation there in chapter 10 of which he warns them. And then in chapter 11 it seems to gets worse. In chapter 11:21 he scolds them for getting drunk at the Lord's Table. I mean, taking the, the holy communion. "For in eating every one taketh before his own brother: and one is hungry, and another is drunken." He's talking here about what happened at the Lord's Table. Ladies and gentlemen, how many of you would say, "I'd like to be like that New Testament church?" I, you, you just can't imagine. You say, "Could they, could they even be saved? I mean, were they even born again? Did they know anything about Jesus?" They did, but they were so carnal. And for eleven chapters he's dealing with the carnalities, one after another after another. And I left some of them out. I could get in chapter 7 and tell you what he had to tell them about marriage and divorce and all of that. And so I just, I just, I just kind of hit the high spots. In this entire book for eleven chapters he is warning them, pleading with them, explaining to them, challenging them about their carnality, about their divisions, about they're being little babes in Christ. And now he comes to chapter 12 and he changes the subject. Up until this time he's been dealing with the carnalities, and now he says, "And now concerning the spirituals..." See, you see. Now he's changing gears. Now he's talking about the spiritualities. Now the point I'm making is this: That we need to understand that you can have a spiritual gift and not be spiritual, right? He said to these people, "You come behind in no gift...."

And don't you let anybody tell you, I don't care what kind of gift they have or what kind of gift they think they have, if they think that that gift is a sign that they have spiritually arrived, they don't know their ABCs about the Bible. There are a lot of people who say, "Oh, I can do this and, therefore, I'm one of God's super saints." I just refer them back to the church at Corinth. The principle that I'm trying to make to you, my dear friend is this: That spiritual gifts and spiritual living are not necessarily synonymous. The church at Corinth proves it clearly and plainly. They came behind in no gift.

II. If You Have a Spiritual Gift, That Spiritual Gift Is Going to Operate Under Your Control

Now that's the first spirit, ah, that's the first principle that I want to make if I might. Now the second principle that I want to lay down before we really even get into the matter of the distortion of the gifts is this: That if you do have a spiritual gift, that spiritual gift is going to operate under your control. Notice, if you will, in verse 2. Now I'm in chapter 12:1. And believe it or not, all of that has been dealing with chapter 12:1 that I've just said, so we're not going to get too far, are we? Now chapter 12:2: "Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Now what does he mean they were carried away by these dumb idols? There was there in Corinth the Greek mystery religions. The Greeks learned it from the Egyptians. The Egyptians learned it from the Babylonians. And they had what they called the mystery religions. And they worshipped the gods that lived on Mount Olympus. Now these gods that lived on Mount Olympus, of course, were not real gods at all. They were fictitious gods. They were half human and half god. Now Jesus is not half human and half God. He is all man and all God, you see. But these were what we call demigods, demigods, half gods. And they, they had, ah, carnal pleasures and carnal desires and things like that. But the people worshipped them. And they wanted to get in, in favor with these gods. And so the way that they would get in favor with these gods is that they would fast. They would deny themselves. They would pray. They would work themselves up into a particular state by meditation and surrender until suddenly they would break through and they would make contact with that idol god. Now Virgil, the philosopher, and Plato also spoke about this, and they described what would happen to these people at Corinth and other places when they would finally make contact with their, ah god. Their, their, their, they, and they described them with their hair disheveled, with them trembling, and with their faces shining. And they would be babbling incoherently, making noises and sounds, incoherent utterances. And when they had done that, when they were picked up, when they were swept along, when they were carried along to

such a way that they got into an ecstasy of incoherent speech, they would say they had made contact with that demigod that lived on Mount Olympus. Now Paul said, "I want to remind you that you were once that kind of a worshipper. That's what your past has been." Look at it again. "You were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols..." Now the idea of carried away is that, that, that they're just swept up, that they have no longer control over themselves. Have you ever heard of a person who, who, who speaks of getting, ah, caught up in some sort of a, of an experience, and he says, "I was just carried away, just carried away?" Now what Paul is going to say is this: Listen, friend. The first principle is that you can have spiritual gifts and not be spiritual. The second principle is this: If your spiritual gift is operating as it ought to operate, your spiritual gift will never carry you away. It will never sweep you off your feet, as it were. You're, you're not going to be, ah, in a position where you just can't help yourself. Every now and then in some service, and I've been in services like this, a person will stand up and call, do something that they call speaking in tongues right in the middle of a message. Maybe, ah, it'll be a, a man will be preaching and someone will stand up in that service without being recognized and interpret the speaker and begin to make incoherent sounds. And if you were to remonstrate with that person, do you know what he would say? "Well, listen; let God be God. God told me to do it. And if God told me to do it, I ought to do it if nobody likes it. I couldn't help it. The Spirit of God moved me and I was carried away." Paul says, "Oh no. Don't say you were carried away." Let me show you something here that's very clear, and I want you to get this ve, very clearly if you will. Look in, in, in, ah, 1 Corinthians here chapter 14 and, ah, verse 32: "And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints." What does that mean? That means, my dear friend, that the spirit that is in, in me, if I'm a prophet, it is subject to me. I am not subject to it. I am never out of control when I'm being led by the Holy Spirit of God. Those who worship pagan deities, they are carried away, swept away by these dumb idols. But when a man is controlled by the Spirit of God, when he is led of the Spirit of God, when he is filled with the Spirit of God, the Bible says the spirit of the prophet is subject unto the prophet, and no one should ever say, "Well, I just couldn't help myself." I went one time to a film. The title of the film was "Martin Luther." It was the life of Martin Luther, a very good film. Many of you have seen it. At the end of that film a man was giving a gospel invitation. In the middle of that gospel invitation, when he was pleading for souls, some woman stood up and started making incoherent sounds. And there was a chill, a distraction, a coldness that came on that service. Everybody turned to this woman, looked at her. Some people who didn't have any idea, not even the foggiest of what she thought she was doing, thought maybe she was having a stroke or something was wrong with her. Now, folks, I want to tell you something. In my humble but accurate opinion, that was

not of God. God doesn't work that way. God does not work that way. God is not the author of confusion. That's what the Bible says. That was not her service. She was not in charge of that service. And, and she had no way of saying, "Well, the Spirit of God made me do it." The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet.

III. The Holy Spirit Always Honors the Lordship of Christ

Now the third thing, third principle. The first principle is that you, dear friend, you can, you can have a spiritual gift and not be spiritual. Second thing is this: that the Holy Spirit does not carry you away and make you, lead you to be out of control. Third thing: The Holy Spirit always honors the lordship of Christ. Notice in verse 3: "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed..." Some of them had gotten worked up into such a froth and such a frenzy that they'd left themselves open to demonic invasion and were actually cursing the Lord they thought they were praising. That's how swept away they were. And he says, "Look, folks, the Spirit of God doesn't lead you to call Jesus accursed." And then he goes on and gives the other side, "...and no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost." Now what he's saying is that it is the office work therefore of the Holy Ghost of God, the Holy Spirit of God to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus said, when He spoke of the Holy Spirit, "He shall not speak of Himself; He shall take the things of Mine and show them unto you. He shall glorify Me." Now you beware of any parade that is led by the Holy Spirit or portends to be led by the Holy Spirit. You never see the Holy Spirit leading the parade. You'll see Jesus leading the parade; the Holy Spirit standing on the sidelines and pointing Him out. Do you understand what I'm saying? You beware of any movement that has the Holy Spirit for a figurehead. I am not putting down the dear Holy Spirit. He is God, equally God with God the Father and God the Son. But the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to magnify the lordship of Jesus Christ. And the only way that a person can say that Jesus is Lord is by the Holy Ghost. Now that doesn't mean that's the only way you can repeat those words. I mean, anybody can repeat those words, Jesus is Lord. I mean, anybody can repeat those words, Jesus is Lord. You can take \$5.00 and go down here, ah, outside one of these taverns, find a drunk and say, "You want to make \$5.00?" Say, "Well, how?" "Well, you just say three words. I'll give you \$5.00." "Sure. What do you want me to say?" "Jesus is Lord." "Jesus is Lord. Give me \$5.00." He could say that. He's not talking about verbalizing. That's not what he's talking about. He's saying that you cannot say it and mean it. I mean, that you cannot claim Jesus Christ as Lord but by the ministry of the Holy Spirit of God. And the emphasis of the Holy Spirit is the lordship of Christ. Any movement that is not Christ-centered completely there's something wrong about that. Now there are people today who talk about getting a second blessing. That is, when you get saved, you get Jesus, and then

later on you get something else. Now, folks, I want you to turn...just put your bookmark there in 1 Corinthians 12 and I want you to turn to Colossians 2, and let's look in verses 9-10: "For in him (that is, in Jesus) dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." Now God the Father and God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are wrapped up in a man named Jesus. "For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily." All of the fullness of God is in the Lord Jesus Christ. So, therefore, it makes sense the next verse that follows. "And ye are (what's that next word? I can't hear you), ye are complete in him..." Now, folks, if you're complete in Him, do you need anything else? No. You are complete in Him. Folks, when you've said, "Jesus," you've said it all. When you get Jesus, you get all. People talk about the second blessing. I've told you before, I believe in a second blessing. I'll tell you what the second blessing is. The second blessing is discovering what you got when you got Jesus. That's all. And the, I believe in a third blessing. The third blessing is discovering you didn't discover it all in the second blessing. And you're going to keep on discovering that in Him, in the Lord Jesus, you are complete. You are complete in Jesus Christ. Don't get the idea that you're going to graduate from Jesus, that you're going to move beyond Jesus. Any movement, dear friend, that is of the Holy Spirit is a movement that magnifies the lordship of Jesus Christ. In Him you are complete! Hope you'll understand that, folks. You can't get anymore than when you get the Lord Jesus, "For the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily." Now the next thing I want you to notice. Every Christian has a spiritual gift. Every Christian has a spiritual gift. Let's skip a few verses and, and look, if you will, in verse 7: "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to (what?) every man to profit withal." Now it's not that some people have a manifestation of the Spirit and others don't. The manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man. Obviously, he's talking to Christians. To every born again person there is a spiritual gift. All Christians are included. Now notice, ah, what he says here. "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given..." Not may be given. It is a completed action he's talking about. It is done. It is given, and it is given to every man. You get the same thing in verse 11: "But all these worketh that one and selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will." Now don't you say, dear friend, that you don't have a spiritual gift. If you are saved, if you are born again, the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man. Every person here has already received your spiritual gift if you're saved. You don't need to go seeking it. You've already got it. Now you need to discover it. You need to develop it. You need to put it to work. But every one is given that spiritual gift.

IV. You Don't Decide What Spiritual Gift You Will Have

Now it follows, therefore, if, if it's already given, you don't decide what gift you'll have. And that's the fourth principle. Look, if you will again, in chapter 12:11: "But all these

worketh that selfsame Spirit (that is, the Holy Spirit) dividing to every man severally as he will." Now look at that word *severally*. It's the Greek word *idios*. What does it remind you of? What word? Idiot. Right. What, what was an idiot? What, what, every man, ah, *idios*, as he will. It, it, the, the word literally means one of a kind. Now when it was originally used, it did not mean somebody who has, is mentally deficient, but somebody who was special, someone who was unique. And after a while, because, ah, mentally deficient people were different than other people, they were called, they came to be called after this word *idiots*. But what Paul is saying here is that, that every Christian is one of a kind. God never makes duplicates, only originals. And just as everybody in this building is different physically, and just as everybody in this building has different talents, we're all different spiritually. And the Holy Spirit of God makes each one of us. He puts in every one of us a rare blending of spiritual gifts. Now the question is, can a person have more than one spiritual gift? I believe that he can. Everybody has at least one. I believe that many people are multi-gifted with one predominant spiritual gift. We'll get into that, if God gives us time, later on. But it is the Spirit of God who decides what gift you shall have and not you yourself. Now, because of that, all Christians have the baptism of the Holy Ghost, all Christians. Every now and then somebody will ask me, "Have you got the baptism?" I say, "Yes, I have." Now what they think is that if I have the baptism, that I'm going to be speaking in ecstatic languages. What they are asking me is do I have the gift of tongues. I do not have the gift of tongues. That is not my gift. But I do have the baptism of the Holy Ghost. And if you are saved, so do you! Look, if you will, in chapter 12 now, verse 12 and following: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one member, are one body (all of the member now; not some, all of them), and all of the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." Now what that literally says and the tense is this: For by one Spirit have we all been baptized. The word *are* literally means accomplished action. It is done. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." I said this two Sunday nights ago, I believe. I want to say it again. Nobody will find in the Bible a command for a New Testament Christian to seek to be baptized in the Holy Ghost. Why? Such a command would be superfluous. Why command us to do something that's already been taken, that has already taken place? "For by one Spirit have ye all been baptized into one body..." This is the only place where the Bible gives a description here of what this baptism of the Holy Spirit is. Sure, the Bible said before the Day of Pentecost that it would happen. But after Pentecost, every Christian who is saved is baptized automatically, *ipso facto*, into the body of Christ. No Christian is commanded to be baptized with the Holy Spirit. Do you know what the command is to Christians? To be filled with the Spirit. You see, when I'm saved, I am put into the body of Christ by the

Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is put into me by the Lord Jesus, and I've been made to drink into that one Spirit. He lives in me, and He has placed me into Christ. Now it is my job, my duty, my reasonability, and my happy privilege to yield all that I am to Him and let Him fill and possess this temple, which is the purchased possession. When I got saved, He came in as resident. When I'm filled, He becomes president. When I got saved, He came into abide and will never leave. But when I'm filled, not only does He abide; He presides. He is Lord. And the Bible says where the Spirit is Lord there is liberty. And so, my dear friends, ah, we need to understand here that if we're saved, that we're not, ah, to be saved, ah, to seek to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, but we are to yield all that we have to the Holy Spirit. Now, ah, having said all of that, that's all by way of introduction. Ah, let me...I, I, I know probably I'm not going to, to really get much into the distortion of spiritual gifts. But let me just tell you why God gives us spiritual gifts. And I want to mention, ah, three major reasons I believe.

A. God Gives Spiritual Gifts for Cooperation

Number one: For this matter of cooperation. Look, if you will, in verse 13: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body..." You see, what our Lord wants is not union. What our Lord wants is unity. And the way that God gives us unity is to make us different – to give you one gift and to give me another gift – and then to put us into one body where we all need one another. We're not, as a church, necessarily to be wired together by organization or rusted together by tradition or frozen together by formalism, but we are to be melted and fused together by the Spirit of God as He places us into the body of Christ. And so, we are to cooperate one with another. I need you and you need me. I have gifts that you need. You have gifts that I need. We need one another.

B. God Gives Spiritual Gifts for Coordination

Not only for cooperation, but also for coordination, so that we can work together. Notice in verse 14: "For the body is not one member, but many." Now it is, therefore, my business how you live. It is your business how I live.

C. God Gives Spiritual Gifts for Compassion

Now the next reason that He did that is not only for cooperation and coordination, but compassion. We skip a few verses. Look down in verse 26. He says, "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." That is, we're to feel together. Now if your feet hurt, you hurt all over, don't you? I mean, if your back is tired, the rest of you is in sympathy with it. Now when, when all of us discover our spiritual gifts and put our spiritual gifts together and work together, folks, there's going to be more weeping and more laughing than you've ever heard in this church. And, frankly, there's nothing wrong with laughing. Now there might have been someone who, ah, who maybe was a little too spiritual to sing your

chorus tonight, “He Fills my Life, ah, Laugh, Mouth with Laughter, and I go, ‘Ha-ha-ha-ha.’” But, folks, when you get full of the joy of the Lord Jesus, He’ll fill your mouth with ha-ha-ha-ha-ha. He really will. I hope you don’t get so stuck up you can’t enjoy that. But I’m going to tell you something else. He’ll also fill your eyes with tears. One member weeps; the others will weep with it. And, God, give us a church that knows how to shout and a church that knows how to laugh and a church that knows how to weep. When one member suffers, every member suffers with it. I used this illustration in the Discovery Class. Have you ever hit your thumb with a hammer, putting up, nailing up pictures for your wife or something like that? I’m talking about one that turns the thumbnail blue after a while. You know, it goes “whaaaaaaa.” I mean, it hurts. That’s excruciating. Now if you did that, I dare say I know exactly what you did next if you hit your thumb with a hammer. You grabbed it. That’s the first thing. And squeezed it. That helps. But the second thing you did was to pop it in your mouth and you sucked it, isn’t that right? Sure. And I know the third thing you did. You did a little dance. You went just like this. Isn’t that right? Sure, you did. Now I want to ask you a question. What do your knees have to do with your thumb? I don’t know, but it just, it just feels better when you do that little dance. I mean, folks, that’s the way God made us. God just hooked us together that way. And that’s what he’s saying. He said, “Listen, if you want to know what the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is to be like, it’s like a body. When one member rejoices when you eat ice cream, it feels good all over. When one member suffers, you just suffer together.” And that’s when the fellowship, my friend, gets so sweet and gets so wonderful.

Conclusion

Well, I told you I’d quit when it’s quitting time. Boy, I’ve got something interesting to say right now, but you’re not going to get to hear it. Don’t beg. All right. Now let’s bow our heads together in prayer. Father, I thank You so much for Your Word. Lord, these truths are so exciting, Lord. Father, I just believe it’s going to be so wonderful, Lord, if our people can just discover their spiritual gifts, get those gifts into action. So, Lord, help us as we continue to study and learn from Your Word. In Jesus’ name, amen.

The Distortion of Spiritual Gifts, Part 2

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 28, 1985

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant.”

1 CORINTHIANS 12:1

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Danger of Ignorance
- II. The Danger of Inferiority
- III. The Danger of Intolerance
- IV. The Danger of Immaturity
- V. The Danger of Intemperance
- VI. The Danger of Imitation

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles please and turn with me tonight to 1 Corinthians chapter 12. We're thinking tonight on the subject, "The Distortion of Spiritual Gifts." The mighty apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:1: "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant." You'll notice the word gifts is italicized if you have a King James translation of the Scripture. Literally it says, "Now concerning the spiritual things or the spirituals or the spiritualities, I would not have you ignorant." In the first eleven chapters Paul has been dealing with them about the carnalities, and how he's beginning to speak about the spiritualities. But even here he has to warn this Corinthian church. Now, folks, a spiritual gift is a God-given ability to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. It differs from a talent. A talent is received from your natural birth. A spiritual gift is given at your new birth. With a talent you can do natural things. With a spiritual gift you can do supernatural things. With a talent you may be merely superficial. With a spiritual gift you are mighty supernatural. Now I want us to see tonight some inherent dangers, however, around this area of spiritual gifts. As a matter of fact, for a long time in the church we didn't hear much about spiritual gifts. I want to confess to you that when I came up in my home church, I had, I, I learned absolutely nothing about spiritual gifts, just nothing.

So far as I know, it was never mentioned. Joyce, do you...where's Joyce? Do you ever remember it being mentioned? She and I grew up together. By the way, Joyce, why don't you learn how to sing so you and I can do what the Lotts did and sing together? Work on it! We never heard about it. Didn't know anything about spiritual gifts. When I went to seminary, folks, I didn't hear anything about spiritual gifts. And I've often wondered about that. Why, why has this great, vast body of knowledge, why did it go underground for such a long period of time? I believe because of the misuses and abuses and counterfeits are spiritual gifts that many good and even godly people shied away from the area of spiritual gifts. Now, you see, the devil can take anything good and pervert it and twist it and distort it. And sometimes we're so afraid we're going to get out on a limb we don't even get up the tree. I mean, we just simply, ah, we just simply have negated, overlooked, run past great bodies of Scripture. And when we do that, we leave ourselves open to the excesses and the distortions of many people, and we make ourselves fair game for those who would twist and pervert, wittingly or unwittingly, the Word of God. So it is altogether fitting tonight that we should look at this area of spiritual gifts. Now I want to mention about four or five dangers before I get right into the distortion of spiritual gifts.

I. The Danger of Ignorance

The first danger is right here in verse 1, and that is ignorance, just ignorance. Remember I told you that if education costs you, ignorance costs more. You cannot afford to be ignorant of something that is so very important, something that the great apostle Paul said, "I would not have you ignorant."

II. The Danger of Inferiority

The second danger is in the area of inferiority. Look, if you will, in chapter 12:15: "If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?" Now God has put all of the members in the body as it hath pleased Him. Spiritually, some of us are ears. Spiritually, some of us are eyes. Spiritually, some of us are, ah, hands. And spiritually, some of us are feet. But you know, folks, really, feet are not all that attractive. You, you hear a lot of songs about hands. "I Want to Hold Your Hand." "Hand in Hand." And, you know, you have people talking about hand lotions and how beautiful your hands are. But you never talk, you, how many songs do you know about feet? You know, you, or how many people talk about your beautiful feet. And I know there happens to be a passage in the Scripture that says, "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel." But if you've seen most preachers' feet, you know, if you believe that, you really believe in verbal, plenary inspiration. Ah, you don't, you, you don't hear, you don't hear much about feet. Feet, you know, they, they, they're just

there to, to help us to grow all the way down the ground and, and, and to get us around a little bit. And so, here, if a person perhaps is in the body and they don't have one of the more showy gifts, they might feel inferior. "If the foot shall say, I am not the hand, am I not of the bo, I, (excuse me), Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body?" Folks, if you don't have the gift that somebody else has, if you're a foot rather than a hand, you don't have to have an inferiority complex.

III. The Danger of Intolerance

Now ignorance and inferiority are both dangerous when it comes to gifts. And then I'll tell you another danger. It's the opposite side of inferiority, and it is intolerance. Look, if you will, in chapter 12:21: Ah, "And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Now the eye actually, I suppose, is superior to the hand. If you had to lose a hand or an eye, you probably would say, "Well, take my hand." And, and there are more songs about, ah, eyes and there's more poetry about eyes, the mirror of the soul. And the eyes are, are such an exquisite part of the human body. Marvelous is that gift of sight. But if a person has a gift that would be the counterpart of being a spiritual eye, he must be careful that he doesn't say, "The hand I have, I don't need you," or to the foot, "I don't need you." Now if you're not careful, you're going to have the same thing happen to you that happened to the church at Corinth. Some of these people had some of the more showy gifts. They were spiritual eyes and they were, they were despising spiritual feet. Wouldn't it be silly if the eye became intolerant of the foot, and the foot became angry at the eye, and there was a war, a schism in the body? And so the eye says to the foot, Ah, "I, I don't need you. As a matter of fact, I'm not going to communicate with you anymore." And so the body is walking along, and the eye sees a hole, but the eye says, "I'm not going to tell the foot about it. He's about to step in that hole, and I'm not going to let him know it." And the foot steps in the hole, and the body falls and comes up with what? A black eye.

IV. The Danger of Immaturity

Now listen, friend, let me tell you, listen. When one member suffers, every member suffers with it. There is the danger of ignorance. There is the danger of inferiority. There is the danger of intolerance where we think that we are, are better than somebody else. There's the danger of immaturity. Look, if you will, in chapter 13:11. Now, by the way, you will never really understand chapter 13 until you understand it in context with chapter 12 and chapter 14. Now if you're a Bible student, you know that 1 Corinthians 13 is the most beautiful chapter, perhaps, in all of the Bible. It is a marvelous ode and a poem, poem to love. But you have to see it in context of spiritual gifts. And when you read chapters 12, 13, and 14 together, it's amazing how much light will burst onto the

scene. And what Paul is saying is that whatever your spiritual gift, it must be used, it must operate in the atmosphere of love. And right in the middle of this thing he says in verse 11: “When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” Now you know what was wrong with the Corinthians? Folks, they were babies. You remember back over there in chapter 3, he said, “I could not speak unto you as spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.” And he’s still, over here, warning them about their immaturity. They had never moved on to maturity. And when you get on to chapter 14, he’s going to say, “Hey, listen. In malice be children, but in understanding be men.” You see, they were, they were, ah, little babies. They had not yet grown up. They were acting still like little children. And, and, ah, he’s trying to tell them now that you must grow up. Look in chapter 14:20: “Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children...” Now, as a matter of fact, they h, they were fully developed in arguing. I mean, they were full grown. They, they were mature as far as arguing was concerned. But understanding they were still like little babies. Now one of the great problems of spiritual gifts is this: There are a lot of carnal people who want to dabble with spiritual gifts, and they use spiritual gifts as toys rather than tools. Now these things are not toys. They are tools. They are not for selfish edification. They are for mature service to the body of Christ. And so there’s the danger of immaturity.

V. The Danger of Intemperance

And then there’s the danger of intemperance. Look, if you will, in chapter 14:30. Here’s another danger. He’s talking about people prophesying. Well, we could go back all the way back, ah, to verse 26: “How is it then, brethren? When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.” What was happening, they were like a lot of little children at a birthday party. Ah, they’re standing up. Everyone just talking and screaming. “If any man speak in an unknown tongue, let it be by two, or at the most by three (no more than two or three in a service, that’s what he’s saying), and that by course (that is, only one at a time); and let one interpret.” It should never, ah, you, you should never have more than two or three people giving a message in a, in a foreign language. Ah, then only one at a time. And then someone should interpret. And, ah, everything should be done to edify the church. It shouldn’t just be meaningless. “If any man speak...” Ah, excuse me. Verse 28: “If there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.” Now it’s very obvious that some people were disrupting the church service. And here Paul is having to put the quietus on them. He’s trying to tell them how to behave in the church. “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that

sitteth by, let the first hold his peace, for ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.” And then, here’s a key verse, verse 32: “For the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.” Now what’s he saying? He’s saying, “Don’t anybody stand up and disturb a church service and say, ‘I just couldn’t help it.’” The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet.” Ah, I’ve seen people so intemperate, so immature, so intolerant that they have actually disturbed the worship service and given God the credit for it. They said, “God the Holy Spirit told me to do this.” Paul said, “Now wait a minute. God is not the author of confusion. God didn’t do that. You did that all by yourself. God didn’t help you to do that.” And so there’s the problem, there’s the problem of, ah, intemperance.

VI. The Danger of Imitation

But the problem that I really want to deal with tonight is the problem of imitation, the problem of imitation. Now, you see, the devil had rather have you have a substitute rather than the real thing. And so, he will bring... You Coca-Cola people are not on the ball tonight. And, ah, so he’ll bring something along that is perhaps new and improved, so he thinks, and, ah, and, ah will move you away from the real thing, but it will be so close to the real thing. It’ll seem so much like the real thing that you may be tempted to swallow it. Now listen. By the way, that’s not a, a commercial for Coca-Cola. Ah, but listen. I have, I have noticed in spiritual gifts that, and I took my Bible and I tried to do a study of this, and this is just a casual study. But I have noticed that for everything that God does, the devil will distort it or man will imitate it. Now you’re going to find out that all of the gifts and their manifestation can be divided three different ways. There can be a spiritual manifestation that is guided and energized by God the Holy Spirit. Or there can be a soulish manifestation where we ourselves in our own energy, with our own senses, our own intellects imitate the gift. Or there can be a satanic imitation where the devil himself energizes a spiritual gift, imitates a spiritual gift, which is not a gift from God. And in the church, a pastor and church leaders have to constantly be evaluating between the spiritual, the soulish, and the satanic. I want you to see what I’m talking about. Let’s just take a few gifts now. Let’s take, for example, the gift of prophecy. Look, if you will, in chapter 14:3. Now here’s what the true gift of prophecy is. “He that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort.” Remember what we said prophecy does? Prophecy builds up. That’s edification. Prophecy fires up. That’s exhortation. Property, ah, prophecy shores us that. That is comfort. And that’s what folks need. As a matter of fact, the entire fourteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is written to tell us how important the gift of prophecy is. But now, ah, there’s also a, a soulish, a soulish imitation of this. Go back to 1 Corinthians 2, for example, and let me show you how that you could soulish imitate prophecy. Now I

believe that when a man gets up and preaches, for the most part, he's exercising the gift of prophecy. Most preachers, though not all of them, have the gift of prophecy in the secondary sense, not that they're a prophet, ah, like, ah, Isaiah or Jeremiah, but they speak for God. But, you see, a person who has certain natural abilities, certain physical gifts, certain kinds of personality, certain kinds of emphatic speech, certain abilities to, to speak could get up and almost mesmerize a congregation, and people would say, "Oh, isn't he a wonderful preacher?" But God wouldn't be in it. It would not be spiritual. It would be soulish. Look, if you will, for example, in 1 Corinthians 2:1: "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God." That is, ah, excuse me, and verse 4: "And my speech and my preaching were not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." One of the saddest things that could happen would be for a man to stand up and preach and be drawing out of his own well, not have the wisdom, the anointing, the power of God. He could be a spellbinder. The apostle Paul had that natural soulish ability, but he refused to use it. He depended upon God the Holy Spirit. Now you see, my friend, there is a spiritual gift of prophecy. There is a soulish imitation of the spiritual gift of prophecy. And then there is a satanic manifestation of the gift of prophecy. Look, if you will, for example, in Revelation 2:20. There was a church here that was having quite a bit of difficulty. And part of the difficulty was a woman who thought God had called her to preach. And look in verse 20: "Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess..." Now there are a lot of women today who are saying, "God has called me into the ministry." This woman said that God had called her into the ministry. She'd called herself a prophetess. Now what did she do? She called herself a prophetess, but she taught them at, which calleth herself a prophetess, "...to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols." Here was a woman who, ah, was exercising a gift of prophecy, but actually she was a false prophet. And she was energized of the devil himself. Jesus warned about the same thing in Matthew 24:24. Jesus said, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders..." Now a person who stands up and speaks and preaches in the energy of the flesh, he may not be satanically inspired. He's just soulishly inspired. But there are certain people who are actually the emissaries of the devil himself, and they're inspired by the devil. So you have to ask yourself when you hear of a man who purports to be a prophet, is he doing that in the power of the Spirit, the power of the soul, or the power of the devil? Let's take another gift, for example. Let's take the, ah, the, the gift of wisdom. Ah, now the Bible tells us in 2 Corinthians 12:8 there is a gift of wisdom. Let's see how that gift would operate. Look, for example, in Acts 6:10. There you're going to see what I would consider to be the

spiritual gift of wisdom. Acts 6:10. This speaks of, of, of Stephen, a man mighty in the spirit. He testified to the enemies of Christ at a synagogue, and the Bible says in verse 10, "And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." That makes me believe that Stephen had the charismatic, supernatural gift of wisdom. It was so powerful, so potent, so persuasive they were not able to resist it. As a matter of fact, it was so strong that they actually murdered him to shut his mouth. There he is exercising a God-given gift. But now, also, there are those who have a gift of wisdom, but it is not, ah, spiritual wisdom. It is soulish wisdom. Let me give you an example of that. Look, if you will, in Acts 5, and let's begin in verse 33. The apostles are preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. There are some who don't like what the gos, the, the apostles are saying, and so, ah, they tell the apostles to be quiet, to shut up. The apostles say, "We ought to obey God rather than men." In verse 33: "And when they heard that, they were cut to the heart and took counsel to slay them. Then stood up there one in the council, a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people..." Now just underscore that. He's, boy, this is a guy that everybody says, "When he speaks, everyone listens. He's in representation among all the people, "...and commanded the apostles to be put forth a little space." He said, "Now just put them over there, fellows. I want to tell you something." "And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. For before in these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nothing. And after this arose up Judas of Galilee in the days of T, of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found to fight against God. And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go." I've heard many preachers or some preachers stand up and say what a marvelous speech this was that Gamaliel gave. What a wonderful thing he told them. And everybody says that, "Now listen, just leave them alone. Don't oppose them. If it's of not of God, it'll come to nothing. And if it is of God, don't oppose it." And everybody says, "Didn't he have wonderful wisdom?" I don't think he had good wisdom at all. I think here was a man who was using his head, but he didn't have wisdom from God. Now look, folks. If it was of God, you couldn't leave it alone. You had to join it. If it wasn't of God, you had to oppose it. I've heard people stand up and say, "Oh, this, this is very wonderful and, and good, good advice." It wasn't good advice at all. It was wise, so far as this world is concerned, but that's all. He had soulish wisdom. He was an

unsaved man, as far as I'm concerned. He ought to have stepped over there with Peter and those apostles and say, "I'm one of them." If he had real wisdom, he would have known the Lord Jesus Christ. And the Bible says Peter, ah, ah, Paul says in 1 Corinthians, "Had they known him, had, had they had true wisdom, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." But here's a show of, just what we would call today, common sense. He was a, he was, listen. He had a good reputation. He was quite a philosopher. Now there are a lot of people who have soulish wisdom. I think one of the greatest dangers in a Baptist church is soulish wisdom. It happens so many times in business meetings. People will stand up and say what they think, but not what they prayed over, not what God has told them. They don't have a message from God. They just simply think they have figured it out. Now it, it doesn't mean that it's satanic. It's just the best that man has to offer. And, folks, that's not much. You see, that is a substitute for the spiritual, charismatic gift of wisdom. But, wait a minute. Not only is there spiritual wisdom like, ah, Stephen had. Not only is there soulish wisdom like Gamaliel had. But let me show you satanic wisdom. Did you know that the devil gives wisdom? I mentioned that this morning. Turn to James the third chapter here for a moment. James 3, and look with me now in verses 14-15: "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual (the word sensual means soulish), devilish." Now James goes a step further. James speaks of all kinds, all three types of wisdom. There is that wisdom that comes from above. That's the true spiritual gift of wisdom. Then there's wisdom that is sensual or soulish. And then there is wisdom that is devilish. And he goes on to say in verse 16, "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." I, in my lifetime, have come face to face with people who were so devilishly clever, so hellish wise that it's almost impossible to oppose them apart from the anointing of the Holy Ghost of God. Have you ever come up against a person like that? I mean, when a person can get so full of the devil, he can give you such convoluted arguments. He can give you such twisted, perverted logic that if you're not careful you won't know which end is up. Jesus spoke of them. He said, "If it were possible, they would deceive the very elect." That wisdom doesn't come from above. It is devilish. And woe be to God, woe be to the church, woe be to the committee, woe be to the institution that is run by devilish wisdom. Now remember, dear friends, there are three kinds of wisdom. There is that which is from above. There is that which is sensual. There is that which is devilish. I wish I had more time to deal with that. Let's talk about the gift of tongues for a moment and see here where you're going to find all three categories in the gift of tongues. Ah,

for example, turn to Acts 2:4. There you're going to see the spiritual use of tongues. You're going to see what God the Holy Spirit does. Now remember that to speak in tongues or to speak with tongues, the, the word tongues, glossa, means language. It does not mean incoherent babbling. It means a known language as you're going to see very clearly here in Acts 2:4: "And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other languages, other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under the heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language." That's so important. "...every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marveled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?" And, by the way, the, the Galileans were the hillbillies. They were the, ah, ah, the, the rubes from the country who'd, ah, not had language, ah, training, who'd not been to the university, as it were. "And they, aren't these all these dumb Galileans? How hear we every man in our own language, our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elanites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia. Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes. Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our languages, in our tongues the wonderful works of God." And God brought a sign to the Jews. And, by the way, tongues are given as a sign primarily to unbelieving Jews. God did that here. The Bible makes it clear there were Jews there. They were there for the Feast of Passover. And God gave this sign gift. It was a sign gift that was originated, motivated, used of God the Holy Spirit. That is the spiritual gift of tongues that is spoken of in 1 Corinthians 12:2. Now what about a soulish use? Well, let's turn, if you will, to 1 Corinthians 14 for a moment now and see what had happened. Remember that the, the Corinthians were soulish. They were carnal. That's what the word carnal means, soulish. They were depending upon the, ah, ah, the flesh and the soul rather than the Spirit. And look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians 14. Let's begin about verse 6: "Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine? And even things without life-giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sound, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?" Now if I were to go over here and sit down at our organ and just start, ah, pounding on the keys, folks, it's not going to make music, I can promise you that. I can make noise, but I can't make music. He goes on to say in verse 8: "For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?" Suppose you're out on the battlefield and a trumpeter stands up and he just hits a few notes, or worse, they're supposed to advance and he plays retreat or revelry or mail call. Who's going to

get ready for the battle? “If the trumpet shall give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification. Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.” Now why do you think Paul was saying that? Why do you think Paul that in the Scripture? I’ll tell you why. Because, folks, in the service there were people who were standing up making noises. Paul says, “It sounds like a barbarian.” Do you know where you get the word barbarian? Bar-bar! It, it, that’s literally what it means. It, it, it, it’s a, ah, a word that imitates the noise, when you, you just can’t even understand what is being said. It’s like a cacophony. It’s like a person, ah, sitting down, like a child sitting down at a piano and just hitting all kinds of notes and, and not making any sound, not speaking with something that can be articulated, something that could be understood. Well, you say, “Pastor, the Holy Ghost enabled them to do that.” Well, I want to ask you a question. If the Holy Ghost enabled them to do that, why did the Holy Ghost inspire Paul to tell them not to do it? Huh. Do you think on one hand the Holy Spirit says, “Do it,” and then He says over here, “Now, Paul, tell them not to do it.” No. Folks, they did that themselves. They just cooked that up themselves. That was something they did. And I’m not saying they didn’t love God. They loved God. I’m not saying they weren’t saved. They were babes in Christ. They were in Christ. But that wasn’t of God. That wasn’t of God. I am convinced that 99 and 44/100% of what goes under the guise of tongues today is at best a psychic, soulish manifestation. It is something that people do in evangelical churches. They do it in Catholic churches. They do it in Mormon churches. They do it in voodoo worship. They do it in all kinds of things. Now don’t tell me, dear friend, that the Holy Spirit has energized all of that. No, He’s not. Now I’m not saying there is not a legitimate gift, but I’m saying in all of the gifts, in all of the gifts there is that which is spiritual. There’s the Day of Pentecost. Then there is that which is an imitation, that which is soulish. And people, albeit well meaning, still are motivated not by the Spirit, but by the flesh, and, ah, good people. Now, ah, look, if you will, in verse 37, chapter 14:37 here. “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.” The apostle Paul was no fool. He knew people. And he knew that when he said this to these Corinthians, they were going to say to him, “Now, Paul, listen. I have a spiritual gift. It is of God. And, Paul, you’re not going to tell me not to use my gift.” And Paul says, “If any man think himself to be spiritual. You think you’re spiritual? You’d better remember that what I tell is the word of the Lord. I’m an apostle.” But then he says with a shrug of his shoulders in the next verse, “If any man will be ignorant, just let him be ignorant.” He

knew, he knew, as surely as his name was Paul, there would be some in that assembly who would say, "Paul, I don't care what you say. I've got my experience." And they were going to depend upon their experience rather than the Word of God. But he said, "If you're really spiritual, you're going to understand that what I say is the Word of the Lord." Now I'm not saying these people were lost. I believe people can be wrong in some doctrine and be saved. I believe that people that sprinkle little babies, and I believe that people who are get sprinkled rather than being baptized by immersion, I expect to meet a lot of them in heaven. And I expect a lot of people have been baptized by total immersion are going to go straight to hell, because salvation is in Christ, not in the creek. But, listen. That doesn't mean that I'm not going to point out what the Bible says about what real baptism is. Now I believe that some people who get off into these kind of excesses, I believe they love God. I expect to meet them in heaven. But that does not mean that we need to back off and not teach what the Bible has to say about these matters. I'm telling you, folks, there is a lot going on in the average so-called church today that is not motivated by the Holy Spirit. It is, at the best, soulish, and it may be satanic. Let me show you something very frightening here. Look, if you will, now at the satanic use of tongues. Ah, look in 1 Corinthians 12 and let's look in verse 3. Well, let's get the first three verses so we get a running start. "Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." Remember what I told you of the demi-gods that were up on the mountains, Mount Olympus, a half-god and half-man, and, ah, they, they were worshipped, the, the, the idol pagan gods. And the people, according to Virgil and Plato and others, would work themselves up into a frenzy to worship these gods until they began to speak incoherently? They were just picked up and carried along. Now that's what Paul is warning them about. He said, "You know that you were Gentiles carried away (that is, just swept up in ecstasy) unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led." And then he says something that is amazing in verse 3: "Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed..." Boy, that sends a chill up my spine. Do you know what I believe was happening in this church? I believe there were people who let themselves open to demonic infestation by putting themselves in neutral, as it were, by letting themselves be opened up, not keeping the heart with all diligence, getting carried away into ecstasies until the devil saw a place where he could move in, and a person began to speak, this not incoherently; this time in a language he's never learned. But God didn't teach it to him. The devil did. He doesn't know what he's saying, but he's cursing Jesus. And, folks, I have read more than once testimonies of missionaries who have told of those who were demon-possessed who began in languages they've never learned and to blaspheme God in those languages. And the apostle Paul is saying, "Hey, don't you get caught up.

Don't you get swept up in this thing. No man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed." You could go through all of the miracles, excuse me, through all of the gifts, and every one of them. You could take the same thing in the gift of miracles. Did you know there's a satanic gift of miracles? There is. Let me just mention this one and I'm going to have to quit. Look, and I'm not even going to mention the spiritual and the soulish, though I could show you that. Ah, if you want, if you want a Scripture for the spiritual gift, ah, 2 Corinthians 12:12. If you want a Scripture for the soulish gift, ah, Acts 8:9. If you want a, if you want a Scripture for the satanic gift, look in Revelation 16:13 and then we'll be finished. I might have said Revelation 13, but Revelation 16:13: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet, for they are the spirits of demons working miracles." Somebody says, "Oh, if you can do miracles, God is with you." I went one time. I'm almost sorry that I went. Joyce, you went with me to a tent healing meeting. I'm not going to name the name of the evangelist. He's not one of the better known evangelists. He's dead now. If I know anything about God, if I know anything about the Word of God, the spirit of the enemy of the devil was working in that tent that night. I have never seen such a parody of the work of God, such a misrepresentation of the Word of God, such a twisting of the Scripture, such a manipulation of people, such a merchandizing of human misery, such a money-making racket. And God knows I'd want to be very careful because I don't want to judge anybody. But I'm just telling you folks for whatever it's worth. All there is in me that knows Jesus rebelled about what was going on up there. But over that platform were these words: "No man can do these miracles, except God be with him." And I thought, *Oh no, friend, you're wrong, you're wrong.* A man can do miracles in the power of the devil (Revelation 16:13).

Conclusion

Now folks, you say, "Pastor, you've got me scared tonight. I won't know whether it's spiritual, soulish, or satanic everything I do." Well, you'd better walk close to the Lord. Don't you get led down any primrose path. I tell you the devil would if he could distort spiritual gifts. And there are dangers. That doesn't mean we need to hang it up. But I can understand why, for a long time, this matter of spiritual gifts went underground. I can see today, as I preached a while back, how the devil can lead so many people a step at a time away from the Word of God, away from the Word of God, away from the Word of God until we have date, great congregations and great movements that are built on experiential religion rather than divine revelation, rather than the Word of God. That's the reason the apostle Paul had to sum it all up by saying, "If any man think himself to be spiritual, thinks that he's a prophet, he'd better acknowledge that what I

say is the word of God.” Thank God for spiritual gifts. We’re going to talk more about how to develop and put your spiritual gift into practice in another message. Let’s bow together in prayer.

Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 7, 1993

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Description of the Gifts
 - A. They Are Spiritual Gifts
 - B. They Are Supernatural Gifts
 - C. They Are Service Gifts
 - D. They Are Sovereign Gifts
 - E. They Are Salvation Gifts
 - F. They Are Support Gifts
- II. The Diversity of the Gifts
 - A. Wisdom
 - B. Knowledge
 - C. Faith
 - D. Healing
 - E. Miracles
 - F. Prophecy
 - G. The Discerning of Spirits
 - H. Tongues
 - I. The Interpretation of Tongues
 - J. Ministry
 - K. Teaching
 - L. Exhortation
 - M. Giving
 - N. Ruling
 - O. Mercy
- III. The Discovery of Your Gift
 - A. The Principle of Lordship
 - B. The Principle of Stewardship
 - C. The Principle of Fellowship

Conclusion

Introduction

Back to the basics—Christianity 101—and I want you to take your Bibles today and find 1 Corinthians chapter 12—1 Corinthians chapter 12. And today, we're going to be talking about spiritual gifts. If you want real joy and fulfillment in your Christian life, I'll tell you how to have it: get right with God, then discover, develop, and put to work your

spiritual gift. You are a gifted child. And, the title of the message today is “Unwrapping Your Spiritual Gift.”

Now, look, if you will, in chapter 12, verse 1: “*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant*” (1 Corinthians 12:1). May I say that the world is saturated with ignorance on the subject of spiritual gifts? The devil wants to keep you ignorant, but you are a gifted child. You have, if you are a child of God, if you’re born again, you have a spiritual gift. Now, sometimes, when we talk about spiritual gifts, people get a little antsy. They’re afraid of spiritual gifts. But, fear is rooted in ignorance. Most prejudice is rooted in ignorance. We’re so afraid of wildfire that we end up with no fire. Dr. Vance Havner said, “We’re afraid we’re going to get out on a limb; we haven’t even been up the tree.” And, out on a limb is where the fruit is. And so, we’re going to be talking to you about spiritual gifts. And, there are three things I want you to see. First of all, spiritual gifts described—the description of these gifts. Secondly, I want you to see the diversity of these gifts. And, I’m going to give you a long list of gifts, and you’re going to say, “Maybe that one’s mine.” And then, last of all, I want you to see the discovery of the gifts—how, indeed, you can discover your spiritual gift. And, we’re going to get it right from the Word of God.

I. The Description of the Gifts

The description of the gifts:

A. They Are Spiritual Gifts

Look, if you will, in verse 1: “*Now concerning spiritual gifts*” (1 Corinthians 12:1). The very first thing I want to say is this: they are spiritual gifts. The world here is *pneumatika*—“spiritual.” We’re not talking to you about a gift of money, a gift of beauty, a gift of health, a gift of fame. If I were to tell you today, “I’m going to tell you how to have a brand new automobile,” maybe some of you would get out and begin to take notes. But, the problem is, we’re not all that interested in spiritual things. I’ve often heard it said, “Oh, we’re so heavenly minded we’re no earthly good.” But, the truth of the matter is we’re so earthly minded we’re no heavenly good. These are spiritual gifts. What a tragedy to fail to understand that you have a spiritual gift!

B. They Are Supernatural Gifts

Not only are they spiritual gifts—they are supernatural gifts. Look, if you will now, in verse 14 of this same chapter—chapter 12 and verse 4: he says here in verse 4, “*There are diversities of gifts*” (1 Corinthians 12:4). Now, the word for *gift* is a different word. One word was used in verse 1: *pneumatika*. Now, here’s a word that is used: *charismata*; it’s the word we get our word *charismatic* from. And, this gift means—the word *charis* is the word *grace*. And so, a *charismata* is a grace gift. And, what is grace?

Grace is that which is completely, totally unearned. It is the sovereign work of God. It is the saving work of God. It is the supernatural work of God. And so, if you have a grace gift, it's different from talent. It is not, indeed, a charismatic gift. A lot of people who are not even saved have talent. But, a grace gift is not something that is earned—it is not something that is earned. It is the grace gift of God. Therefore, if you have a spiritual gift—and you do—there's no room for pride. You see, every Christian is either supernatural or he is superficial.

C. They Are Service Gifts

Now, here's the third thing I want you to learn about these gifts. First of all, we say that these gifts—these gifts—are spiritual gifts. Secondly, they are supernatural gifts—verse 4 (1 Corinthians 12:4). Thirdly, they are service gifts. Look, if you will, in verse 7: *“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal”* (1 Corinthians 12:7). Now, what does it mean *“to profit withal”* (1 Corinthians 12:7)? It means “to profit the others”—“to profit the whole body.” If you have a spiritual gift, it is not a means to an end. And, you do have a spiritual gift. It is not for your selfishness. It is not to make you feel good. It is not to prove something to you. These gifts are not for evidence; they are equipment. They are not for your enjoyment; they are for your employment. They are to put you to work for the Lord Jesus Christ. It's not that you have a little gift that's going to make you feel good. It is that God has given you a gift *“to profit withal”* (1 Corinthians 12:7).

One of my favorite stories is of a woman who'd taken a first aid course. And, later on, she was giving a testimonial to her class, and she said, “In front of my house there was a horrible wreck. An old man driving an automobile lost control, went up the curbing, hit an oak tree, was thrown out on the pavement. His head was crushed; his eyes were rolling around in bloody sockets. His bones were fractured.” She said, “He was pumping his blood out there on the asphalt.” She said, “It was terrible. But,” she said, “I remembered my first aid.” She said, “I remembered, if I were to put my head between my knees, I wouldn't faint. And,” she said, “I did—it was wonderful.” Now, that's the kind of an idea that some people have about gifts. They think that a spiritual gift is something that is supposed to be a particular blessing to them. But, the Bible says here in verse 7 that the gift is a service gift: *“[it is] to profit withal”* (1 Corinthians 12:7)—that is, “to profit the whole body.” Again, it is not for your enjoyment; it is for your employment.

D. They Are Sovereign Gifts

Now, here's something I want you to notice very carefully: your gift not only is a spiritual gift, a supernatural gift, and a service gift, but your gift is a sovereign gift. Look, if you will, in verse 11 of this chapter now—verse 11: *“But all these worketh that one and*

selfsame Spirit—he’s talking about the Holy Spirit—“*dividing to every man severally*”—or, “individually”—“*as he will*” (1 Corinthians 12:11). Now, you don’t decide what gift you’re going to have. You couldn’t decide what gift you’re going to have any more than you could decide, in the natural realm, what talents you’re going to have or to decide how tall you’re going to be, or the color of your skin, or the color of your hair. You can’t decide that. Well, some people do decide the color of their hair, but what I’m trying to say is this—that your gift is a sovereign gift. The Holy Spirit of God chooses your gift. Your joy and responsibility is to discover the gift that God has given you.

Now, some people get the idea that, in verse 31, that we’re told that we are to seek a particular kind of gift. Look in verse 31: “*But covet earnestly the best gifts...yet [!] shew...unto you a more excellent way*” (1 Corinthians 12:31). Some people think that we’re to pray, “O God, give me this gift or give me that gift.” But, the word *covet* here is usually used in a bad connotation, and what he is saying here is this—that there was something wrong with the Corinthian church. They were seeking—they were coveting—the best gifts to them—the more showy gifts like tongues and miracles. And, what he is saying here is this: he is saying, “You covet the best gifts.” This is not imperative; it is indicative. What he is saying is, “This is what you’re doing: you’re coveting the best gifts. But,” he said, “I’m going to show you a more excellent way.” And then, he speaks to them in one entire chapter about love. What is a spiritual gift? A spiritual gift is a sovereignly bestowed gift. You’re not to want or covet somebody else’s gift. You’re to say, “O God, thank You for the gift that You have given to me.” These gifts are sovereign gifts.

E. They Are Salvation Gifts

Now, next, they are salvation gifts. Look, if you will now, in verse 12, and find out when you got your gift: “*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all [of] the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ*”—that is, the Body of Christ—“*For by one Spirit...we [were] all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12:12–13).

Now, some people say, “Have you gotten the baptism of the Holy Spirit?” If you’ve been saved, you’ve gotten the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “*For by one Spirit [have] we all [been] baptized into one body*” (1 Corinthians 12:13)—not some of us, all of us. And, somebody asks you, “Have you gotten the baptism of the Holy Ghost?” You can say, “Yes, I got the baptism of the Holy Ghost when I was saved and put into the Body of Christ.” “*For by one Spirit [have ye] all [been] baptized into one body*” (1 Corinthians 12:13). And, when you were put into the Body of Christ with a function, your spiritual gift enables you to function as God puts you in the Body. You may be put in as a hand, a

foot, an eye, but wherever you were put into the Body, that is the way that you are to function.

Now, when you got saved, you got your spiritual gift. Just as you got your natural proclivities when you were born naturally, you get your supernatural proclivities when you are supernaturally born. And, your spiritual gift is a salvation gift. When the Holy Spirit came into you, He did not come in empty-handed. When you were born, you were born a gifted child. Do you have that? When you were born spiritually, you were born a gifted child. And, *“for by one Spirit [have] we all [been] baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). The moment the Holy Spirit of God placed you into the Body of Christ... He placed you into the Body of Christ, that you are to be in the Body of Christ to do a particular thing. Everybody in this building has a ministry. Now, you may not have a ministry because you don't know you have a ministry, but you have a ministry. That is, when you were saved, you had a sovereign, supernatural gift that God equipped you with. Now, you may not yet have discovered it. *A little baby that's born in the natural world has hands. Have you ever watched a baby discover his hands? That little baby, when it's born, doesn't know it has hands. But, later on, that baby can become an artist, a pianist, a violinist, a surgeon, as he learns how to use these hands. But, he didn't get the hands later on. The parents didn't take the baby back to the hospital and say, “Now, put the hands on.” The hands came at birth. Now, you, the child, has to discover his hands. The child has to develop his hands and then deploy his hands and put his hands to work.* Do you have it? These gifts are salvation gifts.

F. They Are Support Gifts

Now, let me say something else: they are support gifts. Look, if you will, in verse 17 of this same chapter: *“If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?”*—wouldn't that be grotesque? Some of you today wear a 195-pound eyeball. If the whole body were an eye, you couldn't hear a thing, could you? But, you could sure see good—*“If the whole were hearing, where...the smelling?”*—in other words, suppose you are a great big ear, but you can't smell anything. But now, notice—*“But...God [hath] set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him”* (1 Corinthians 12:17–18). And, he goes on to say that the eye needs the ear and the nose needs the rest of the body and so forth. What's he saying? That God gave us different gifts—and the reason that God gave us different gifts is to make us one. Now, if you don't learn anything else that I'm trying to say to you today, I want you to learn this—that God made us different, that He might make us one. God gave me some gifts He didn't give you; God gave you some gifts He didn't give me. And, each of us has individual gifts, and together we must depend upon one another. And, that is what makes the Church the Church. These are support gifts, and, therefore, if you try to exercise your gift apart

from your relationship to the body, it's going to be absurd.

Now, my hand—there's my hand—there's nothing particularly wrong with that hand. I think it's a pretty nice hand myself, and I don't think you're necessarily repulsed by it. But, if it were cut off from my hand and flung out there on the floor, I think you'd say, "Ugh." If you walked in and saw a hand lying on the floor this morning, you'd say, "That's grotesque; that's repulsive." The hand is significant only as it is a part of the body. Your spiritual gift is here to support the rest of the body, to profit the whole body. You're not to be a "Lone Ranger Christian." God made us different, that He might make us one. And, the Bible says, "When one member suffers, every member suffers with it. When one member rejoices, every member rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

You ever hit your thumb with a hammer? Boy, if you have, you know there's hardly a pain like that—hitting your thumb with a hammer. I'm talking about one that makes the thing turn blue later on. I wasn't there when it happened, but if you did, I can tell you, I know just about what happened. The very first thing you did was to grab it. I'll tell you what else you did: the next thing you did—you put it in your mouth and sucked it. Now, I'll tell you third thing you did: you did a little dance like this. Now, what do your knees have to do with your thumb? I don't know, but I tell you, that dance helps. Now, "when one member suffers, every member suffers with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). These gifts are support gifts. God put us in the Body—and God gave us gifts—to support one another. It is sheer pride for you to say, "I don't need the Church." You need the Church. And, I'm going to tell you something else: the Church needs you.

Now, here are the gifts described. And, I have given you six descriptions of these gifts.

II. The Diversity of the Gifts

Now, let's talk about the diversity of the gifts. There are many, many gifts. You say, "Well Pastor, if I'm a gifted child, I want to know what my spiritual gift is." Well, I'm going to read some of the gifts here, and I want you to see if you can hear your name called. Look in verse 4: "*there are diversities of gifts*"—"diversities of gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:4). Now, let's skip down to verse 8 and begin to look at them.

A. Wisdom

In verse 8, he mentions wisdom: "*For [by] one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom*" (1 Corinthians 12:8). What is wisdom? Wisdom is a spiritual gift. Have you ever known people who are gifted with wisdom? I'm not talking about common sense. You can be unsaved and have common sense. I'm not talking about horse sense. You know what horse sense is? That's what keeps a horse from betting on a track meet. That's horse sense. But, I'm not talking about that. Wisdom is not common sense; it is uncommon

sense. People who have the gift of wisdom make wonderful, wonderful counselors. Maybe that is your gift.

B. Knowledge

Or, in verse 8: “[a] word of knowledge” (1 Corinthians 12:8). Now, it doesn’t say that you know everything. Nobody knows everything. But, the charismatic gift of knowledge is the ability to know things that you could not know apart from the anointing, the guidance, the giftedness of the Holy Spirit of God. The devil’s counterfeit of this is clairvoyance. But, you can know things through the Spirit that you couldn’t know any other way. As a matter of fact, Simon Peter knew that Ananias and Sapphira were telling a lie in Acts chapter 5 (Acts 5). How did he know that? He wasn’t there when he carried on the transaction. He had a word of knowledge—a word of knowledge.

I’ve had that happen to me on a few occasions. I don’t think that’s my gift. But, I was preaching in South Georgia in a revival meeting one time, and while I was preaching, there was a man that people were praying for. Somebody came in, and tapped him on the shoulder, and motioned for him to come out. He was the sheriff of that county. As he walked toward the back of the congregation, right in the middle of the message, I felt impressed to say this: “There goes Sheriff So-and-so. There most likely has been a wreck. Liquor has been involved, and somebody has been killed.” He left. About 11:30 that night, he came and knocked on my motel door. I came out. He said, “I need you to lead me to Jesus Christ; I want to be saved.” There had been a wreck. A car hit a logging truck. A broken liquor bottle was in the front seat, and the man who was killed was the man who ran against this man as sheriff of that county. Now, how did I know that? How did God put that in my mind? I don’t know—wasn’t a part of my sermon. I was surprised when I heard myself say it. I just believe it was an answer to prayer for this man, as people were praying. God wanted him to be somehow convicted and convinced by that. I don’t have the gift of knowledge, but I think sometimes we can have flickers of these things. There is the gift of knowledge.

C. Faith

There is the gift of faith. Look, if you will, in verse 9—maybe this is your gift: “*To another faith by the same Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12:9). Now, all Christians have faith, in the general sense, but this is a very specific sense. The gift of faith—he describes it in chapter 13, verse 2: “If I have faith that could remove mountains...” (1 Corinthians 13:2). This is mountain-moving faith.

If you want to find the story of somebody who had the gift of faith, read the story of George Müller of Bristol. This was a man the whole Christian world knows who had unusual faith. He had the charismatic gift of faith. He could believe God for certain things. And, I thank God that He puts in the church people who have this kind of faith,

and I know some in this church. How they encourage me because of their great and strong and mighty faith. There's a little lady in this church who, I believe, has the gift of faith. She is a constant encouragement to my heart because of her faith. George Müller of Bristol raised millions of dollars for orphans without ever telling a person about his need—incredible stories. One day, he was on a ship; he was off the coast of Newfoundland, and there was a great fog. And, he went to the captain of the ship, and he said, "Why aren't we moving?" And, the captain said, "I'm sorry. We can't move in this fog. It would be unsafe." And, Müller said, "But, I've got a speaking engagement, and I cannot miss it. And, it's very important—you must get the ship moving." He said, "We'll move the ship when the fog is lifted." He said, "Very well, let's go to the chartroom and ask God to take away the fog." The old sea captain, knowing the ways of the sea, just went with George Müller just to humor him. They went into the chartroom and got down on their knees, and Müller prayed like this: "God, You know I'm supposed to be in thus-and-such a place at thus-and-such a time, and the captain says he won't move the ship 'till the fog gets gone. So, God, I ask You to take away the fog. Thank You, Lord. Amen."

Now, the captain later reported this: he said, "He prayed a prayer that was so simple that it was like a child would pray. Then," he said, "I began to pray. And, Müller rebuked me and said, 'Don't pray.'" He said, "Why not? He said, 'Two reasons: number one, you don't believe He'll do it; and number two, He's already done it.'" And, the captain said he got up, and went out, and looked, and the fog was gone. Now, you explain that. I don't have that kind of faith. I believe in God. I have faith. But, there is that kind of faith that he's talking about, which is the gift of faith.

D. Healing

And then, in verse 9, he speaks of the gift of healing (1 Corinthians 12:9). Actually, the Greek word is *healings* (plural), because there are all kinds of healing. There are physical healings, mental healings, spiritual healings, and there are some that God has given the ability to heal. This does not mean that, if you're a doctor, that you have the gift of healing. You can be unsaved and not have the gift of healing. You can be saved and have the gift of healing and not be a doctor.

You say, "Well Pastor, I'm going to ask you about a certain preacher. Do you think he has the gifts of healing?" Well, God has given me permission not to answer you. Let me tell you that that man, or whomever you're thinking about, will report unto God. But, I believe with all of my heart, because I can believe black print on white paper, there are people who have the gift of healing. You can do with that what you want. But, I do believe there is a supernatural charismatic gift of healing. You can read the Bible, and you can see that there are gifts of healing. But, of course, God uses medicine, and

thank God for medicine. Jesus said, *“They that [are] whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”* (Matthew 9:12). Jesus said, “Sick people need a doctor.” That’s pretty good advice to me. Now, *“they that [are] whole need not a physician, but they that are sick”* (Matthew 9:12). But, there are the gifts of healing.

E. Miracles

Then, there are gifts of miracles. Now, look, if you will, in verse 10: *“To another the working of miracles”* (1 Corinthians 12:10). “Pastor, do you believe in miracles?” Of course, I believe in miracles. Why? Number one: I believe the Bible. Number two: I believe there is a God. And, to say there cannot be miracles is simply to limit God and to say that God is the prisoner of the world that He has created. “Are there miracle workers today?” There probably are. “Do you know any?” No, I don’t. “Do you think it would be wonderful if we had some miracle workers in our church?” Well, it’d be nice. But, I’ll tell you this—that miracles are not much good in converting the unsaved. As a matter of fact, Jesus had to step over the miracle mongers in order to do His ministry, sometimes. But, there are miracles that are performed. You’re going to find, as you study the Bible, that miracles came mostly in clusters. Now, there were the miracles surrounding the creation. There were the miracles, for example, surrounding the ministry of Elisha and Elijah. There were the miracles surrounding the ministry of Jesus, the miracles surrounding the ministry of the apostles, and the miracles that are prophesied for the last days. And so, there are gifts of miracles.

You say, “Well, if you’re Spirit-filled, will you do miracles?” Not necessarily. The Bible says that John the Baptist was filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb, but notice what the Bible said about John the Baptist in John 10, verses 41 and 42: *“And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true”*—that is, “everything that John said about Jesus is true”—*“And many believed on him”*—on Jesus—*“there”* (John 10:41–42). What a blessing! I tell you what, I’d rather have the power to point men to Jesus like John did than to raise the dead. I mean that with all of my heart and soul. *“John did no miracle”* (John 10:41). He was a Spirit-filled man, but the ministry of John was that he pointed men to Jesus Christ. Now, maybe miracles are your gift.

F. Prophecy

Then, there’s the gift of prophecy in verse 10 (1 Corinthians 12:10). Now, what is prophecy? Prophecy is not primarily foretelling; it is forth-telling, although the prophets did sometimes foretell. There is the office of the prophet, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, and there’s the ministry of prophecy. You say, “Pastor Rogers, what do you think your gift is?” I think it is prophecy—I think it is prophecy. Well, what is prophecy? Prophecy is not telling people off. You know, every now and then, we have some folks around our

church who say, “Well, I’m just a prophet, *da da da da da*.” No, that’s not what the gift of prophecy is, friend—not at all. If you want to know what the gift of prophecy is, 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 3: “*he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort*” (1 Corinthians 14:3). There you have it. That’s the three-fold ministry: edification, exhortation, and comfort. What is edification? To build up. What is exhortation? That is to fire up. What is comfort? That is to shore up. I believe that that is one of the gifts that is greatly needed—and especially to preach the Word of God. As a matter of fact, if you’ll read chapter 14, you’re going to find out that he spends almost an entire chapter showing the superiority of prophecy over tongues. And, there is the gift of prophecy: to build up, to fire up, to shore up people.

G. The Discerning of Spirits

Now, there’s another gift in verse 10, and that is the discerning of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). What does that mean? Well, we live in a world that is filled with malevolent spirits: wicked spirits, evil spirits, vile spirits, demon spirits. “Do you believe in demons, Pastor?” Yes, I believe there are demons. I’m not trusting them, but I believe, concerning them, that demons exist, and I believe that these demons are lying spirits. “[*And*] Satan himself [*has*] transformed [*himself as*] an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). And, God gives some people a spirit of discernment. They can look in and say, “That is of the devil. It’s the devil parading around in an angel’s garb. It’s a wolf in sheep’s clothing.” And, we need, in the church today, those who have the discerning of spirits giftedness. It’s a greatly needed gift.

H. Tongues

Then, he mentions, in verse 10, the gift of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10)—*glossolalia*, speaking in tongues. The word *glossa* means “tongue” or “language.” In the back of your book is a glossary (in many books). That means it’s a listing of words, an explanations of words. And, what is the gift of tongues? The gift of tongues is a supernatural gift to praise God in a foreign language that you have never learned. On the day of Pentecost, the apostles who had this gift began to praise God, and people from every nation under Heaven that were there in Jerusalem heard them speak in his own language (Acts 2:6). They were praising God—not in an unknown tongue, but in a known tongue. The word *unknown* is supplied by the translators. It’s not there in the original; it simply is the word *tongue*—“language, a foreign language.” And, these people were impressed—they were impressed. They said, “How did you learn these languages?” “We never learned them.” The Bible says that “tongues are not for a sign to believers but to unbelievers” (1 Corinthians 14:22). Tongues are not a sign to God’s people about anything; they’re a sign to unbelievers. Paul said, “*I speak with tongues more than [you] all*” (1 Corinthians 14:18). Where did he do it? On the mission field.

And, God supernaturally gifted him. And, it may be that God would give you the gift to praise Him in a language that you've never learned to convince unbelievers, that they might come to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. The Interpretation of Tongues

Then, there's the gift of the interpretation of tongues. What is the gift of interpretation of tongues? Well, the word *interpretation* is a normal word, which means "the translation." If I were to stand up here today... Let's suppose that we had a busload of Russian tourists to come in here today. Let's say they're Russian Jews, because tongues were primarily a sign to Jews. And, let's say that they were to come into this service and sit down today, and suppose that God were to touch me and give me the ability, in perfect fluent Russian, to begin to praise God. I don't know Russian, but I begin to praise God in a foreign language. I begin to speak and say, "Jesus, You're wonderful. How I love You. I praise You." And, these people come to me, and they say, "Where did you learn Russian?" "I don't know Russian." Well friend, they are convinced that something supernatural is going on. But, how many of you know Russian—let me see your hand? All right. So, if I'm up here speaking in Russian, you're saying, "What on earth is the Pastor saying?" You don't know. Well then, he'd have to have the gift of interpretation—or somebody, because nobody's to be in the dark. I am praising God in a language I have never learned. You're interpreting a language supernaturally. God has given you the ability. And so, everybody is blessed, and everybody is convinced, and nobody is sitting in the dark.

These are spiritual gifts, and God does that. Now, does God still do that today? He can if He wants; He's God. And, I've resigned from being God. Now, let me tell you something, friend: God is God, and God can do whatever He wants whenever He wishes, but if He does do what He does, He's not going to contradict His Word right here in the Bible.

J. Ministry

"Well," you say, "Pastor, I've been going down the list, and I haven't found mine." All right. Just turn to Romans chapter 12, and let's look at the other list, because this is not the only list. Romans chapter 12—very quickly now; we're going to run very fast now—beginning in verse 4. He speaks of some more spiritual gifts: "*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*"—that is, "These are support gifts." Now, look in verse 6—"*Having then gifts [different]*"—all right. We're still on the same subject. Still tracking okay?—"*Having then gifts differing according to the grace*"—the word *grace*, *charismata*—"according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy" (Romans 12:4–6).

What is prophecy? We've already mentioned that. Might be your gift of preaching jail services, mission work, or ministry. Look, if you will, in verse 7: ministry is acts of service (Romans 12:7). And oh, we need this gift! Thank God for this gift. This is general church work—those who work in the activities program, those who type, those who usher, those who coach, those who work in the nursery. You say, “It doesn't take supernatural strength to work in the nursery.” Hello? Listen, the gift of ministry—a greatly needed gift. You ought to do... Every committee meeting, every choir practice, everything that we do ought to be done in the power of the Holy Spirit.

K. Teaching

Then, he mentions the gift of teaching. Thank God for the gift of teaching! Now, a gift of gab won't make you a teacher, but the Holy Spirit of God can. In Sunday School, whether you're a missionary teacher in mission organizations—if you're a mother, you might have the charismatic gift to teach your children at home—thank God, if you have it.

L. Exhortation

Then, he mentions the gift of exhortation. What is the gift of exhortation? It's greatly needed in the music ministry. Many of these folks behind me have the gift of exhortation. Have you ever heard a singer stand up here and sing—maybe not have the same voice quality that somebody else has, but when they sing, God is all over them, and the message just comes home to your heart, and you are blessed and moved? Why? Because it is more than just a display of beautiful music. They are exhorting you; they are firing you up. That's the gift of exhortation. If you have it, fine.

M. Giving

There's the gift of giving. I'm looking into the faces of some of you who have the gift of giving. Now, all of us are to give like all of us are to have faith. But, thank God, there is the gift of giving. What is the gift of giving? What is the gift of giving? It is the ability to make money, and to give money wisely, and to give money sacrificially. I have very few people who come up to me and say, “You know, my gift is giving.” But, I do know some who have said that—and, indeed, their gift it is.

N. Ruling

There's the gift of ruling. He mentions that here in this same passage. What is the gift of ruling? It is the ability to administrate. People on church staffs often have the gift of ruling—committee leaders, people in leadership. You might be a coach, and you're coaching for Jesus and leading boys and girls. And, you have the gift of ruling. It means administration and leadership.

O. Mercy

There's the gift of mercy. Oh, how we need the gift of mercy! And, maybe that is your gift. What is mercy? It is showing the love of Jesus Christ. These people who have the gift of mercy... And, we have many of them in our church, in hospital visitation, benevolence committees, in counseling. They're in the extension department, the care homes. They are the people who love and wrap arms of love around people. Thank God for a church that has the gifts of mercy.

III. The Discovery of Your Gift

Now, let me very, very quickly come to the third point. I've talked to you about the description of the gifts, the diversity of the gifts. Finally (and very quickly), let me talk to you about the discovery of your gift. How can you discover your gift? Let me give you three principles. You're here still in Romans chapter 12.

A. The Principle of Lordship

First of all is the principle of lordship. Look in Romans chapter 12, verses 1 and 2: *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service"*—now, he's talking about your service to the Lord, and he says—*"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 12:1–2). You want to find the will of God for your service? Then just present yourself to God. Say, "Lord, here I am—here I am." You see, your gift has to have the power to operate it.

Suppose you got married, and you got a lot of gifts. You got a waffle iron. You got a toaster. You got a blender. You got a television set. Then, you moved into an apartment, and there's no power. What good is the gift if you can't plug it in? You see, God gives you the gift when you get saved, but the gift begins to operate when you get the power to operate that gift. And, the power to operate that gift comes when you present yourself to the Lord Jesus Christ, and you say, "Here I am, Lord; I give myself to You." First principle is the principle of lordship.

B. The Principle of Stewardship

Second principle is the principle of stewardship. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: *"For I say, through the grace"*—the charisma—*"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 12:3–4). Three times there he says, "Think, think, think."

Now, God has given you a gift. You're to be a steward of that gift. You're not to sit, soak, and sour; but you're to say, "Now God, if You have given me a gift, what is my

gift?” Now, in verse 2, the Bible says that you’re going to renew your mind (Romans 12:2). Well, if God gave you a renewed mind, what do you think you ought to do with it? May I suggest that you think with it? Wouldn’t that be a good idea? If you have a renewed mind, wouldn’t it be a good idea, if you have a renewed mind, that you begin to think? And, how does he say to think? *“To think [not] more highly than [you] ought to think”* (Romans 12:3)—not to think that you don’t have; you know, not to say, “I have this gift, or I have that gift.” But, on the other hand, don’t say you don’t have a gift—you insult God. *“To think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man [a] measure of faith”* (Romans 12:3). God is giving you a gift; you’re a steward over it. There’s the principle of lordship, the principle of stewardship.

C. The Principle of Fellowship

Now, here’s the key, and the wonderful thing—there is the principle of fellowship. 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: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given [unto] us”* (Romans 12:4–5) and so forth.

Now, there is the principle of lordship, the principle of stewardship, and the principle of fellowship. Now, what does that mean? Well, in plain English—listen—in plain English, it means this: you belong to me, and I belong to you. You know how you can discover your gift? Let me tell you how you can discover your gift: get in the Body of Christ, and go to work. It’s hard to steer a ship that’s not moving. But, in the Body of Christ, as you operate, how does my hand know it is a hand? It can function in the body. How does my mouth know that my hand is a hand? My hand feeds my mouth. It’s a sad thing when somebody thinks he has the gift of preaching but nobody else has the gift of listening. Now, what I’m trying to say is this—that if God is giving you a gift, God will be confirming that gift to somebody else, and your gift is going to come out as you get in the church and you go to work. And, you’re going to find your brothers and sisters saying, “Would you do this? Would you help me here? May I talk to you? May I counsel with you? Would you please sing this song for me? Would you tell me what this verse of scripture means?” And, on and on, you’re going to find your gift coming to the surface—why? Because *“[we’re] members one of another”* (Ephesians 4:25).

And, you put those three principles together...the principle of lordship—you just say, “Lord, I present my body to You”—He’ll renew your mind. Then, the principle of stewardship: “God, if You gave me a gift, I’m going to think, ‘What is it that I like to do? What is it that I feel good about doing?’” You say, “Well, you know, Pastor, I am kind of bored with my Christianity. I’m a little frustrated in my Christianity.” Well, what are you doing? “Well, I’m coming, listening to you preach, and I’m going to a Sunday School

class, listening to someone teach.” Is that all you’re doing? You ought to be bored, and you ought to be frustrated. You need a ministry, and God has given you a gift. And, the word *charis* means both “grace” and it means “joy.” When your grace gift comes and you put it to work, then the joy of the Lord is going to begin to flow.

Conclusion

Boy, I hope you get what I had to say today—not because I’ve said it. Look around—just look. Can you imagine, Brother Bob, what would happen if everybody here discovered, and developed, and put his gift to work for Jesus? Wouldn’t that be wonderful? Oh, wouldn’t it be wonderful? And, we’d be helping and encouraging one another. O God, let it be—let it be.

Father, thank You for Your Word. We love You and praise You. In Jesus’ wonderful and holy name. Amen.

You Are a Gifted Child

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 23, 2000

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1–12

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Description of the Gifts
- II. The Distortion of the Gifts
- III. The Diversity of the Gifts
- IV. The Design of the Gifts
- V. The Distribution of the Gifts
 - A. Wisdom
 - B. Knowledge
 - C. Faith
 - D. Healing
 - E. Miracles
 - F. Prophecy
 - G. The Discerning of Spirits
 - H. Tongues
 - I. The Interpretation of Tongues
- VI. The Deployment of the Gifts

Conclusion

Introduction

In the Christian world, we've kind of divided people up into the clergy—that's those who are in full-time ministry—and the laity; these are the ones in the pew. A little girl was asked to define—describe—the clergy and the laity, and she said, "Well, the clergy are paid for being good; the laity are good for nothing." What I want to do is to help you not to be good for nothing but to be good for something. And, you may not realize it, but if you're saved, you have been called into the ministry. God has a ministry for each of us.

Take your Bibles and find 1 Corinthians chapter 12, where we were last Sunday. It's a wonderful chapter, and I want you to stay in that chapter with us, as we help you to unwrap your spiritual gift, for you are a gifted child. There are many people who say, "Well, I'm frustrated. I don't seem to be making any progress in my Christian life. I don't see any victory, and I don't have any joy." And, I say, "Well, what are you doing for Jesus?" "Well, I'm coming to church on Sunday morning. I'm sitting there. I'm listening to music. I'm singing songs and listening to my pastor preach." Your problem is, very

frankly, that you need to find a ministry. You need to discover your spiritual gift and put it to work for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. When I look at those in this building this morning—and this is only part of them, because in just a few moments another group will be here—when I look at these, I think, “Dear God, what would happen if all of these people, Brother Jimmy, were to put their spiritual gifts to work for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ?”

There are three kinds of people in every church: there are those who make things happen, those who watch things happen, and those who don't even know anything is happening. Now, I think probably most of those in this auditorium this morning are in the middle group. You are the watchers; you are the observers, but you have never really gone to work. Now, let me tell you why you need to do it.

Number one: the need is desperate. The gates of Hell—the slouch gates of Hell—have been opened, and there is a floodtide of filth, and debauchery, and demonism. And, militant atheism is on the march, and humanism is pervading our schools and is the order of the day. And, we need a revival—don't we?—a revival that cannot be explained by propaganda, and personality, and philosophy. Moral standards have fallen. In all of my ministry, all of my life, I have never seen the moral standards as low as they are—not only in America, but around the world. In America, we have liquorized society and glamorized adultery in our so-called “God-blessed America.” And, the sad thing is there is so much unconcern on the part of many who name the name of Christ. And, we sit in our services, and we listen to messages, and we go out, and we never, ever really get involved.

A wise man, some years ago, said that the average church is like those people at a football game. Down there on the field are 22 men desperately in need of rest, and up there in the stands are 50,000 people desperately in need of exercise. And, that's the way we have in our church. We have our church staffs—a few people who are doing so much—and then the rest, who are just sitting around. I'm telling you, friend, that the need is great and the hour is late. Oh, if we could only understand that! The sands of time are running out for this generation. We only have so many years, so many months, so many days, so many hours, perhaps only so many minutes before the end of all things is at hand. And, the hour, I want to tell you, is ripe.

Listen, in spite of the sin and the debauchery, there is a greater hunger for spiritual things today than in any time since I have been in the ministry, according to my humble but accurate opinion. I see people who are so hungry for the things of God. There is a move, I was reading in the newsmagazines recently—a new move toward spirituality. The false thing—the sad thing—is that people are turning to humanism, and new ageism, and false cults, because we have failed to declare the truth. But, it's like a game. The people are looking one more time, and they are asking this question: “Is

Jesus really the answer?” “Is the Bible true?” is what these people are saying—“Is it really true?”

Now, with all of that in mind, let’s think some about helping you to put some emphasis in your life, to fulfill the prayer that was sung to us this morning: “I want my life to count for Jesus. I’m tired of just sitting around, drawing my breath, drawing my salary, fighting to live while I live to fight. I want my life to count for Jesus.” Do you want your life to count? Are you just content to sit around, endure, until you die? One of these days—and soon—we’re going to give an account.

Now, God has called you to serve Him, and God has equipped you to serve Him; and the way that God has equipped you to serve Him is this: God has given to you a spiritual gift, and at least one. And, you’re to take that gift, discover it, develop it, and deploy it for Jesus.

I. The Description of the Gifts

Now look, if you will—1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 1: “*Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant*” (1 Corinthians 12:1). First point—the description of the gifts—the description of the gifts. These gifts are spiritual gifts. In verse 4 they are called *charismata*; that’s the word that’s translated “gifts” in verse 4 (1 Corinthians 12:4). And, what that means is they are charismatic gifts. *Charis* is the word for “grace.” They are grace gifts. Now, Paul says that you have a grace gift, and he says, “I don’t want you to be ignorant” (1 Corinthians 12:1). Education may cost, but ignorance will cost you far more. And, as I said earlier, the average Christian and the average church is saturated with ignorance when it comes to spiritual gifts.

Now, when I’m talking about the gifts—the description of gifts—remember, I’m not talking to you about material gifts. If I were to tell you who wants—or ask you, “Who wants to be a millionaire?” you’d all perk up. You’d say, “Yeah, I want to be a millionaire.” Well, I’m talking to you about something far more valuable, but the devil has clouded your mind. I’m not talking about material gifts.

I’m not talking about natural talent. It’s obvious that Brian Arner has a natural talent. He could take that voice and sing somewhere else. He could sing in nightclubs; he could sing in the theater or whatever, but he also has a spiritual gift to go with that voice. We’re not talking about natural talents. Natural talents come from God. You have natural talents.

But, what I’m talking about now is supernatural ability that comes from God. When you get saved, you have natural talents, but you have supernatural gifts; and so, you are naturally supernatural. And, as a Christian, you ought to be supernatural and not superficial, because God has gifted you. The description of the gifts is that they are spiritual gifts. They are *charismata*; they are grace gifts. They are not earned; they are

not learned. They are given, and God has given you a gift. That's the first point.

II. The Distortion of the Gifts

Now, here's the second point—the distortion of the gifts. Notice, again, now in verse 2: *“I would not have you [to be] ignorant”*—he says in verse 1—*“Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost”* (1 Corinthians 12:1–3).

Now, evidently, there was a lot of craziness going on in Corinth. Corinth was a very carnal church. And so, Paul says, “Look, let's get rid of this ignorance. There are all kinds of strange things happening here. Spiritual gifts are being distorted.” And, do you know what the devil wants to do? The devil wants to give the Holy Spirit a bad name. The devil wants to take something that is good and distort it and pervert it. And, by the way, the devil is a pervert. The devil has no raw material; God made everything. So, anything that is bad is a perversion of that which was once good, because God made everything.

So, the devil wants to take spiritual gifts and distort spiritual gifts. And, we see this happening today in America—people saying, “Oh Pastor, have you heard about the revival going on in thus-and-such a place or thus-and-such a place?” All kinds of strange things are happening—people falling down and being, as it were, glued to the floor; some of them indecently exposed, some of them laughing maniacally, out of control; some roaring like lions and barking like dogs. And, somebody says, “Hallelujah! Revival has come!” That's the way the people in Corinth were to begin with. He said they were *“carried away”* (1 Corinthians 12:2). They were led away by these dumb idols. Some would get in such a frenzy they would even curse Jesus and call Him accursed.

Listen friend—let me tell you something about real revival: real revival is never seen by the gifts of the Spirit; real revival is seen by the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, and mercy, and long-suffering (Galatians 5:22). Real revival doesn't put you out of control; real revival brings you under the control of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes people say, “Well, I was just carried away. I couldn't help it.” You'd better read 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 32: the Bible says, *“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”* (1 Corinthians 14:32). I've been in services sometimes where somebody would disturb the service and say, “Well, God just came on me.” No, *“the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”* (1 Corinthians 14:32). And, again, Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 14 and verse 40: *“Let all things be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:40). And so, anytime you find worship that draws away from the Lord Jesus Christ—even worship that magnifies the Holy Spirit rather than the Lordship of

Jesus—that worship is false. No one can say that Jesus is Lord but by the Holy Ghost.

What is the office work of the Holy Spirit? John chapter 16—put it in your margin—verses 13 and 14: Jesus, speaking of the Holy Spirit, says, *“Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he [will] not speak of himself”*—that is, He’s not going to magnify Himself. He’s not going to say, “Look at Me”—*“but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: [for] he [shall] shew you things to come. He shall glorify me”*—that’s what Jesus said—*“He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and...shew it unto you”* (John 16:13–14). Any movement or any teaching that has the Holy Spirit for a figurehead is distorted. I love the Holy Spirit. He lives in me. I rejoice in the dear Spirit of God, and I can say with Isaiah, *“The Spirit of the Lord...is upon me; [for] the LORD hath anointed me to preach”* (Isaiah 59:21). But, when you see a parade, you’ll never see the Holy Spirit leading that parade, if it’s a spiritual parade. You’ll see Jesus leading the parade and the Holy Spirit standing on the sideline saying, “Look at Him. Look at Him. Look at Him.”

No, you don’t go beyond Jesus to the Holy Spirit. Some people think that. That’s foolishness. Friend, you’ll never go beyond Jesus. You may go deeper into Jesus, but you’ll never go beyond Jesus. And, don’t let anybody come along with some phony teaching that takes away from the glory of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Colossians 1:18: *“And he”*—Jesus—*“is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things”*—*“all things”*—*“he [may] have the preeminence.”* You want to know whether or not this church is Spirit-filled? Whether my preaching is Spirit-filled? Whether your music is Spirit-filled? Whether your gift is operating? Does it give pre-eminence to Jesus Christ? That’s it. Don’t let your gift be distorted.

III. The Diversity of the Gifts

Now, we described the description of the gifts—they’re spiritual gifts, *charismata*—the distortion of the gifts—the devil tries to distort it because he doesn’t want you to understand it. Now, number three: let’s think about the diversity of the gifts. Look, if you will, in verses 4 and following: *“Now there are diversities of gifts”*—what does the word *diversities* mean? Just “different kinds”—that’s all that means—*“but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all”* (1 Corinthians 12:4–6).

Now, take your Bible. Look at it. In verse 4, you find the word *gifts* (1 Corinthians 12:4); in verse 5, the word *administrations* (1 Corinthians 12:5); and in verse 6, you find the word *operations* (1 Corinthians 12:6). Do you see it? Gifts, administrations, and operations. Now, the gifts speak of God’s provision. God has given you a gift. Administrations speak of God’s purpose. God gave you a gift for a purpose. And,

operations is the word we get our word *energy* from—speaks of God’s power. So, God makes a provision. God has a purpose for that provision, and God gives you power so that you might fulfill the purpose of that provision that God has given you. And so, there is a diversity of gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4). What we have in this diversity is unity in diversity. God wants unity in diversity.

Now, when Joyce and I got married, we got all kinds of gifts. And do many couples here in America when they get married. It’s a custom. I went to one of these parties the other night, and people bring gifts. They bring waffle irons, and they bring blenders, and they bring toasters, and they bring all these can openers—all of these things—and coffee makers. These are all gifts. And, these gifts—they have different functions, and they have different capacities; but they all have to be plugged in (the kind I’m talking about). They don’t operate without the power. Now, it’s the same power that operates them all, but they all have different functions and different capacities. And, that’s what Paul is saying about the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ: we have different capacities; we have different functions, but it is the same Spirit. We’re all plugged in to Him. And, what you need to do is plug in your spiritual gift. Your ministry is your place of service.

Now, it is unity in diversity. Diversity in a church is not bad; it is good. Division is bad. Now, unity is good. And, what is unity? *Unity is not unison. This choir has sung this morning in unity but not necessarily in unison. They’ve sung different parts, and that’s what makes it beautiful.* God doesn’t want us all to be alike. We’re not a congregation of clones. God makes us different. And so, unity is not unison. Unity is not uniformity—not everybody doing the same thing. That’s not unity. That kind, if you ever see the goose-stepping following Hitler, that’s uniformity. That comes from pressure from without. Unity comes from life from within. We all share the same Holy Spirit. It is not even union. You say, “Well, we’re all members of the same church.” That’s union but not necessarily unity. All the corpses in one graveyard are not going to cause the resurrection. No, it is the unity of the Spirit. You see, we’ve talked about the description of these gifts. We’ve talked about the distortion of these gifts. We’ve talked about, dear friend, the diversity of these gifts. There are *“diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:4). Do you see that in verse 4? Good.

IV. The Design of the Gifts

Now, let’s think about the design of the gifts. What is God’s design? What purpose does God have for your spiritual gift? Well, look now in verse 7: *“But the manifestation of the Spirit”—*that is, “the outworking of the Spirit,” “the manifestation of the Spirit”—*“is given to every man”—*that is, “all of us have a gift.” He’s talking about mankind—*“to profit”* (1 Corinthians 12:7). Now, in the King James, it says *“withal”* (1 Corinthians 12:7). Now, what does that mean? It means, “to profit the entire body.” Your gift is not a selfish gift.

Your gift is not a means to an end—excuse me, your gift is not a means in-and-of itself but a means to an end. So many people think that their spiritual gift is something for their enjoyment. Your spiritual gift is not for your enjoyment; your spiritual gift is for your employment. Your spiritual gift is a tool, not a toy. And, God gives you a spiritual gift, that you might do a job and to get that job done in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, if I have a gift, it's going to bless you. If you have a gift, it's going to bless me. And, we're going to bless one another.

When I was studying for this sermon, I looked this text up—verse 7—in some other translations. Let me give you one: Phillips, for example—“Each man is given his gift by the Spirit, that he may use it for the common good” (1 Corinthians 12:7). That's what it means “to profit withal”—“that he may use it for the common good.” It's not some introverted, self-centered gift. Conybeare translates it this way: “But the gift, whereby the Spirit becomes manifested, is given to each for the profit of all”—“given to each for the profit of all” (1 Corinthians 12:7). That is the design of the gifts. And, there's so much selfishness in the church today, and people are asking always, “What's in it for me?”

I've told you before about the lady who took a first aid course. Later on, she came back. They were having testimonials. She said, “I am so glad I took my course in first aid.” She said, “Out in front of my house there was a terrible automobile wreck. An old man, driving a car, went up the curb and hit an oak tree—was thrown out of the car. When I got out there, his head was crushed like an eggshell; his eyes were rolling around in pools of blood. He was in a state of shock, pumping his life's blood out on the asphalt.” She said, “It was horrible.” But, she said, “I remembered my first aid. I remembered if I would put my head between my knees, I wouldn't faint.” That's the kind of theology we have today, which is really “me-ology.” People are just thinking about themselves.

Your spiritual gift is given to you to profit the entire body.

[To] rescue the perishing, care for the dying,

Weep o'er the erring one, lift up the fallen [one],

[To] tell them of Jesus, the mighty to save (Frances J. Crosby).

That's why you have a spiritual gift. Now, the gift, therefore, is designed that you might be a blessing to this entire church. And, God wants you to be a blessing to this church and, therefore, to make a church—this church—a blessing in this community and make this community a blessing to the world.

V. The Distribution of the Gifts

Now, let's think next about the distribution of the gifts. We've talked about the design. Look at the distribution. How are they distributed? Well, they're distributed by the Holy Spirit. Look in verse 8: “For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another

the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; [and] to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Corinthians 12:8–11). Who distributes the gifts? The Holy Spirit of God. You don’t decide this; He sovereignly decides. He chooses the gift. And, no need for you to go around asking God for a spiritual gift. If you’re saved, He’s already given you the gift. He has... Your gift was a birthday gift; it came on the day of your spiritual birthday, when you were born again. My brown eyes came with me when I was born, and that’s a natural characteristic. Your spiritual gift is a supernatural characteristic, and it came when you were baptized into the Body of Christ.

Now, all you do is to discover the gift and develop the gift that God has already given you. Do you ever watch a little baby discover his hands? It’s an amazing thing. He comes with those hands. You never go to the hospital and say, “Now, put the hands on.” He comes with that. But, there comes a time when a child just discovers those little hands and so forth. Your hands came when you were born; they’re birthday presents. When the Holy Spirit came into you and put you into the Body of Christ, He didn’t come in empty-handed; He came in with a gift. Put this scripture down—1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 10: *“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another”—“as every man hath received the gift”—“as good stewards of the manifold grace of God”—“[charisma] of God” (1 Peter 4:10).* So, every man has received that gift.

A. Wisdom

Now, let’s look at some of the gifts that the Holy Spirit has distributed. For example, in verse 8, he speaks of wisdom (1 Corinthians 12:8). Do you see it there? What is wisdom? Now, it’s not just being smart, and it’s not even what some person would call a *worldly wisdom*. It is not natural sense; it is not common sense. It is uncommon sense. There are certain people who just spiritually have the gift of wisdom, and these are the kinds of people—and I know some people—that if I ever need a problem... And, I can think of some in this congregation. I will not embarrass them by calling their names, but I believe they have the gift of wisdom. And, I speak with those people when I want guidance or insight—I’ll talk to those people. If a person has the gift of wisdom, they make wonderful, wonderful counselors. That may be one of the gifts that you have.

B. Knowledge

And then, he mentions, in verse 8, the gift of knowledge (1 Corinthians 12:8). And, actually, in the Greek language, it is “a word of knowledge.” It doesn’t mean if a person has the gift of knowledge, he knows everything. Nobody knows everything. Nobody

knows one-tenth of one percent of anything, but we have a gift of knowledge. It's literally "a word of knowledge," just like in law you might have a word of law or a point of law. This is the ability to know things that you could not know other than by divine intuition. It is not something that's learned from school; it's not something that you get from memory. It is God giving insight. The devil counterfeits this gift—and by the way, the devil counterfeits all of these gifts. The counterfeit of this gift is what we call *clairvoyance*. But, there is a gift of knowledge that you can know things by divine revelation that you could not know any other way.

For example, how did Simon Peter know that Ananias and Sapphira were lying in Acts chapter 5? He said, "[You've not] lied unto men, but unto [the Holy Ghost]" (Acts 5:4). How did Peter know that? He had the word of knowledge—the word of knowledge. God just told him that. I think God has given me, sometimes, a little blip into this. I was preaching one time in a town and in a revival meeting. And, in the service, someone came down the aisle, and took a man about the third row there, and tapped him on the shoulder, and led him out. And, the man happened to be the sheriff. I said, "There goes Sheriff So-and-so. Most likely there's been an automobile accident, and liquor has been involved, and somebody's been killed." Well, why would I say that? I had no idea about that. That night, there was a knock on my motel door. That man came and said, "I need to get saved." And, he said, "You remember what you said?" He said, "I went out there, and an automobile had hit a logging truck. Somebody had been killed. I looked in the automobile. There was a broken whisky bottle, and the man that was killed was the man that ran against me for sheriff of this county." He said, "I need to get saved." He did get saved. I don't think that is my gift. I think that was just a blip on the horizon. I don't have that gift, but I think I understand something about how that gift works.

C. Faith

Then, there's the gift of faith in verse 9 (1 Corinthians 12:9). Now, when it talks about faith there, he's not talking about natural faith or even supernatural faith that all of us have. You know, the Bible says, "God [has] dealt to every man [a] measure of faith" (Romans 12:3). But, there is this superabundant faith—the gift of faith. You read about it in the next chapter: "Though I have...faith, so that I could remove mountains" (1 Corinthians 13:2). If God wants you to move mountains, He'll give you mountain-moving faith. Not all of us have mountain-moving faith. I like to be around people who have mountain-moving faith, don't you? I really do. I believe we need a mountain-moving, devil-defying, earth-shaking faith in God. And, thank God for some people who have that kind of faith. I know some people, I think, that are gifted with that faith.

If you want a blessing, read about Müller of Bristol. He was a man who lived in Bristol, England. He had incredible faith. He raised, literally, millions and millions of

dollars, when a million dollars was something, to feed orphans, without ever asking anybody—just telling God about his needs. The story of his life is incredible. One episode that I remember reading about—Müller was on a ship—a sailing ship. He was going to Newfoundland. He was supposed to speak, and the ship stopped in the middle of the ocean. And, Müller said to the captain, “Why is this ship stopped?” He said, “We can’t move because of the fog.” Müller said, “But, I’ve got to be there. I’ve got a speaking engagement. I’ve not missed a speaking engagement. It’s God’s will for me to be there.” And, the captain said, “I’m not going to move this ship until the fog lifts.” He said, “Very well, let’s go to the chartroom and pray that God will take away the fog.” The captain said he went with him just to humor him. He got down on his knees, and Müller said, “God, the captain says he’ll not move this ship until the fog is gone. And, I’ve got an appointment, and we need to move this ship. So Father, in Jesus’s name, take away the fog. Thank You, Lord.” The captain said, “I started to pray,” and he said, “No, don’t you pray.” He said, “Why not?” He said, “Two reasons—number one, you don’t believe He’s going to do it; number two, He’s already done it.” And, the captain gave the story, not Müller. The captain said, “I got up and looked, and the fog was gone—the fog was gone.” Now, that’s a gift that some people have. Not everybody has that kind of faith, but thank God for those who have that kind of faith. The devil will counterfeit that kind of faith, also.

D. Healing

And then, he mentions healing in verse 9 (1 Corinthians 12:9). Actually, it’s in the plural—*healings*. “Now Adrian, do you believe God heals?” Absolutely. God heals by miracle, and God heals by medicine. God heals instantaneously, and God heals in time. And, God heals by doctors, and thank God for doctors. For Jesus said, “*They that [are] whole need not a physician, but they that are sick*” (Matthew 9:12). And yes, there is a gift of healings. The apostles had the gift of healing. I don’t know anybody today who has the gift of healing. I’d like to meet him. I wouldn’t put him on stage somewhere and let people come by; I’d take him to the hospital—to the little children’s ward is where I’d take him and just see whether or not he has this gift of healing that he brags about. In my estimation, I believe the hottest part of Hell is reserved for people who merchandise people’s maladies, and sicknesses, and pains with some charlatan act of healing. I believe in healing—I believe in healing. But oh, may God have mercy on those who make merchandise of other people in this particular area!

And, let me say this—that when Jesus died, not only did He take your sins—He took your sickness. And, the Bible says, “*With his stripes we are healed*” (Isaiah 53:5). But, we’re waiting for the redemption of the body. Read Romans chapter 8 (Romans 8:23). That has not yet come, but it will come. Hallelujah! And, there are, nonetheless, the gifts

of healing, and I thank God for that. And, God does heal today in answer to prayer and in many ways.

E. Miracles

Now, he also mentions also the gift of miracles in verse 10 (1 Corinthians 12:10). These miracles normally came in clusters in the Bible. There were miracles, obviously, around the creation, miracles around the ministry of Moses, miracles around the ministry of Elijah and Elisha, miracles with Jesus and the apostles, and there may be end-time miracles. And, I certainly am not opposed to miracles. I don't know anybody today that has the gift of miracles, but I would not deny God's ability in that area. I don't think it's a very good miracle so far as bringing the lost of Jesus. As a matter of fact, Jesus had to rebuke the miracle mongers of His day who followed Him—not because of who He was but because of what He did.

But, I'll tell you a verse that is a wonderful verse to me—is John chapter 10, verses 41 and 42, which speaks of John the Baptist. Was John the Baptist filled with the Holy Spirit? You'd better believe it. The Bible says he was filled with the Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). What does that do to your theology? But now, listen to this: it says, concerning Jesus, in John chapter 10, verse 41: *“And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle”*—talking about John the Baptist—*“John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there”* (John 10:41–42). It wasn't the miracle that John did; it was Jesus that John preached that was the wonderful thing. I had rather have it said about me that many believed on Jesus through my word than that I had the power to do miracles. I mean that with all of my heart, because that is the lasting miracle—that new birth, the greatest miracle of all.

F. Prophecy

Then, he mentions prophecy in verse 10 (1 Corinthians 12:10). What is prophecy? Prophecy is the ability to speak for God. It's not merely foretelling, though some of that is included; it is forth-telling. It is speaking the Word of God. Now, some have the gift of prophecy. And, as a matter of fact, in chapter 14, Paul says this is a gift greatly to be desired among the church (1 Corinthians 14:5). And, there are a lot of ideas—misinformation—about prophecy. There are some people who, today, claim to have the office of a prophet. No, the office of a prophet is no longer. The Church is built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. You don't keep laying the foundation every story. But, there is a gift of prophecy.

What is the gift of prophecy? I hear some people say, “Well, my gift is prophecy,” and they think they are anointed by God to tell other people off: “I have the gift of prophecy.” No, no—that's not what the gift of prophecy is. As a matter of fact—quite to the contrary. If you read there in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 3: *“he that prophesieth*

speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort” (1 Corinthians 14:3). That’s not telling folks off. To edify is to build up. To exhort is to fire up. To comfort is to shore up and to hold up. That’s what a prophet does, and that’s what is needed so much in the Church today. There’s the gift of prophecy.

G. The Discerning of Spirits

And then, he mentions the gift of the discerning of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). We need to learn that everything, as I’ve said before, everything that is spiritual is not of God. There is spiritual wickedness, and demons are masters of deception. This is also a greatly needed gift in the Church of our Lord today, because the devil has come with so much counterfeit flim-flam in the Church today. We need somebody and some bodies with the gift of discerning. Now, it’s not the ability to go ’round, and judge people, and say who’s saved and who’s lost. That’s not your prerogative to do that, and Matthew 7:1 warns against that.

H. Tongues

And then, he mentions the gift of tongues in verse 10 (1 Corinthians 12:10). What is the gift of tongues? The gift of tongues is not primarily a prayer language where you speak in ecstatic speech and don’t know what you’ve said and you’ll never know whether or not God has answered your prayer. That’s not what the gift of tongues is in the Bible. Speaking in tongues—other languages—is not a sign that you’re Spirit-filled. As a matter of fact, the Corinthian church was Paul’s most carnal church, and tongues were their long suit of clothes. Tongues is not a sign that you’re saved; it’s not a sign that you’re Spirit-filled. As a matter of fact, tongues is not a sign to God’s people about anything. Tongues is a sign to the unsaved. First Corinthians 14:22: *“Wherefore tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not”* (1 Corinthians 14:22).

What is it—the gift of tongues? It is the ability to speak in a language you have never learned—not an unknown language but a known language. The word *unknown* that you have in your King James Version is in italicized print, which means it’s not in the original. The translators only supplied that to make it read more smoothly, but here they covered the meaning. It is a known language. Turn to Acts chapter 2: *“how hear we every man in our own [language], wherein we were born?”* (Acts 2:8). It is the ability to praise God in a language that you’ve never, ever learned, as a sign to unbelievers. That’s what the gift of tongues is.

And, what is the sign that you’re filled with the Holy Spirit? Not that you have the gift to speak in languages you don’t know, but you control the one tongue you do have. I’m serious. That’s what he’s saying in the next chapter: *“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, it profits me nothing”* (1 Corinthians 13:3).

“The fruit of the Spirit is love” (Galatians 5:22). And, if you want to know of a man that’s filled with the Holy Spirit, see if his heart is filled with love. But, there was in that day, in New Testament times, the ability to speak in unknown languages—not unknown to others but unknown to you. And, that is a charismatic gift of the Spirit.

I. The Interpretation of Tongues

And then, he mentions in verse 10 the interpretation of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:10). Why is that? Well, remember what a spiritual gift is for? That everybody be profited, right? Now, if you stand up here—if Mark stands up here and begins to speak in Russian—what good is that going to do me? I don’t know Russian. I know a few Russian words, but I don’t know Russian. But, suppose a bus pulls up there this morning filled with Russian Jews, and they’re now visiting America. And, someone says, “You want to go to a Protestant church, an evangelical church?” “Yes, we do—see how they worship in America.” And, they come in here, and they’ve never heard... They don’t understand English.” I don’t understand Russian. But, suppose I had the gift of tongues, and I began to praise God in fluent Russian. Fine, wonderful, glorious. They say, “Look at that.” They’re amazed. But, you don’t know Russian. So, if I have that gift, then God’s got to give him, or you, or you, or somebody else the gift of interpretation to say, “This is what the pastor is saying.” Why? So that everybody is edified—everybody understands—because every gift is what? Given to profit the entire body. Nobody is sitting around in the dark while somebody is doing something that somebody else can’t understand. It’s a sign—gift—to unbelievers. It is a supernatural gift.

Some people say that tongues have ceased. Well, perhaps, but I think there are two heresies concerning tongues: one is to say, “You must,” and the other is to say, “You mustn’t.” God is God. God can do whatever He wants to do, whenever He wants to do it.

Now, time is gone, would you believe? You’ve listened very slowly, this morning. I know many of you are saying, “Pastor, you never got to my gift.” And, I have a passage. We were going to go to Romans chapter 12 (Romans 12), and I was going to give some other gifts: ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, ruling, and mercy—describe those gifts. Very frankly, I’ll have to do that in another message. But, you do have a spiritual gift. Maybe your gift is the gift of ruling, and you serve on a church staff, committees, or coach a team. The gift of mercies—to visit in the hospital. Maybe it’s the gift of giving. Maybe it’s the gift of exhortation. I believe Brian Arner has, among other gifts—I don’t know him very intimately, but I certainly think he has—the gift of exhortation—that is, “to move hearts”—along with his natural ability. Perhaps you have the gift of teaching. You taught this morning in Sunday School. Perhaps you, as a mother, are teaching your children. You have the gift of ministry, acts of service, church work, activities programs, typing,

ushering, working in the nursery. These are also charismatic, spiritual gifts.

VI. The Deployment of the Gifts

Now, think of the deployment of the gifts. And, look, if you will, now in verse 12: *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ”* (1 Corinthians 12:12). You see, God brings us together as a body. Some are eyes, some are ears, some are feet, some are this, some are that. We all have different gifts, and yet those gifts are to be put to work in the Body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, you want to know what your spiritual gift is? You will discover your spiritual gift in the context of the Body of Christ. I had no idea that God would want me. And, by the way, I think my gift is prophecy. That’s what I think my gift is. How did I know that? I was a dumb football player. God called—not all football players are dumb, just this one—and God called me into the ministry. Upon a time, as a young person, in my church, they said, “Adrian, we want you to be the youth week pastor.” I was scared petrified, but I got up and mumbled out a few words. And, people said, “Hey, we were blessed by that”—“we were blessed by that.” “Thank you.” “Do it again—again.” You know, it’s sad to see somebody who thinks he has the gift of preaching and nobody else has the gift of listening. You’re going to find out that... You’re going to find your gift operating in the Body.

Bill Gothard has a classic illustration. With this I must close: he imagines a party, and they’re getting ready to serve the dessert. And, the person bringing the beautiful dessert to the table makes a miscue, and the dessert falls on the floor. There is the episode. Now, here’s how the different gifts may come into practice: the person who has the gift of prophecy says, “That’s what happens when you’re not careful.” A person who has the gift of mercy says, “Hey, don’t feel bad. Anybody could do that.” A person who has the gift of service says, “Hey, let me help you to clean it up.” A person who has the gift of teaching says, “The reason it fell—it was too heavy on one side. Next time put it in the middle.” The person who has the gift of exhortation says, “From now on, let’s just serve the dessert first and put it in the middle of the table so it won’t fall.” The person who has the gift of giving says, “Wait a minute. I’ll buy a new dessert.” And, the person who has the gift of administration says, “Jim, get the mop. Sue, please help pick it up. Mary, you go fix some more dessert.” Now—hey, folks—that’s a great illustration. You see how all of these different gifts are necessary and how they all work together.

Well, I wish I had more time, but let me say this: you are a gifted child. God doesn’t want you just to sit in Bellevue. And, your life is going to be meaningless, to a degree, until you discover your spiritual gift. It is said that Napoleon, one time, looked at China on a map. And, this angel of war, Napoleon, took his pointer and pointed toward China,

that vast area with its hordes of people. And, Napoleon said, “Gentlemen, there lies a sleeping giant. Let him sleep, for if he awakens, he will disturb the world. Let him sleep.” I believe that the devil looks at Bellevue Baptist Church, and he says to his demons, “There’s a sleeping giant. Let it sleep, because if it ever really stirs, it’s going to turn Memphis upside down.” God has given you a spiritual gift, and the only way you can discover your spiritual gift is to have it, and the only way you can have it is to be saved; and the only way you can be saved is to put your faith in Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want to lead you in a prayer. And today, if you’ve never done it, you can receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. And, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, if you will trust Him with sincere faith, He will forgive your sins, He will come into your heart and give you a new nature, protect you and guide you through this life, and when you die, He’ll take you to Heaven. Would you pray: “Dear God, I need You, and I want You. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, right now. I believe You are 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, and by faith I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Forgive my sins, cleanse me, save me, Jesus”? Pray it from your heart.

Did you? Thank Him by faith, now: “Thank You for saving me. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You’re my Lord and my Savior. And, because You died for me, I will live for You; and because You’ve saved me by Your grace, I will serve You with my love. And, I will never be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Unity Through Diversity

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 18, 1981

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1–13

Outline

Introduction

- A. The Holy Spirit Is a Gift to the Church
 - B. Spiritual Gifts Are the Holy Spirit's Gifts to Man
 - I. There Are Diversities of Endowments
 - A. Wisdom
 - B. Knowledge
 - C. Faith
 - D. Healing
 - E. Miracles
 - F. Prophecy
 - G. Discerning of Spirits
 - H. Tongues
 - I. Interpretation of Tongues
 - J. Ministry
 - K. Teaching
 - L. Exhortation
 - M. Giving
 - N. Ruling
 - O. Mercy
 - II. There Are Diversities of Expressions
 - III. There Are Diversities of Effects
- Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles, now, tonight, and turn, if you will, to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, as we're continuing to think on the theme of the Body of Christ. The Body of Christ today is geared so that it will lead normally and naturally into Operation Discovery. Operation Discovery is just simply the Church's way of helping you to discover your natural talents and your spiritual gifts—but not only helping you to discover them, but helping us to uncover them, so that we, in God's timing, may be calling upon you and putting you to work through your church. Everybody ought to be put to work through His work. "God hath put every member in the Body, as it hath pleased Him" (1 Corinthians 12:18). That means that every member in the Body is important to the health and the welfare of the Body.

Now, a Body is unity through diversity—a Body is unity through diversity. Now, I want us to read here the first 13 verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 12: *“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant. Ye know that ye were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb idols, even as ye were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit”—*and that verse right there teaches the theme of what I have to say, “Unity Through Diversity.” Notice diversity and sameness, both in the same sentence—*“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God [that] worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ”—“so also is [the body of] Christ”* (1 Corinthians 12:1–12). And so, if these verses teach us anything, they teach us unity through diversity.

The fact is not the organization of the Church is an organism; but being an organism, it must be organized. Your body is an organism, but your body is organized. It just so happens that your eyes are up here rather than on the bottom of your foot, and your thumb is in just to position to your little finger. Did you know that human beings are the only ones that have a thumb that can do that? You see, that’s a form of God’s organization. And, because you have a thumb that can do that, you have been able to do things that no animal can do. I could spend a lot of time talking about doing things that no animal will do. But anyway, somebody said, “Man’s the only animal that can blush, and he’s the only one that needs to.” But, we...and that’s true. None of the other animals blush. Did you know that? Only man can blush, but man is the only one, really, I think that needs to. But, you see, we are an organism. My body is an organism; but because it’s an organism, it is organized.

Now, you see, a church should be an organism that is organized. Now, a church is either going to be supernatural or it’s going to be superficial. A church ought to be supernatural—that is, it ought to have the life of God in it. Now, a graveyard is organized, but it’s certainly not alive. And, a church can be organized, and we can go around and do things in the power of the flesh. And, as the Lord spoke of the church in the Book of the Revelation—the church at Sardis, I believe, *“Thou hast a name that*

thou livest, and art dead” (Revelation 3:1). So, if we are not supernatural, we, indeed, are going to be superficial.

Now, I want us to think a little bit about the Holy Spirit as a gift to the Church; and then, I want us to think a little bit about the gifts of the Holy Spirit to the Church.

A. The Holy Spirit Is a Gift to the Church

Now, the Holy Spirit Himself is the gift—God’s gift to the Church. We receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of our salvation. Look in chapter 12, verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Now, notice it says, *“For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one Body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). That tells me immediately that we receive the Holy Spirit when we get saved, otherwise Paul could not say, *“For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one Body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13), because if some have the Spirit and others did not the Spirit, he’d have to say, *“For by one Spirit have some of you been baptized into one Body.”* But, we know that the baptism of the Holy Spirit comes coincidentally and simultaneously with salvation, or Paul could not say, *“For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one Body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). When do we receive the Holy Spirit? We receive the Holy Spirit when we receive Christ.

Now, just keep your finger there in 1 Corinthians chapter 12; and turn to Acts chapter 2, and look in verse 38 for just a moment—Acts chapter 2 and verse 38. On the Day of Pentecost, God worked in miraculous, supernatural power, so much that those unsaved people who were there, first of all, were brought to amazement. They were all amazed. And then, they asked a question: *“Men and brethren, what must we tell them to be saved?”* The first question they asked is, *“What meant this?”* The second question is, *“What must we do?”* You know, the problem in the modern-day Church is we’ve not done anything to cause them to be so amazed that they ask, *“What does this mean?”* And so, consequently, they’re not asking, *“What must we do?”* Now, I believe we’d have plenty of people asking the second question, if we could cause them to ask the first question, don’t you? If there’s something that would happen in our church that could not be explained by personality, propaganda, or promotion—something that is absolutely inexplicable apart from the working of the dear Holy Spirit of God? And so, they ask, *“Men and brethren, what must we do?”* And, this is what Peter said in Acts chapter 2 and verse 38—look at it: he said, *“Then said Peter unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive”—not might, but shall receive—“the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38).

Now, the gift of the Holy Ghost is not some spiritual gift; it is the Holy Ghost Himself. The Holy Ghost is God’s gift to you. When you repent of your sins and trust Christ as

your personal Savior, and when you are baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, at that moment you receive the Holy Spirit of God. As a matter of fact, the mark that you are a Christian is not your profession of salvation; the mark that you're a Christian is your possession of the Spirit.

There were some people in the Book of Acts that Paul had to reason to tell whether they were saved or not. I want you to turn to Acts chapter 19 for a moment, and look, if you will, in verses 1 and 2—Acts chapter 19, verses 1 and 2. And, incidentally, we're going to do a lot of looking tonight, so just lick your fingers and let them do the walking through the sacred pages. All right, Luke chapter—excuse me, Acts chapter 19... In Acts chapter 19, Paul asked a very poignant question—and a very poignant question and a very personal question to some people—in verse 1: *“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples”*—now, don't take it for granted that every disciple is saved. The word *disciple* just simply means, “learner; persons who are studying.” And—*“He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”*—now, that's a little misleading translation there. And, it should be translated or could be translated—or more aptly read, “Have you received the Holy Spirit, having believed?” In other words, “When you believe—when you believe—did you receive the Holy Ghost?”—*“And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus”*—these people really didn't understand what John the Baptist was trying to do. John the Baptist was trying to point them to Jesus—*“[And] when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (Acts 19:1–5).

Now, I could go on and talk about this verse, but I don't want to linger here because I have so much to say. The point I'm trying to make is this: that Paul was not so primarily interested in their profession of salvation as he was their possession of the Spirit. The mark that you're a Christian is that you possess the Holy Spirit. You receive Him when you believe. As God spoke through Peter in Acts 2:38: *“Repent, and be baptized...in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38). “For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into one Body...and have all been made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

B. Spiritual Gifts Are the Holy Spirit's Gifts to Man

So, if you're going to understand spiritual gifts—and let's go back now to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, lest we get too far astray—but if you're going to understand spiritual gifts, you're going to have to learn, first of all, to differentiate between the gift of the Spirit,

which is the Holy Spirit Himself, God's gift to you—and now, the gift of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit Himself. God gave Him to you when you got saved—but the gifts of the Spirit are those God-given abilities that the Holy Spirit gave to you when God gave you to Him. That is, when the Holy Spirit came into you, the Holy Spirit did not come in empty-handed; He came in with a spiritual gift.

Now, as we're thinking about the idea of unity and diversity, there are three major things that I want you to see—and a lot of other things. And, I just decided tonight—I came with so much material that I was just going to preach until it was quitting time and quit wherever it was. Amen. Okay, now, I don't know where it's going to end. Dr. Lee used to say my sermons are like bologna and sausage: you can cut them off anywhere, and they're still good. So, that's what I'm going to... I have got enough stuff here tonight—I know that I know that I could stand up here for four hours. I'm not going to do it, so relax. All right, but I just want to... I've got so much in my heart I want to share with you about finding your place in the Body and discovering what the spiritual endowment that God has given you. But, I am seeing now, as I'm looking at what Sidlow Baxter calls "the enemy which is the clock," I'm saying that we're not going to be able to get much more across except the fact that being a part of the Body of Christ is a glorious experience of seeing unity in diversity.

I. There Are Diversities of Endowments

Now, the first thing that I want you to see that Paul is speaking to us here about—in 1 Corinthians chapter 12, beginning in verse 4—is that there are diverse endowments with the same Spirit. Look again in verse 4: "*Now there are diversities in gifts, but the same Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 12:4). Now, every Christian has a spiritual gift, and you can even be a carnal Christian and have a spiritual gift. You know, I hear preachers sometimes saying, "Oh, we need to get back to the New Testament church—get back to the New Testament church." Well, be careful when you say that, because I knew one New Testament church that I don't want to get back to, and that's Corinth. Amen. I tell you, if there was a ever a church that was a mess, it was the Corinthian church. If there ever was a church that was carnal, it was the Corinthian church.

Just go back left again. We're leaving the twelfth chapter again. Let me show you something. Go back here, if you will, to 1 Corinthians chapter 2, verse 1: and Paul says, "*And I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech*" (1 Corinthians 2:1)—no, excuse me, I wanted chapter 3. All right, 1 Corinthians chapter 3: "*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal*"—now, the word *carnal* is the same word we get our word *carnivorous* from; it just simply means, "fleshy, or referring to the flesh"—"*as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. [Why,] I...fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it,*

neither [now] are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Corinthians 3:1–3)—implied as other men, as unsaved men, as natural men. Oh, I tell you, this church was a mess; and as you read the...as you continue to read, it was filled with all kinds of gigantic problems. Now, that's the point I'm showing is it was a carnal church.

But now, look, if you will, in chapter 1 and verse 7: he says to this same church, *"So that ye come behind in no gift"* (1 Corinthians 1:7). Mister, all of the spiritual gifts were manifest at Corinth. There wasn't a one that they came behind in. Here was a church that was filled with people; and all of the people in this church were manifesting spiritual gifts, and they were as carnal as they can be. "What point are you making, Brother Rogers?" Just simply this: that you can be carnal and have a spiritual gift. Don't think for one little moment that you don't have a spiritual gift or that you have to be a super addition of a Christian to have a gift. Every Christian has a spiritual gift. I've taught you the same thing this morning from Ephesians 4, verse 7: I believe that we all, *"every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ"* (Ephesians 4:7). We all have a spiritual gift.

Now, our spiritual gift is a different gift, perhaps, than the person sitting next to us. Look at our verse again. We're back again—you're going to wear out your Bible—we're back again now to 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 4: *"there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 12:4). Now, dear friend, there are so many spiritual gifts. We're going to just run down a few of them and let you see what some of them are. Look, beginning in verse 8, and we're just going to look at them.

A. Wisdom

For example, there's wisdom; it's one of the gifts of the Spirit: *"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom"* (1 Corinthians 12:8). Now, wisdom is not common sense; it is uncommon sense—it is practical insight into the ways of God.

B. Knowledge

"To another the [gift] of knowledge"—or *"the word of knowledge"* (1 Corinthians 12:8). What is the word of knowledge? That is the ability to know something that you could not know apart from divine revelation. The devil's counterfeit of this is clairvoyance.

C. Faith

And then, another one of these gifts in verse 9 is the gift of faith. And, this is not ordinary faith, because all Christians have this, but it is mountain-moving faith.

D. Healing

And then, again, in verse 9, *"the gifts of healing"*—*"the gifts of healing"* (1 Corinthians 12:9)—that is, "more than one kind of healing"—not only healing for the body, but

healing for the soul and healing for the spirit. And, some people have the charismatic gift of healing.

E. Miracles

And then, others—the gift of miracles in verse 10 (1 Corinthians 12:10). This is the ability to perform things that are contrary to the known laws of nature but not contrary to the almighty laws and power of God.

F. Prophecy

And then, there's the gift of prophecy in verse 10 (1 Corinthians 12:10). This is not necessarily foretelling the future but is speaking for God with clarity, and unction, and power. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 14, verse 3: "he that speaketh unto men unto prophecy speaketh under edification, exhortation, and comfort" (1 Corinthians 14:3). A prophet is God's man who edifies you—he builds you up, he exhorts you, he fires you up, he comforts you, he holds you up in times of trouble. And, as a matter of fact, God spends one whole chapter—chapter 14 (1 Corinthians 14)—telling us why prophecy is better than the gifts of tongues. And, the Church will pray that the gift of prophecy will be manifest in the church, because it is so needed.

G. Discerning of Spirits

Then again, in chapter 12, verse 10, he speaks of the gift of the discerning of spirits (1 Corinthians 12:10). We need to learn that everything that is spiritual is not. There is "*spiritual wickedness in high places*" (Ephesians 6:12). And, the Bible says, "*Believe not every spirit, but [test] the spirits*"—"try] the spirits"—"*whether they [be] of God*" (1 John 4:1).

H. Tongues

Then, in verse 10, he speaks of the gift of tongues. And, what is the gift of tongues? The gift of tongues is the ability to speak in a foreign language—not some on sensible Gibberish, but a foreign language that you've never learned. It may be Russian, French, Spanish, Italian, Latin, Greek—some language that you've never learned, and that's the gift of tongues as it was on the Day of Pentecost. It is the ability to so glorify God as a sign—gift primarily to Jews that others may see and hear and what to be saved. Much today—I'm convinced—most of what goes under the guise of tongue speaking is not the biblical gift. At the best, it is a psychological manifestation; at the worst, it may be a satanic manifestation. But, there is a spiritual gift of tongues.

I. Interpretation of Tongues

And then, there's the interpretation of tongues in verse 10 (1 Corinthians 12:10). That is the ability to interpret a foreign language that you've never learned. **If a contingency of**

Jews from Israel came, and they only spoke Hebrew, and I don't know Hebrew well enough to speak Hebrew, and I stood up here and spoke fluently in Hebrew, and they said to me, "Where did you learn that Hebrew?" and I said, "I never learned it. God just gave me a supernatural ability to praise God in Hebrew," at least they would be convinced—it would be a sign to them. The Bible says, "Tongues are not a sign for them that believe, but to them that don't believe" (1 Corinthians 14:22). And so, they would be convinced. But, how many of you know Hebrew? You'd be sitting out here saying, "What is the pastor saying to those people?" So, if God gave me that gift of speaking in a foreign language, He'd have to give somebody else the gift of interpretation. Let's say that Dale would have the gift of interpretation. He would stand up here and say, "The pastor is saying, 'Praise God that God gave us a wonderful day out there in the Body of Christ—day, and so forth, and we love Jesus, and so forth.'" And, Brother Dale would just be saying what I'd be telling those people; and so, there'd be the gift of interpretation of tongues. I don't think you think that's your gift, do you, from the look on your face? All right.

J. Ministry

And then, there are a lot of other gifts. We could turn to Romans chapter 12 here for just a moment, because you say, "Brother Rogers, you haven't hit me yet." All right, I don't know my gift. I must have been behind the door when the gifts were passed out. Turn to Romans chapter 12, beginning in verse 6. You're going to find another gift there in Romans chapter 12 and verse 6 (Romans 12:6). You're going to find the gift of ministry, and this is to serve one another.

K. Teaching

And then, there's the gift of teaching. That doesn't mean that you can teach in grammar school, or high school, or Memphis State, but it means that God has given you a supernatural ability to communicate the Word of God.

L. Exhortation

And, in Romans chapter 12, verse 8, there's the gift of exhortation (Romans 12:8). That means to encourage people and to cheer them on for the Lord Jesus Christ.

M. Giving

In Romans chapter 12, verse 8, there's the gift of giving (Romans 12:8). God has given some people the supernatural, charismatic ability to give to earn and disperse money. I hope you've got that one.

N. Ruling

All right, and then, there's the gift of ruling; that is to oversee God's business—to

administrate the affairs of God. And, the Bible says, “*Obey them that have the rule over you, [seeing as] they watch for your souls*” (Hebrews 13:17).

O. Mercy

And then, again, in verse 8, there’s the gift of mercy, showing kindness and mercy to these people (Romans 12:8).

And so, we don’t have time to delineate, and you’ve seen that I’ve gone very quickly. I don’t have time to spend a great deal of time. But, back now to 1 Corinthians chapter 12 one more time, and get the point. Yeah, just put a bookmark there, and it will help you. All right, now, look in 1 Corinthians chapter 12: “*there are diversities*”—excuse me—“*of gifts, but the same Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12:4).

Now, you say, “Brother Rogers, I don’t believe I have any of those spiritual gifts mentioned there.” Friend, these are just two lists. And then, in Ephesians 4, we have some others. And then, scattered through the Bible we have indications of spiritual gifts. And so, I don’t know how big the list of gifts may be; there may be hundreds, thousands, millions, because these things can be put together in combinations—and so, the point being that you have a spiritual gift.

You see, God made us different in order that He might make us one. Never mistake equality—never try to equate equality—with sameness. Sameness does not bring unity; it brings disunity. That’s one of the problems in America today. Do you know why we have so much disunity in America? We’re trying to squeeze everybody into one mold. We do not allow people to be different. God wants us to be different, that we might become one. You must be different from me, and I must be different from you, so I will depend upon you and that you will depend upon me. Sometimes I hear a man saying, “Well, my wife always agree with one another,” and my first thought is, “How dull—how boring.” Man, you ought to be around the Rogers house sometimes. All right, listen, the important thing is not that you have the gifts that I have or that I have the gifts that you have; the important thing is not even what you have. The important thing is where you got it. Look in verse 4: “*there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12:4).

Now, God, who gave you a gift, gave me a gift. I cannot be proud of my gift; I can be thankful for it. You cannot be proud of your gift, but you can be thankful for it. There’s not room for pride. Look in verse 21: “*the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of [thee]*” (1 Corinthians 12:21). God forgive us for the abominable pride. The point I’m making is this: “*there are diversities of gifts*”—or endowments—“*but [it is] the same Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12:4)—verse 4.

II. There Are Diversities of Expressions

Now, the second thing—not only are there diversities of endowment, but there are also diversities of expressions of those endowments. There are diversities of exercises, but the same service. Look in verse 5: *“there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord”* (1 Corinthians 12:5). Now, what he’s saying is, “We all serve the same God.” We do not serve the same God the same way. The word *administrations* means “exercises” or “expressions of what we do.” You see, the way you exercise your gift has to be as sovereignly bestowed as the gift itself.

Now, I believe that God has given me the gift of prophecy, but it’s not up to me to say how I’m going to exercise my gift of prophecy. I have to ask the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit says, “I want you to exercise your gift of prophecy at Bellevue Baptist Church.” I believe as much as I believe anything that I was led by God’s Holy Spirit to this church. I wouldn’t have come otherwise. And so, not only are there differences of endowments, but the same Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4)—here is a diversity of exercises and expressions, but it is the same Lord that we serve (1 Corinthians 12:5).

Now, what’s the point? It means that even if we have the same gift, we don’t have to do the same thing the same way. You see, the important thing is that the Lord is being served. Now, you know, one of the things that I used to try to get everybody to do is go door-to-door visitation, and I’ve about quit that. I found out some of your folks are not going door-to-door visitation. I mean, you wouldn’t go with a stick of dynamite; you wouldn’t go with a machine gun in your back—hardly. And, I just think, “Well, now, if you wouldn’t go door-to-door visitation, you must not be right with God.” Boy, I used to say, “Man, if you’re right with God, you’ll love souls; and if you love souls, you’ll want to be a soul winner. You want to be a soul winner? You got to get out there where they are, and where they are is behind those doors. And, get out there, and knock on those doors, and bring those people to Jesus Christ.” And I, you know, boy, I guess I put a lot of people under a lot of bondage about that, and I’ve gotten some people, you know, and boy, I just keep tightening them down, tightening down, tightening down, ’til I made them get out there and do it. And, they’d do it for a while; and soon as I wasn’t looking, they’d quit. And, what I was trying to do—even if they had a gift and maybe even their gift was evangelism, I was trying to make them operate the same way I operate—or think I ought to operate. Now friends., we need to stop doing that, because I’m afraid we’re of violence to the psyche of some people. We need to find out what a person’s spiritual gift is and let that person operate according to his spiritual gift so he’ll be happy, we’ll be happy, and God will be served. And, that’s what Paul is saying right here. He says, “There are diversities of gifts; it’s the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:4). And then, he says, *“There are differences of administrations, but the same Lord”* (1 Corinthians 12:5). You see, once you find your gift, the way you administrate your gift may be different,

and the way that you take your gift and serve God through your gift may be as different as the gift.

Now, sometimes we make a mistake when we try to get people all to have the same gift; and then, sometimes we make a mistake when we try to get people to use their gift the same way. You see, the important thing is not that we all go door-to-door, or that we all sing, or that we all teach, or that we all use this technique; the important thing is that the Lord is being served. It is the same Lord.

III. There Are Diversities of Effects

Now, the third thing—not only are there differences of endowments and not only are there differences of exercises, but there are also differences of effects—differences of effects. Look at the next verse, if you will, and see what Paul is saying here. Now, he says, *“There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all”* (1 Corinthians 12:6). Now, this word *operation* is the word we get our English word *energy* from. It means here, primarily, “the effect of God’s working, the outcropping of God’s working, the outward manifestation of that energy that is He.” I want you to see the pattern. I want you to see what I’m trying to say. And, I may be confusing you more than I’m helping you; but listen, I want you to see God’s pattern. He’s saying there are different endowments, there are different exercises, there are different effects—the same Spirit, however, the same service, and the same source. You see, there is unity in diversity. We have the same Spirit; we’re all serving the same Lord, and we all receive our power from the same source. But, we’re all not the same land, so I don’t have to have the same fruit that you have to have, you don’t have the same fruit that I have to have, you don’t have to have the same effect of your ministry.

For example, what am I talking about here? Well, suppose I preach and 100 people get saved. Well, that’d be glorious, and that’d be wonderful; and I’d praise God for it. Suppose you have the gift of healing, and you heal somebody; and that brings up an interesting point: that some people are saved—that the gifts of healing disappeared with the apostles. That may be so, but I have never proved it; and I’m not going to get into an argument with somebody, telling them what God won’t do. You know, I might want to be healed by somebody, sometimes, and somebody might just have the gift of healing and I might need it, so I’m just not going to get backed into that corner saying what God won’t do. God’s God, and He can do anything He wants. He doesn’t even have to ask me. But so, there may be somebody who has, today, that supernatural, charismatic gift of healing. And, I’ll tell you, some folks, I don’t think have...no, I won’t tell you. But anyway, anyway, I’m not going to say what God won’t do.

But, suppose I preach and 100 people get saved. Suppose somebody has the power, and the power is from God. And, that person—they lay hands on that person, or

pray over that person, and that person is absolutely, supernaturally healed. I'd say, "Praise God," and so would you. But now, wait a minute—what about these fellows who usher there tonight and take up the collection? Did you know that they ought to usher and take up the collection with the same power that I would take me to preach so 100 people would get saved? I find that these people are to sing in the choir with the same power that it would take for someone to lay their hands on someone's head and heal them. You see, we get all confused about the effects. The most important thing is not the effects but the source of the effect.

You see, the important thing is that we all operate in the power of the Holy Spirit. We leave the results with God. I like what Bill Bright said: that "successful witness is sharing Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results with God." But, I want to say a successful service is doing whatever you do in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results with God. The important thing is the One who causes the effect is the Lord Himself. Look, if that's what he's saying in verse 6: "*and there are diversities of operations*"—and that word *operations* means "manifestations of energy"—"*but it is the same God which worketh all in all*" (1 Corinthians 12:6). And, we need to get past the operation and look to the person who is behind it all. You see, there is a unity, and there is a diversity. Are you getting the picture? I want you to see it very clearly, because here is a different endowments, different exercises, different effects—the same Spirit, the same service, the same source. Isn't that beautiful—how different we are and yet how alike we are, because we're all part of the same Body?

Now, so many of us are filled with pride, because we think that God is using us in a way that He's not using somebody else. But, you see, the important thing is not the size of the effect; the important thing is the source of the effect. Now, I want to say something here, and I pray God will get it into your heart: *you don't have to be spectacular to be spiritual*. A choir practice ought to be spiritual. A deacon's meeting ought to be spiritual. A committee meeting ought to be supernatural. Everything we do around here ought to be supernatural. And, if it's not done supernaturally, it's done superficially. And, don't think that only the spectacular is the supernatural. What Paul is saying is the differences...and we're not all showboats, but we all ought to be working for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I hope that God will help us to see this, and I know that you hope that I have seen this. And, I want to confess that I just did, and I was ready to launch forth on something else. But, I want you to see what a good boy I am. Do you see that—what I did? Told you the age of miracles wasn't past! All right, now, I just praise God—I praise God—that God has taken so many of us—God has taken so many of us—from such different backgrounds. And, God has given us different spiritual gifts, and God has given us different ways to exercise those spiritual gifts. And then, God has given different

effects to the ways that we exercise those spiritual gifts. But, we're one in the bond of love.

Next week in your Sunday School class, you're going to be asked to fill out a form. And, don't you come around here with a rye smile and say, "Oh, I wanted to be studying the Bible. I didn't want to be filling out that form." Filling out that form is going to be one of the most spiritual things you've ever done, if you do it right in the power of the Spirit. And, there's work to be done. The Bible says that "a son...that sleepeth in harvest is a shame to his father" (Proverbs 10:5). Now, this is not some sort of a trap that you're getting into. Nobody's going to be pressed into service. We're not going to twist your arm. You wouldn't be any good if we had to, but we do want to know who you are, and what you can do, and what your needs are, and all of these things. And so, Operation Discovery is the second phase to the Body of Christ today.

Conclusion

Do you see what we're trying to do, today? We've been trying, today, to get across one lesson: that everybody is somebody in the Body. There is unity, and there is diversity. Next week, we want you to help us to discover you, and we want you to discover yourself and your spiritual gift. And so, let's be praying for Operation Discovery. I have a feeling in my heart that we're on the threshold of some of the greatest blessings that we have ever, ever known here at Bellevue Baptist Church, and I believe this church is just going to get up and run in the power of God's Holy Spirit. And, the world is going to feel the impact of what's going to be happening in these weeks here at Bellevue Baptist Church.

Let's bow.

Faithful in Fellowship, Part 1

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 22, 1995

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12–19, 25–27

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Function of the Body
 - A. A Manifested Person
 - B. A Ministering Purpose
 - C. A Motivating Power
 - D. A Mutual Program
- II. The Formation of the Body
 - A. A Supernatural Birth
 - B. A Spiritual Baptism
 - C. A Single Body
- III. The Fellowship of the Body
 - A. We Share a Common Life
 - B. We Are to Show a Common Love

Conclusion

- A. Accept Yourself
- B. Be Yourself
- C. Give Yourself
- D. Work Together

Introduction

First Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12—would you turn to it? And then, look up here. We’re talking about this factor of faithfulness, and the factor we’re talking about today is fellowship. And, we’re talking about fellowship in the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, there are many figures of speech to describe the Church. The Church is described as a building. And, the members of the Church are building blocks in that building, and Christ is the foundation. The Church is described as a bride—Christ Himself being the bridegroom. But, the figure of speech that we’re talking about today is this—that the Church is described as a Body, with Christ as the head and we, the members of His Body. It’s so important that you understand that while Jesus Christ and the Church are not identical, they are inseparable, like the bride, the groom, the foundation, the building, the head, and the body. You know, it’s kind of popular today to say, “Well, I’m a Christian, but I don’t believe in organized churches,” or, “Jesus—yes;

but the Church—no.” And so, they don’t attend. Oh, they may be members, but they go about three times: when they’re born, they get christened; then, when they are married, they go; and then, when they die, perhaps their funeral is there. So, they go when they’re hatched, and matched, and dispatched. The first time they throw water; the second time, rice; the third time, dirt—and that’s it. But, the Bible says that we are not to “[forsake] the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is” (Hebrews 10:25).

Now, look in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12. And, here you’re going to understand something about the Church and your place in it—listen: *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ”* (1 Corinthians 12:12). That is the Body of Christ. Now, if I could leave this thought in your heart today, it would be this: you are somebody in His Body—you are somebody in His Body. You are important to Jesus, and, therefore, you are important to His Church. And, the Church is vitally important to you. Oh, dear God, please write that in our heart. Dear God, help us to understand that we are somebody in His Body and that the Church is the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, it is in that church that we have fellowship.

I. The Function of the Body

Now, think with me. First of all, I want you to think with me about the function of a body. What is a body? Now, we know what a physical body is—a human body—and the Church is analogous to that. So, what is the purpose of my body?

A. A Manifested Person

Well, first of all, in my body, there is a manifested person. Did you get it? A manifested person. Look up here. Do you see me? No, you don’t. What you see is my body. I’m on the inside looking out at you. You see my body. I am not a body. I have a body—I have a body. I live in here. It is called my “earthly house,” but all that you know about me you know through this thing called my body. You don’t know me any other way. All you ever know about Adrian Rogers is his body. You cannot know anything else about me apart from my body. “Oh,” you say, “yes, I can read what you wrote.” Who wrote it? This body. You say, “Well, I can hear what you say.” Who says it? This body. You see, there’s no way that you can know anything—not one iota, not one scintilla of a fact, can you know about me apart from my body. It is my body that manifests me. Everything that you know about me you have learned through my body. The body is a manifested person.

What is the purpose of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ? It is to manifest Jesus, to make Him known to this world. As He inhabits our humanity, we display His deity. And, Jesus Christ is known through His Body. That’s kind of frightening, isn’t it? Do you

know what this city knows about Jesus Christ? All that they can know is what they learn through the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, through you and through me. Jesus is the invisible part of the visible Church, and the Church is the visible part of the invisible Christ. Now, in a body, there is a manifested person.

B. A Ministering Purpose

In a body, there is a ministering purpose. Why does my body exist? To serve me. It doesn't exist for any other purpose except to do the will of the person who lives inside this body. I don't want my body to be doing anything for me—nothing! I want to do something through it. Now, think with me. The body is not here to do something to me, but it is to here to serve me. I mean, I don't want to wake up this morning and have my hand to greet me and say, "Good morning, Mr. Rogers. I'm here to shave you today. I'm here to scratch your ear and to write a few letters." I would be frightened to think that thing is going to do something like that—that it conjures up what it wants to do. I want it to be there to do the bidding of the person who lives inside. There is a ministering purpose. The body is to minister the life of the person who lives inside that body.

I'm told after World War II there was a cathedral that had been bombed in Europe, and some of the GIs thought that they would help rebuild the cathedral. And, in the courtyard of that cathedral, there was a statue of the Lord Jesus, who was there with His arms outstretched. They found most of the parts of that disintegrated statue and put it together, but they could not find the hands. And, somebody got a plaque and put these words on it: "He has no hands but our hands"—and put that on the statue. That is so true. He has no hands but our hands. We are His hands; we are His feet.

C. A Motivating Power

Thirdly, in a body, not only is there a manifested person, not only is there a ministering purpose, but there must be a motivating power. Got it? A motivating power. What makes my body a body is not only does it have eyes, and hands, and fingers, and feet, and legs, and arms, but it has life—life! There is a spirit in me—the spirit of life. And, when a man dies, he does what? He gives up the spirit. Now, what makes the Church a body is this—that the Church has life. The Church is more than an organization; it is an organism. The life of my body is my spirit. The life of His Body is the Holy Spirit, the Holy Spirit of God. We sing and say it, "Brethren, we've met to worship and adore the Lord our God. All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down." A body without a spirit is a corpse, but a spirit without a body is a ghost. But, the Church is neither a corpse nor a ghost; it is a Body, the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, to manifest His person, to minister His purpose, motivated by His power—the power of the Holy Spirit of God. Other organizations meet; they're clubs. The PTA, the Girl Scouts, the Kiwanis—they're all good. But, there's an intrinsic and a vital difference between these and the

Church. The Church has the Holy Spirit. We're not merely an organization; we are an organism.

D. **A Mutual Program**

Now, because there is a manifested person, because there is a ministering purpose, because there is a motivating power, there must be a mutual program—a mutual program. What? We do it together. Now, look in verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?”*—can you imagine a 175-pound eyeball?—*“If the whole [body] were hearing, where were the smelling?”*—can you imagine somebody sitting here with a body that looks like a TV dish?—*“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body?”* (1 Corinthians 12:13–19). You don't have a one-member body any more than you have a one-brick building. So, what's he saying? He's saying we have a mutual program. We have many members, but they all have one agenda. So, therefore, the Bible is not against organization. Your body is organized. That's the reason they call the parts of your body what? Organs—because they are organized.

Sometimes people foolishly say, “Well, you know, I have my own religion, but I'm against organized religion.” Well, if you mean you're against an organized church, you don't understand the Bible. The body has to be organized in order to function. And, when your body ceases to be organized, you are sick, very sick. Thank God for organization. Now, organization is not the purpose we exist for. It is to help us to meet our purpose. **It's like digestion. When organization is working correctly, you're really not aware of it. But, like digestion, when it's not working correctly, that's about the only thing you are aware of.** And so, we are to work together. The Bible says, *“Let [everything] be done decently and in order”* (1 Corinthians 14:40). When my ministry makes problems for your ministry or your ministry makes problems for my ministry, either I'm wrong, you're wrong, or we're both wrong. When the members of my body are rightly related to the head—when this hand is related to the head and this hand is related to the head—these hands have to be related to each other; they have to work together. Now, that is the function of the body.

II. **The Formation of the Body**

Let's talk about the formation of the body. How does this body get to be a body? Well,

look in verse 13. Look at it—look at it. Verse 13—chapter 12, verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13).

And, that one Spirit is the Holy Spirit. How is the formation of the body? Three things:

A. A Supernatural Birth

First of all, there’s the supernatural birth. You are born again. When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior—verse 13 calls it *“[drinking] into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13)—that one Spirit is the Holy Spirit. He is to you what water is to your body. Jesus said in John 4—and we spoke it last week: “I am the water of life. If you’re thirsty, you can come to Me and drink, and there will be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14). He is, indeed, that water of life, and we drink into that Spirit. Today, if you’re thirsty, you’ll never find satisfaction until you drink from Heaven’s well and with joy you draw water from the well of salvation. And, I tell you this with all of my heart: if you’ll trust Him today, receive Him today, believe on Him today, He will change your life radically, dramatically, eternally. You’ll be so glad you trusted Jesus. I wish I could do it for you, but I can’t. There will be supernatural birth.

B. A Spiritual Baptism

And, after a supernatural birth, there will be a spiritual baptism. Look at it again—verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Who is the baptizer? The Holy Spirit. Into what does He baptize us? The Body of Christ. Who does He baptize? All of us who have drunk into that Spirit. The baptizer is the Holy Spirit. The believer is baptized, and he is baptized into the Body of Christ. Isn’t that what verse 13 says? *“For by one Spirit are [ye] all baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit of God places us into the Body of Christ. When does that take place? When you get saved. When you drink into the Spirit of God, the Spirit of God places you into the Body of Christ.

Now, sometimes people will ask you this question: Have you received the baptism of the Holy Ghost? Now, they mean something subsequent to salvation. But, this is not something subsequent to salvation, because if that were true, then some would have it and some would not have it. But, he says, *“For by one Spirit [have ye]”*—what’s that next little word? You’re not watching the scripture—*“For by one Spirit [have ye]”*—what?—*“all [been] baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Learn something. In the New Testament, no believer is ever commanded to be baptized in the Holy Ghost—never. We’re commanded to be filled with the Holy Ghost. God would not command you to be baptized in the Holy Ghost, because you’ve already been. *“For”—what?—“by one Spirit [have ye] all [been] baptized”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). That’s Spirit baptism. You see, in Spirit baptism, you are placed into the Body of Christ, but when you’re filled, your

body is now yielded to Christ. And so, we're to be filled. Every part of my body is to be yielded to Him because I am in His Body. The Holy Spirit of God took me and placed me supernaturally into the Body of Christ.

Now, there are two kinds of baptism: there is spiritual baptism and physical baptism—baptism by the Spirit and baptism with water. John the Baptist said, “I baptize you with water. There’s One coming after me who is mightier than me who will baptize you with the Holy Ghost” (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16), talking of the Lord Jesus. Now, listen—up there is a baptistry. It is a liquid tomb. Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, when they receive Christ and are baptized by the Spirit into the Body of Christ, they should show it by water baptism. It is not water baptism that puts you into Christ; it is Spirit baptism that puts you into Christ. The Holy Spirit of God puts you into the Body of Christ. Water baptism is the outward symbol, emblem, illustration, proclamation that you belong to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, yes—you ought to be baptized with water after you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, after you’ve drunk into that one Spirit, after the Spirit of God has placed you into the Body of Christ. Then, to show it, you’re baptized. But, this is an emblem and a symbol of your having been placed by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.

C. A Single Body

A supernatural birth, a spiritual baptism, and then a single body. Look at it again in verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into”*—how many bodies?—*“one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13)—a single body. He takes many of us, and He makes us one Body in the Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians chapter 4, verse 4: *“There is one body, and one Spirit”* (Ephesians 4:4). Hallelujah! That’s why there is the true unity of all true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Fellowship of the Body

Now, let’s move on to the third thing. I’ve talked to you about the function of the body, and I mentioned those things—the manifested person and so forth. I’ve talked to you about the formation of the body: there’s a supernatural birth, a spiritual baptism, and a single body that results. Now, let me talk to you about the fellowship of the body. What is the fellowship of the body?

A. We Share a Common Life

Well, first of all, because we’re in the Body, we share a common life. Look in verse 15: *“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?”* (1 Corinthians 12:15–16). What is he saying here in these verses? He’s saying that we are bound together. We share a common life, because the

Holy Spirit that's in you is the Holy Spirit that's in me. We belong to one another. We can't be in competition with one another, nor should we live in isolation from one another. The foot and the hand both belong to the body.

Now, look at your hand—relatively attractive. You put jewelry on your hand. You can't see your feet because I doubt anybody here is barefooted, but most of you don't have gloves on. Interesting, isn't it? The hands are a little more attractive; feet, generally, are ugly. That's true. I mean, you know, we, every so often, we say, "You know, they've got nice looking feet there," but not so often. But, we say, "You know, hands—there's something about hands that are beautiful." People like to paint hands and look at hands and so forth. But, the foot is not as noticeable as the hand, but you'd have had difficulty getting in here today without yours. And, each member of the Body is important. You see, God made us where we need one another. Isn't that wonderful? Do you know why God made us different? So He could make us one—so none of us could function apart from ourselves.

Eyes are beautiful. Eyes are the mirror of the soul. And, you look in a person's eyes, and you could just seem to see the beauty of Jesus in a person that really loves the Lord. But, suppose you opened a dresser drawer and there were about nine of them rolling around in there? You'd faint. Suppose you walked in the lobby of the church this morning and there was a hand out there on the floor? You see, we have significance, as we find ourselves in the Body. God made us different, that He might make us one. If you go into the bookstore after the service today, you don't send your hand in there to get a book. You go in. You don't send your eyes in there to look at a book. You go in there, and you're a part of a Body. Now, some members of the Body, therefore, that don't seem necessary are very necessary. Question: When was the last time you ever said, "Lord, I really do thank You for my pancreas. Bless God for my wonderful spleen"? Now, you don't do that until your pancreas starts acting up, and then you might say, "Thank You, Lord, for my pancreas."

Joyce had gone somewhere, and I was doing the cooking in my house. So, I didn't want to cook, so I went to the corner restaurant for lunch and got a chili dog covered with chili. And then, that evening, I thought I'd cook for myself, and I went in the shelf, and there was a can of tamales that Joyce never would open that somebody had given us. So, I put that thing in there, and opened it, and filled it with Tabasco sauce, and put it in the oven, and heated it up, and wolfed it down. Then, about 9:30 or 10:00 at night, I was in my recliner, going over my sermon notes for the next morning, and I started to get up and didn't want to move. There was a pain that started here, and went here, and down around here and there. And, I said, "Well, you know, that's indigestion—a chili dog and tamales." And so, I got some Alka Seltzer, and that didn't help. And, I got some aspirin, and that didn't help. But now, it's getting to be 1 or 2 in the morning and

excruciating pain.

So, I got a medical book and began to read to find out what's wrong with me. And, it's about 1 in the morning—2. And, my daughter, who happened to be there, said, "Daddy, you're going to the hospital." I said, "No, not me. I'll be all right." She said, "Daddy, you're hurting. You're going to the hospital." I didn't want to go to the hospital. I mean, that's like saying, "I surrender"—to walk in there at nighttime. And so, I get in there, and the doctor begins to poke around on me and so forth. And, I said, "Now doctor, it's not my lungs, not my heart." The doctor said, "Would you be quiet for just a moment?" and said, "Sir, you've had a gall bladder attack." You know, all these years I had never praised God for my gall bladder—never one time had I thanked God for my wonderful gall bladder. It had done so much good. Let me ask you a question: Don't you take certain things for granted until they're gone or they begin to malfunction?

Question: Who opened the doors of this church this morning so you could come into it? You don't know. Who turned on these lights and set the temperature? Did you go to Sunday School class and have some coffee this morning? Who made that coffee? What are the names of the people right now who are working in that nursery, taking care of those babies over there, and changing those diapers, and fulfilling their motto, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed"? Who is doing that? Who is it that does so many things that we just simply take for granted? Let them stop doing it one time. Come here on a Sunday morning, and all the lights be off, and the doors be locked, and this building be cold, and there be no choir—then maybe you'll begin to say, "Thank God for the members of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ." We are one Body. Now, you know the people who sang these songs this morning, and you know those who preach, and so forth. You see those members of the Body. But, there are other parts you don't see. They're just as vital and just as important. And so, what I'm saying is this: What is the fellowship of the body? We share a common life.

B. We Are to Show a Common Love

And, not only do we share a common life, but we are to show a common love. Look in verse 25: God says He does this *"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it"* (1 Corinthians 12:25). Think with me, beloved brother or sister in Christ—because we're in the same Body, there can be no arrogance. I can never say I don't need you. There can be no envy. I can't say, "Well, I want to be an eye like you, rather than an ear or whatever." There can be no rivalry. We belong to one another. I don't need to try to get ahead of you. There can be no self-sufficiency, where I try to operate apart from you. There can be no disunity, where I don't like you. We're not divided.

All one body we,
One in hope and doctrine, one in charity.

...

Onward then, ye people, join our happy throng,
Blend with ours your voices in the triumph song (Sabine Baring-Gould).

We belong to one another.

He says here, “When one member suffers, every member suffers with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). I have frequently used this illustration: Have you ever hit your thumb with a hammer—I mean, really hit it? I’ve never had a baby, but a worse pain than having a baby. I’ll get a lot from that, I know. You hit your thumb with a hammer, and you go, “Waaaaaaaaa!” It just hurts. I’m talking about one that’ll give you a blue thumbnail for six months. What’s the first thing you did? I wasn’t there, but I’ll tell you exactly what you did: you grabbed it. Your hand came to the rescue. Second thing you did: you popped it in your mouth. Don’t say you didn’t; you did—you popped it in your mouth. And, the third thing you did: you did a little dance. Sure, you did. Now, what do the knees have to do with the thumb? I don’t know, but you’ve got to have that dance. I mean, it’s all together. “When one member suffers, every member suffers with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). Eat ice cream—it feels good all over. “One member rejoices; every member rejoices with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). That’s what God has intended the Church to be. Friend, when we come to church and we share our sorrows, they’re divided; and we share our joys—they’re multiplied. That’s why we have church! That’s the fellowship.

We are the Body of the Lord Jesus. We share the same life. We show the same love. Why? Because we serve the same Lord. Look in verse 27: “*Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular*” (1 Corinthians 12:27). Loyalty to Jesus means loyalty to His Body. You cannot love Jesus without loving what Jesus loves.

A pastor visited a home—a beautiful home of cultured young couple. There were no children in the home, but there was a dog that the members of that family fawned over, petted and loved, cuddled and coddled. The pastor said, “I may be walking on thin ice, but I want to ask you people a question. You love God. You’re intelligent. You have many creature comforts. But, there are no children in this home. I see the love that you lavish upon that dog. Forgive me for asking, but have you considered having a child that you might show that love to that child?” When that pastor said that, that woman burst into tears, sobbed in anguish, and ran out of the room. The pastor said, “Uh-oh. I said something very wrong.” He said to the husband, “Forgive me. What did I say? I know I said something terribly wrong.” He said, “Pastor, there’s no way you could know, but we

did have a child—a boy. He was the light of our life and the love of our hearts. He was taken ill. He died. The doctors say that we can never have another child. This dog that you see was his dog. He dearly loved this dog. Before he died, he made us promise that we would take care of his dog. Now Pastor, you may not be able to understand it. You may think we're foolish when we lavish so much love upon this dog, but in our way, it's our way of expressing love for our son. We love that dog simply because our son loved it so much." Friend, if for no other reason, I can tell you why you ought to love the Church: because God's Son loves the Church. All of its faults, all of its flaws, all of its failures, all of its foibles—God loves the Church, and so should you. If you love Jesus, you will love what Jesus loves. And, if you love the head, you'll love the Body.

Conclusion

May I make some suggestions to you?

A. Accept Yourself

You're somebody in His Body. Accept yourself. You may not be a shoulder to bear burdens. You may simply be an ear to listen or an eye to watch. Accept yourself.

B. Be Yourself

Number two: Be yourself. Don't try to be somebody else. When I first started preaching, I would look at other preachers, and I'd say, "I want to be him," or, "I want to be him." I figured out I could never be one of them, but I can be the best Adrian Rogers there ever is. There's only one Dale Palmer. You can be the best Dale Palmer ever. Only one Joe Jernigan—only one Jim Whitmire. Be the best of that. Accept yourself. Be yourself.

C. Give Yourself

And then, give yourself. Every part of the body gives. The heart gives. The lungs give. The liver gives. And, you have to give to get to live. We're in it together. Accept yourself. Be yourself. Give yourself.

D. Work Together

Work together. And, when we do, do you know who will be shown? Jesus, because He lives in this Body called *Bellevue*. What a fellowship! What a joy divine! We are the Body of Christ. Isn't that wonderful? That's wonderful. And, you get into the Body when you get saved.

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. I want you to pray this prayer. If you're not certain that you're saved right now, I want you to pray this prayer: "Dear God"—just talk to Him right now, if you're not certain that you're saved and you want to be—"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

believe You're the Son of God. I believe You died for my sins and paid for my sins with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, by faith, I receive You into my heart. Come into my life. Come in now, right now. Take control of my life, and begin to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, I will make it public. I will not be ashamed of You. If You'll just give me the strength, I'll make it public today that I love You." Can you pray that? If you can, tell Him that. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Now, look up here. "Pastor, why did you put that last thing in there about making it public?" For this reason—for this reason: Jesus said, "If you're ashamed of Me, I'll be ashamed of you" (Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). Jesus said, "If you'll confess Me before men, I'll confess you before My Father" (Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8). Walking an aisle doesn't save anybody, but what it indicates is what saves you—is that you're trusting Jesus and you're not ashamed of Him. That's what saves you. For the scripture says, "*Whosoever [believes] on him [will] not be ashamed*" (Romans 9:33; Romans 10:11).

Faithful in Fellowship, Part 2

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 22, 1995

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12, 25

Outline

Introduction

- A. The Function of the Body
 - B. The Formation of the Body
 - C. The Fellowship of the Body
 - I. Love One Another
 - II. Receive One Another
 - III. Greet One Another
 - IV. Submit One to Another
 - V. Forbear One Another
 - VI. Confess to One Another
 - VII. Forgive One Another
- Conclusion

Introduction

Talking about a factor of faithfulness, which is fellowship—“Faithful to the Fellowship.” First Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 12 says, *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ”* (1 Corinthians 12:12)—that is, Christ and His Body. Then I want you just to skip on down to verse 25. And, God says that He made us different and dependent upon one another in order that—and I begin reading now in verse 25: *“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another”* (1 Corinthians 12:25). I want you just to underscore that phrase—“one for another.” That’s what I want to talk about.

But, I want to review, first of all, what we said this morning, as we talked about the fact that the Church is the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is His mystical Body. Christ is the head; we are the members of that wonderful Body called “the Church of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

A. The Function of the Body

And, we talked to you about the function of a body. A body manifests the person that lives in it. And, Jesus is to be manifested by the way that we live. The way this world will know the Lord Jesus Christ is through His Body, the Church. He mediates and manifests Himself through us. And so, a body reveals the person inside that body. The

Church is to reveal the Lord Jesus Christ. A body has life. The life of the Church is the Holy Spirit. The Bible has a purpose, and it is to do the will of the person who owns the body, who lives in the body. And, what is the purpose of the Church? To do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, all of the parts of the body function together, just as we are to function together to serve our Lord. There's to be no disunity, but we're to have a common purpose, and a common function, and a common goal. So, we talked to you about the function of the body.

B. The Formation of the Body

Then we talked about the formation of the body—how, when we get saved, the Holy Spirit of God baptizes us into the Body of Christ. (That's Spirit baptism.) Water baptism is a symbol of Spirit baptism, spoken of in verse 13: *“For by one Spirit [have] we all [been] baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). When you get saved, the Holy Spirit comes into you and then the Holy Spirit puts you into the Body of Christ. So, He's in us, and we are in Him. Hallelujah! And so, a Christian is in Christ, and Christ is in the Christian. And, we are in the Body, and Christ is the head of the Body.

C. The Fellowship of the Body

Now, we talked to you not only about the function and the formation, but we talked to you about the fellowship of the body. And, we said that we are to be in fellowship. Why? Because we share the same life, we show the same love, we serve the same Lord. That's what I said this morning. You say, “Why didn't you say it that quickly this morning? Why did it take you all that time to say it?” Well, anyway, that's what we said this morning.

Now, we didn't get time to just kind of bear down on the part that I want us to look at tonight again, and look at it in verse 25: *“That there should be no schism”—that means “division”—“in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another”* (1 Corinthians 12:25). I want to talk to you tonight about caring for one another. You know, that's what makes Bellevue the wonderful church that it is—that we do care for one another. That is God's plan.

Now, I told you this morning, because we're members one of another, there can be no arrogance. I can't be proud and arrogant if I have a gift that you don't have. Or, you can't be proud and arrogant if you have a gift that I don't have. You can't be proud if you're an eye and I'm a foot. Oh, no—there can be no arrogance.

There can no envy. I shouldn't envy your gift; you shouldn't envy mine, because the Bible says, “God put every member in the body, as it pleased Him” (1 Corinthians 12:18). And, none of us has anything that God didn't give us, isn't that true?

And then, there should be no rivalry. When you prosper, I prosper. When I prosper, you prosper. The more God blesses you, the more I'm blessed, because you and I are

in it together. And so, I want you to prosper so I can prosper. If you are a member of a Body, you want the rest of that Body to be healthy, don't you? And so, we need, certainly, not to be envious over those and think that somehow their gain is our loss. Their gain is our gain. There can be no rivalry.

There can be no self-sufficiency. No member of the Body can say, "I don't need you." You need me; I need you. We need one another. There certainly should be no disunity, no schism in the Body. When the body begins to war against itself, you are tragically sick. As a matter of fact, we could call that "cancer" in the Body of Christ.

Now, we are to care one for another. I want to mention some ways tonight that you, as a Church—we, as a Church; you, as a brother or sister in Christ—we need to care for one another. In the Bible, God gives some "one another" commands. We call these "reciprocal commands." Now, there are many of them. As a matter of fact, I looked them up, and there were so many of them that I dare not even begin to try to elucidate on or expound on all of the "one another" commands in the Bible. But, I do want us to look at chapter 12, verse 25, where the Bible says we should care for one another (1 Corinthians 12:25). And then, I want to mention some ways that we should care for one another. And, these are all the "one another" verses that I have selected for us tonight.

I. Love One Another

The first one is found in John 13, verse 34. Here's what Jesus said: Jesus said, "*A new commandment I give unto you, That ye [should] love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another*" (John 13:34). Now, all of the commandments had been given in the Old Testament. But now, along comes Jesus, and He says, "I'm going to give you a new commandment: you're to love one another." This was the last commandment He gave before His arrest, His mock trial, His crucifixion. He said, "I give you this command—that you love one another" (John 13:34).

Now, we don't need, as members of Bellevue Baptist Church, one of those little birds on our cars for people to know that we're saved. Or, we don't need a lapel pin with a cross or a fish. That's fine. As a matter of fact, I like that kind of thing. I think it's very wonderful. But, that's not the way that people are to know that we're His disciples. Do you know the badge that the Christian is to wear? It is the unseen (but always seen) badge of love. Listen to this verse—1 John 4, verse 20: "*If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?*" (1 John 4:20). Again, in the Bible, Jesus said, "*By this shall all men know that [you're] my disciples, if ye have love one [for] another*" (John 13:35). The Bible commands us to love.

Now, this love is not optional, but it's not automatic. If it were automatic, we wouldn't be commanded to do it. Now, what is this kind of love? Why did Jesus say, "*A new*

commandment I give...you, That [you] love one another" (John 13:34)? In the Old Testament, we're told to love. Well, what is the new commandment? The new commandment is that we are to love as He loved—that is, with a new quality. Now, the love that Jesus is talking about here is not just merely doing our neighbor no harm, but it is seeking opportunity to do him good, even when he doesn't deserve it. That's what Jesus did for me. *"God commendeth his love toward [me], in that, while [I was] yet [a sinner], [He] died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Do you know what real love is? Love is not your giving me what I deserve; it is giving me what I need. Love is not giving me even what I want; love is giving me what I need. Love says, "You will do me good, regardless of what I do to you." We're to love one another. That's the way we care for one another, according to 1 Corinthians 15.

II. Receive One Another

Now, not only are we to love one another—here's another command: we are to receive one another. Turn, this time, to Romans chapter 15, and just look at this passage of scripture. It's a very interesting passage—Romans chapter 15 and verse 7: our Lord says here, *"Wherefore receive ye one another"*—there's our word again—*"receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God"* (Romans 15:7). How are we to love? We are to love as He loved. How are we to receive? We are to receive as He received. Now folks, this is one of the most "needy" commands in all of the Bible—that we make people feel loved and welcome when they come into the church.

If you look at the early Church in the New Testament, what a background—what a mixture of backgrounds there were! They, the people, came from all kinds of religious backgrounds. Many had been raw pagans. They came from social backgrounds. Many of them had been divorced. Many of them had multiple marriages. Some of them were polygamists. Many of them had mixed marriages. Various races had married together. There were Jews, and barbarians, and Greeks. There were slaves; there were free. There were rich, poor. There were educated and ignorant, young and old, mature and babes in Christ, and they were all a part of the Body of Christ. Do you know what we have to do at Bellevue Baptist Church? We have to make everybody who wants to worship God feel welcome. Now, we must do that, folks. We must love one another. We must receive one another.

Turn to the Book of Philemon for just a moment—that's over near the end of the epistles—and see if you can find it. It's a very short little book. And, in the Book of Philemon—it's on page 1488 if you have a Bible like mine—there was a man named Onesimus. He was a slave. He ran away from his owner. Paul met him in prison. Paul led him to Christ and sent him back to his owner. And, look, if you will, in Philemon, beginning in verse 15—here's what Paul tells Philemon: *"For perhaps he therefore*

departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him for ever; Now not as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?”—and then, Paul said—*“If thou count me therefore a partner, receive him as myself”* (Philemon 1:15–17). Paul said, “You take this runaway slave, and you receive him now. You, the rich man, you receive this man. Receive him as a brother.” And then, Paul said, “You receive him as if he were an apostle.”

What’s that going to tell us about any body who walks in those doors? Now, if any body comes to disrupt, obviously, we can’t allow them to disrupt. If any body comes to mock, obviously, they must be dealt with. But, any body who comes to worship God must be received. Say, “Amen.” We’re to receive one another.

Turn, if you will, to 3 John here for a moment. You know, a country preacher said, “There’s one-eyed John, two-eyed John, and three-eyed John.” You turn to three-eyed John, if you will, here—back almost to the Book of the Revelation—and let me show you about a man in the Bible who caused a lot of trouble in the church. Look, if you will, in 3 John and verse 5, I believe. Let’s look at it here for a moment—3 John, verse 5: *“Beloved, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers”* (3 John 1:5). That is, “Do faithfully to a stranger as you would to a brother.” And then, skip on down to verse 8: *“We therefore ought to receive such, that we might be fellowhelpers [in] the truth. I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good”* (3 John 1:8–11). What does that tell us? It tells us we must receive one another.

Now, there are people in this church who don’t hold as high a standard as you may hold. They are weak in the faith. They don’t understand the deep mystery of God. Is a person like that to be made to feel unworthy? Are they to be looked down upon, if they come into your Sunday School class and they don’t know the books of the Bible, or they don’t understand theology, or they don’t understand all of the dispensational truth that you think you understand? Do you know what Romans 14, verse 1 says? *“Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations”* (Romans 14:1). What does that mean? “Don’t argue with him about tweedle-de-dee and tweedle-de-dum.” In the *Living Bible*, it is paraphrased this way: “Receive a brother into the church even if he scarcely believes Christ can save him” (Romans 14:1). That doesn’t mean that we put a premium upon weak faith. But, who is it that needs love? Who is it that needs care if it’s not somebody who’s weak? *This is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints.* We are to love one another. We are to receive one another.

Now, that doesn't mean we're to receive heretics or willful sinners. *Any church has a right to screen out the bugs when it lets in the light.* We're not talking about heretics. The Bible is very clear about that, also. Second John, verse 10: *"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed"* (2 John 1:10). We're to have soft hearts and not soft heads.

III. Greet One Another

Now, here's a third thing: when we're to care one for another, that means we're to love one another. That means we're to receive one another. It also means, because we love and because we receive, we are to greet one another. Look again now in Romans chapter 16, verse 16—what Paul said to the church at Rome, which was a very cosmopolitan church. In Romans chapter 16, verse 16: *"Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you"* (Romans 16:16). And then, in 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 20: *"All the brethren greet you. Greet ye one another with an holy kiss"* (1 Corinthians 16:20). Second Corinthians 13, verse 12: *"Greet one another with an holy kiss"* (2 Corinthians 13:12). There are three times he said that, so I want you to turn to the person next to you... You say, "Now, wait a minute, Pastor. Do you see who's sitting next to me? If you think for a minute..." But, but what does this mean? What does this mean? Here it is: *"Salute one another with an holy kiss"* (Romans 16:16). *"Greet ye one another with an holy kiss"* (1 Corinthians 16:20). *"Greet one another with an holy kiss"* (2 Corinthians 13:12). Three times it's mentioned. We are to greet one another.

Now, what is a holy kiss? It's not an erotic kiss; it's not a kiss on the mouth. In the Bible, people kiss on this side and kiss on that side. The men would kiss the men, and the ladies, the ladies. That'll clear a lot up right there. And, it was just an embrace. As a matter of fact, I recently come from Spain. They do that in Spain. If you go in the Middle East, they do that in the Middle East. They still do that. Not a thing in the world wrong with that, but that was a custom then. Customs change. The Bible says that we're to "render custom to whom custom is due" (Romans 13:7). What that really means is show acceptance in a very warm and in a very wonderful way. By the way, there's absolutely nothing wrong with a holy kiss. If you want to do that and feel comfortable, that's fine. But, what this is saying is simply this—that we must demonstrate our love. There must be love. There must be receptivity. And, there must be the demonstration of that love and that receptivity. People need to be loved; they need to be greeted. This greeting needs to be personal. It needs to be warm. It needs to be impartial. You can't do it by radio and television or through mail. James chapter 2 and verse 9: *"But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors"* (James 2:9).

We call our radio/television ministry “Love Worth Finding.” We are now speaking of Bellevue Baptist Church as “a family of friends and a friend to the family.” Do you know what we need to do, folks? We need to show and demonstrate warmth and love to every person who walks in those doors, not just say, “You’re welcome to come and sit down.” But, we need to move toward them with a smile, a handshake, an embrace—and yes, a holy kiss, if that’s appropriate. But, what he is saying is this—that we need a warm fellowship. Does that make you uncomfortable when somebody touches you or if I say, “Now, reach out and take hands across the aisle, and let’s sing, ‘We’re One in the Bond of Love’”? Do you just kind of want to go, “I don’t want to touch anybody”? You know folks like that? I mean, they sit in church like this, you know. Hey, folks, there are people who are going to die and go to Hell because we’re so self-centered. You say, “Well, some people just don’t like that.” That’s true. Some don’t, but most do. And, the bigger we get, the more loving we need to become. Now, I’m not talking about pawing over people; I’m not talking about manhandling people. I am just talking about being warm, and loving, and caring one for another. We’re to treat one another as members of the same body. We are in the family together; and so, we are to greet one another.

IV. Submit One to Another

And then, I want you to turn to Ephesians chapter 5 with me for a moment. And, here’s another time the Bible speaks of “one another,” and it speaks of submitting one to another. Look, if you will, in chapter 5, verse 18—it’s a command to be filled with the Spirit: *“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit”* (Ephesians 5:18). Why did he say, “Don’t be drunk with wine, but be filled with the Spirit”? Why didn’t he say, “Don’t commit adultery, but be filled with the Spirit”? Or, “Don’t steal, but be filled with the Spirit”? Because being drunk with wine is the devil’s substitute for being filled with the Spirit. He’s talking here not only in contrast, but in comparison. Being filled with the Spirit is a lot like being drunk with wine. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter said, “These men are not drunk, as ye suppose” (Acts 2:15). They were drunk on new wine; they were filled with the Spirit of God. And, when they were filled with the Spirit of God, they became free in their spirit. And then, verse 19: *“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ”*—now, here’s our “one another” verse—*“Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God”* (Ephesians 5:19–21).

Now, submission is not merely for women or for wives; it is for Christians. We are to submit ourselves one to another. What is biblical submission? It is one equal willingly and lovingly placing himself under another equal, that God may therefore and thereby be glorified.

Do you know, in a body, the various members of my body at various times have to submit to the other parts of my body? That's just all there is to it. We're in the Body of Christ, and we care for one another. Therefore, there are times when I must submit to you. I am the pastor, but I must submit to you. You must submit to one another. We all will come to a place and times when it is right to submit and for somebody to lead. I think it was Bill Gothard who said, "When you show people their rights, you'll have a revolution. Show them their responsibilities, and you'll have a revival." When a man says, "I know my rights," well, what rights does a dead man have? We are crucified with Christ, and we need to learn how to yield, and give to one another, and submit one to another.

V. Forbear One Another

I want to mention another one now in Ephesians chapter 4. You're in chapter 5. Go back to chapter 4, and look with me, if you will. And, these are just some "one another" verses. I'm talking about the fact that the Bible says, "*There [shall] be no schism in the body; but [we] should...care one for another*" (1 Corinthians 12:25). And, I'm just looking at the verses that deal with one another.

Chapter 4, verse 1: "*I therefore*"—this is Ephesians 4, verse 1—"*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering*"—now, here's our "one another"—"*forbearing one another in love*"—"forbearing one another in love"—"*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*"—and notice the next phrase—"There is one body" (Ephesians 4:1–4). You see that? Listen. Look at it: "*forbearing one another*" (Ephesians 4:2).

Turn to Colossians. Now, do you always get mixed up on these? I do. "**General Electric Power Company.**" All right. So, that's Philipians, Colossians... Turn to Colossians, and look, if you will, in chapter 3 and verse 12. Look at it: "*Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering*"—here it is one more time—"Forbearing one another, and"—we'll get to this next one in a moment—"forgiving one another" (Colossians 3:12–13). But, we're to forbear one another.

What is forbearance? Why does he say this several times in the Bible—"we're to forbear one another"? Forbearance is graciously enduring and putting up with the displeasing, offensive, or sinful attitudes or actions of other people. Now folks, everybody in this church is not lovely. As a matter of fact, only one out of three is. Would you look at the person on either side of you? If it's not them, it's bound to be you. In all seriousness, if you were to start with the pastor, the man standing up here, and look me over real good, you'd find so many faults in me it would be embarrassing. And,

in any member of this church, the same thing would be true. I don't mean that there's any sin in my heart or life at this moment that I cherish. As far as I know, I stand before you tonight with absolutely no un-confessed, un-repented-of sin in my life—absolutely! I'd be ashamed to try to preach any other way. But, I am light years from perfection, and so are you. Amen? And, I know that I have habits, and faults, and foibles, and idiosyncrasies that may rub you the wrong way, and I think you just might have one or two. You know what we ought to do every now and then? Just go stand in front of a mirror and take a long look. Would to God some gift would give us to see ourselves as others see us! Isn't that what Bobby Burns said? Only, he said it in that accent. "Would to God somebody would get us to see ourselves as others see us." So, what we need to do, folks, is to understand that we're in it together, and we have to forebear one another.

You ought to try being the Pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church some time and read my mailbag. There'll be some who'll say, "Why don't we have more music like those four guys sang tonight?" There'll be somebody else who'll say, "Why do we have to have that grasshopper music in church?" There'll always be somebody who'll say, "Man, the sound system is great!" Somebody else will say, "When are you going to tune that thing down? It's so loud!" Somebody else will say, "Why do we always have to clap? It's not a theater." Somebody else says, "Oh, I love it when we praise the Lord and you say, 'Clap your hands, all ye people.'" Now, if you were pastor, what would you do? Hey, folks, we're all just a little different, and everybody's a little bit strange—except me, and Sorrell, and I'm not too sure about him.

Do you know what it takes to make a great church? Forbearance! Say, "Amen." I mean, we're different. We don't all like the same thing, but we love Jesus and we love one another. You see, we're to love one another. We're to receive one another. We're to greet one another. We are to forebear with one another.

VI. Confess to One Another

I'll tell you something else we're to do: we're to confess to one another. Look in James chapter 5, verse 16: "*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed*"—don't criticize one another. Pray for one another. The confession of a fault is not a call to criticism; it's a call to prayer—"*The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much*" (James 5:16). We're to confess one to another.

Did you know that the failure to confess to one another holds back revival, forgiveness, and healing? You confess to one another, so that we pray for one another, so that we're healed. Do you know what real revival is? Real revival is not just getting the roof off. (That's fairly easy.) Real revival is getting the walls down. You say, "What do you mean?" Well, getting the roof off is saying, "God, forgive me. Here's thus and

thus and thus I have done.” But, when we go to one another and we confess our faults one to another and pray for one another, that’s when that real *koinonia* begins—that’s when that real fellowship, that caring for one another... Hey, there are a lot of us tonight who need somebody to pray for us, don’t we? But, we’re either so rotten proud or else we don’t trust that person that we don’t confess our faults one to another.

Now, be careful here. The devil can take anything and take it to an extreme. The circle of confession ought to be as big as the circle of need. Sometimes, there are some very personal and private things. Be very careful to whom you confess that. Sometimes there is somebody that you have wronged. Then you need to confess to that person. Very private sin—private confession. Personal sin—personal confession. Public sin—public confession. But, what we need to do is to begin to pray for one another. None of us is perfect. And oh, if there were less criticism in churches and more prayer, what a mighty healing there would be, physically and spiritually!

VII. Forgive One Another

And, I’m coming to the close. But, I think all of these kind of come to a head in this last one. Ephesians chapter 4 and verse 32: *“be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another”—again—“as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you”* (Ephesians 4:32). An unforgiving spirit has ruined so many churches. Has somebody done you wrong? So, what’s new? When you fail to forgive—refuse to forgive—you destroy the bridge over which you yourself must travel, for Jesus said, *“If ye forgive not men their trespasses [against you], neither [shall] your [Heavenly] Father forgive [you] your trespasses [against Him]”* (Matthew 6:15).

That brings up a very interesting question: Can you forgive somebody if they have not yet repented? No! The Bible says, “If your brother sin against you seventy times seven and come and say, ‘I repent,’ you forgive him” (Matthew 18:21–22). Now, if he’s not repented, you can’t forgive him. And yet, you cannot have an unforgiving spirit. So, what do you do in a case like that? Well, if he repents, you always forgive him. But, what if he continues to sin against you? You can’t just say, “Well, I forgive—I forgive.” Even Jesus didn’t forgive like that. God doesn’t forgive unless there’s repentance. When Christ was on the cross, He didn’t say to those who were nailing Him to the cross, “I forgive you.” He prayed for their forgiveness. I believe that prayer was answered on the Day of Pentecost for many of them.

Well, what do you do in a case like this—I mean, when there’s somebody who has, perhaps, egregiously sinned against you, and you don’t want to carry that bitterness in your heart, and yet you cannot forgive because they have not yet repented—what do you do? What you do is you put that forgiveness in the bank in escrow. From your heart, you say, “There it is, Lord. I forgive them. And, whenever they write a check of

repentance, it's already in the bank, ready to be drawn." You see what I'm talking about? From your viewpoint, you've already forgiven them, but from their viewpoint, that forgiveness is not yet received until they do repent. But, as far as you're concerned, you have already forgiven them. Isn't that what God has done when Jesus died on the cross? There is a legacy of forgiveness for every one of us, but it never becomes ours until we claim it by repentance and faith. Yet, in the great loving heart of God, He died for every one of us. And, that's the spirit we've got to have, folks, in this church. That's what we've got to have.

Conclusion

This church is a Body. We are the Body of Christ. We're to care for one another. We're to love one another. We're to receive one another. We're to forebear one another. We're to greet one another. We're to confess one to another. We're to forgive one another. And, when we begin to do that, folks—I mean, really do it—this church, or any church, will become a little colony of Heaven. What a fellowship! Isn't that what you want for Bellevue? That's what I want. So, let's just kind of make ourselves a committee of one to get it started.

Well, why don't we just stand and sing, "We're One in the Bond of Love"? Let's just stand and sing it. Brother Jim, I want you to lead us, and I want us to join hands across the aisle and do it—"We Are One in the Bond of Love."

Amen. Just, now, drop your hands, and bow your heads in prayer. And Father, let that love be the love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost.

The Church: The Body of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 02, 1997

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12–25

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Birth of the Body
- II. The Business of the Body
- III. The Bonding of the Body

Conclusion

- A. Accept Yourself
- B. Be Yourself
- C. Give Yourself

Introduction

Be finding 1 Corinthians chapter 12. Because of the ordination, I want to speak to you about the Church. Now, when you say a good word for Jesus, always say a good word for the Church, because if you love Jesus, you're going to love what Jesus loves—and Jesus loves the Church! Never criticize the Church, because when you criticize the Church, you're criticizing the Body of Christ on earth. You're criticizing the sovereign Lord of the Church, when you criticize the Church. That does not mean that the Church is beyond correction. It does not mean that the Church is beyond admonishment. But, be very careful when you put down and criticize in a negative way—I mean to say—the Church of the Lord Jesus.

I. The Birth of the Body

I want us to think of the Church as the Body of Christ. And, I want you to look, if you will, first of all, at the birth of the Body. Look in verses 12 and 13: *“For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:12–13). Now again, I want you to understand that the Church is the mystical Body of the Lord Jesus Christ, and He is the sovereign head of His Body, which is the Church.

Now, think with me as to when the Church began. Verse 13 says it this way: *“For by one Spirit [have] we all [been] baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Do you know what that day was? That was the Day of Pentecost. Who baptized us into the

Body of Christ? The Holy Spirit. *“For by one Spirit”—that is, the Holy Spirit—“we [have] all [been] baptized”—immersed, placed—“into [the] body [of Christ]”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). The baptizer is the Holy Spirit. Who is the baptizee? Who is baptized? The believer. Into what is he baptized? Into the Body of Christ. When was he baptized? The minute he believed on the Lord Jesus Christ—at the moment of his salvation.

The baptism into the Body of Christ is not something optional. Notice it includes all of us: *“For by one Spirit have we all been baptized into the Body of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Now, every now and then somebody may ask you, *“Have you received the baptism of the Holy Ghost?”* If you’re a believer, say, *“Yes—yes.”* Now, there is there not one command—listen to me carefully—not one command in the New Testament that ever tells a born-again believer to seek the baptism of the Holy Ghost—not one! We are told as believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit: *“For by one Spirit are we all”—and the Greek means “have we all been”—“baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). The baptizer is the Holy Spirit. The one who is baptized is the believer. He is baptized when he receives the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Savior. And, he is baptized—placed—by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ.

In Luke 2 you have the story of the birth of the physical, literal body of the man Jesus, when He walked this earth. In Acts 2 you have the birth of Jesus’s other body—His mystical body, the Church. And, both His literal body and His mystical body—both of them—are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit of God. Both births—the virgin birth and the birth of the Church—are by the Holy Spirit and both are supernatural.

Now, baptism—you need to understand this—baptism, in the Bible, is spoken of both literally and figuratively. Literal baptism takes place in water—that is, where we immerse people in water. But, it is not water baptism that puts you into the Body of Christ. It is Spirit baptism that puts you into the Body of Christ. *“For by one Spirit [have] we all [been] baptized into one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Sometimes people want to tell you that water baptism is necessary for salvation. That’s ridiculous! If water baptism is necessary for salvation, that takes the “whosoever” out of the Bible. Did you know that no man on the Sahara Desert could be saved? He’s out there in the middle of the desert, and he calls on the Lord to save him. God couldn’t save him—couldn’t be baptized. A man in an airplane couldn’t be saved. A man in a submarine couldn’t be saved. You’d have to change the Bible to say, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord and is fortunate enough to be near water, and is fortunate enough to have somebody there to baptize him”—and the people who believe this would say, “of my denomination”—“shall be saved.”* That’s ridiculous! Friend, the Bible says, *“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (Romans 10:13). And, *whosoever* means, “anybody, any place, any time”—it means “anything.” So, it’s not water baptism. *“For by one Spirit [have] we all [been] baptized*

into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13). Water baptism is the emblem, the symbol, the representation of that Spirit baptism that places us into the Body of Christ.

Now, if by one Spirit we’re baptized into one Body, then that means that the Church is not an organization; it is an organism. The Holy Spirit of God puts us into the Body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God is in us. So, the Church is not an organization like the Kiwanis or the Boy Scouts—nothing against the Kiwanis and nothing against the Boy Scouts. But folks, we are different. We have been placed by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ, and we share the life of Christ.

Now, the Holy Spirit is the corporate Spirit of our church. Now, if we had the body without the Spirit, we’d be a corpse. But, if we have the Spirit without the body, there’s only a ghost. But, a church is a body indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God. Now, that’s the birthday of the Church, when the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost took all of those disciples and baptized them into one Body. And, since that time, every believer is added by the Holy Spirit to that one Body, which is the Church, and we’re a part of that. So, that’s the birthday of the Church.

II. The Business of the Body

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to notice: not only the birthday of the Church but the business of the Church. Or, why did God do this? What is our busyness or our business? Not busyness, but our business? What is the business of the church?

Well, we have just a singular program. And, what is it? Look in verses 14 and following: *“For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? [Or] if the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body?”*—that is, *“if it’s one great big eyeball, there wouldn’t be a body”*—*“But now are they many members, yet”*—now, notice this—*“one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:14–20). Many members—one Body. We call that what? Unity in diversity.

Now, God has many members in His Body. And, there are hundreds and hundreds of us here tonight. But all...while we’re many members, we all have one agenda—not two agendas, one agenda. Whose agenda is it? The agenda of the head. All the members of the Body are to be committed to one agenda, and that is what the head says to do.

You see, a healthy body is a body that is coordinated, where the members learn to work together at the impulse of the head. Now, that means that we’re organized. We have organs. We have lungs, and livers, and spleens, and hands, and feet, and eyes,

and ears, and these all work together in coordination, because they are organized. Now, when your body gets disorganized, you're sick. When your body is organized and is working together, and the members are not working against one another but for one another, then you're doing well. Now, somebody has said that good organization is like good digestion: when it's working right, you never notice it; when it's not working, it's the only thing you can notice. And, a church that is operating under the leadership of the head is going to be organized.

Have you ever heard anybody say, "I'm against organized religion"? Have you ever heard that? Well, just listen. You'll hear it. Pardon me, but that's not very bright, and it's certainly not very scriptural. As a matter of fact, this whole chapter teaches here that God has put us together in an organization, but we have a singular purpose in all of our diversity—and that is to follow the leadership of the head.

Now, the members of this Body cannot go off on their own. We cannot say... I cannot say to my hand, "Well, it's so gifted I'm going to send it off on a mission of its own." No, it is only significant as a hand as it stays connected to the body. Now, God forbid, but if you were to look around and see the hands on the various members here, you're not particularly repulsed or turned off by that. But, if you were to walk, look down on the floor, and there'd be one lying on the floor, you wouldn't like that, because the hand dismembered from the body is not only unattractive; it is useless and even grotesque. We are members one of another, and we function as we function in the Body under the head. We have a singular purpose. That means that we're to be working together. If my ministry causes difficulty for your ministry, or your ministry causes difficulty for my ministry, then one of us is wrong, or perhaps both of us, because when this hand is properly related to the head, and this hand is properly related to the head, they have to be properly related to one another. So, we have a singular purpose.

And, what is the purpose of my body, physically? What is the purpose of my body? It is to serve me. Now, I am not my body. My body serves me. I'm on the inside of this body, giving it directions. Now, if a man begins to serve his body, that's dangerous. He's out of control if a body is there as a servant. Now, that tells us that, as a church, we're not here to do things for Jesus—no. What I mean by that is Jesus is here to be doing things through us. We are the Body of the Lord Jesus in Memphis, Tennessee, and we have a singular purpose. This is the business of the Church, which is simply to obey the head and do what the head wants it to do.

Now, how do you know the man named Adrian? How do you know me? May I tell you that the only possible way that you can know me is through my body—what my body says, what it does or writes? That's the only way you can know me—through my body. You can't know me any other way. The only way that you can know the man Adrian... You can't look inside me. You cannot read my mind. You cannot see my heart.

The only thing you know about me is what my body does. If I smile, you say I must be happy. If I look this way, you say I must be mean. Whatever it is, that's all you know. When I'm talking, you hear my words. If I'm writing, you read what I write. If I'm acting, fighting, loving, laughing, leaping, dancing, whatever it is, all you know about me you know through my body. Isn't that right? So, what is the purpose of my body? The purpose of my body is to serve me and to declare me. What is the purpose of the Church? To serve Jesus and to declare Jesus. Isn't that right?

Do you know what this city knows about Jesus? Just what it sees in His Body—in His Body. I mean, this is the way this city is to know Jesus—through the Body, which is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. You see, Jesus is the invisible part of the visible Body, and the Body is the visible part of the invisible Jesus. And, the Holy Spirit has baptized us into the Body of Christ. And, that is the business of the Body—to manifest the life of the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The Bonding of the Body

Now, let me talk to you about a third thing: not only the birth of the Body and the business of the Body but the bonding of the Body. It's very, very important that we be one together. Look now in verses 15 and 16: *“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?”* (1 Corinthians 12:15–16).

Now, what if the foot and the eye were to get into a competition and the foot says, “I have no need of the eye,” and the eye says, “Well, very well then. I'll fix you.” And, the eye sees a hole in the ground and doesn't tell the foot, and the foot steps in the hole. And, the body falls and comes up with a black eye. Now, the point is that God made us where we need one another. I cannot be in competition with you; you cannot be in competition with me. No part of the body can function as it ought apart from the other part.

Now, the feet and the hands are different. Generally, we keep our feet covered. Generally, we have our hands uncovered. Generally, we decorate our hands. We put rings on our hands. A few of you have rings on your toes tonight. And, maybe you do, but most of you don't. We decorate our hands; we display our hands. And yet, our feet are as necessary as our hands.

Our eyes are spoken of almost always poetically. Eyes are called the *mirror of the soul*. The eyes are beautiful. And, some people have the most absolutely beautiful eyes. Some women have gorgeous eyes, and then they put all this stuff on them. Now, some is fine, but I mean, I mean, you look like a jack-o-lantern with the light blown out. God gave you those eyes as a mirror of the soul, and eyes are beautiful. But, what if you

opened a dresser drawer and there's a dresser drawer full of them? That's weird. You see, God put us in the Body to function as a Body. That's why it's so ridiculous to say that, "I love Jesus, but I don't love the Church." God put us *"in the body, as it hath pleased him"* (1 Corinthians 12:18). And, God made us different, that He might make us one.

Now, you know, some members of your body don't really seem to be so necessary at first. Look, if you will, in verse 22: *"Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, [among] these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness"* (1 Corinthians 12:22–23). Now, what does that mean? Well, you know, when people teach little boys and girls to be thankful to God for the body He gave them, they say, you know, "Thank God for your eyes. Thank God for your ears. Thank God for your hands." Do you ever teach little boys and girls to say, "Thank You, Lord, for the pancreas. Thank You, God, for my kidneys. Thank You, God, for my liver or my spleen"? If you've ever received a kidney transplant, you'd say, "Thank You, God, for my kidneys," wouldn't you? But, you know, we just take it for granted that our kidneys are functioning, or our spleen is functioning, until it ceases to function.

Now, what he says is we belong to one another, we need one another, and, therefore, we should care for one another. Look in verse 25: *"That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another"* (1 Corinthians 12:25). A man that doesn't take care of his body is sick. And, each part of the body is to take care of the other part.

You know that, back in 1980, I had a gall bladder attack. And, it was Saturday night, and I was sitting in my recliner. I was there with my daughter, Gayle, and Joyce had gone somewhere. And, I had prepared my own meals that day. I went—well, I didn't prepare; yeah, I prepared one of them, and I bought one—I went to a restaurant and bought a childog; and then, I ladled it down with Tabasco, and wolfed it down, and ran off to a meeting. And then, that evening I came in and looked for something to eat. And, somebody had given us a case of tamales. And, Joyce would never take them out. They were canned tamales. She said, "That is probably the worst thing a man could eat." Well, she was gone; and so, again, I got those tamales out, and I put them in the can opener, and then put them in the microwave, and, again, in a hurry, I ingested—inhaled—that can of tamales. And, I'm sure that my system was just loaded with that fat. And, I sat down in my recliner and began to read.

And, about 10:00—10:30—I thought I'd get up and go to bed, but I felt a pain. As a matter of fact, I felt a lot of pain, mostly all over. But, it was right in here. And folks, if you ever have a gall bladder attack, come to me. If you think it's a gall bladder attack, I

can give you a test. Just put your fingers right under your rib cage and push. If you can do it and keep smiling, you haven't got it. Now, I didn't know whether I was having a heart attack or whatever, and I hated to go to the hospital. So, I got up, and got some medical books, and began to study, you know, to try and find out to see if I could figure this thing out. Finally, my daughter Gayle said, "Papa, you're going to the hospital." I felt so weak to drive up there and turn myself in. It's like you're surrendering to the...

And, I told the doctor, I said, "Now doctor, I don't think it's the flu. I can breath well. And, I don't think it's my heart. I've got a good heart." He said, "Would you be quiet?" He said, "You've got a rock collection down there—well, a gall bladder attack." Well, I want to tell you about that gall bladder attack: when I got that gall—this is interesting, isn't it? Don't you love this organ recital? You know—when my vicious gall bladder attacked me, the rest of my body stayed up all night to keep it company. That's what the Bible says: "when one member suffers, every member suffers with it; when one member rejoices, every member rejoices with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26).

Look again in verses 25 and 26: *"there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it"* (1 Corinthians 12:25–26). We're here to minister to one another. In a loving church, we're members of the same Body, and there can be no arrogance, there can be no envy, there can be no rivalry, there can be no self-sufficiency, there can be no disunity, because disunity, or rivalry, or envy is disloyalty to the head, the Lord Jesus Christ. Loyalty to the head means loyalty to one another.

I'm going to do something, and don't try to write these scriptures down, because I'll be going too fast. But, I want to give you some scriptures that use the phrase "one another":

John 13:14: *"Wash one another's feet."*

Romans 12:10: *"[Prefer] one another."*

Romans 12:16: *"Be of the same mind one toward another."*

Romans 14:13: *"[Do] not...judge one another."*

James 4:11: *"[Do not] speak...evil one of another."*

Romans 14:19: *"Edify one another."*

Romans 15:7: *"Receive...one another."*

Romans 15:14: *"Admonish one another."*

1 Corinthians 12:25: *"Care [for] one...another."*

1 Peter 4:10: *"Minister [gifts] one to another."*

1 Corinthians 16:20: *"Greet...one another."*

Galatians 5:13: *"Serve one another."*

Galatians 6:2: *"Bear...one another's burdens."*

Ephesians 5:21: “[Submit]...one to another.”

1 Thessalonians 4:18: “Comfort one another.”

Hebrews 3:13: “Exhort one another.”

Hebrews 10:24: “Consider one another.”

James 5:16: “Confess your faults one to another.”

James 5:16: “Pray one for another.”

1 Peter 4:9: “Use hospitality one to another.”

1 John 1:7: “Fellowship one with another.”

You think God’s trying to tell us anything? Oh, He’s telling us, folks, that we need one another. “For by one Spirit [have] we all [been] baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Conclusion

Now, I’m finished with the message, but let me give you three things I pray that God will lay on your heart, as you see yourself as a member of the Body called *Bellevue Baptist Church*—the Body that is ordaining this man to the gospel ministry.

A. Accept Yourself

The first thing: accept yourself—accept yourself. The Bible says, “God hath put every member in the Body, as it has pleased Him” (1 Corinthians 12:18). Don’t try to be somebody else. I don’t know where God put you in the Body. Maybe God made you a shoulder in the Body, so you could bear burdens. Maybe God made you an ear, so you could listen. Maybe God made you a heart, so you can love. Maybe God made you a hand, so you can help. Maybe God made you a mouth, so you can preach. Just accept the gifts that God gave you. And, God put you in the Body for a particular purpose. Accept yourself.

B. Be Yourself

Number two: be yourself. Don’t try to imitate other people. When I first started preaching, I would listen to other preachers preach. And, I’d hear Billy Graham preach, and I’d want to be like him. And, I’d hear Dr. Lee preach; I’d want to be like him. I’d hear W.A. Criswell preach; I’d want to be like him. I’d hear Hyman Appleman preach; I’d want to be like him. And, you know what I discovered? All I could be is an imitation of those men, but I can be the best Adrian Rogers there is. And, nobody can be you but you. God made you unique. Accept yourself. Be yourself.

C. Give Yourself

And then, give yourself. You know, the parts of the body must give in order to live. The lungs have to give. The liver has to give. The spleen has to give. The marrow has to

give. All of the body gives; and as it gives, it receives. Find your place in the Body. Find a ministry in this church. Now, I don't know what your ministry might be. It might not be significant in the eyes of men, "but God has placed every member in the Body, as it has pleased Him" (1 Corinthians 12:18).

What is the birth of the Body? When we receive Christ, the Holy Spirit places us into the Body of Christ. What is the business of the Body? The business of the body is to obey the head, because the only way that you can see the person who lives in the Body is by what the Body says and does. And, the way this world is going to see Jesus is in us. What is the bonding of the Body? God made us different, that He might make us one. Do you think if we were all alike, that would bring unity? That would bring disunity. If we were all one great big eyeball, first of all, it would be hideous. I could see a 6-foot eyeball up here preaching. I couldn't preach, because I wouldn't have a mouth—but boy could I see you! Now, it'd be hideous! And, suppose we had a congregation of eyeballs rolling around in here. We wouldn't need any seats. We'd just roll all around. Getting dumb now—I'm going to quit. All right.

Folks, God made us different, that He might make us one. Isn't it wonderful to be part of a New Testament church? You see, to Him be glory through the Church. Father, help us to be the kind of a church You want us to be. In Your holy name. Amen.

You Are Somebody in His Body

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 16, 2000

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

Outline

Introduction

- I. In a Body, There Is a Manifested Person
- II. In a Body, There Is a Ministering Person
- III. In a Body, There Is a Motivating Power
- IV. In a Body, There Is a Mutual Program
 - A. We Have a Mutual Life
 - B. We Show a Mutual Love
 1. There Can Be No Arrogance
 2. There Can Be No Envy
 3. There Can Be No Self-Sufficiency
 4. There Can Be No Disunity
 - C. We Share a Mutual Lord

Conclusion

- A. Discover Yourself
- B. Accept Yourself
- C. Give Yourself

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 12? Find verse 12; and when you've found it, look up here—1 Corinthians 12, verse 12. And now, I tell you that you are very, very important to Bellevue Baptist Church if you are a member of this church. You are so important to this church. Now, the question I want to ask you is this: Is the Church important to you? The title of our message—"You are Somebody in His Body."

Now, there are a lot of terms for the Church—a lot of ways that the Church is described. For example, the Church is described as the Bride of Christ. He is the Bridegroom and we are the Bride. The Church is described as His building—not these physical buildings, but a spiritual building with Christ as the foundation. We are living stones. The Church is described as an army and Christ our victorious King, and we march under His blood-stained banner. Hallelujah! The Church is described as a flock of sheep, and we're His people—the sheep of His pasture—and Jesus is the Good Shepherd who leads His flock along. But, the way that I want us to think about the Church today is the Church is also described as His Body—B-O-D-Y. He is the head,

and we are the members; and I want you to keep that in your heart. Now, I want to say of all of these things, whether it be a Bride, or a flock, or a battalion, or whether it be a building—whatever it is—all of these speak of community and none of it speaks of individualism. It speaks of togetherness. Folks, we're in this together. The Bible teaches that we are "*members one of another*" (Romans 12:5).

Now, if anybody says, "I believe in Jesus, but I don't believe in the Church," they're showing their ignorance. Jesus and the Church are not identical, but Jesus and the Church are inseparable, like a bride and groom, a head and body, a foundation and building, a shepherd and a flock. All of these go together. So, don't say, "Jesus—yes, and the Church—no," because when you say that, very frankly, you're displaying your ignorance. And, you say, "Well, I love God, but I don't love the Church." May I tell you something plainly? And, I hope I don't hurt your feelings, but if you don't desire fellowship with the saints here, you have no prospect of fellowship with the saints *there*. I'm telling you it just as clearly as I can tell you—that love for Jesus and love for what Jesus loves are inseparable.

Now, let's look at the scripture that tells us that the Church is a Body. Do you have your Bibles open? All right, 1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 12: "*For as the body is one, and [has] many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made*"—A-double-I—"to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, *Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him*" (1 Corinthians 12:12–18). I'm going to stop reading there. We're going to read some more scripture later on.

But, there are four thoughts, and I pray God the Holy Spirit will help me to write indelibly upon your heart today, if you're a member of this church. And, by the way, if you're not a member of the New Testament church, you ought to be—if not this one, one somewhere. So, this is good for everybody, wherever you are, by television or later by tape, or on the radio, whatever. I want you to listen to these four wonderful principles that are taken right from the scripture.

I. In a Body, There Is a Manifested Person

Now, first of all, I want you to tell you, as we think of the Church as a Body—the Body of Christ—in a body—in a body—there is a manifested person. Do you know who's manifested by my body? I am—I am. May I tell you that all you know about me you

know through this—my body? You don't know a thing in the world about me apart from my body—nothing. Or, you say, "Well, yes, I do. I can read what you've written." My body wrote that. You say, "I can know about you by what you say." My body is saying this. You can say, "Well, I know about you by the way that you walk." It's my body that is walking. All you know about me... You don't know anything about me apart from my body. What my body has done or is doing is the only way you can know me.

Now, there is in this body a manifested person. The person who's manifested by this is the person who lives in this, whose name is Adrian; and you know me through my body. How is the world going to know the Lord Jesus Christ? Through His Body—through us. Hey, that's kind of frightening in a way, isn't it? I mean, when you think about it, how is this world going to know the Lord Jesus Christ? God is a Spirit, and a spirit is invisible. My spirit, the real me that lives inside this earthly house, is invisible. Jesus lives in His Body, which is the Church, and Jesus is manifested by His Body. We are here to tell Memphis, Tennessee, what Jesus Christ is like. That's why we're here—we are to manifest the Lord Jesus. In a body, there is a manifested person. The Church is the visible part of the invisible Jesus, and Jesus is the invisible part of the visible Church. And together, we manifest the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. In a body, there is a manifested person.

Now, there's only One who's ever lived the Christian life. It's not Adrian; it's not Jim Whitmire, not Mark Dougherty, not David Scott. There's only One who's ever lived the Christian life. You know what His name is? It's Jesus. He's the only One that's ever lived the Christian life. And, if Jesus's life is being lived on this platform behind this pulpit, it'll be Jesus in Adrian doing it. It won't be Adrian; it'll be Jesus in me. If Jesus is manifested in your home, it'll be because Jesus is manifesting Himself through you. If you try to imitate Jesus, all you're going to be is a little cheap imitation of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see these kids wearing these bracelets and adults, too—"What Would Jesus Do?" Just the letters—"WWJD?" What would Jesus do? And, that's fine. I think that's great. But, be careful. Don't get the idea that you're supposed to cook up what Jesus would do. You haven't any idea what Jesus would do, many times. Matter of fact, what Jesus would do would probably be opposite of what you think He would do. It'd surprise you. And then, secondly, if you think you knew what Jesus would do, then all you have to do is do it. Do you think that you can do what Jesus would do? Do you think you have the strength—the power—to do that? No, friend. Listen, nobody can be Jesus but Jesus, and it's Jesus in you that will do it. When you ask yourself, "What would Jesus do?" let Jesus tell you what He would do. And then, when you say, "Jesus, it needs to be done," let Jesus do it. Does that sound mystical to you? Friend, that is the Christian life. It is Christ in you that is the hope of Glory. And, in a body, there's a manifested

person; and in His Body, which is the Church, Jesus Christ is to be manifest. Now, have you got that?

II. In a Body, There Is a Ministering Person

Let's move to the second point, because, really, this deals with you; so pay attention. In a body, there's also a ministering purpose—a ministering purpose. What is the purpose of my body? It is to minister to me. My body is here to serve me. My eyes are here to help me to see. My hand is here to feed me and to write for me. My legs are here to carry me around. My body is here to minister to me. What is Bellevue Baptist Church to do? We are here to minister to the Lord Jesus Christ—we are here to minister to Him.

Now, my body is not to have any plans of its own. I would be afraid of my body if my body had plans of its own. My body is to serve me; I'm not to serve it. And, it's only to serve me at my command. If I woke up this morning and my hand somehow had the ability to speak and say, "Good morning, Mr. Rogers." "Good morning, hand. How are you?" "I'm fine, thank you. Mr. Rogers, I have some plans today. I'm going to scratch your ear. I'm going to shave you. I'm going to take a pen and write some words for you, and I'm going to shake some hands for you." I'd say, "Just be there—just be there. I don't want you to have any plans of your own." I would be afraid of that thing. So many times, we're telling Jesus what we're going to do for Him. He doesn't want us to do anything for Him. Does that surprise you? He wants to do something through you. Your body is here to minister to you, and this church is here to hear what the head says and to do it. That's what we're here to do; and therefore, we must listen to what our Lord is saying. We are to minister to Him.

Now there, we're talking about spiritual gifts, and we're going to show you that you're a gifted child; and all of us have been placed in the Body of Christ in a particular function, and we're going to talk about different abilities. But, I want to say without any stutter, stammer, apology, equivocation, *the best ability is availability*. That's it. Are you available? You want to discover your spiritual gift? Are you available? I mean, are you responsive to Him? In a body, there is a manifested person. The person who lives in the body is to be manifested. In a body, there is a ministering purpose. The body is to minister to the purpose to the person who lives in that body.

Over in Europe, after World War II, there was a cathedral that had been destroyed by the Nazi bombs, so American GIs were there. And, they had extra time, and they were helping to restore the old cathedral. And, out in the courtyard of that cathedral there was a statute of a likeness of Jesus, and the boys... The statue had been broken—was on the ground; and they were picking it up, and putting it back together, and cementing the statute back together, but they couldn't find the hands. They found every part of the statue but the hands—no hands. Finally, one of those GIs made a

beautiful plaque and put it at the foot of that statue; it said, “He has no hands but ours.” What truth in that! We are His hands; we are His feet. We are the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I’m talking to you today and I would be talking to you on the next two Sundays about discovering your spiritual gift. Are you available? Are you willing to let Jesus be the manifested person in you? Are you willing to let your body minister to the Lord Jesus Christ, to His desires, to His needs? Are you saying, “Here am I, Lord. My hands are Your hands. My feet are Your feet”? God put you in Bellevue Baptist Church—every one of you from this side to that side, down here, all the way across, young and old, mature and immature—God put you in this church to serve Him. And, if you think you’ve done God a wild favor by coming on Sunday morning and listening to a sermon... And you call this the service? This is not the service; the service begins when you leave here. Now, God put you here to serve Him.

III. In a Body, There Is a Motivating Power

Now, here’s the third thought. Remember, I said there were four. In a body, there’s a manifested person. In a body, there is a ministering purpose. In a body, there is a motivating power—a motivating power. My body has to have something to motivate it. There is life in my body. If there were no life in my body, I have no power to move with. I would be a corpse. I would be a lump of clay down here on the ground.

Look, if you will, in verse 13 of this same chapter here—1 Corinthians chapter 12, verse 13: *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 12:13). Now, the life of my human body is my human spirit. There is the breath. The word spirit—*pneuma* or *ruach* in the Old Testament—it’s the motivating power. God breathes into man’s nostrils the breath of life. Man became a living soul; he’s animated by the spirit that’s in him. When Jesus died upon the cross, He gave up the spirit; and therefore, His body then was lifeless for three days without the spirit. You see, a body has to have a motivating power.

Now, the motivating power of the human body is the human spirit. The motivating power of Jesus’s power is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is to be the life of Bellevue Baptist Church—the Holy Spirit of God. Without the Holy Spirit of God, there is no power in this church. Learn the difference between an organism and an organization. The church is organized, but it is not an organization; it is an organism. An organization does not necessarily have life. The Boy Scouts, the Kiwanis, the PTA—all wonderful organizations, but not like a church. Those are organizations. There’s something different about a church. I pray God that it’ll be different. There is the life of God that is to be in us, *“For by one Spirit [have] we all [been] baptized into one body,”* and that one

spirit is the Holy Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Now, granted, you can get a group of people together, get a beautiful building, get a man who can talk well, get the folks together, get them organized around some causes, and call it a church, but it may not be a church. It may be a wonderful organization. It may do some good; but friend, I'm here to tell you there's an absolute, distinct difference, when the Spirit of Almighty God is working, moving among His people. And, people need to come in here and see that it is a spiritual dynamic. Just as my human spirit is the life of my body that is motivating me right now, the Holy Spirit of God is to be the life of Bellevue Baptist Church. And, well we sing on Sunday mornings, sometimes, All is vain, unless the Spirit of the Holy One come down. The church is not a corporation with Jesus as the president; it is a body with Jesus as the head. It is an organism; it has life.

Now, the Bible says, *"For by one Spirit"*—verse 13—*"[have] we all [been] baptized into one body"* (1 Corinthians 12:13). He's not talking about water baptism, in my estimation; he's talking about spirit baptism. We are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. When does this take place? When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ—when we receive Christ as personal Savior. The two things take place at the same time: we are baptized into the Body of Christ, and we're filled with the Spirit. We've all been baptized into His Body and have all been made to drink into one Spirit—that is, the Holy Spirit of God. When I give my heart to Jesus—when I say to Jesus, "I am a sinner. I can't save myself. You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You once and for all, now and forever. Forgive my sin. Come into my heart. Be my Lord and Savior"—then a miracle takes place, and the Holy Spirit says, "Now I'm placing you, Adrian, into the Body of Christ. I am baptizing you into the Body of Christ." Water baptism only symbolizes this spirit baptism. I am baptized—verse 13—into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13).

But, not only am I placed into the Body of Christ—the Holy Spirit is placed into me, and I've "been made to drink into one spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Just as I take a drink of water, the Holy Spirit just comes into me, so I am in the Body of Christ and the Holy Spirit is in me. That takes place when I get saved, and that makes the wonderful transformation—that makes the difference.

And so, when I am put into the Body of Christ, there I receive my spiritual gift. When I'm put in the Body of Christ, I'm put in the Body of Christ maybe as an eye, to see things for Jesus; maybe as a shoulder, to bear burdens for Jesus; maybe as a hand, to hold things for Jesus; maybe as feet, to go somewhere for Jesus; maybe as a heart, to love for Jesus. But, God puts every member *"in the body, as it hath pleased him"* (1 Corinthians 12:18). He places us in the Body of Christ, and we're going to discover later on, when we discover how to know our spiritual gift, that we received our spiritual gift

when we were placed in the Body of Christ. It's a birthday gift, when you were born again.

But also, when you're saved, the Holy Spirit comes into you. You've been "*made to drink into one Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 12:13). It's right there in that verse 13. The Holy Spirit of God is in me, and I am in Jesus. Isn't that wonderful? That saying is true about you. Now, when I'm baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ, I receive my gift. When I'm filled with the Holy Spirit, I receive the power to use my gift for the glory of God. And so, in a body, there is a motivating power.

Some people have the idea—and it's a false doctrine, false theology—that you get saved and then later on you receive the Holy Spirit. No, sir. This verse says, "*For by one Spirit [have] we all*"—every one of us—"*[been] baptized into [the] body [of Christ]...and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 12:13). As a matter of fact, I'm going to tell you something very clearly: if you don't have the Holy Spirit, you're not saved—absolutely not saved. The Bible makes that clear in the Book of Romans, where the Bible says, "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*" (Romans 8:9).

Now, who is the Baptizer? The Holy Spirit. Who is being baptized? The believer in Jesus. Into what is he baptized? Into the Body of Christ. When is he baptized? At the moment of his conversion—the moment he gives his or her heart to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, no one is left out. We're baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. Romans 8, verse 9: "*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*" (Romans 8:9). So, in a body... Are you listening? Are you following along? Anybody that is a manifested person... I'm manifested in my body. Jesus is manifested in His Body, the Church. In a body, there's a ministering purpose. My body is here to minister to me; we're here to minister to the Lord Jesus Christ. In a body, there's a motivating power—the power that animates and motivates my body is my human spirit; the power that animates and motivates the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit of God. Does that make sense?

IV. In a Body, There Is a Mutual Program

Now, here's the fourth and final thing of these things: in a body, there is a mutual program—in a body, there is a mutual program. Now, we just read verse 13; let's pick up in verse 14, and read this, and see what Paul is saying: "*For the body is not one member, but many*"—that is, "*There's no such thing as a Long Ranger Christianity*"—"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, am I not of the body?"—let me reread that—"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole [body] were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath

God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body?—that is, “If we were all just one great big eyeball or one great big ear like a rooftop antennae, where would be the body?”—“*But now are they many members, yet one body*” (1 Corinthians 12:14–20).

Now, in a body, therefore, there’s a mutual program. Did you know that the members of Bellevue Baptist Church are to have but one agenda, and that’s the agenda of Jesus? We don’t have any other agenda; we don’t do anything else. You see, we are here—all of us—to do one thing, and that is to show the life of the Lord Jesus Christ to this community, to manifest Him, and to minister to Him. And, it is to be a mutual program. A healthy body is coordinated. One of the things that makes Bellevue Baptist Church the wonderful church that it is, is that it has some measure—some degree—of coordination. Now, I’m not against organization. When I said, “The church is not an organization but an organism,” don’t for one moment think that I’m opposed to organization. I’m very much in favor of it, because the Bible is very much in favor of it. God says, “*Let all things be done decently and in order*” (1 Corinthians 14:40). And, the analogy of the Church is the human body. The human body is organized. It has organs; it is organized. As a matter of fact, if you study human anatomy and physiology, you will stand in awe at the organization of a human body. And, when you see the Church, you’re going to say, “Thank God for the organization of the Church.” A healthy body is organized.

Now, we’re talking about mutuality. Let me show you three areas of mutuality—three things. You know, we’re all so different—we’re so different. Somebody said, “Only one out of three people is either handsome or beautiful. Look on either side of you. If it’s not them, it’s you.” That’s worth coming for, wasn’t it? We’re different. We are so different, but let me show you, if you are truly a born-again child of God, three things that we all have in common:

A. We Have a Mutual Life

Number one: we have the same life. Write it down—the same life. Beginning in verse 15 and 16—look: “*If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*”—“And if the eye shall say, Because I am not... If the eye shall say, Because I am not...because I am not the eye...” Let me put on my glasses. If the eye shall say, “I need no glasses,” do I yet need glasses? All right—“*And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?*” (1 Corinthians 12:15–16). What’s he saying? He’s saying that we’re all in the same thing together; we share common life.

And, he goes on to mention the foot and the hand. The foot and the hand should never be in competition. No part of my body can function as it ought apart from the other

members of the body. A foot is not as noticeable in public as the hands. I dare say that probably nobody in here is barefooted. There may be—I've seen them come to church barefooted; but I dare say most of you have shoes on today, right? And, I dare say that most of you are not wearing gloves, but you may be. But, I'm saying generally, what? The feet are covered; the hands are bare. Most of you have rings on. Few of you have rings on your toes, but a few do. A few have rings on your toes and so forth. But generally, the hands are more public and more noticeable than the feet, but both are necessary. God has made us where no one part of the body can function as it ought apart from the others. It's grotesque to us when one member of the body has been severed from the body.

Now, look up here. See my hand? Does that particularly bother you? I don't think so; I'm just waving at you. But, suppose you look down in the aisle beside you and there lies a hand. Whew! If you were to see just a human hand out there, severed... My eyes don't particularly bother you, I trust; but if you were to open a dresser drawer and find a dresser drawer full of them, good night! What has happened here? You see, the Christian is to operate along with other Christians. We need one another. Look in verse 17: *"If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole body were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him"* (1 Corinthians 12:17). So, we need one another.

Now, you have parts of your body that you're not really aware of. Many times we teach boys and girls to thank God for their eyes, and their ears, and their hands; but this morning, when you got up and thanked God for your blessings, did you say, "God, I just want to thank You so much for my pancreas. And Lord, I am so blessed by my kidneys today, and my liver, and my spleen"? No, you didn't do that. You didn't say, "God, I'm so grateful for my pancreas." Friend, if you had pancreatic cancer and God healed you, you'd thank God for your pancreas, would you not? You see, there are parts of our body that function that we're not even aware of it; but thank God for it.

Now, let me ask you a question: you're sitting here right now—are you aware of the nursery workers in this church? Probably not, unless you've got a child over there. But, that's what keeps this building from being a bawl-room. They come in here and bawl. Are you aware of who got here while it was still dark and began to turn on the lights and open the doors? Who made your cup of coffee that you had in Sunday School this morning? Who did all the printing that you're reading today? Are you aware of what goes on? By the way, let's just thank the ushers in our church. Can we do that, right now? Just thank them. I mean, people come to church, and they say, "Oh, wasn't that great music?" They don't go away saying, "Wasn't that great ushering?" You see, you don't thank God necessarily for your pancreas, for your spleen, but "God has set every

member in the body as it has pleased Him” (1 Corinthians 12:18). And, we need one another, and there are so many jobs that are done at Bellevue Baptist Church that in the eyes of the world, perhaps, are thankless jobs; but I’m telling you, in the eyes of Jesus, they are not, because you’re a part of His Body. And, thank God for people who have discovered their gift and are ministering to the Body of Jesus Christ.

B. We Show a Mutual Love

We have a mutual life and; and therefore, we show a mutual love. Look in verses 25 and 26 of this same chapter: *“That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it”* (1 Corinthians 12:25–26). We have the same life; and therefore, we have the same love. You’re to love me. I’m to love you. Why? We’re in the same body.

Now, one of my members is sick. If my heart, or my gall bladder, or my eyes, or whatever have trouble, that doesn’t mean they’re to be shut off; it means they’re to be cared for all the more. We share the same love.

1. There Can Be No Arrogance

Now listen—listen to me: if you’re in this Body, you cannot be arrogant. Listen carefully: you cannot say, “Well, look at me. I’m the pastor. I’m not a custodian; I am the pastor.” No, you can’t be arrogant.

2. There Can Be No Envy

Number two: you can’t show envy. You can’t say, “Because somebody has a gift I don’t have—because he’s an eye and I’m a liver—I’m going to be jealous of the eye.” No! There can be no envy; there can be no rivalry. The members of the Body are not to be at war with one another. I don’t have to get ahead of you; you don’t have to get ahead of me.

3. There Can Be No Self-Sufficiency

There can be no self-sufficiency. I cannot say, “I don’t need you.” You cannot say, “You don’t need me.” If I were to ask you to pick up a red card, the hand can’t say, “I don’t need the eye, because the hand can’t feel color.” The eye has to say, “That’s the red one right there.” We need one another. The eye can’t pick up the card, however... We need one another.

4. There Can Be No Disunity

There can be no rivalry, no self-sufficiency, and there can be no disunity. We’re in it together.

C. We Share a Mutual Lord

Why? We share the same life; we share the same love, and we share the same Lord.

Look in verse 27 of this same thing: *“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”* (1 Corinthians 12:27). You see, loyalty to the head, Jesus, has to be loyalty to one another. If this hand is right with the head and this hand is right with the head, these hands have to be right with one another. If you’re right with Jesus and I’m right with Jesus, we’ve got to be right with one another. There can be no disunity. Loyalty to Jesus means loyalty to one another, just like loyalty to the head means loyalty to every member of the body. You cannot—you cannot, you cannot—be loyal to Jesus without being loyal to this church.

And, that’s the missing note today, friend—is loyalty. People think—they think nothing about missing a church service, for example. I’m going to preach on church attendance. They’re—“Well, we had company to come today.” So what? What if you go tomorrow to your job and tell your boss, “I’m not coming in”? “Why not?” “Well, we had company to come.” Ridiculous! And, by the way, Joyce and I just don’t have company to come on Sunday morning unexpectedly. You know why? They know we’re going to be in church. If you have company to come, you say, “Make yourself at home. Come and go with us if you want. We’ll see you later. Sunday’s our day to be in the house of God.” Loyalty—loyalty—to Jesus is loyalty to what Jesus loves. If you love Jesus, you’re going to love what Jesus loves.

A pastor in Georgia was visiting in a home—a very affluent home, a beautiful home. They had everything—a young couple. But, they didn’t have any children in that home, but they had a little dog. Have you seen people kind of make fools of themselves over dogs? They had a little dog. That dog was praised, petted, loved—all of these things. And, the pastor sitting down—he said to the couple...he said, “You know, you have such a lovely home, and everything is so beautiful. You have so much. I notice you don’t have any children. Have you ever thought that perhaps some of the love that you’re showing that dog you could be showing to a child?” When he said that, the woman broke into tears, and got up, and left the room. He said to the husband, “I’m sorry. I know I said something terribly wrong. Tell me what it was.” He said, “Well, you couldn’t know, but we did have a son, and the doctor told us we’d never have another child; but there were difficulties in the birth of this son, and our son died. And, this dog that we make fools of ourselves over was his dog, and he loved him with all of his heart. Before he died, he asked us if we’d take care of his dog, and we promised that we would. And, in a sense, the love that we’re showing this little old dog is the love we’re showing to our son.”

Friend, you can find a lot of fault in the Church. I’m going to tell you something: Jesus loved the Church, and I’m going to love it with all of my heart, because the Church is His Bride, it is His Body, it is His building. He is the head, and we share mutual programs. We have the same life, the same love, the same Lord. We’re in it

together. So, we're to discover our spiritual gift.

Now, what does Bellevue Baptist Church exist for? How many of you can give our mission statement? "Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of magnifying Jesus through worship and the word. Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of maturing believers in Jesus through ministry, moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry"—"moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry"—"and making Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations." That's why we are here.

Conclusion

Now, I'm finished with the message, but let me tell you what I want you to do:

A. Discover Yourself

Number one: I want you to discover yourself. That's why we're going to be talking about unwrapping your spiritual gifts—I want you to discover yourself. Listen, you have a spiritual gift. Next Sunday I'm going to be talking about how to discover your spiritual gift. I want you to discover yourself.

B. Accept Yourself

Number two: I want you to accept yourself. When I first started preaching, I wanted to be like other preachers. One day, I made up my mind I could never be W.A. Criswell, I could never be Billy Graham, I could never be anybody else except Adrian Rogers. I decided I'd be the best Adrian Rogers there can be—not that I'm all that hot, but you know—I'm the best Adrian Rogers there is, good or bad. No, I'm not asking for applause. What I'm saying is this: you need, number one, to discover yourself; number two, you need to accept yourself.

C. Give Yourself

Number three: I want you to give yourself. Every member of the Body is both a receiver and a transmitter. We're here to receive from the other members, and we're here to give to the other members. And, when a cell in the body begins to receive and not give, they call that cancer—it's cancer. We're here to receive. I'm here to receive from you—not that I was asking for applause; but when you did that, that affirmed me. I'd be lying if I didn't say that that affirmed me. But, I'm praying God that I'll bless you today and my life, and your life, and our lives will be so co-mingled together that we will discover ourselves, accept ourselves, give ourselves, and be ourselves for Jesus. Every member—every body—is somebody in His Body. You're important. Way up there in the corner of that balcony—you, sir, are important. Over here—lady, you're important. You, sir, are important. You are somebody in His Body.

How do you get into that Body? By receiving Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and

Savior. And, the Holy Spirit of God will put you in the Body of Christ, and the Holy Spirit of God will come into you and help you to live like the Christian He has made you to be.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Would you begin to pray for those round about you who may not know the Lord Jesus Christ? And, if you want to be saved today, I want to tell you that if you will put your faith where God has put your sins—on the Lord Jesus Christ—He will save you. Furthermore, He will keep you.

Pray this: “Dear God, I am a sinner”—pray it; pray it, and mean it—“God, I am a sinner, and my sin deserves judgment. I’m bound for Hell, but I want to be saved. Jesus, You died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust You, and I do trust You, right now, like a child. I lay my pride in the dust. I receive You as my personal Lord and Savior. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, save me, Lord Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Then thank Him: “Thank You for saving me. I receive it by faith like a child, and that settles it. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my friend. And, Lord Jesus, thank You for saving me. I don’t ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

You Are Somebody in His Body

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 11, 2004

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 12:12–27

Outline

Introduction

- I. In a Body, There Is a Manifested Person
- II. In a Body, There Is a Ministering Purpose
- III. In a Body, There Is a Motivating Power
- IV. In a Body, There Is a Mutual Program
 - A. We Share the Same Life
 - B. We Show the Same Love
 - C. We Serve the Same Lord

Conclusion

Introduction

Thank you, young people. That was wonderful. Would you take God's precious Word and find 1 Corinthians chapter 12? And, I want to speak to our new members and, hopefully, some of our longer time members. I didn't say "older member," but "longer time members" will listen. I want to talk to you about finding a place in the Body of Christ. The title of the message: "You are Somebody in His Body." And, I want to say to our new members something that I trust God the Holy Spirit will use to help you to understand just how important you are to this church and how important the church ought to be to you. The Bible does not teach a "Lone Ranger Christianity."

Now, there are a lot of figures that describe the Church. The Church is called a *Bride*. The Church is called a *Body*. The Church is called a *flock*. The Church is called an *army*. The Church is called a *Body*. But, all of these speak of an inter-relationship with other people. You cannot serve God as you ought living an isolated, singular life. You are to love your brothers and sisters in Christ. The Bible says we're not to forsake "*the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is*" (Hebrews 10:25). And, I want to tell you something: I don't want to be mean, but if you don't enjoy being with your brothers and sisters in Christ here, you have little hope of being with them up there. Now, if you don't love the Church, that's just a sign to me that you don't love Jesus, because if you love Jesus, you would love what Jesus loves.

Now, we're going to talk about the Body. We are in the Body of Christ. I'm a member of that Body; you are a member of that Body. We're talking about the spiritual, mystical Body of Christ. And, I want to make some propositions to you about the Body of Christ,

and I think that they will resonate with you, if you will open your heart and your mind.

I. In a Body, There Is a Manifested Person

First Corinthians 12, verse 12: the first thing I want you to see is this—that in a body—in a body—there is a manifested person. Look in verse 12: *“For as the body is one, and hath many members”*—there’s just one Adrian up here, but I have hands, and eyes, and feet, and lungs, and spleen, and gizzard. All right. Now—*“as the body is one, and hath many members, and all members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also”*—now, don’t miss this—*“so also is Christ”* (1 Corinthians 12:12). Now, what he’s saying is that “I identify myself with my Church, which is my Body.”

Now, look up here. You see me. This is my body. It is not me. I live in this body. What you’re seeing right now is not really Adrian Rogers. You’re seeing the earthly house that Adrian lives in. Now, my body is manifesting me. All you know about me—all you know about me—you know through my body. There’s no other way that you can know anything about me except from my body: what my body looks like, how my body acts, what my body says, what my body writes, what my body speaks. That’s the only way you can know anything about me—through my body. You cannot look into my spirit. You cannot see my soul. All you can see is my body. I am being manifested to you. The real Adrian is being manifested to you through his body.

How is Jesus going to be known to this world? Through His Body. It is the Body of Christ that manifests the Person who lives in that Body. The Church is the visible part of the invisible Christ, and Christ is the invisible part of the visible Body. Jesus is manifested in His Body. The only way that you could know anything about Jesus apart from His Body is for God to give you a direct revelation—to speak to you directly out of Heaven. But, the Body is here to manifest the Person that lives in His Body.

You know, some time ago, there was a man who wrote a book called *In His Steps*. Shelton was his name, I believe. I read that when I was a teen. My heart was moved, and it’s a great book. I’m not really here to knock it, but the basis of that book is this: a group of people got together one time and decided that before they took any course of action, they would ask this question: What would Jesus do? And then, they would endeavor to do what Jesus would do. Well, if you think about it, there are some problems there:

First of all, that you would know what Jesus would do. Jesus may surprise you. Many times, Jesus would do things that you would never even dream that He would do. I don’t mean illegal and immoral, but He would have plans that you would never think of, right? Sure. And so, that presupposes you could know what Jesus would do. Secondly, it presupposes that you could do what Jesus would do if you know what He could do. You think you could do what Jesus would do if He wanted to? I mean, do you—do

you—have the power to do what Jesus would do? The best you would be would be a little cheap tin imitation of Jesus, even if you knew what Jesus would do if He were here. But, here's the basic flaw in that whole thing—listen to me, precious friends: Jesus is here! So, you don't have to ask yourself, "What would Jesus do if He were here?" You can say, "Lord Jesus, You live in me. Do as You wish. Do as You will. Speak to my heart."

I tell our young people—and I want you to learn this, and I want you to hear it—there's only one Person who has ever lived the Christian life—only one: His name is Jesus. And, if it is lived in your office, in your school, in your house, it'll be Jesus in you doing it. The Body manifests the Person who's in this Body. Christ lives in me. **He is the manifest Person of our Church, this Body, just as Adrian is the manifested person in his body that you're looking at right now.**

II. In a Body, There Is a Ministering Purpose

Number two: Not only, in a body, is there a Person who is manifested—a manifested Person—but in a body, there is a ministering purpose. What is the purpose of my body? It's to serve me; I'm not to serve it. My body is a servant—my body is a servant to me. I live in this body, and it is to be my servant. Now, therefore, that means that my body has no plans of its own. **Very frankly, when the alarm went off this morning, I did not want to get up. My body decided it was going to stay in bed, but the person in me said, "You rascal, get up! You've got to preach this morning. Out! Up!" "Yes, sir," and I got up. Now, I believe in the Resurrection. I have one every morning. I do my best sleeping just before the alarm goes off. I get up—I wake up—not because I want to, but because there's something in me that says, "Body, get up. You're not to have plans of your own."**

That's the reason, preacher boys, I don't believe in a committee-led church. If the Church is a body, a hand would be analogous to a committee—a committee of five to hold things and to manipulate things. Well, I don't want to wake up and have my hand say, "Good morning, Mr. Rogers. This morning I'm going to put some things in your mouth. I'm going to take a razor and bring it to your skin on your face. I'm going to write some letters on your behalf. I hope you'll like them." I would say, "If you don't mind, just be there." I don't want a hand-led Body. I don't want a committee-led church. You see, we exist to serve Jesus. We're to get our orders from Jesus. We are to minister to the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, what is the best ability, new member? The best ability is availability: "Here I am, Lord. Here I am. You manifest Yourself through me. I will minister to You, Lord Jesus, because I am Your Body." And, in a body, there is a ministering purpose.

After World War II, there was a cathedral that had been bombed. In that cathedral, was a statue of Christ. The cathedral was in ruins. They rebuilt it. Some students got

together and said, “We’re going to put the statue of Christ back together that had been decimated.” And, they got all of the pieces and gathered them up, but they couldn’t find the hands. They wondered what to do. They left the hands off, and somebody made a placard and put it underneath that statue; and it said, “He has no hands but ours.” That’s very true: we are His hands. We’re His eyes. We’re His ears. We are His Body.

And, the Body is here to manifest the Person who lives in the Body. People are to look at Bellevue Baptist Church, and they’re to see Jesus Christ. And, this Body is here not to be served by Christ, but to serve Christ, because in a body, there’s a manifested Person—in a body, there is a ministering purpose.

III. In a Body, There Is a Motivating Power

Thirdly, in a body, there is a motivating power. Look in verse 13: “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*” (1 Corinthians 12:13). Now, that Spirit that he’s talking about there is the Holy Spirit. In my body is my human spirit, and without my human spirit I’m dead. The spirit is the spirit of life. A body without a spirit is a corpse; a spirit without a body is a ghost. But, a spirit in a body is a living organism. What manifests—or, what motivates, and manipulates, and energizes, and propels, and drives the Church? The Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit of God is the motivating power. A body, in order to operate, must have life. If the life goes out of my human body, I become a lump of clay. Now, I could be manipulated. You could come up here, and take hold of my arms, and wave them around, and so forth, but there would be no inner life.

Now listen, new members—this is what makes Bellevue Baptist Church different from any other organization, unless it’s another church. We’re different from the PTA. We’re different from the Kiwanis. We’re different from the Boy Scouts. We’re different from the American Legion. We are different from that club—the flower club—that you belong to. Those things are organizations. The church is not an organization; it is an organism. What’s the difference? You see, an organization is wired together; an organism is given life together. The Church is not a corporation with Jesus Christ as the president; the Church is a Body with Jesus Christ as the head.

Now, you know, the sad thing is this—that some churches make nothing of the Holy Spirit of God and they go on operating. But, how do they operate? They operate with organizational power. One man said, “If the Holy Spirit were to suddenly die”—of course, that’s impossible—”but if the Holy Spirit were to suddenly die, many churches would go on the next Sunday as they did the Sunday before and never know the difference.” That’s frightening, isn’t it?

We have to ask ourselves this question about Bellevue Baptist Church: What is

there about Bellevue Baptist Church that cannot be explained apart from the Holy Spirit? Friend, if you can explain Bellevue apart from the Holy Spirit, then it's an organization. But, if you cannot explain Bellevue Baptist Church apart from the Holy Spirit, it is an organism.

Now, in a body—in a body—there's a manifested person. What you're seeing—what you're seeing—is the person who lives in the body. Not only is there a manifested person, but in a body, there is a ministering purpose. The body is to minister to the person who lives in the body. My body is to serve me just like this Body is to serve Jesus. In a body, there is a motivating power. If there's no spirit in my body, I'm a lump of clay, gravity takes over, and before long I will assume room temperature.

One man wrote to another man about his church. The church had forgotten the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and he said, "Pray for us here. The furnace is out, but the blower is still going." May that never happen to Bellevue Baptist Church! May we never take for granted the blessings that we have! May we ever believe the words of that song: "All is vain unless the Spirit of the Holy One comes down" (William Moore).

Now, here, we're talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Look at it again in verse 13, because it's a key verse: "*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Now, some people think that you get saved; and after you're saved for a while then, perhaps, you'll get the baptism of the Holy Ghost. And, they may ask you, "Have you had the baptism of the Holy Ghost?" Well friend, I can tell you, if you have been saved, you have, for any person who is saved is baptized with the Holy Spirit. Look at that verse again: "*For by one Spirit are [ye] all baptized*" (1 Corinthians 12:13). And, the Greek construction is, "For by one Spirit have ye all"—not *some*, but *all*—"been baptized into one body" (1 Corinthians 12:13). That's how you get into the Body of Christ.

Now, look at that scripture carefully. Who is the Baptizer? The Holy Spirit. Who is being baptized? The believer. Into what is he baptized? He is baptized into the Body of Christ. When is he baptized into the Body of Christ? When he believes in Christ. At the moment you put your faith in Christ, God the Holy Spirit puts you into the Body of Christ. There's no such thing as being saved without being part of the Body of Christ. That happens at the moment of salvation, and none is left out. Now folks, listen to me—not one shred of scripture ever tells you to seek to be baptized with the Holy Ghost, because you'd be seeking something that you already have. You see, when you receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, you are put into the mystical Body of Christ.

Now, watch this verse again, because notice what it says here in the last part: "*whether [ye] be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 12:13). Not only are we put into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, but now, the Holy Spirit comes into us. "*We...drink into one Spirit*" (1 Corinthians 12:13).

Now, what does that mean? It means that if you are saved, you belong to the Body of Christ, and it also means that your body belongs to Jesus. I mean, the Holy Spirit comes into you to take possession. *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...which [you] have of God, and [you’re] not your own?”* (1 Corinthians 6:19). You don’t belong to you anymore. You see, when I get saved, I am in Christ; and, therefore, I belong to Christ. I’m not my own. I’ve been made to drink into one Spirit. The Spirit puts me into the Body of Christ. And, the Holy Spirit comes into me, and I have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Now, water baptism is important, but water baptism does not put you into the Body of Christ. Not all people have had water baptism, but all believers have been baptized into the Body of Christ. He’s talking here about spirit baptism. Water baptism symbolizes spirit baptism. The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives me spiritual gifts; the filling of the Holy Spirit enables me to use those gifts. When God put you into the Body of Christ, He put you in the Body of Christ. It may be a hand, may be a foot, may be an eye, may be a big toe, may be a liver, may be a spleen—but you’re put into the Body of Christ. The Holy Spirit says, “That’s where you belong.” And, the Holy Spirit comes into you. And so, when you’re put into the Body of Christ, you receive a spiritual gift. It’s your job to discover, develop, and deploy that gift. And, when the Holy Spirit of God takes over your body, that enables you and empowers you to use the spiritual gift that God has given you. And, if you’re not discovering your gift and putting your gift to use—I started to scold you, but let me just beg you—do it—do it.

IV. In a Body, There Is a Mutual Program

Now, number four: In a body, not only is there a motivating power, but in a body, there is a mutual program—a mutual program. Look, now, in verse 14: *“For the body is not one member, but many”*—and I’m going to read right on through verse 20—*“If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing?”*—I mean, think about it: *What if standing behind this pulpit tonight was a 200-pound eyeball? I could see you real well, but I couldn’t hear a thing you say—“If the whole [body] were hearing, where were the smelling?”—What if I’m an ear about the size of a boat sail? Well, I could hear you real well, but I couldn’t smell you—“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him”—“as it hath pleased him”—“And if they were all one member, where were the body?”*—There’s no such thing as a huge eye being a body—*“But are they many members, yet...one body”* (1 Corinthians 12:14–20). There is a mutual program.

No one in this church is to have his own agenda. That is not your privilege; it is not

your responsibility. The members in the Body all have one agenda, and that is to serve the head. And, when a body is motivated by the Holy Spirit, that body is coordinated, because everything is working together. Now, notice how it all works together:

A. **We Share the Same Life**

We have the same life. Look in verses 15 and 16: *“If the foot shall say, Because [I’m] not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, [I’m] not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?”* (1 Corinthians 12:15–16). What’s he saying? We share the same life. One part cannot function as it ought apart from the other part.

Now, every member, therefore, is valuable and needful. Your hands are important, and your feet are important. But, in our society, we’re much more aware of hands than we are feet. Most of you, if not all of you, have shoes on tonight. Few, if any of you, have gloves on tonight. Our hands are open and outward. Many of you wear rings on your hands, but very few of you have rings on your toes—but some of you do. I’ve watched. You’ve got rings on your toes. But, hands almost always are uncovered and tend to be more beautiful than feet. Feet are not necessarily aesthetically beautiful. Now, yet God has made us where one part of the Body cannot function apart from the rest of the Body. As I told you before, *the Bible doesn’t teach a Lone Ranger Christianity*.

Do you know what would turn you off and repulse you very much? To see a part of any body severed from the body—an arm, a leg, severed and lying on the ground. If you walked out of this church tonight and there, on the parking lot, was a human leg, some of you would faint. Some of us would faint. Or, you go and open your dresser and there’s a dresser full of eyeballs. And, you say, “Good night!” But, eyes are beautiful in the right place. See, God made us where we share the same life. God made us where we belong to one another.

Look, if you will, in verse 17: *“If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole [body] were hearing, where were the smelling?”* (1 Corinthians 12:17). What’s the point? God made us where we need one another. Why did God make us so different? Here’s the whole thing: God made us so different, that He might make us one. Now, I don’t know what kind of a preacher Brother Ken would be. I have an idea, watching him, he’d be a pretty good preacher. But, I wouldn’t be much of a song leader. But, you know, if Ken keeps on doing his job, and I keep on doing my job... And, Brother Mark is a great administrator. I think he would be a fair song leader and an okay preacher, maybe. But, he’s great at what he does—he’s great at what he does. We’re all so different. God made us where I need you and you need me, and we cannot function apart from another. That’s the reason we need to be thankful for one another

and some of the less glamorous jobs.

I mean, did you wake up this morning and thank God for your pancreas? I said, “O glory, glory, glory—my spleen is doing well,” or, “My gall bladder is really hitting on all eight today.” Now, you don’t think about that. I mean, you just take it for granted that your spleen, and your thymus, and all of these things are working in there. Do you know what many of us do? We come to Bellevue Baptist Church and we just take it for granted. We walk in here—the air conditioning is going to be on. We walk in here—the doors are going to be unlocked. We walk here—and the sound system is going to be right. We go there to the reception—there are going to be cookies on the table; there are going to be ladies there to serve those cookies. We’re going to have singing, and somehow the words of the music get up there on the screen; and we don’t think anything of it. But, I’ll guarantee you one thing, friend: if you had some of those people cease to function, chaos would take place. Isn’t that right?

Suppose right now there were no nurseries, nursery workers. You know, they have a scripture over there: *“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed”* (1 Corinthians 15:51). Suppose there were no nursery workers? It would be chaos in this place. It wouldn’t be a church; it’d be a bawl-room. They’d all be bawling. Kids would be in here. But, you take it for granted. You come and sit here Sunday after Sunday after Sunday after Sunday. And, maybe you never even thank God for the nursery workers, never thank God for the mechanics, never thank God for the people who clean up after us after we’ve been here. Friend, every member is important in this Body. And, there are parts of your body that you may not have ever thanked God for, but they are so very important. We share the same life.

B. We Show the Same Love

Number two: We show the same love. Look, if you will now, in verse 25 of this same chapter here: he says here, *“That there should be no schism in the body; but...the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it”* (1 Corinthians 12:25–26). We share the same love. Now, we’re not necessarily all that loveable, but we belong to one another. Therefore—listen—I cannot be arrogant and say, “I do not need you.” I cannot be envious and say, “I want what you have.” I cannot have a rivalry where I want to get ahead of you. I cannot be self-sufficient and say, “I don’t need you.” And, you can’t say that about me. There can be no disunity in the Body—no schism. I cannot say, “I don’t like you,” and you can’t say you don’t like me. We can’t afford that. We are together.

C. We Serve the Same Lord

Listen friend, not only do we share the same life and show the same love, but we serve

the same Lord. Look, if you will now, verse 27: *“Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular”* (1 Corinthians 12:27). Remember that a body is to minister to the person who lives in that body. We, together, serve the Lord Jesus Christ, and loyalty to the head means loyalty to the body. Loyalty to Jesus means loyalty to one another. If we love Jesus, we’re going to love one another. You cannot love Jesus without loving what Jesus loves.

Years and years ago, I read a story about a preacher. He was visiting in a home in Atlanta, Georgia—a beautiful, lavish home. There was a young couple. They seemed to have everything that a heart could desire. They had beautiful accoutrements in the home, lovely automobiles. All the furnishings were so nice. This couple loved the Lord. They were a godly couple. The pastor visiting in that home looked around, and he noticed they were young—looked like childbearing age—and he said, “Pardon me. Maybe I’m talking out of school. Maybe I’m saying something I ought not to say. But, have you two ever considered having a child? I notice that you have this little dog. And, you show so much love to that little dog, and you just seem to adore this dog. Now, I’m not really opposed to pets, but don’t you think that perhaps you could take that love and put that love into a little baby? You’ve been blessed so much.” When he said that, the woman began to cry and walked out of the room. The preacher said, “There, I’ve done it again. I should have kept my mouth shut. I’m sorry,” and began to apologize to the husband.

He said, “Preacher, it’s all right. You just don’t understand. We did have a child. We had a son. This dog was his dog. Our son is dead. Our son died as a child. And, our son loved this dog, and he asked us before he went to Heaven—and we know where he is, Pastor—to take care of his dog. And, we’ve been to the doctor, and the doctor says we can’t have any more children. And so, you may not be able to understand it. I don’t know how to explain it to you, Preacher; but somehow, when we love that dog, it’s like we’re loving our son. We’re just taking the love that we had for our son and we’re showing it to this little dog.” He said, “Preacher, I don’t know how to explain it to you, except we just love him because our son loved him so much.” Well friend, that’s why I love the Church—because Jesus loves it—because Jesus loves it. Whether you understand it or not, Jesus loves the Church. We share the same life. We serve the same Lord. We show the same love.

Now, what’s the purpose of Bellevue Baptist Church? Bellevue Baptist Church has a mission statement. If you’ve been to the Discovery Class, you’ve heard it. If you’re a deacon, you’ve memorized it. I could call on any one of these deacons tonight to stand up and give it to me... Let me see here...

“Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word. Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of moving believers in

Jesus toward maturity and ministry. And, Bellevue Baptist Church exists for making Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations.” That’s why we exist. We are the Body of Christ, manifesting His person, ministering to the Lord Jesus, motivated by the Holy Spirit, mutually working together, every member cooperating with the other members to magnify Jesus through worship and the Word, to move believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry, and to make Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations.

May I tell you my desire for this church? Here is it—and I’m going to tell you very quickly, just not to elaborate on them. But, here are ten things I want for Bellevue. I pray God will put them on your heart:

1. Number one: I want our church to have a godly pastor. I want to be a godly man.
2. Number two: I want us to have a congregation totally committed to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.
3. Number three: I want a congregation that is growing in Christ-likeness.
4. Number four: I want a congregation that is learning to worship. We exist to give God glory.
5. Next, I want a congregation that discovers, develops, and deploys its spiritual gifts, where every member is a minister.
6. Next, I want a congregation that cares for the needy, the hurting, the weak, the forgotten, the lost, the last, and the least.
7. Next, I want a congregation that is discipling and disciplining our membership.
8. Next, I want a congregation that strengthens the family, because America will not be restored unless our families are restored.
9. Next, I want a congregation that reaches out to evangelize those around it with a worldwide missionary passion and vision.
10. Next (and last)—that our congregation would reach out to other congregations, helping and strengthening other congregations, sharing in fellowship and cooperation with other congregations.

New members, you are somebody in the Body of Christ. This is a church, not a club. You are a member of it. When you gave your heart to Jesus Christ, you made your last independent decision. From now on, you’re to say, “Lord, what will You have me to do?” New member, I want you to discover yourself—who you are in Christ. Find out what your spiritual gift is. Number two: I want you to accept yourself. Maybe you’re an ear, not a shoulder. Maybe you’re a hand, not a foot. Just accept who you are. Number three: Be yourself. Don’t try to be somebody else. When I started out preaching, I used to listen to other preachers and say, “I want to be like him. I want to be like him. I want to be like him.” I discovered all I could be was an imitation of any of them. I can be the best Adrian Rogers there is. You can be the best you that there is. Discover yourself. Accept yourself. Be yourself. And, give yourself. You’ve got to give in order to live. In a

body, every part of your body, whether it's your lungs, your heart, your marrow—whatever it is—in order for it to exist, it has to receive and it has to give. God brought you here, new members, to receive. And, God brought you here to give. This is the Body of Christ, and you are somebody in His Body—you really are. Say, “Amen.”

Conclusion

Let's bow together in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Now, how do you get into the Body of Christ? You're placed into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit. You're baptized by the Holy Spirit into the Body of Christ. When does that take place? When you get saved. When do you get saved? When you turn from your sins to Jesus and ask Him to save you. And, the Bible says clearly and plainly, simply and sweetly, *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you'll] be saved”* (Acts 16:31). Would you like to be saved tonight? Would you really? Let me guide you in that decision. Would you pray with me right now? And, right now, where you are tonight—I mean, tonight, right where you are—Jesus will save you and keep you saved forever, if you'll trust Him. Now, if you just repeat words, that doesn't mean that you're going to be saved. But, if you'll ask Him, in repentance and faith, to save you, He'll do it.

Pray a prayer like this: “Dear God”—that's right. Just pray—“Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, Jesus. I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You shed Your blood on the cross for me. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And now, I yield my life to You. I give myself to You, Lord Jesus, and I receive You into my life to take control of my life and begin to make me the person You want me to be. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus”—pray it and mean it—“Save me, Lord Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Did you? Were you sincere? Were you? Then, pray this way: “Thank You for doing it, Jesus. Thank You. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. Thank You for saving me. You're now my Lord, my Master, my God, and my Savior, my Friend. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You. Thank You for saving me. Thank You, Lord. Now, Lord Jesus, help me not to be ashamed of You and give me the courage to make this public, because that's what You want me to do. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Now, look up here. “Why did you say, Pastor, ‘give me the courage to make it public’?” Because the Bible says, *“With the heart man [believes] unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:10). You see, *the faith that will not lead to confession will not lead to Heaven*. Jesus, frankly, said—plainly said, “If you're ashamed of Me, I'll be ashamed of you. You'll confess Me before men—I'll confess you before my Father in Heaven” (Matthew 10:32–33).

So, what we're going to do is to sing an invitational hymn. Brother Ken is going to lead us. I'm going to ask the ministers of our church to come and stand at the head of each of these aisles, all the way across the front. At the head of each of these aisles will be a man of God to welcome those of you who will be coming. And, if you prayed that prayer with me tonight and said, "Lord Jesus, come into my heart," I want you to show you mean it by coming forward. Perhaps you did it at home at the kitchen sink, maybe in your office, maybe a school desk, maybe with your head upon your pillow—you prayed and asked Christ to save you. Well, if you meant it, I want you to show it by coming forward tonight.

"Pastor Rogers, what would I say when I go down there?" Just say, "I'm trusting Jesus." What will happen? Number one: We'll rejoice. Number two: We'll give you some scripture to stand on. Number three: We'll answer any question we can answer. Number four: We'll seal it in prayer. It'll take just a few moments—one of the greatest things you could do. You say, "Well Pastor, I still don't understand this business of being saved. Should I come?" Absolutely! Just come and say, "Look, I need some more help." We have an open Bible. We'll guide you in this decision, okay?

Others of you tonight need to come forward. Maybe you've been saved, just like that young man tonight. Did you know... What did he say? Six, seven years he'd been saved and hasn't been baptized. You ought to be baptized as soon as possible after you're saved. Baptism is like a burial. You don't die and then get buried in six years. If you're saved and haven't been baptized, you need to come and say, "I want to make an appointment for my baptism. I want to be baptized as a believer in Christ."

Maybe you belong to another church somewhere off somewhere else and you live here now. You worship here. If you're here on a Sunday night and God speaks to you, most likely this is where you need to belong. Every Christian ought to be a member of a local New Testament church—if not this one, one somewhere. You need to come and say, "I want to place my membership here."

Some are coming, saying, "I'm trusting Jesus." Others are coming, saying, "I want to obey Him in baptism and make an appointment for my baptism." Others are coming, saying, "I want to place my membership here." Maybe somebody says, "Pastor, I just have a burden. I need somebody to pray for me." You come, and we'll do that.

Let's pray together. Father God, I pray—I pray—in the name of Jesus that You'll bless this invitation. And Lord, help our minds to be centered on Christ. Holy Spirit of God, draw people to Jesus tonight; and Lord, give them the courage to make public what they feel in their heart. In the strong name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Let's stand up as we sing. You step out and come.

Christmas Is Spelled *L-o-v-e*

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 03, 1995

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 13

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Value of Love
 - A. Love Is Greater Than Oratory
 - B. Love Is Greater Than Prophecy
 - C. Love Is Greater Than Knowledge
 - D. Love Is Greater Than Faith
 - E. Love Is Greater Than Feeding the Poor
 - F. Love Is Greater Than Martyrdom
- II. The Virtue of Love
 - A. Love Is Patient
 - B. Love Is Kind
 - C. Love Is Not Jealous
 - D. Love Is Humble
 - E. Love Does Not Behave Unseemly
 - F. Love Is Unselfish
 - G. Love Is Even-Tempered
 - H. Love Is Not Suspicious
- III. The Victory of Love
 - A. Love Is the Greatest Virtue
 - B. Love Is the Greatest Commandment
 - C. Love Is the Greatest Testimony
 - D. Love Is the Greatest Motivation
 - E. Love Is the Greatest Confirmation

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you find 1 Corinthians chapter 13; and when you've found it, look up here—1 Corinthians chapter 13. If you didn't bring a Bible with you, you might look on with a neighbor, or perhaps there's a Bible there in pew rack before you. But, it'll help you so much if you'll keep the Bible in your hand. I want us to have a devotional thought tonight around this theme that "Christmas is Spelled *L-o-v-e*"—"Christmas is Spelled *L-o-v-e*."

What is the Christmas message? John 3:16: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son*" (John 3:16). Now, if you're looking for something to give somebody this Christmas, why don't you give what God gave? Give love—give love.

“God so loved the world, that he gave his...Son” (John 3:16). And, when He gave Jesus, He was giving us the gift of love.

Our world and our city is in desperate condition. We have a lot of self-called, self-styled technicians, and bureaucrats, and doctors of whatever, who have prescribed many palliatives and cures for humanity’s hurt. But, it is well said—truly said, “What the world needs now is love.” And, Jesus, talking about the last days, said, “*Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*” (Matthew 24:12). Love is a commodity that is desperately needed and especially in this Christmas season.

Now, the thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians is really a chapter on love, but it comes between chapters 12 and 14. You didn’t know that, did you? Well, it did. You’ll learn the fact that 13 comes between 12 and 14. And, these two chapters—chapter 12 and chapter 14—are dealing with the Spirit-filled life. And, the real mark of the Spirit-filled life is love.

Now, chapter 12 deals with spiritual gifts, chapter 13 deals with love, and chapter 14 deals with power. And, when you have love, then you know how to use spiritual gifts with power. That’s what it’s all about. This chapter is not just put in there accidentally or just... Paul, in the middle of theological treatises on spiritual gifts, is talking about love. Now, that’s not by happenstance; that’s a strategy. There are three things I want you to see about love tonight, as we think about Christmas being spelled *l-o-v-e*.

I. The Value of Love

First of all, I want you to see the very values of love. Look, if you will, as we begin to read here: “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity*”—in every place, if you’re reading from the *King James* like I am, every time it uses the word *charity* you may substitute the word *love*, because we use the word *charity* today to mean being kind to the poor or something like that. But, it literally means Christ-like love. So—“*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal*” (1 Corinthians 13:1). Now, what he’s saying here is that love is absolutely indispensable; there’s no substitute for it.

A. Love Is Greater Than Oratory

He’s saying, for example, that oratory—speaking “*with the tongues of men and of angels*” (1 Corinthians 13:1)—is not a substitute for love.

Sometimes you go to the park, and you see maybe a statue of a lion. Maybe he’s made out of iron, and there’s water that’s coming out of his mouth. And, he never tastes a drop of it. I think some of us have heard speakers and preachers that way. They may have the gift of oratory, but they don’t understand the love that is necessary truly to

teach and preach the Word of God. And, we've heard enough sermons by Dr. Sounding Brass and Dr. Tinkling Cymbal. What he says—that if I have not love, I'm become as sounding brass or tinkling cymbal. Oratory—speaking, preaching, teaching—is no substitute for love.

B. Love Is Greater Than Prophecy

And then, he says here in verse 2 that *“though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not [love], I am nothing”* (1 Corinthians 13:2). So, he's saying that love is greater than prophecy. I know enough about preaching, today, that if you want to get a crowd, if you were to announce, “On one hand, I'm going to preach a series of sermons on prophecy,” or, on the other hand, “I'm going to preach a series of sermons on love,” I can tell you after 40 years of preaching experience that far more people would come to hear the series of sermons on prophecy than would come to hear the series of sermons on love. Isn't that true? People are interested in prophecy. They want to know what's going to happen. I know of folks who have come to feed on prophecy and then they can tell you the meaning of the third toe of left foot of some beast in Revelation and split a theological hair into seven equal divisions, and yet they don't have love. And, our Lord says, “Although it is splendid, it is nothing.” They have Heaven on their minds, but they've got Hell in their hearts.

C. Love Is Greater Than Knowledge

And then, he says love—not only that it...it's greater than knowledge. You might have a head full of knowledge. But, John Wesley, who is the founder of Methodism, said that “all knowledge without love is splendid ignorance.” Think about it. Love is indispensable. It is greater than oratory. It is greater than prophecy. It is greater than knowledge.

D. Love Is Greater Than Faith

According to verse 2, it's greater than faith. Now, faith is indispensable. It's incredibly important. You cannot know God without faith. And yet, he says, “Even if you had faith—such faith that you could move mountains and you had not love,” he says, “it's nothing—nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2). That's what he says. What he's saying is what good is it to remove mountains if you can't remove malice—if you don't have love?

E. Love Is Greater Than Feeding the Poor

And then, he says love is greater than feeding the poor. Look, if you will: *“though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor”* (1 Corinthians 13:3)—and if you don't have love, again, it's nothing. You see, some people give money instead of love. Now, you can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving. But, parents sometimes give material things as a substitute for love. And, people need more than our charity; they

need more than our pity. They need actual love, and that's the reason that we're beginning this new program that we're beginning to impact this city with the love of Jesus Christ. And, we're calling it, until we change the name, if we ever do, "Bellevue Cares."

F. **Love Is Greater Than Martyrdom**

And then, he's saying that love is more important than martyrdom. Look at it again. He says, "*And though I give my body to be burned, and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing*" (1 Corinthians 13:3). The false religions have their martyrs. As a matter of fact, we know of people today who will blow themselves up in order to blow somebody else up, and that's one of the great dangers in our state department. When they were investigating the suicide bomb that killed so many of our marines in Beirut, they said, "How are we going to defend ourselves against this?" And, the answer was it is virtually impossible to defend your life against someone who is willing to give his. I mean, if a man is willing to die himself, there's hardly any way you can defend yourself against such an individual. And, many of these people don't love you, because they don't love themselves. And, I'm not saying that we as Christians ought not to be willing to die for our faith. But, what our Lord is looking for—more than people who will die for their faith—is people who will live for their faith and show that living by loving. And so, he says, "If you give your body to be burned, and have not love, it's, again, it is splendid nothing" (1 Corinthians 13:3). So, that is the value of love.

II. **The Virtue of Love**

Now, now notice the virtue of love. Notice what love is like. This Christmas season you're going to need this.

A. **Love Is Patient**

Look, if you will—he says here, first of all, that love is patient. Look at it in verse 4: "*[Love] suffers long*" (1 Corinthians 13:4). You say, "Well, you know, I don't have much patience." Why don't you just be honest and say, "I don't have much love"? A lack of patience is literally a lack of longsuffering; it is a lack of love.

B. **Love Is Kind**

And then, not only is love patient—love is kind. It says it is kind. Now, what is kindness? Do you know what we need in Memphis, Tennessee? Kindness. What is kindness? It's love in the little things. Another word for kindness is *courtesy*—just being kind, being courteous.

One woman came down the aisle of a church to give her heart to Christ, and the preacher wanted to know what had impacted her life for Christ. And, she said, "You did."

And, he said, “Well, I’d be interested to know what it was that I said that brought you to Christ.” And, she said, “It was nothing you said; it was something you did.” She said, “I was standing near when somebody criticized you very sharply and, I thought, unfairly. And, I listened to the way that you responded to her, and I saw the kindness with which you dealt with her viciousness; and I knew that your faith was real.”

C. Love Is Not Jealous

Real love, again, is not jealous. This verse says it envies not (1 Corinthians 13:4). You know, jealousy’s a horrible, terrible thing. And, it’s been called by some a *green-eyed monster*. If you really have love, you’re going to be willing to give credit when credit is due. You’re going to be able to praise others. You’re not going to think that somebody else’s gain is your loss. You’re not going to cringe when other people are praised.

D. Love Is Humble

And then, he says that love is humble. Well, he says here in the King James, “[It] is not puffed up” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Love and pride don’t dwell in the same heart. True love is humble. True love can say, “I am sorry.” True love can say, “Please forgive me.” True love can say, “I forgive you.”

E. Love Does Not Behave Unseemly

And then, it “[does] not behave itself unseemly” (1 Corinthians 13:5). That is, true love is not rude. People say, “Well, I just say what I think. I speak forthrightly. I have the gift of prophecy.” Don’t ever excuse your rudeness under the guise that you have the gift of prophecy. “He that speaks unto men and prophecy speaks unto men in edification, exhortation, and comfort” (1 Corinthians 14:3). Real—real—love “[does] not behave itself unseemly” (1 Corinthians 13:5).

F. Love Is Unselfish

It’s unselfish; it “seeketh not [it’s] own” (1 Corinthians 13:5). You’re... This Christmas, stop worrying about what you’re going to get. Begin to think about how you can show the love of the Lord Jesus.

G. Love Is Even-Tempered

Real love is even-tempered; “[it] is not easily provoked” (1 Corinthians 13:5). It doesn’t have a hair trigger. Mr. Drummond wrote a sermon on 1 Corinthians 13. The title of the sermon was called “The Greatest Thing in the World,” and it was love. And, in that sermon, he said this: “No form or vice, not worldliness, not greed of gold, not drunkenness itself does more to un-Christianize society than an evil temper.” And so, real love is even-tempered.

H. Love Is Not Suspicious

And then, real love is not suspicious; it “[*thinks*] *no evil*” (1 Corinthians 13:5). It doesn’t think the worst. It’s not paranoid. It doesn’t join the society of mudslingers. Have you ever met anybody who doesn’t trust somebody who doesn’t trust anybody? I can tell you, very frankly, that person does not know love. So, I’ve talked to you here about the value of love and the virtue of love.

III. The Victory of Love

Let me just, in a few moments, talk to you about the victory of love. Begin now in verse 8, and look at it: “Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:8). That’s one of the greatest statements in the Word of God. It is underscored—it’s highlighted and yellow—in my Bible right here—and has been for a long time. “Love never fails” (1 Corinthians 13:8). Love is eternal; it will never pass away. “[*Love*] *never [fails]...whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part*” (1 Corinthians 13:8–9). Don’t get puffed up about what you know. You don’t know 1% of anything. And, don’t think that you know the future. All you’ve got is an educated guess.

A. Love Is the Greatest Virtue

You say, “Well, I know what the Bible says.” Yes, but there are many things about the future that’s not been revealed to us. The Bible says that prophecy’s to be sealed up to the time of the end (Revelation 22:10). And, the Bible says, “*It doth not yet appear what we shall be [like]*” (1 John 3:2). And, a little child can ask questions about Heaven that nobody can answer. I don’t care what seminary he teaches in—“*we know in part, and we prophesy in part*” (1 Corinthians 13:9). And, it’s time that we had a little humility about some of the things that we know and some of the things we don’t know. But, love lasts. Love is more important than education. It’s more important than ability. It’s more important than money. It’s more important than handsome looks. It’s more important than prophecy. All of these things are going to pass away.

B. Love Is the Greatest Commandment

Now, I want this church—I want this church—to be known primarily for the gospel it preaches and the love it shows. Hello, I want this church to be known primarily for the gospel it preaches and the love it shows! Now, we have a lot of wonderful things around here; but folks, I want us to be famous for the gospel and famous for love. I want people, when they come to Bellevue Baptist Church, to say, “That is a church that loves.” I tell you again: love is the greatest virtue; it is the greatest commandment. Matthew chapter 22, verses 37 through 40: “*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first*

and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37–40). Now folks, Jesus—no other authority, no lesser authority—than Jesus said love is the greatest commandment. Then, what would be the greatest sin? To fail to love, because that would be the breaking of the greatest commandment. The Apostle Paul says here in 1 Corinthians that love is the greatest virtue.

C. Love Is the Greatest Testimony

I’ll tell you something else—not only is it the greatest virtue and the greatest commandment; it is the greatest testimony. Now, do you think people are going to say, “Well, Jesus is wonderful because we have this magnificent tree, or we have this marching band, or whatever”? No, they might say, “Those folks are cunning. Those folks are crafty. Those folks are educated. Those folks are talented.” But, do you know what’s going to impress this city for Jesus Christ is your love and my love? Listen to what the Bible says—John 13, verse 35: *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:35). That’s the reason we must never divide over details. That’s the reason we must incredibly love, we must constantly love, we must sacrificially love. We have got to love, and we’ve got to drown every insult in the river of love. We have to show love.

And listen, folks—let me tell you this: there are a lot of people who are not lovely. Real love is not giving me what I deserve; it is giving me what I need. Real love is saying, “I will love you and do you good regardless of what you do to me.” It is the greatest testimony. *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one [for] another”* (John 13:35).

D. Love Is the Greatest Motivation

But, not only is it the greatest virtue, and the greatest commandment, and the greatest testimony—it is the greatest motivation. Do you know what motivates me? You say, “Well, you want to have a successful church.” No, that’s not what motivates me. “Well,” you say, “you want reward in Heaven.” Well, I do, but that’s not what motivates me. The same thing motivates me, I think, that motivated the Apostle Paul, and I believe motivates you. Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 14: *“For the love of Christ constraineth us”*—*“the love of Christ constraineth us”* (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Love so amazing, so divine

Demands my soul, my life, my all (Isaac Watts).

It’s the love of Jesus Christ. When Jesus asked Simon Peter, *“Peter...lovest thou me?”* (John 21:27). And then, he said, “If you do, feed My sheep” (John 21:27). He didn’t say, “Do you love sheep?” He didn’t say, “Do you love to feed sheep?” “Do you love Me?”

The great motivation for teaching that Sunday School class, for coaching that team,

for helping these boys and girls in the orchestra, or in the choir, or in the hand bells, for being on the tree, for serving on the staff, is a love for Jesus Christ. It is the greatest motivation. That will move you—keep you going—more than anything else. Jesus said, *“If [you] love me, [you will] keep my commandments”* (John 14:15). The Apostle Paul said, *“The love of Christ constraineth us”* (2 Corinthians 5:14).

E. Love Is the Greatest Confirmation

And, I’ll tell you something else: love is the greatest confirmation. Do you want to know whether you’re a child of God? Do you want to know whether you’re saved—on your way to Heaven? Listen to the Word of God. First John chapter 3, verses 14 and 15: *“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren”*—now, that’s it. Now folks, that’s black print on white paper—*“We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him”* (1 John 3:14–15). So, I just want to say on this Christmas season that the thing we need to do more than anything else is to do what God did when He sent Jesus—and that is to love. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”* (John 3:16).

There was a Christian, an aged man. He was dying in Scotland, and a friend came over to say goodbye and farewell to this man. And, this man said to the friend, who had come to say goodbye to him while he was dying—he said, “Well, I’ve just had three other visitors, and two of them have gone; but the third visitor I’m going to keep with me forever.” And, he said, “Well, who were they?” He said, “Well, the first visitor who came to see me was Faith, and I visited with Faith and enjoyed Faith; but I told Faith goodbye. ‘I thank God for your company, Faith. I have walked with you since I first trusted Christ, but now I’m going to die and I won’t need you anymore, Faith, because Faith will be lost in sight. I’ll see Jesus face to face.’” Then, he said, “I had another visitor to come see me, and the name of this visitor was Hope.” And, he said, “We had a wonderful time, and I visited with Hope. And then, I said to Hope, ‘Farewell, Hope. You’ve helped in the hour of battle. You’ve been with me in distress, when my heart was broken, when I’ve had so many needs. You’ve been there like a rock, like an anchor. But Hope, I won’t need you anymore. Goodbye, Hope. I’m going to Heaven, where hope has turned to fruition and fullness.’” But, he said, “The third visitor I had with me,” he said, “he is with me now and will be with me. His name was Love, and I said to Love, ‘Love, you’ve been my friend. You’ve linked me with God. You’ve linked me with my fellow man. You have comforted and gladdened me in all of my pilgrimages; and now, I’m going to Heaven. But Love, I’m not going to leave you behind. You, with me, will enter into the city of God through the gates of Glory. And you, my friend Love, will be perfected in Heaven.’”

Is that not what the Bible says? Listen to it in verses 12 and 13: *“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is [love]”* (1 Corinthians 13:12–13). Now, look up here. Look at me—every member of this church. Brothers and sisters, let us love one another, for love is of God. And, God’s people said, “Amen.”

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Father, I pray that you will just, this Christmas, help us to show the love of Jesus to everyone we meet. And Lord, may we be so filled with that love that love will spill out—not selfishness, not pride, not arrogance? Lord, in our teaching, in our preaching, in our giving, in our sacrificing, may it all be infused with love. In the holy name of Jesus. Amen.

Now, let me say this: that *“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son”*—that’s Jesus; that’s the story of Christmas—*“that [if anyone would believe] in him”*—trust in Him—*“[he’d] not perish”*—that is, “die and go to Hell”—*“but [he would] have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). And, when the Bible says that we are to believe in Him, that doesn’t mean intellectual belief. It includes that, but it goes far beyond that. It means *trust*.

If you will, trust the Lord Jesus. Put your faith where God put your sins—on Christ. Commit your life to Him. Believe that He can save you and will save you, and receive Him into your heart. He will save you. Your sin will be forgiven. The Holy Spirit will enter into you to give you a new nature, and make you a new person, and to teach you to love as you ought to love, because you cannot give this love until this love is first in you, because the Bible says, *“The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 5:5). And, the Holy Ghost comes in when you get saved.

We’re going to sing an invitational hymn. The ministers of our church are going to stand at the head of each of these aisles. And tonight, if you will give your heart to Christ, trust Him to save you... I’m going to ask you to do something wonderful. I’m going to ask you to make your way down one of these aisles right down here to the front. And, I want you to tell the minister that you want to be saved or that you’re trusting Christ. And, if you know Christ, we’ll rejoice. If you still need Him, we’ll take an open Bible and guide you in this decision, and Jesus can save you tonight. If you have been saved and never made it public, you come and you tell the minister, “I’m saved. I’ve come to give Him glory, to make it public, and to make an appointment for my baptism.” If you’re not saved, just say, “I need to be saved. I want to know Jesus.” We’ll guide you in this decision. You can be saved tonight.

Others of you tonight may want to come and place your membership in this church

and be a part of the Bellevue family of friends and family of faith. If you're saved, and know Christ, and need a church home, and want to be a growing, fellowshiping member of this church, I lovingly invite you.

Learning to Love

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 23, 2000

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 13

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Excelling Values of Love
 - A. Love Is More Valuable Than Oratory
 - B. Love Is More Valuable Than Prophecy
 - C. Love Is More Valuable Than Knowledge
 - D. Love Is More Valuable Than Faith
 - E. Love Is More Valuable Than Charity
 - F. Love Is More Valuable Than Martyrdom
- II. The Enabling Virtues of Love
 - A. Love Enables Us to Be Patient
 - B. Love Enables Us to Be Kind
 - C. Love Enables Us Not to Envy
 - D. Love Enables Us to Be Humble
 - E. Love Enables Us to Be Courteous
 - F. Love Enables Us to Be Unselfish
 - G. Love Enables Us to Not Be Irritable
 - H. Love Enables Us to Forgive
 - I. Love Enables Us to Be Sympathetic
- III. The Victories of Love
 - A. Love Conquers
 - B. Love Completes
 - C. Love Continues

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word and find 1 Corinthians chapter 13, if you would. If you've been a Christian very long, you know this is an epic chapter in the Word of God. It's a pen of praise to love. Tonight, we're thinking on this subject: "Learning to Love." What the world needs now is love, beyond a shadow of any doubt—love, more love, and much love.

This 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians—I'm going to say something profound, so listen carefully—is stuck between chapter 12 and chapter 14. Now really, in a sense, there's a lot of meaning to that, because if you've studied 1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 14, you know they deal with *what?* Spiritual gifts. Now, why, in the middle of dealing with

spiritual gifts, would the Apostle Paul give us an entire chapter on love? Well, you see, the Corinthian church was high on an emphasis upon gifts, especially the more showy gifts like prophecy and tongues and miracles and healings, but they had a deficit in this matter of love. Somehow, they got to thinking they were super saints and better than others because they were exhibiting what they considered to be some of the more showy gifts. So, right in the middle of this, in order to set them straight, Paul teaches them about love.

And, I want to say, before we ever even get into the message tonight, the mark of a Spirit-filled person is not a spiritual gift. You can be a baby Christian and have a spiritual gift. As a matter of fact, every baby Christian has spiritual gifts. If you're a Christian, as I preached this morning, you have a spiritual gift. You may not have even discovered your gift, but it is yours. And so, some spiritual gift, no matter whether it's a showy gift like performing miracles or whether it's a humble gift like service, that spiritual gift is not a sign that you are a spiritual person. The mark that you're a spiritual person is not the gifts of the Spirit but the fruit of the Spirit. And, as God describes the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5—He begins with this: *“the fruit of the Spirit”*—and what's the first quality? Love, and the rest flow out of that—*“the fruit of the Spirit is love”* (Galatians 5:22).

Now, we've heard that love makes the world go 'round. I'm not sure about that; but friend, it sure does make the trip worthwhile. If you're going to be on this world, you've got to have love if you are going to have any sense of joy, victory, and service that counts. And, to love is a commodity that's rare today, and it's because we live in such a wicked world. And, Jesus said, *“Because iniquity should abound, the love of many shall wax cold”* (Matthew 24:12). Have you found yourself hesitating to stop by the side of the road and help somebody with a flat tire? Have you found that you're careful about inviting somebody in your house if they come and knock on your door and say, “My battery's dead. Do you have any jumper cables?”—or, somebody stops and says, “Could you give me directions to a certain place?” Don't you feel that you're a little careful about that and you don't want to do that? Why? Because there is so much iniquity in the world; there's so much sin in the world. And, the word *iniquity* here literally means “lawlessness.” Lawlessness abounds. And so, we have abounding lawlessness and abating love.

There was a bishop. His name was Bishop Usher. And, he lived in Ireland, and he was shipwrecked off the coast of Ireland. Whether that was his home or not, I know not, but he was shipwrecked off the coast of Ireland and made his way to the shore, found a clergyman, and asked the clergyman if he would take him in. The clergyman looked him up and down and said, “Well, who are you?” And, he said, “I am Archbishop Usher.” And, this minister looked at him, and he didn't look much like an archbishop bedraggled and wet. He said, “How do I know that you are the archbishop that you say that you

are? I'm going to give you a Bible test and see if you can pass the test. And, if you can pass the test, I'll give you all the help you need." Archbishop Usher said, "All right." And so, the preacher said to the archbishop, "How many commandments are there?" And, the archbishop said, "There are eleven." He said, "Aha! You are an imposter." He said, "If you can name an eleventh commandment, I'll give you all the help you'll need." And, he quoted what the Apostle John said, "*A new commandment give I unto you, that [you] love one another; [even] as I have loved you*" (John 13:34). And, he said, "Come in. You know the Bible better than I do."

Love is such a wonderful, wonderful, wonderful and necessary thing. I believe, in a church like Bellevue Baptist Church, it is the attracting element in our church. I have had people—many people, person after person—tell me, "You know, I wasn't going to go to Bellevue. It was so big, but we thought we would just visit. And, we came one time, and it was all over. We knew this was where we belonged. We sensed an incredible sense of love in that church." I believe that is so true. And, people say, "Well, big churches don't have a lot of love." Question: How did they get to be big? It is the love that is the attracting element here in this church. They asked a little boy one time, "Why do you pass so many churches to go to a particular church?" He said, "Because they love a fellow over there." And, I would like for people to come to Bellevue Baptist Church and sense that love. And, we call our television and radio program *Love Worth Finding*. Now, we'd better not say that if it is not true. And, it's not true because we print it or announce it; it is true only because we demonstrate it.

Now, let's read this 13th chapter, and I'm going to read the entire chapter and then I'm going to come back and say three basic things about this entire chapter. Here's what the Apostle Paul says about love. Now, let me say that I'm reading from the King James Version of the scriptures; and so, here in the King James, the word *charity* is used. Now, it is not used in the sense that we use it today—that is, of helping those who are needy, though we ought to do that and to show charity today. The word here means "love," so I'm going to substitute "love" each time I read "charity":

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not [love], I am nothing"—notice, he's talking there about spiritual gifts: the gift of prophecy, and the gift of knowledge, and the gift of faith. This is in the context of spiritual gifts—*"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing. [Love] suffereth long, and is kind; [love] envieth not; [love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up"*—the Corinthians were envying one another's gifts, and those that had the more showy gifts were strutting their stuff. But, he says—*"[Love] envieth*

not...vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly—they were getting carried away, as I’ve said this morning, doing ridiculous things in the name of the Holy Spirit, unseemly things—“*[Love] seeketh not her own*”—they were trying to use gifts as tools, not toys—“*[Love] is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. [Love] never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; [and] whether there be tongues, they shall cease*”—and let me just pause right here and say this verb here is intransitive. You say, “Well, that’s a blessing to know that, Pastor.” What it means is nothing is acting upon this verb. It does of itself; that is, tongues are going to cease in and of themselves. It’s the middle voice—“*whether there be knowledge, it shall [pass] away*” (1 Corinthians 13:1–8). That’s a transitive verb, but the one concerning the tongues is intransitive.

“*For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child*”—the Corinthians were childish Christians. Paul had to say, “*[I cannot] speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*” (1 Corinthians 3:1). They were bickering, acting like children. And, Paul says, “When I was a child...” He’s talking now in an analogy: “That’s the way I was in the natural world”—“*I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things*”—he’s saying to the Corinthians, “Stop acting like big babies”—“*For now we see through a glass, darkly*”—the word *glass* means “mirror.” The mirrors of that day were not like our highly polished mirrors of today; and so you saw, but you didn’t see real clearly—“*but then face to face: now I know in part*”—he’s talking here about the gift of knowledge—“*but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, [love], these three; but the greatest of these is [love]*” (1 Corinthians 13:9–13).

I. The Excelling Values of Love

Now, three things I want to lay on your heart as we consider “Learning to Love.” And, the first is the excelling values of love—the excelling values of love. And, he’s telling us that love excels, and he’s saying, in verse 1, that love excels.

A. Love Is More Valuable Than Oratory

Love is more valuable than oratory. Look at it: “*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not [love], I am nothing*” (1 Corinthians 13:2). The world has heard enough loveless sermons. The world has heard enough of showy gifts. And, I told you this morning that the mark of a Spirit-filled life is not speaking in a foreign tongue but controlling the one tongue that you have and letting the law of love be in that

tongue. So, love is more valuable than oratory—verse 1 (1 Corinthians 13:1).

B. Love Is More Valuable Than Prophecy

In verse 2, love is more valuable than prophecy. If you have the gift of prophecy, look at it: *“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith”—and so forth—“and have not [love]”* (1 Corinthians 13:2). Now, you may have the gift of prophecy and can split a theological hair in 16 equal divisions; but if you don’t have love, what good is that? I know people who have Heaven on their mind but Hell in their heart. What good is that?

C. Love Is More Valuable Than Knowledge

And then, he says in verse 2 that love is more valuable than knowledge: *“And though I have...all knowledge”* (1 Corinthians 13:2). What good is it to have a bright heart—a bright head—if you don’t have a right heart? And, people are not all that interested in us unloading theological facts on them. I have to watch myself when I preach. Am I just unloading information, or is the love of Jesus Christ coming through my heart? Now, I believe in knowledge. The Bible says we are to *“study to shew [ourselves] approved unto God”* (2 Timothy 2:15). And, we are to thank God if we have the spiritual gift of knowledge.

A little boy asked his dad, one time, when he was studying the Bible—he said, “Dad, there are in the Bible the cherubim and the seraphim. What is the difference between the cherubim and the seraphim?” His father said, “Well, they’re kinds of angels.” And, the little boy said, “Well, what is the difference?” He said, “Well, the word *seraphim* stands for ‘flame’; and so, we just think that perhaps the cherubim were the angels that excelled in knowledge. And, *cherubim*, rather, is a word that means ‘knowledge.’ And, *seraphim* stands for ‘flame,’ and so perhaps there the angels that excel in love.” The little boy thought about that, and he said, “You know, father, when I go to Heaven...” He had the idea he was going to be an angel. He said, “You know, when I die, I think I’m going to choose to be a seraphim. I’d rather love God than know everything.” There’s a lot of wisdom there, although we’re not going to be angels when we get to Heaven. One man said, “My wife is already an angel. She’s always up in the air harping on something and doesn’t have anything to wear.”

D. Love Is More Valuable Than Faith

Love is more valuable than oratory. Love is more valuable than prophecy. Love is more valuable than knowledge. Love is more valuable even than faith. Look at it in verse 2: He says, *“and though I have all faith...and have not [love], I am nothing”* (1 Corinthians 13:2). Now, faith is important. You can’t get to Heaven without trusting the Lord, but what he’s saying is this: What good is it if you have faith so that you can remove

mountains, and you can't remove malice? If your heart is headquarters for hate... Then, he says, "You are a zero. You're nothing."

E. Love Is More Valuable Than Charity

Then, he says love is more valuable than giving to the poor—what we call *charity*. Look in verse 3: "*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and...give my body to be burned, and have not [love], it profiteth me nothing*" (1 Corinthians 13:2). We're often heard that you can give without loving, but you can't love without giving. And, a lot of giving is giving instead of ourselves rather than not ourselves. And, I could preach a message, and take an offering, and get some money from loveless hearts, and in Heaven's record it amounts to nothing. Love is greater than giving to charity.

F. Love Is More Valuable Than Martyrdom

Love is even greater than martyrdom. He says, "*Though I give my body to be burned*" (1 Corinthians 13:3). Did you know that you can die for your religion and still not have love? There are a lot of people today who are terrorists, who are on suicide missions in the name of religion. Do you know why they do that? Do you know why they don't love other people? Because they don't love themselves. A lot of false cults are based on zeal but not on love. A man may not fear dying, because he really doesn't know what living is and he doesn't know living if he doesn't know love. So, in the first section here of this chapter, he's talking about the excelling values of love. Love is greater than oratory, prophecy, knowledge. It is greater than faith. It is greater than charity. It is greater than martyrdom. It is greater than any spiritual gift. That is love.

II. The Enabling Virtues of Love

Now, let's move from the values of love to the virtues of love. He tells us why love is so valuable. What are the virtues of love? What are the enabling virtues of love?

A. Love Enables Us to Be Patient

Well, love enables us to be patient. Look, if you will, in verse 4: he says here in verse 4, "*[Love] suffereth long*" (1 Corinthians 13:4). You see, love is not blind. Love doesn't see that people... Love doesn't see people as having no faults. Love is not blind. Literally, love sees more, but love forgives. Love forgives seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22). Real love is not giving people what they deserve; it's giving people what they need. Love enables us to be patient. It endures.

B. Love Enables Us to Be Kind

Love enables us to be kind. Look again in verse 4 of this same chapter: "*[Love] suffereth long, and is kind*" (1 Corinthians 13:4). What is kindness? It is reacting to people with love. **A woman told a preacher, "You have brought me to a saving faith in**

Jesus Christ.” And, the preacher said, “Well, I’m grateful for that. I like to know how God uses me. What was it that I preached that brought you to Christ?” She said, “It was nothing that you preached.” She said, “I was standing around when somebody criticized you to your face, and I watched you respond to that person with kindness; and I knew that what you had was real kindness.” Isn’t that what we need here at Bellevue Baptist Church—just a lot of kindness? Love is kind. Now, there a lot of folks who are religious but not necessarily kind. That’s the reason a little girl prayed, “Lord, make all the bad people good and all the good people nice.” We need to be nice. Love enables us to be patient. It enables us to be kind.

C. Love Enables Us Not to Envy

It enables us not to envy. Look in verse 4 again: “[love] envieth not” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Now, envy and love don’t dwell in the same heart. You want me to tell you whether or not you have love? If somebody else is being blessed and you rejoice, then you have love. If you cringe when other people are being praised, there’s no love in your heart. You think that somebody else’s gain somehow in your loss. Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 30 says, “A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones” (Proverbs 14:30). Be around somebody when they will say, “You know, So-and-so really looked nice today.” Say this... You know, one lady might be speaking to another lady and say, “Wasn’t she beautiful this morning?” And, the other person will say, “Yes, she surely was, but,” and then begins to but-ter all over the place—can’t stand for somebody else to be praised.

D. Love Enables Us to Be Humble

Love enables us to be humble. A big head and a big heart are never in the same person. Look in verse 4: “[love] vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up” (1 Corinthians 13:4). Love and pride don’t dwell in the same heart. Do you know why there are church fusses sometimes? Do you know why husbands and wives squabble sometimes? Let me give you a verse of scripture. The Bible says in the Book of Proverbs, “Only by pride cometh contention”—“only by pride” (Proverbs 13:10). There’s never been a war, never been a squabble, never been a fuss, never been a division that was not caused by pride. Pride and love are in opposition one to another. *There are no problems too big to solve; there are just people too small to solve them.* We could solve the problem if we’d attack the problem rather than one another. And, Jonathan Edwards, who was a great preacher in the Great Awakening, said this: he said, “There’s nothing that puts a man so much out of the devil’s reach as genuine humility.” And, it is love that enables us to be humble. “[Love]...is not puffed up” (1 Corinthians 13:4).

E. Love Enables Us to Be Courteous

And then, he says, again, in verse 5, that love is courteous. Look at it. He doesn't use the word *courteous*, but he says, “[Love] doth not behave itself unseemly” (1 Corinthians 13:5). It doesn't do weird, strange things. Manners are just love in little things, even in marriage. Remember when you were dating your wife and head over heels in love with her before you were married and you opened the car door for her? Now, if a man opens a car door, one of two things is new—the wife or the car. Remember when you were there in the restaurant, and your foot happened to touch her foot, and you said, “Oh, I'm sorry. Did I? Forgive me.” Now, you do it, and you say, “Get your number 14s out of the way.” What is the difference? What is the difference? Love can say, “Please.” Love can say, “Thank you.” Love is courteous; it doesn't “*behave itself unseemly*” (1 Corinthians 13:5).

F. Love Enables Us to Be Unselfish

Love is unselfish. Look again in verse 5: the Bible says, “[Love] seeketh not her own” (1 Corinthians 13:5). A loving person doesn't say, “Well, I know my rights.” Bill Gothard has wisely said, “Teach a man his rights and you have a revolution; teach him his responsibilities and you have a revival.” What can cause us to forego our rights and take up our responsibilities except genuine love? And, we need more unselfishness in the average church.

G. Love Enables Us to Not Be Irritable

Love is not irritable. Look again in verse 5, if you will, of this same chapter, as he describes... We're just talking about the virtues of love: “[Love] is not easily provoked” (1 Corinthians 13:5). Do you have a hair trigger? Are you one that flies off the handle, easily irritated? One block that stands out in an otherwise wonderful Christian is this irritability, this flying off the handle. *Years ago, when I was working my way through school, there was a deacon in our church who hired me to work for him. I thought he was one of the most wonderful men that I've ever known. I worked with this man, and I'll not tell you the kind of work because I wouldn't. He's in Heaven now, and he's a dear friend. I wouldn't want to embarrass him. But, I worked for him, and upon an occasion I saw this man get so angry. I can still remember—he picked up a tool and threw it all the way across the room, muttering something that I would not want to repeat. I was so hurt because I looked up to him. He was a leader in our church, and I was just a young person. And, I thought, “How sad that this man is so easily provoked.” And, I've seen in my own life the times when I have taken my eyes off the Lord and gotten provoked, and the Holy Spirit is reminding me, “Adrian, the reason you did that is because that's what you were full off.” *What spills out is what you're full of.* We need to learn to drown insults in an river of love and learn that bad tempers are something we never lose by*

losing our temper. And, love is not irritable. We're talking about the virtues of love.

H. Love Enables Us to Forgive

Love enables us to forgive. Look again, if you will, in this same chapter here—chapter 13 and verse 5: the Bible says that love *“is not puffed up, [does] not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil”* (1 Corinthians 13:4–5). Now, what that means is that love does not keep a record. The word *thinketh* right here—you don't see it in the Scripture, but the word *thinketh* is a bookkeeping term. It means that God—that love—doesn't keep a record.

How many of you remember when you used to have a savings stamps? Remember those savings stamps? You'd go and buy something, and they'd give you some stamps; and you'd put them in a book. And, you'd, finally, you'd get a book full of them, and you'd go in, and cash them in, and get a toaster or something like that. There are some people who still save those things, but they are little irritations. Your wife does something to you, and you put a stamp in the book—and another one and another one. Or, your husband, or your neighbor... And then, one of these days, you get a book full of them and cash them in. I mean, you just explode, and you say, “What's wrong—what's wrong—with you?” Well, you've just been treasuring those things up. You've been storing those things up. You've been putting those things in the book, and you've not learned. You become a collector of grudges. Let those things go. Don't harbor a grudge. Just let it go. Love enables us to forgive and to forget.

I. Love Enables Us to Be Sympathetic

And, real love is sympathetic. Look again at verse 6: “[Love] rejoiceth not in iniquity” (1 Corinthians 13:6). Do you know what gossips are? Gossips are people who rejoice in iniquity. They love to tell something. And, by the way, it's not an honor to you if somebody gossips to you. They want to use your ears for garbage cans. Like a lady said, “You know, my pastor said, ‘Don't say anything unless it's good’; and boy is this good!” They rejoice in iniquity. They rejoice to tell these things. They seem to be glad about some injustice. They seem to regale in saying bad things about other people. And, you tell them something bad, and they say, “Oh, that's too bad—that's too bad. Is there anything else? We want to know more.” A wise man has said, “Before you listen to anything about another member of the church or before you say anything, you make it pass through these three gates: number one—is it true? number two—is it kind? number three—is it necessary? Does it need to be told? Is it true? Do you know it to be true? Is it kind? It may be true; it does need to be, but it may be told in the wrong way. And, is it necessary? Does it need to be told at all? Love—true love—is sympathetic.

III. The Victories of Love

So, look at what we've talked about. We've talked about the excelling virtues of love. We've talked about the enduring values of love. Let's talk a little bit about the victories of love. What does love do?

A. Love Conquers

Well, look, if you will, beginning in verse 7—love conquers: “[Love] beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. [Love] never [fails]”—“[love] never [fails]” (1 Corinthians 13:7–8). The way to get rid of your enemies is to love them to death.

I was reading about a lady in her... She was 78 years of age, and she lived in Rotterdam in the Netherlands. Her name is Elaida Huissen, 78, a Dutch lady. She'd been smoking cigarettes for 50 years; and for 50 years she'd tried to quit smoking, and she'd never been able to quit smoking. But finally, after 50 years, Elaida, this lady, quit smoking. And, somebody said, “How were you able to quit smoking when you've been trying for 50 years?” And, she said, “Love—love enabled me to quit smoking.” There was another man name Leo Jansen...or, a man. He was 79, and he proposed marriage to her but said, “I'll only marry you if you quit smoking.” And so, after 50 years, she quit smoking. And, here's what she said: “Will power never was enough to get me off the tobacco habit. Love did it.” “[Love] never [fails]” (1 Corinthians 13:8). Love conquers. And, you know, if you love Jesus enough, you're not going to harm Him, hurt Him, cause Him shame by the way that you love. “[Love] never [fails]” (1 Corinthians 13:8); it conquers.

B. Love Completes

But, not only does love conquer—love completes. Look again, if you will, in verse 8: “[Love] never [fails]: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall [pass] away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away”—now, what's he talking about—“that which is perfect” (1 Corinthians 13:10)? He's talking about love—“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Corinthians 13:8–11). Now, he's saying this: he's saying that “apart from love, all these gifts that you've been using are toys; they're just kid's stuff. Prophecy, and tongues, and knowledge—it's going to pass away.”

And, one day, we're going to stand before the Lord, and the Lord will say, “Why should I let you into My Heaven?” And, you say, “Well, I prophesied in Your name.” And, He says, “Prophecy shall cease. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.” “Well, I had knowledge, and I was filled with religious philosophy and understanding.” “Knowledge

shall pass away. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.” “Well, I have the gift of tongues, and I said many wonderful things. I didn’t understand any of them, but I said many wonderful things.” “Tongues shall cease. Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.” Again, the question—“Why should I let you into My Heaven?” “I’ve been saved by grace. I’ve been born again. My heart is filled with love for You, my Lord, my Father, and my fellow man.” “Enter into the joys of thy Lord.”

C. Love Continues

Love conquers, love completes, and friend, love continues. Look in verses 12 and 13: *“For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, [love], these three; but the greatest of these is [love]”* (1 Corinthians 13:12–13). You see, one of these days, faith will be unnecessary. When I stand before Jesus and see Him face-to-face, faith will turn to sight.

A Christian of yesteryear was named Augustine. Some call him Saint Augustine. Saint Augustine, one time, is reported to have said this: “Lord, thou hast declared that no man shall see Thy face and live. Then let me die, that I may see Thee.” What he wanted—he wanted his faith to turn to sight, that he might see the Lord. Now, faith will turn to sight, and hope will turn to reality. One of these days, all the things that we hoped for—and *hope is assurance based on the Word of God*—will turn to reality, but love will go on, and on, and on, and on throughout all eternity. There was a martyr who was dying at the stake. He was being burned for his faith. And, he said, as the flames crept up around him, “Farewell, all the world. Goodbye faith. Farewell hope. Welcome love,” as he stepped over into Heaven.

Now, I’m finished. But, no one—Adrian, or you, or anyone else—can exercise his or her spiritual gift in this church as he or she ought unless we are filled with love. And, you’re not going to be filled with love until you have evaluated, appreciated, and appropriated the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ our Lord. Only Jesus can put this kind of love in your heart.

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. You know, the mark, to me, of a born-again Christian is a genuine love for Jesus and a love for people. And, the Apostle John says, “If a man love not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?” (1 John 4:20). But, the Apostle Paul says, *“The love of God is shred abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 5:5). So, the only way that you can have true love in your heart is to have the Holy Spirit in your heart. And, the only way that you can have the Holy Spirit in your heart is to be

saved. And, the only way you can be saved is to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.

So, let me lead you in a prayer. If you're already saved, would you begin to pray for those round about you? And, if you're not sure that you're saved or sure that you're not saved and want to know tonight that you are Heaven-born, Heaven-bound, that your sins have been forgiven and that if you died tonight you'd go straight to Heaven, let me help you to get it settled. You can do that by receiving the gift of God's love, for the Bible says, "*God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8). He died for us—He died for us, even while we were sinners.

Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Pray this prayer: "Dear God, I am a sinner. My sin deserves judgment, but I need and want mercy. Jesus, You died to save me. You promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You. I believe on You. I believe that You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for doing that. Thank You for taking my place. I believe that God raised You from the dead—I literally believe that; I believe it literally happened. I believe that You are the Son of God. And now, tonight, like a child, with all of my heart, once and for all, now and forever, I trust You to save me. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Come into my life, and begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, help me, Lord Jesus, never, ever, ever to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Real Love

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: August 28, 1983

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 13

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

Outline

Introduction

I. Love Excels

II. Love Enables

III. Love Endures

Conclusion

Introduction

First Corinthians chapter thirteen, would you take your Bibles and open to this marvelous chapter. Now, if you've been a Christian for anytime at all, surely you know or ought to know that this is one of the best known, best loved chapters in all of the Bible and in any language or in any literature nothing has been more beautifully written, nor more meaningfully written than this beautiful ode or poem to love, written by the apostle Paul to a church that needed more unity.

Now, Paul starts in the eleventh chapter and there in the eleventh chapter he's dealing with the disunity that was in church concerning the Lord's Supper. And in a very real sense this thirteenth chapter is a part of all that Paul has to say on unity in the body.

So, I want to read the entire chapter because and I want to read it all the way through. The only minor adjustment that I will make, though I'll be reading from the King James Version of the scripture is to substitute the word *love* for the King James word *charity* because they mean the same though today when we use the word *charity* we think primarily of giving to the indigent and to the poor.

So, let me just substitute the word *love* and other than that I want to read the entire chapter, the thirteenth chapter and all thirteen verses. Then I want to make some comments on it and then we'll prepare our hearts to share together this memorial supper of our dear Lord.

Paul says, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not

love, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling symbol. And though I have the gift of prophesy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing. Love suffereth long and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, love never faileth, but whether they be prophecies, they shall fail; and whether there be tongues, they shall cease and whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known. Now abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love.”

Someone said it is love that makes the world go round. Someone said well, whether it does or not it makes the trip worthwhile. And indeed, it does. How would you like to live in a loveless world? And yet, we’re fast approaching that kind of a world. Do you know what Jesus prophesied of the end days? The Lord Jesus said because in the last days iniquity shall abound and the word iniquity literally means lawlessness because lawlessness shall abound the love of many shall wax cold and do you, do you find that true today? Do you find that because there’s so much lawlessness that you’re afraid to stop the highway and pick up somebody? Do you afraid to entertain a stranger in your home, to show hospitality and you’re just afraid to extend yourself or give yourself because you don’t know what’s going to happen. You say, you know, I, I would like to show love to a stranger but I don’t know whether that strange is setting me up to do me in. and, and there’s so much lawlessness. How accurate is the Bible because iniquity shall abound because lawlessness shall abound the love of many, shall wax cold. And so, we live in an age that is ah, well we call it the “atomic age” and now we are getting machines to do every thing. Someone has well said, the more machines act like men, the more men will behave like machines. And machines don’t have much love in them and we have that kind of a society.

Years ago, two hundred years ago, a well known encyclopedia discussed the word atom, and it did that with the use of only four lines in the encyclopedia. And then that same encyclopedia discussed the subject of love, and it took five pages on the subject of love. Four lines for atom and five pages for love. Today that same encyclopedia takes five pages on the word atom and does not mention love at all. We have changed

haven't we. We have come now into the atomic age, but because lawlessness shall abound the love of many shall wax cold.

Now Paul's ode and poem to love, I think falls into three natural divisions.

I think first of all, he tells us that love excels. And then I think he tells us, that love enables. And then I think he tells us that love endures.

I. Love Excels

Now first of all, he talks to us about how love excels all other things. For example, he says love excels oratory. Look at it. "But though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love I am become as a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal."

Now the world has heard enough loveless sermons. The world has heard enough loveless lectures. And Paul said, "if you could speak like an angel, what good is it if you don't have love?"

Now we have some people today who are, putting a great emphasis on speaking in tongues. What they call speaking in tongues. I don't, I believe there is a biblical gift of speaking in tongues, but I believe that ninety-nine and forty-four one hundredths percent of what is called tongues speaking today is not the biblical gift.

Now, this is not to say there is not a biblical gift, but there is a satanic counterfeit around in the world today. But let me tell you something about tongue speaking friend. Tongue speaking is not a sign that you're filled with love. The sign that you're filled with love is not that you can speak in many tongues, but that you can control the one tongue that you have.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not love, it profiteth me nothing." Here was a church that was making much of the gift of speaking in tongues, at least, what they called speaking in tongues, but it was a church that was horribly fractured and divided and that's, Paul was talking to these people. And Paul is saying don't you come around here talking about your spiritual gifts if you're not loving one another. And he's saying there that love exceeds oratory and then he says in verse two that love exceeds prophecy. "And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge and though I have all faith ..." and so forth, "and have not love, I am nothing."

Now, what is prophecy? Prophecy is the ability to speak theological truth in such a way — a concise and forthright way — that it, that it moves and impels and, and, and encourages people. It exhorts them, it edifies them, it encourages them, but suppose a man has the gift of prophecy and he doesn't have love, suppose he can split a theological hair into sixteen equal divisions, suppose he has heaven on his mind, excuse me, heaven on his tongue, but hell in his heart, what good is it, Paul says. He says love is more valuable than oratory; more valuable than prophecy and uh, love

exceeds knowledge.

Look again in verse two. “And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge.” You see, what Paul is saying is that a right heart is more important than a bright head. Now, he’s not saying that you ought not to have oratory. He’s certainly not against prophesy and he indeed is not against knowledge. We ought to have knowledge, but knowledge without love is a hurtful thing. I don’t know who first said this, but it is exceedingly true. People will not care how much we know until they know how much we care. What people are looking for in this day and age and rightfully so, is love.

A little boy was reading in the bible and he saw some pictures and some listings of angels and he read there about the cherubim and the seraphim and so, he ask his daddy, “daddy, what is the difference between the cherubim and seraphim?” Suppose your little boy asked you that question, daddy, would you know? Well, this daddy didn’t know but he said, “Well, son, we’ll look it up. And so, he got down some encyclopedias and so forth and he, he tried to look up and see what was the difference between the cherubim and the seraphim and he found out that cherubim comes from a Hebrew word that means *knowledge* and seraphim comes from a Hebrew word which means, that stood for *flame*. And this explanation went on to say that it was commonly believed or supposed that the cherubs therefore were angels that excelled in knowledge and the seraphs were angels that excelled in love. And the little boy thought about that and then this is what he said to his daddy. He says, “Daddy, when I die I will be a seraph? I’d rather love God than know everything.” That’s pretty good.

Oh, friend, love excels knowledge. And then he goes on to say that love excels faith in verse two. He says, and though I have all faith and have not love, I am nothing.

Now, faith is wonderful. Without faith you can’t be saved, but what Paul is saying is if you have enough faith so that you can remove mountains and yet you can’t remove malice, what good is it? I mean, if, if, if there’s, if your heart is headquarters for hate so that you could remove mountains, really you would not be able to remove mountains with that kind of hate in your heart, but even if you could, and you didn’t have love, Paul is using the hypothetical. What good would it be?

You see, love excels oratory. Love excels prophecy. Love excels knowledge. Love excels faith. Love excels what we call today charity. Look if you will in verse three. “And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned and have not love, it profiteth me nothing.”

Now, suppose you bring all your goods down here to the seminary sale, suppose you give the rest of them to the Red Cross, suppose you give some more to the United Fund and all of that, but you still don’t have love. You say, well, a man wouldn’t do that if he didn’t have love, Oh yes, he would. You can give without loving but you can’t love

without giving.

So, what good is it if a man gives and people do give? Do you know why some people give? A guilty conscience. Some people give instead of themselves rather than giving of themselves. Sometimes it's cleaner and neater, to write a check to give some cast off things and so forth rather than to give ourselves. Do you know what this world needs? This world needs, do you know what the poor people need? Not more money. They'd be glad to take it and I'm not saying that we ought not to give it, but that's not primarily what they need. It's one thing to give a starving man a fish; it's a better thing to teach him how to fish. Amen. That's what a world needs. A world needs some people who will say, here, I will give of myself unto you. And though I give my goods, if I bestow my goods to the poor and, and, and, all of these things and have not love it's nothing. Love excels charity. And then he goes on to say that love excels martyrdom. Look if you will in verse three. And though I give my body to be burned and have not love. You say, well, do loveless become martyrs? Yes, they do.

Did you know that false cults have their martyrs? You think of Jim Jones and the ghost of Guyana. All of those people who died there and others who have died for causes that were not loving causes. You see, a man may not fear dying because he doesn't know what living is. There's some people who are so filled with hate, for them to die in order to kill somebody else would be an honor. Though I give my body to be burned and have not love it profiteth me nothing.

So, you got it? You got it big, you got it plain, you got it straight? Love excels, love excels. It's greater than all of these other things and all the rest of these things good as they are, are meaningless without love.

II. Love Enables

Secondly, not only does love excel, but love enables. The things that we need to do, we ought to do, we want to do, we can only do through love. For example, love enables you to be patient. Look if you will in verse four. "Love suffereth long."

Now, we hear people say love is blind, but love isn't blind. Love sees more. Hahaha, it really sees. You see, but we still forgive, we, we have this patience. Love forgives seventy times seven. Love does not give to a person what they deserve. It gives to a person what they need. Love enables us to be patient. Love enables us to be kind. Look again in verse four. Love is kind.

One woman was converted. She joined a church, made a profession of faith in Christ. She was talking with a minister later and he said I'm always interested to know what brings people to Christ and if there was anything in the sermon that particularly moved your heart toward Christ, I'd like to know what it was. She said to tell you the truth, though I enjoyed your sermon very much, it was not anything in particular that you

said in the sermon. She said it was what happened after the sermon. She said I saw a woman come up and criticize you sharply and unfairly to your face. And she said I wasn't a Christian and I just watched you. I wanted to see what your reaction would be. And she said, when I saw the kindness that came out of your mouth I knew what you had was real. The kindness! Kindness sometimes dear friend and, and, and that kind of love is going to win people to Jesus Christ. I know people who are saved, I guess, and they're going to heaven, I hope. But boy, they're kind of hard to live with, to dwell there above with those that we love that will be glory, but to live here below with those that we know, that's another story! Isn't it?

A little girl was heard to pray, "Lord, make all the bad people good and make all the good people nice." Wouldn't it be good if all the good people were nice? Uh, you see, love enables you, love enables you to be patient, it's long suffering. Love enables you to be kind, love enables you, not to envy. Look again in verse four. Love envieth not. You want to take a test and see whether or not you're an envious person? Do you rejoice in the success of other people? I'm not talking about the success of somebody who is in a completely different field or social strata than you are. I'm talking about one of your peers. Can you rejoice when somebody else has a success? Somebody else has a blessing. Do you cringe when somebody else is praised? If you do dear friend, you need to load up on love.

Envy is as the rottenness of the bones. It hurts you far more than it hurts the person that you envy. Love will enable you not to envy. Love will enable you to be humble. Look again in verse four. Love vaunteth not itself. Let me tell you something. Did you know that love and pride don't dwell in the same heart? You can't do that. You see, dear friend, you be big headed or you can be big hearted, but you can't be both. Love doesn't vaunt itself.

Do you know why people don't get along? Do you know what causes so many arguments? Well, you say, a lot of things. No — only one thing, No, no, no, preacher, lots of things. No — only one thing. Do you know what the scripture says? "Only by pride cometh contumaciousness." Only by pride cometh contumaciousness. The contumaciousness that we have is ego against ego. There are no problems too big to solve, just people too small to solve them — People who are big-headed rather than big-hearted. Love doesn't vaunt itself. Have you ever heard a person stand up in a church and he'd been in a smaller church where they have a different kind of business meeting than we have stand up and say I know my rights. I want to ask you a question. What rights does a dead man have — somebody who's been crucified with Christ. You're not your own, you're bought with a price.

You see, knowledge puffs up, love fills up and so, love enables you to be humble. Jonathan Edwards was one of the greatest preachers who ever lived and Jonathan

Edwards said some tremendous words. Listen to them. “Nothing sets a man so much out of the devil’s reach as humility.” Let that soak in. Nothing sets a man so much out of the devil’s reach as humility.

But not only does love enable you to humble, but right on the heels of that, love enables you to be courteous. Look if you will in verse five. Love doth not behave itself unseemly. Do you know what that means? Roughly translated means love is courteous. To be unseemly is to be discourteous. Do you know what courtesy is? Love in little things. Love that says *please*, love that says *thank you*. Love that steps back and gives the other first place.

Now, now, now, listen, we can talk about love and, and, and great flowering swelling words, but you know, your home would be a whole lot sweeter place, the place where you work and the place where you worship. If we’d learn just to be courteous. Do you know, it’s an amazement to me how people lose their religion so fast after I preach on Sunday morning, just get out on the parking lot. Man, it’s all gone. I mean, you’d think I was a better preacher than that, wouldn’t you? I mean, people just trying to get away from the building — they’re going, they’re going to have a fit if somebody gets in front of them or cuts them off or they can’t get out of the parking lot. Why, why my dear friend, listen, it doesn’t longer than twenty minutes, it ain’t much good. Love is courteous, doth not behave itself unseemly. Why did you know there are some folks here, if you want to see a person have a tantrum, you just take the seat they normally sit in in this auditorium, huh? Anybody guilty stand up. That’s right. I mean, if are you just, you let somebody uh, get them out of there their, their Sunday School classroom or ask them to inconvenience themselves. Oh, no, brother, they, they’re standing up for their rights, they know their ground. Why, friend, that’s not love, that’s not love. I tell you, when we have a church that’s filled with love, its self last and others first and if we have to sit on the floor, stand around the walls, it’s all right. Love is unselfish. Love is, is courteous.

Now, love enables you dear friend, to be courteous, right along with that, unselfish. Look again in verse five if you will. Love seeketh not her own. I believe it was Bill Gothard who said when you teach people their rights, you have a revolution, when you teach people their responsibilities, you have a revival. Don’t you think it’s time that we started putting an emphasis upon our responsibilities to other people. Love seeketh not her own. You see, love enables us to be unselfish. Love enables us not to be irritable and I might as well confess now. I talked about getting out of the parking lot, I found myself walking out of the pulpit today and coming home with Joyce and she said something that irritated me and before she could express her heart I turned to her and I said, “well, now, let me tell you something, da, da, da, da, da.” I got home before Joyce did because she had to stop by and pick up her car. And the Holy Spirit said to me, “Adrian, you sinned against your wife, you were so irritable.” I couldn’t even wait until

she got in the house, I had to go out into the car and meet her when she got out of the car and said, “Honey I was wrong, I was irritable.” That wasn’t love. Listen, love enables you not to be irritable. The one blot upon another wise wonderful Christian is temper.

Mr. Grummonds said no form of vice, not worldliness, not greed of gold, not drunkenness itself does more to unChristianize society than an evil temper. Listen to what it says about love. Love is not easily provoked. If you’ve got a temper like a shotgun with a hair trigger, you better start loading up on love. Temper is something you never lose by losing it.

Now, next, love enables you to be forgiving. Look if you will ... and by the way, Joyce forgave me so she’s full of love. All right, now, notice, love enables you to forgive because the bible says love thinketh no evil. Now, this word here thinketh no evil literally is a, is a bookkeeping term and what it really means is that love does not store up grudges. Love doesn’t keep books. Are you a bookkeeper? Somebody does something to you and you say uh huh, I owe you one for that. Uh huh, I’ll get you, you wait, time is coming, that’s what, that’s what this, this word love doesn’t keep an account.

Love learns to drown insults in a river of love. It learns to forget those things and they’re gone behind. Love thinketh no evil. It does not collect grudges. Love enables us to forgive. Love enables us to be sympathetic.

Look in verse six. Love rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth. Love is never glad about injustice. Love doesn’t listen to gossip. And before you let anybody tell you something bad about somebody else you make it pass through those three golden gates. Is it true, is it kind, and is it necessary? Love does not rejoice in iniquity, it rejoices in truth.

Now, love enables you to do, live that way. And friend, you can’t live that way without that kind of love, and you don’t have that kind of love to give. I don’t either. Thank God the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. The only way to live is to be filled with the Spirit as the choir sang the fullness of God.

III. Love Endures

One last thing before we have our communion service. Not only does love excel, and not only does love enable, but love endures. Read verses seven and eight. “Love beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, love never faileth. But whether they be prophesies they shall fail, and whether there be tongues, they shall cease and whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.” There are a lot of things that don’t endure.

You see, love conquers according to verses seven and eight. Haha. What a mighty force is love. Do you know how to get rid of an enemy? Love him to death. The way to get rid of an enemy is to make a friend out of him. Love conquers, but not only does

love conquer, love completes, verses eight and following. Love never fails, prophesy is going to fail. Uh, tongues, they're going to cease. Knowledge is going to vanish away for we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when that which is perfect is come, than that which is impart shall be done away. When I was a child, listen to this verse, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child, but when I became a man I put away childish things.

I'm running out of time now, but what he's saying is compared to love everything else is kid's stuff. "When I was a child I thought as a child, I spake as a child, I acted like a child."

Now, let me put it into vernacular — maybe the choir can understand it. All these other things are Mickey Mouse without love, just Mickey Mouse, I mean, just kid's stuff with out love.

Now, what he's saying is that prophecy and tongues and knowledge are going to pass away and you stand one day before the Lord. He's going to say why should I let you into my heaven? You're going to say well, I prophesied. He's going to say cease from me ye that work iniquity, I never knew you. You're going to say I was a philosopher, I had knowledge. He's going to say knowledge shall pass away, depart from me, I never knew you. You're going to say well, I was a, an orator and I spoke in tongues. He's going to say tongues shall cease, depart from me, I never knew you. But if you'll say I received Christ as my Lord and Savior and therefore I was filled with the love of God. I'm a Christian, I love the Savior, I love thee my Lord, I love my fellow man. He's going to say come thou blessed of the Lord, enter into the joys of his kingdom. Love conquers, love completes and here's the thing, love continues, verses twelve through thirteen.

And now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now, I know in part but then shall I know even as also I am known and now abideth faith hope, love these three, but the greatest of these is love.

Now, notice, faith, hope and love, but you see, one day, and oh Lord, haste the day, one day, faith is going to turn to sight. Do you know what St. Augustine said? Augustine said, "Lord, thou hast declared that no man shall see thy face and live." Then he said, "Lord, let me die that I may see thee." Amen. Oh, but when we do see Him, then that, that, that uh, faith turns to sight. Now, we haven't seen him, but we love him.

But one day, we will see Him. And so, when faith turns to sight, what need is faith anymore and hope, is going to turn to reality so there won't be any need for hope anymore, but love will go on and on on and on and on. Love continues.

A martyr was dying in the flames. They were burning him for his faith in Christ and this is what he said, "Farewell, all the world, farewell faith, farewell hope, welcome love."

Now, abideth faith, hope, love, these three, but the greatest of these is love.

Conclusion

Now folks, look, look at your pastor. Will you enter in with me tonight by the power of the Holy Spirit and according to the word of God into a solemn act of love? Will you? Will you? Nod your head to love, to love? God build our church on love. Love that excels, love that enables and love that endures. And when people think about this church I want them to say behold, how they love one another.

The Gospel Truth

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 18, 1994

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1–4

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Source of the Gospel
 - A. The Penalty of Sin
 - B. The Pollution of Sin
 - C. The Power of Sin
- II. The Force of the Gospel
 - A. The Saving Force
 - B. The Sanctifying Force
 - C. The Stabilizing Force
- III. The Course of the Gospel
 - A. It Extends to Every Person
 - B. It Extends to Every Place
 - C. It Extends to Every Problem

Conclusion

Introduction

“**G**ood news”—“good news”: it’s used over 90 times in the New Testament. And, what do you do with good news? Well friend, you tell it if it’s good news. You need to tell it. My seminary professor, in other days, told me a story. He said there was a mother whose son was pronounced lost in action and judged to be dead. And, the war department said, “Your son is dead.” They sent that letter that every mother dreads to hear, and then they found out he was not dead at all; he was alive and well. And, they told Dr. Leavell, “Go tell that woman her son is alive.” Now, how would you like to be the one who had the opportunity to go to a mama who thought that her son was dead, to knock on the door and say, “I’ve got good news—I’ve got good news”? How excited we ought to be about preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, because it is better news than Roland Leavell had to give to that mother—better news, that Jesus Christ has conquered death, Hell, the grave, and judgment and that we can live forever with Him. Friend, that’s good news.

Listen to it—verse 1: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you”—the good news—“the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what [I’ve] preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 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, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:1–3). Now, what makes good news, good news? The thing that makes good news, good news is the possibility of bad news. Good news is not good news unless there's bad news that makes good news, good news. Got it? Got it. Okay. For example, the bad news is the black velvet upon which the diamond of God's grace, the good news of the gospel, dazzles so brilliantly.

What is the bad news? Look in verse 3: "*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for*"—the next two words are the bad news—"our sins"—"our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Now today, we've tried to explain away sin. Sin is sort of an old-fashioned word today. We like better words like error, mistake, misjudgment, weakness, psychological maladjustment, glandular malfunction. We've just taken the old poison, and we've put new labels on it. So today, a man's not a thief anymore; he's an embezzler. She's not a harlot; she's a lady of the evening. No one's a drunkard; they're an alcoholic, today. We've explained away sin. There's a school of psychology called *behaviorism* that says that man is just the sum total of his chemistry and his environment—I mean, that's all. He's just reacting to what's inside and what's outside, and you can't blame him for that. Maybe he's raised in a bad neighborhood. Maybe he's had a domineering mother who wouldn't let him push his mush off the high chair, and you know, somehow, he's warped. And so, everybody's sick, and nobody's sinful. Everybody's weak, but nobody's wicked. Everybody's ill, but nobody's evil. That's behaviorism: we explain away sin that way.

And, the evolutionist—how does he explain sin? He says, "Well, we're just an accident. We just happened. We came up out of some primordial ooze, and we just evolved from some primitive protozoa to what we are today. And so, there really is nothing called *sin*. How can there be sin? Because there's no fixed standard of right or wrong. Everything is just changing. There's no absolute standard, so there is no such thing as sin."

And, the humanist today will tell you that sin is the invention of a church to keep everybody in line. And, liberal preachers have bought into all three of these things. Let me tell you what a liberal preacher had to say. You want something to get the hackles upon your back if you're a Bible preacher? Here's what this man said, and many are following him—quote: "Sin is"—quote—"the result of infinitive environment, traumatic experiences, physiological complexes, and the like." And then, he added this quote: "After preaching for 50 years, I cannot help but feeling the Church harps far too much on sin." Then, he went on to say—quote: "Paul's words that *'[through] one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin'* (Romans 5:12) can be dismissed as nonsense" (end of quote). Now, that man ought to get out of the pulpit and make a honest living.

I'm serious.

Public enemy number one is sin. Sin is a clinched fist in the face of God. Sin is hellish, damnable. The Bible says, "*For the wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). "*The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die*" (Ezekiel 18:4; Ezekiel 18:20). And, the Apostle Paul said in 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*" (Romans 5:12). And, who, in this building today, would say, "Pastor Rogers, I've never sinned"? "Well," you say, "well, I've sinned, but I've sinned just a little bit." But, the Bible says, "*For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, [the same] is guilty of all*" (James 2:10). What does that mean? How many of the Ten Commandments do you have to break to be a sinner—all ten? Just one. Here's a man dangling over a fire by a chain of ten links. How many links in that chain have to break before he falls in the fire—ten? Just one. "*Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, [the same] is guilty of all*" (James 2:10).

I wonder how many in this building have ever told a lie? Ever cheated in school? Deceived your mama? I wonder how many in this building have ever taken anything that did not belong to them, whether it was a nickel off your mother's dresser, whether you carried materials home from the job or stole an answer in school? How many have ever taken a toy out of the neighbor's yard when you were a child? "Well," you say, "Pastor, those are small things." Yes, but they're an indication of a bigger thing. And, the problem is not what man does; the problem is what a man is. The Bible says, "These things come out of the heart" (Matthew 15:18). A man is not a thief because he steals; he steals because he's a thief. He's not a liar because he tells lies; he tells lies because he's a liar. And, the problem is not what we do. We do what we do because we are what we are. And, there is something in human nature that is called *sin*, and until you deal with the problem, until you admit there is bad news, the gospel will never be good news to you.

Boys and girls sometimes want to come down the aisle and join the church. If you're a mom or a dad, never let your child come forward and get baptized until, first of all, they understand they're sinners—they're sinners. Now, you don't have to drill that into their heads that they're sinners, because that's not the conviction they need—not the conviction of mom and dad, but the conviction of the Holy Spirit. But, when the Holy Spirit convicts that child of sin, then that child can understand a Savior. It is the bad news that makes the good news good.

Now, having said that, let's look at the good news. There are three things I want you to see about the gospel today, and I tell you they are wonderful. What I want you to see today, as we look in these first three verses—1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 through 3—I want you to see the source of the gospel (where it comes from). Then, I want you to see

the force of the gospel; I want you to see its mighty power. Then, I want you to see the course of the gospel; I want you to see where it goes and what it does.

I. The Source of the Gospel

Now, what is the source of the gospel? Well, the source of the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Look in verse 3: *“For I delivered unto you first of all”*—now, that doesn’t mean “that’s the first thing I said.” It may have been the first thing, but that isn’t what it means here. It means “of first importance.” This is number one. This is the highest priority. This is the main thing. And, as we’ve heard so many times, the main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing—*“I [have] delivered unto you first of all”*—of prime importance. There’s nothing more important of what I have to say to you today—*“I [have] 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, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 14:3–4). That is the source of the gospel: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now, what is the bad news, again? Our sins. He died for our sins. Well, sin brings with it penalty. Sin brings with it pollution. And, sin brings with it power. Got it? Sin brings penalty, pollution, and power. It doesn’t give you power; it has power over you. Now, how does the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus deal with problem?

A. The Penalty of Sin

Well, first of all, the death, burial, and resurrection deals with the penalty of our sins. You see, when Jesus Christ died on the cross, that was full payment for our sins. The Bible says He *“died for our sins”* (1 Corinthians 15:3)—that is, “on behalf of our sins.” He died to pay our sin debt. And, the Bible says He did it according to the Word (1 Corinthians 15:3). You see, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross was not an incident. It was not an accident. It was not an afterthought. It was according to the Word. What Word was he talking about? He was talking about the Old Testament Jewish Word—the Old Testament, the Bible of the Jewish people.

Seven hundred years before Jesus Christ came into this world, the prophet Isaiah said, *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him”*—the Messiah—*“the iniquity of us all”* (Isaiah 53:6). Our sins were laid upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus took our sins to the cross, and with His blood on that cross, in agony and blood, He suffered, bled, and died. And, there was the full payment for our sins. And, as He died, He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30)—it is paid in full.

You see, a holy God, a righteous God, demands that sins must be paid for. God cannot merely overlook sin. God cannot merely forgive sin without payment being

made. You say, “Why not?” If God were to do that, He would no longer be holy—He would no longer be just. He would no longer be righteous if He just simply said, “Well, I forgive you.” Suppose you stood before a judge, adjudicated guilty of some horrible, hateful, heinous crime, and the judge says, “Oh well, that’s all right. I’m a loving judge. I forgive you.” A judge has no right to do that. He’d be removed from the bench. He has no authority to do that. As a judge, he must see that payment is made. They say, in a court of law, when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. If God willingly, knowingly, deliberately overlooks sin, then God would become a sinner—God would topple from His throne of holiness. Sin must be paid for. But, Christ died for our sins, and that deals with the penalty of sins, because the cross of Jesus Christ, according to verse 3, was full payment for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3).

B. The Pollution of Sin

But now, wait a minute—let’s go on. Not only do we have the problem of the penalty of sin—and when He paid our sin debt, He removed the penalty—but there’s also the pollution of our sin. Look in verse 4 now: “*And...he was buried*”—“*he was buried*” (1 Corinthians 15:4). Not only did He die, but He was buried. Not only is there the full payment—there’s the free pardon.

“What do you mean He was buried, Pastor?” Well, they put Him in that grave. They sealed Him in there. Three days and three nights He was in the grave. “Well, why is the burial of Jesus Christ a part of the gospel? Why does the Bible put this emphasis on the burial of Jesus Christ?” Well, number one, so everybody would know He was truly dead. Did you know there are some people who believe that He never really died on the cross? Some people have come up with the most asinine theory—that He only fainted on the cross. They call that the “swoon theory.” Well friend, let me tell you, here’s Jesus Christ put in a grave—a rock-hewn grave. In front of that grave was a stone, 4½- to 5-foot-tall. Engineers at Georgia Tech said it probably weighed 1½ to 2 tons. Here’s that stone there in front of the grave. Jesus Christ has hung on the cross, His hands and feet pierced with nails. He’s already been beaten, lacerated.

Then, they take a spear and ram it in His side. Out flows blood and water. He’s taken down from this cross; He’s wrapped in linen garment very much like a mummy, sealed with spices. He’s put in this grave; He’s left there three days and three nights. And then, somebody trying to explain away the resurrection says that He somehow resuscitated there in the tomb, somehow extricated Himself from all of that wrapping. And then, here is a man—let’s say, weighs 185 pounds—He rolls away that stone, slips past the Roman guard that’s guarding it by fear of their own death, appears to His disciples after having spent three days and three nights with those wounds in His hands, His feet, His side, and convinces them that He’s been raised from the dead. If

you believe that... You know, it takes far more faith to believe that then it does that He was raised from the dead. But, He was buried. He was put in that grave. He was dead. No *ifs*, *ands*, or *buts* about it—He died; He was buried.

But, the main reason they talk about the burial of Jesus Christ in the gospel—that the Apostle Paul mentions the burial of Jesus Christ in the gospel—is what it shows. You see, not only was there the pardon that is given—and He deals with the penalty of our sin—but there is the pollution. And, the gospel deals with the purging of our sin. You see, your problem is not just the penalty that your sin deserves; your problem is what sin has done to you. It's the gospel of Jesus Christ that cleanses you on the inside. It's not merely that you don't have to go to Hell, friend. Listen, when you get saved, when you come to Jesus Christ, He makes your heart clean. The defilement, the pollution, of sin is put in the grave of God's forgetfulness. What did it mean when Jesus Christ was buried? That He had become sin, and He died for us. And, that sin is put out of sight. He is buried.

When you get saved, not only does He forgive you so far as judicial forgiveness is concerned, but He cleanses you on the inside. And, *“though your sins be as scarlet, they [will] be...white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). What I'm trying to say is this, friend: your sins are pardoned, and then they are buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. You never have to be haunted by the ghost of guilt. You see, the old person you used to be is dead, gone, and buried. That's what baptism is all about: we're buried with Him by baptism. If you are, then it's gone.

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;

Buried, He carried my sins far away.

That's what it's all about—sin. He deals not only with the penalty of sin (that's His death)—He deals with the pollution of sin (that's His burial). He takes that sin and puts it in the grave of forgetfulness. And again, we sang,

Be of sin the double cure;

Save from wrath and make me pure.

That pollution, that contamination of sin, is put away in the grave of God's forgetfulness.

C. **The Power of Sin**

But then, look again at this passage of scripture in verse 4: and the Bible says, *“And...he rose again the third day”* (1 Corinthians 15:4). Now, what did we say? The three problems were the penalty of sin, the pollution of sin, and the power of sin. He rose again the third day, triumphant over sin. He has broken the back of Satan. He has demolished the power of sin. It was sin that crucified Jesus; it was sin that nailed Him to the cross. But now, He is raised.

Now, look at it very carefully in verse 4: the Bible says, *“And that he rose again”* (1 Corinthians 15:4). Literally, the Greek construction is this: “He was raised again”—“He was raised again.” Who raised Him? Well, God the Father raised Him from the dead. Now, you see, they had put Jesus Christ on trial. There was a mock trial, and they put Him on trial. And, they said, “Let’s bring the evidence against Him.” They said He was a blasphemer. They said He was a fraud. They said He was a troublemaker. And, they said, “Our verdict of Him is that He is worthy of death. So, let Him be crucified.” That was what the lower court said; and so, they put Him in the grave. But, a Higher Court said, “They were wrong, and I will raise Him up.” Listen to Acts chapter 2, verses 23 and 24: *“Him”—Jesus—“being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain: Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it”* (Acts 2:23–24). They said, “He’s worthy of death. Jesus needs to be crucified.” But, God the Father said, “I’ll reverse that court. I’m the Supreme Court of the universe, and I will raise Him up.”

You see, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was God’s stamp of approval upon His life. You see, listen—only ignorance scoffs at the fact of Jesus Christ as an individual, as a human person, on earth. I mean, everybody knows that He was here. I mean, when you date your letter today, you say 1994. What does that mean? Nineteen hundred and ninety-four years after Jesus. You know, all history—He split the centuries AD and BC. I mean, we all know He was here. Don’t ever say that He didn’t exist. You know He existed. Now, your only question is, “Who was this man that existed?” You only have three choices—only three: either He was a liar who said He was God and knew that He wasn’t, or else He was a lunatic who thought He was God and wasn’t, or He was the Lord. Now, He was a fact. But now, which was He—Lord, liar, or lunatic? Was He deceiver, deceived, or Deity? Well, how do we know which one He was? Well, the Bible says in Romans 1:4: *“[He’s shown] to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead”*—I mean, beyond the shadow of any doubt that He walked out of that grave and that is He’s shown alive with many infallible proofs. There’s more proof that Jesus Christ came out of that grave than that Julius Caesar lived. Now, what I’m trying to say is that that means that Satan’s back is broken by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is God’s final stamp of approval upon Jesus. *“[He’s] declared to be the Son of God with power”* (Romans 1:4).

Now, the Bible says, “He was raised” (1 Corinthians 15:4). Let’s talk a little bit about Greek. We don’t want to get too deep, but the Bible says, *“[He] died for our sins”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). That’s what they call the “aorist tense.” That means “a fact that’s accomplished.” It’s in the past. It’s done—it’s done. It’s finished. He died, never to die again. He was buried. That’s in the aorist tense. It’s done. It’s an accomplished fact.

He's buried. That's done. But then, the Bible says, "*And...he rose again*" (1 Corinthians 15:4)—actually, "was raised." That's present tense. You say, "What does that mean?" Well, He died—that's done. He was buried—that's done. But, He rose—that's always. That's present tense—"He did rise." He is risen, and He always will be risen. I mean, friend, that means you're never done with Jesus Christ. You can deny Jesus. You can refuse Jesus, and you die without Jesus. But, you'll rise in the judgment of the damned, and there, sitting on the throne, will be Jesus Christ. He is raised from the dead. He is risen. That, friend, is the gospel truth. That's what the gospel is all about. You see, the bad news is our sins: the penalty of our sins, the pollution of our sins, the power of our sins. But, the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—that, friend, is God's answer, the good news concerning the bad news.

II. The Force of the Gospel

Now, that's the source of the gospel. I want you to notice, now, the force of the gospel. I want you to see what the gospel does.

A. The Saving Force

Well, number one, there's the saving force. Look, if you would, in verse 2. He speaks of the gospel, and he says in verse 2: "*By which also ye are saved*" (1 Corinthians 15:2). There's no other way to be saved apart from the gospel. That's the reason that the Apostle Paul said in Romans 1, verse 16: "*[I'm] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation*" (Romans 1:16). God has no other way for you to be saved apart from the gospel. Listen to the whole verse: "*For [I'm] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...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). To the Jew first—to God's chosen. It is the power of God to everyone who believes to be saved from the penalty of sin, to be saved from the pollution of sin, to be set free from the power of sin. There is the saving force of the gospel—no other way to be saved.

Now, notice what he says here: "*By which...ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what [I've] preached unto you*" (1 Corinthians 15:2). Now, what does it mean to "keep in memory"? That literally means "to hold fast—hold fast what I have preached to you. Don't change it. Don't amend it. Don't embellish it." I mean, if it's new, it's not true. There is only one gospel—no other gospel. It is gloriously simple; it is simply glorious. There's the saving force.

B. The Sanctifying Force

There's the sanctifying force. Notice again in verse 2: "*By which...ye are saved*" (1 Corinthians 15:2). *Saved* is in the present tense also, and it literally means "by which you are being saved." "Well," you say, "now wait a minute, Adrian, have I been saved,

am I being saved, or will I be saved?” Yes—yes. You see, the gospel, the salvation, it’s in the present tense. I have been saved from the penalty of sin. I am being saved from the power of sin. One day, I will be saved from the very presence of sin. So, the gospel continues to work. You see, God’s not finished with me yet. You say, “Well, if you’re so saved, why don’t you look and act a little more saved?” Well, He’s not finished with me. Philippians 1:6 says, *“He [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* And so, salvation is a crisis where you come to God and you say, “God, I am a sinner. Forgive my sin. Come into my heart, and save me,” and He does. But, it’s a crisis that’s followed by a process. He continues to work in you; and, day by day, He’s making you more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, therefore, what is the force of the gospel? There’s the saving force and the sanctifying force. Now, that’s a word we don’t use very much, but *sanctifying* means He is making you more and more, day by day, more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. That’s what He’s doing for me. I haven’t stopped growing. I’m light years from what I could be—but oh, if you only knew what I used to be. I’m growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

C. **The Stabilizing Force**

And, not only is there the saving force and the sanctifying force—I love this—there’s the stabilizing force of the gospel. Look, if you will, in verse 1: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which [ye] also...have received, and wherein ye stand”* (1 Corinthians 15:1). Oh, I love that. You know, it’s good news that we can be saved. It’s better news that we can be saved and know it. It is glorious news that we can be saved, that we can know that we’re saved and know that once we are saved we can never lose it. I mean, *“wherein ye stand”* (1 Corinthians 15:1)—you see, when you get saved, you don’t keep Him; He keeps you.

Let me let me give you a verse. Now, just put your marker there, 1 Corinthians 15, and just turn left to Romans chapter 14. You want a blessing? It’s worth it. I want you to turn to it. Just remember we’re talking about standing. Look in Romans chapter 14 and verse... Those of you who want to go around criticizing and judging other people, Paul asked this question: *“Who art thou that judgest another man’s servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth”*—now, watch this—*“Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand”* (Romans 14:4). You look at some poor stumbling Christian, and you say, “You’re unworthy.” God says, “Would you butt out of it? He’s My servant, not your servant.” And, God says, “I’m gonna tell you something about My servant. I am able to make him stand, and he will be held up—he will be held up. He will.” He didn’t say, “My.” He didn’t say, “Some of them will.” “I am able. And, what I am able to do I will do.” And, you stand in the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, once God saves you, my dear

friend, by His grace—He keeps you by His grace. Don't ever get the idea that salvation is probation—that He gives you a fresh start and then sees if you can make it. I told you before, I wouldn't trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to Heaven.

Friend, you're saved by the grace of God; you're kept by the grace of God. It is good news that we stand in the gospel. Friend, I want to tell you, I stand assured, and I stand amazed. "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound" (John Newton). Look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians 15, and look in verse 10: he says, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am*" (1 Corinthians 15:10). We're saved by grace, and we're kept by grace.

Now, finally and quickly, where's the source of the gospel? It is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ—not in the merit of man, but in the mercy of God; not the goodness of man, but the grace of God. I've talked to you about the force of the gospel: there's the saving force; there's the sanctifying force; there's the stabilizing force of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It's wonderful.

III. The Course of the Gospel

Now, let me talk to you, dear friend, about what this gospel does in our world—the course of the gospel. Here's the reason I enjoy being a gospel preacher:

A. It Extends to Every Person

The gospel of Jesus Christ extends to every person. I love it. I can look to anybody, any place, anywhere on the face of God's green earth and tell them, "No matter what you have done—no matter what you've done—if you trust Jesus, He'll save you." "*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*" (Romans 10:13). You say, "A murderer?" Yes. "A rapist?" Yes. "An adulterer?" Yes. "A thief?" Yes. "A blasphemer?" Yes. Look at what the Apostle Paul said again in verse 10: "*But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain*" (1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul called himself the cheapest of sinners, but he said, "God's grace reached even me." It extends to every person.

B. It Extends to Every Place

It extends, therefore, to every place. You don't have to be in a church to be saved. Some of you listening by television, I don't know where you are right now—maybe it's in a tavern somewhere. Maybe you're listening later by tape, but I want to tell you right where you are, this moment, Jesus will save you. If it's every person, it has to be every person in every place, 'cause everybody's got to be somewhere. Every place—I mean, if it's to the ends of the earth, anybody can be saved. You show me any time, anywhere, where anybody ever called on Jesus Christ to save them in repentance and faith and He didn't save them, then I'll close my Bible and never preach again.

C. It Extends to Every Problem

Every person, every place—now, watch it—and it extends to every problem—every problem. You say, “Pastor, you don’t know my problems.” Well, I can reduce them all very simply. You know what your problems are? Every problem that you have is a subcategory of three things: sin, sorrow, and death. That’s it. And, the gospel is the only answer to sin, the gospel is the only answer to sorrow, and the gospel is the only answer to death. There’s no other book. There’s no other plan. There’s no other teacher. There’s no other method. There’s no other way apart from the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ to deal with sin, and sorrow, and death. The course of the gospel—it extends to every person. The course of the gospel—it flows to every place. The course of the gospel—it covers every problem. And, of course, you know the greatest problem is death. We’re going to die. For the gospel is that Christ was raised from the dead and has conquered the grave.

I want you to imagine a little procession of caterpillars. They’re down there on the ground—caterpillars—and they’re going to have a funeral. And, they’re carrying along a cocoon, because that’s where their brother used to be. He was in that cocoon, and he’s disappeared; he’s gone. They said, “He went into this cocoon. He’s gone. We’re gonna have a processional now. This is all we’ve got left of him. It’s just this outer shell, and we’re gonna have a funeral. We’re gonna put it in a grave.” So there they are—their little feet going along in the mud, little caterpillars. And, up there above them is a butterfly shimmering his wings in the sunlight. He’s free, and he’s complete—what he was made to be. And, while they’re down there feeling sorry for him, he’s up there looking down on them, feeling sorry for them. Do you have a loved one in Heaven? Oh, friend, if he is there, if she is there, they’re there because of the gospel of Jesus Christ that’s conquered sin, death, Hell, and the grave. And, every problem that you ever have is answered in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and that’s the reason the Apostle Paul said, “[I’m] not ashamed of the gospel of [Jesus] Christ” (Romans 1:16). And, with my dying breath, I want to be known as a gospel preacher.

Conclusion

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Father God, I thank You for Your Word, for the gospel. And, I pray that today, many will be saved by the gospel of Christ—not only here, but in other places. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

What Is the Gospel?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 14, 2004

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1–4

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Scriptural Content of the Gospel
 - A. His Death Deals with Sin
 - B. His Burial Deals with Sin's Defilement
 1. He Was Buried to Show Us He Dealt with the Power of Sin
 2. He Was Buried to Show Us That He Dealt with the Pollution of Sin
 - C. His Resurrection Deals with Sin's Dominion
- II. The Saving Intent of the Gospel
 - A. That You Can Believe It and Be Saved
 1. Some Try Sincerity
 2. Some Try Sentiment
 3. Some Try Service
 4. Some Try Sacrament
 - B. That You Can Believe It and Be Strengthened
 - C. That You Can Believe It and Be Secured
- III. The Extent of the Gospel
 - A. It Extends to Every Person
 - B. It Extends to Every Place
 - C. It Extends to Every Problem

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word. Turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15. If someone were to ask you to give a definition of the gospel, could you do it? I think the word *gospel* is a word that is carelessly used. Sometimes we talk about gospel music, but it has no gospel in it. Sometimes a man may be telling the truth, and he says, "That is the gospel truth." It may be true, but it's not the gospel truth. Sometimes a preacher may preach marvelous, wonderful teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, but that's not the gospel. Sometimes a preacher may put on a pair of hobnail boots, walk up and down on people's spines, and then, after they are bloody and raw, pour salt in the wounds. I mean, he'll preach a message on hellfire and damnation. And, by the way, that needs to be preached; I'm not opposed to that. *If we had more Hell in the pulpit, we'd have less hell in the community.* But, that's not the gospel.

What is the gospel? Plain and simple—it's the same thing you saw in the film *The*

Passion of Christ. Here it is—1 Corinthians 15, verses 1 through 4: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel”—do you see that?—“I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I have 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, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:1–4). Ladies and gentlemen, plain and simple—the gospel—the gospel—is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the gospel.

And, by the way, that’s the reason this film has stirred so many passions about *The Passion*. They have attacked the nature of the film. They have attacked the producer of the film. They’ve also attacked the message of the film. *World Magazine* reports the following: “And yet Hollywood, going against its own business interests, is reportedly set to blacklist Mel Gibson.” *The New York Times* reports that “the powers that be in the movie industry, those defenders of artistic freedom who bewail the blacklisting of Hollywood communists decades ago, are going to punish Mr. Gibson for making this movie.” *The Times’s* Sharon Waxman cites a number of powerful industry leaders who have vowed to have nothing to do with Mr. Gibson. She quotes one head of a studio, who would not allow his name to be used, and here’s the quotation: “It doesn’t matter what I say. It’ll matter what I do, and I will do something. I won’t hire him. I won’t support anything he is a part of”—that is, the man who made this film. And, not only *The New York Times* and others in Hollywood—*Newsweek* came out with a cover story after *The Passion*, attacking the very Bible itself. And, *The Dallas Morning News* trotted out liberal theologians who denied that Christ’s death was sacrificial and an atonement for sin. One New Testament scholar—and I used that word loosely—from Berkley, said, “It makes God sound bloodthirsty.” And so, people don’t like this film that tells of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, what it really is, is an attack on the gospel itself. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 23: “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, the word *gospel* comes from our English word, from a combination of two words—“good-spell,” spelling out good things, telling good things. The Greek word itself literally means “good news.” The gospel is the good news of the death, and burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The best news this world ever heard came from a graveyard outside Jerusalem, and it is this: “He is not here...he [has] risen” (Matthew 28:6). That, my friend, is good news.

But, good news is not good news unless there’s the possibility of bad news.

Suppose I said to you tonight, “I’ve got good news for you: your house is not on fire.” Well, that kind of falls flat—doesn’t it?—unless you felt that your house may have been on fire. But, if you’re in the hospital—perhaps a person that you love is there in the operating room—and you’re waiting in the waiting room. And, you’re waiting, and waiting, and waiting. And then, the doors swing open, and that surgeon comes out, takes that mask from his face, and removes that little hat that he wears, and looks at you, and says, “I’ve got good news.” That’s good news because you did not know what you might hear. The good news, friend, is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, by the way, the bad news that makes the good news good is found in verse 3: “*Christ died for our sins*” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

I told you before the word *sin* is not politically correct. People don’t like the idea of sin. The evolutionist doesn’t like sin. He just says that man has not had yet enough time to develop properly: “Give him enough time, and he will stumble upward; and he’ll be all right.” The geneticist says that the problem is in the genes and the chromosomes: “Maybe one day we can make some designer babies and do away with the problem of sin.” The sociologist says that the problem is in the environment: “If we just change the environment, we’ll change the man.” The educator says, “Well, the problem is that we need to teach more”—that the problem is ignorance. In all of these things, no matter what it is, they deal with what man lacks. The evolutionist says he lacks time. This geneticist says he lacks the ingredients. And, the environmentalist says he lacks the proper surroundings. And, the sociologist says he lacks the training. And, the educator says he lacks knowledge. But, man’s problem, hey, is not what he lacks; it’s what he has. He has a problem; it is sin. And, sin brings about three things: sin brings debt, sin brings defilement, and sin brings dominion. What debt does sin bring? Heaven has sued us for damages. We have misused God’s intention for us, and we are in debt to a holy God. And then, sin brings defilement. It is not only what we have done, but what we are. We are sinners by nature. And then, therefore, sin brings dominion. Sin rules over us. That’s the bad news: the debt of sin, the defilement of sin, the dominion of sin. And, it is the gospel, and only the gospel, that has anything to say right about those things.

Notice, if you will—look in verse 3: Paul said, “*I delivered unto you first of all*”—do you see that “first of all”? Look at it: “first of all”—“*I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received*” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Now, he doesn’t mean, “That’s the first thing I said.” He’s not saying, “This is the first, chronologically.” He is saying it is of prime importance. This is the first thing; this is the major thing. No matter what else you do, if you don’t get this, you have missed it all. As somebody said a long time ago, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing, and the main thing is the gospel.” No matter what else a church does, if it doesn’t preach the gospel, it has missed the main thing—it has missed the first thing.

Now, there are three things I want you to learn about the gospel tonight, as we talk about the purpose of His Passion—the gospel truth.

I. The Scriptural Content of the Gospel

First of all, I want you to see the scriptural content of the gospel. I've already mentioned it to you; but now, we're going to slow down and look at it a little bit more—the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

A. His Death Deals with Sin

Why was His death necessary? His death deals with the debt that sin has incurred. Verse 3 says, “[He] died for our sins” (1 Corinthians 15:3). His death was a blood atonement to pay the debt of our sin. Jesus paid it all. And, we need to understand that sin, therefore, is annulled and done away with, and the penalty and the debt are taken away. Somebody said, “He paid a debt He did not owe because I had a debt I could not pay.”

B. His Burial Deals with Sin’s Defilement

Now, His death deals with sin, but His burial deals with sin’s defilement. Have you ever wondered why the burial is a part of the gospel?—“*that Christ died for our sins... And that he was buried*” (1 Corinthians 15:3–4).

1. He Was Buried to Show Us He Dealt with the Power of Sin

Well, there’s another reason that He was buried: so we would know for certain that He was dead. Some people say that Jesus never really died on the cross; He only fainted. They call it *swooning*: “He was not really dead.” You think about that. He was beaten. He was crucified. A spear was placed in His side; out came blood and water. Then, He’s put for three days in a sealed tomb. And, after three days in that tomb, after having been beaten mercilessly, and after having been nailed to a cross and hanging there for six long hours, and after having a spear placed in His side, they say, “Well, He just—He just revived.” And then, after He revived, they believe He woke up and rolled away a stone that engineers at Georgia Tech say weighed between one-and-a-half and two tons. He rolled that away. Then, He appeared to His disciples and convinced them that He had been raised from the dead. Can you imagine a person in that condition convincing them that He had been raised from the dead—convince them enough that they were willing to die for their faith? No! He was buried, all right, to show that He was dead.

2. He Was Buried to Show Us That He Dealt with the Pollution of Sin

But, there’s another reason that He was buried: He was buried to show us that He has put in the grave of God’s forgetfulness our sin—the pollution of our sin. He put our sin away. You see, He dealt not only with sin’s debt, but sin’s defilement. We sing that song

by Augustus M. Toplady:

Be of sin the double cure;

Save from wrath and make me pure (Augustus M. Toplady).

The power of sin and the pollution of sin is dealt for in the death and burial of Jesus.

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;

Buried, He carried my sins far away (author unknown).

But, not only does His death deal with sin's debt—His burial deals with sin's defilement.

C. His Resurrection Deals with Sin's Dominion

Then, His resurrection deals with sin's dominion, because if all He did was to pay my sin debt and put me and my sin in the grave, I still have me. If He doesn't save me from me, He hasn't truly saved me. So, He died for me to give Himself to me. So, He rose for me. And, we mentioned this to you Sunday night. Look in verse 4: *"he was buried, and...he rose again"* (1 Corinthians 15:4).

Now, let's do a little word study. It literally says, "He was raised." That's the Greek construct: "He was raised." Now, you see, the world had put Jesus on trial. If you saw the film, you knew that the trial was a mockery of justice. But, what they've said is, "We have heard the evidence. He is a fraud. He is a blasphemer. He is a troublemaker. He is worthy of death." And, they sentenced Him to death and put Him to death. However, there was a higher court that reversed that decision. Acts chapter 2, verses 23 and 24: *"Him"—Jesus—"being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain"*—now, listen to this—*"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it"* (Acts 2:23–24). Now, "You crucified Him, but God reversed your decision and God raised Him up." And then, Acts chapter 2, 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). He is raised. You see, the resurrection of Jesus Christ was God's stamp of approval upon Jesus Christ. Many false messiahs have come; many religious leaders have come—but what is the difference? Buddha lived and died—he's dead. Confucius lived and died—he's dead. Mohammad lived and died—he's dead. Jesus lived, and died, and rose again! That's the difference. He is a living, risen Savior.

Now, look at the scripture very carefully. The Bible says, *"[He] died"* (1 Corinthians 15:3). You see that? *"[He] died"* (1 Corinthians 15:3). Now, in the Greek language, that's the Arias tense. You say, "Oh Pastor, I'm so blessed." Well, now listen—now listen. It's the Arias tense. What that means is it is done once for all: *"[He] died"* (1 Corinthians 15:3)—Arias tense. Then, the Bible says, *"He was buried"* (1 Corinthians 15:4)—Arias tense. What does that mean? He's buried once for all. It is done; it is a finished fact. But

then, it says, “And He is raised” (1 Corinthians 15:4). That’s not Arias tense; that’s present tense. Now, what does that mean? It means He was raised, still is raised, and always will be raised. That’s very, very important. See, you may run from the Lord Jesus Christ all of your life, but when you die and are raised yourself in the resurrection of the damned, you will meet Jesus face to face, sitting on the throne. He is the risen Savior. You have a date with Deity. You’re going to meet Jesus Christ in salvation, or you’re going to meet Him in judgment; but you’re going to stand before Jesus Christ. He died—that’s finished. He was buried—that’s finished. But, He is raised; He is alive. He is a risen Savior. Now friend, that is the scriptural content of the gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Get it? Good. Okay.

II. The Saving Intent of the Gospel

Now, here’s the second thing I want you to see: I want you to see not only the scriptural content of the gospel—the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus—but I want you to see the saving intent of the gospel—the saving intent of the gospel. Look now in verses 1 and 2: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I [have] preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–2). Now, what is the intent of the gospel?

A. That You Can Believe It and Be Saved

The intent, number one, is that you can believe it and be saved. You can do nothing with the gospel if you don’t believe it. The Bible teaches, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you will] be saved” (Acts 16:31). Romans chapter 1, verse 16 says, *“For [I’m] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth”* (Romans 1:16).

Now, there are many dead-ends that people try, rather than putting their faith in Jesus. The Bible says, *“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 16:25).

1. Some Try Sincerity

You might try sincerity, but you can be sincerely wrong. I’m told that sulfuric acid, H₂SO₄, and pure drinking water are both clear and odorless. But, if you drink H₂SO₄ rather than water, you may be sincere, but you’ll be sincerely dead.

Poor Willy, he’s gone from us.
His face we’ll see no more.
For what he thought was H₂O
Was H₂SO₄.

Sincerity is not enough. There are many sincere people. Many in the false cults are

sincere.

2. Some Try Sentiment

Some try sentiment—weeping and tears. But again, the song—

Could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone (Augustus M. Toplady).

3. Some Try Service

And then, some do service. They are working themselves into the ground on pilgrimages, and service, and all of these things; but they cannot save.

4. Some Try Sacrament

Some try sacrament, and they have their various kinds of sacraments they think can save. No priest-craft can save you.

Friend, it is not in sincerity, or sentiment, or service, or sacrament, but in the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. It is gloriously simply, simply glorious: *“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved”* (Acts 16:31). It is so simple that some will miss it. Not so high that few get up to it—it is so simple that few get down to it. Believe it, number one, and be saved.

B. That You Can Believe It and Be Strengthened

Now listen, number two—and this is very important: Believe it, not only, and be saved, but believe it and be strengthened. Now look, if you will, in verse 2: Paul says, *“By which...ye are saved”* (1 Corinthians 15:2). Now, that is present tense, and what it literally means is, “You are being saved.” Now, salvation comes in different tenses: I have been saved from the penalty and the pollution of sin; I am being saved day by day from the power of sin. Remember what I told you—that He rose to give Himself to us because He has given Himself for us. Day by day, Jesus Christ is saving me.

I was thinking about it as I prepared this message—many years ago, way more than a half a century ago, as a teen, I prayed and asked the Lord Jesus Christ to come into my heart and into my life. I know that I know, as surely as I’m standing here, I would never have made it—never—had it not been for the gospel of Jesus Christ that not only had saved me but has strengthened me. And, I am being saved day by day. Salvation is a crisis when you trust Christ, but it is a crisis that is followed by a process, as He pours His life into you day by day. Those of you who are saying, “Well, I’d like to be saved, but I’m afraid I can’t live it”—you can’t live it. I can’t live it. Nobody has ever lived the Christian life but Jesus Christ. And, He will live it in you and through you, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God. If you trust Jesus Christ, He will come into your heart. He will give you a new nature. Listen—believe it and be saved; believe it and be strengthened.

C. That You Can Believe It and Be Secured

And, listen—believe it and be secured. Notice again—look, if you will, in verse 1: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand”*—*“wherein ye stand”* (1 Corinthians 15:1). Here’s the glorious thing about the gospel. Isn’t it great that we can be saved? Say, “Amen.” Isn’t it better that we can be saved and know it? Say, “Amen.” But now, listen—it is thrice wonderful that we can be saved, and know that we’re saved, and know that we can never, ever lose it. We stand in the gospel.

Friend, I stand amazed and I stand assured because of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. People say, “Well, you know, if you’re living faithfully, when you die, you’re going to Heaven.” I wouldn’t trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to Heaven, much less some of my bad ones. I am secured by the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I stand amazed, I stand assured, I stand secured by the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He has me in His hand. Somebody says, “Well, what if you slip through His fingers?” I’m one of the fingers. I’m in His Body. For me to perish, a part of Christ would have to perish. Friend, it is impossible for a twice-born child of God ever again to be a lost soul. That, friend, is the saving intent of the gospel. We’ve talked about the content and the intent.

III. The Extent of the Gospel

Now finally, let’s talk about the extent of the gospel—the extent of the gospel. Look again in chapter 15 and verse 1: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand”* (1 Corinthians 15:1). Paul was talking to the church at Corinth, and he said to these people at Corinth, “I have preached the gospel to you.” But, everywhere he went he preached the gospel. What is the extent of the gospel?

A. It Extends to Every Person

Number one: It extends to every person. I’ve already mentioned this several Sundays ago, but the gospel is for all. Don’t ever believe that God does not want to save all. He wants to save all. There is a “whosoever” in the Bible. It extends to every person—red, yellow, black, white, young, and old. There is nobody—nobody—that God cannot save and will not save who will repent of his or her sin. You say, “Well, what if a person has committed the unpardonable sin?” Well, then they won’t repent. Anybody who wants to be saved can be saved. There are some here who think, “Well, you know, maybe I’ve committed the unpardonable sin.” Let me ask you this question: You want to be saved? Come on. “Whosoever will may come.” Anybody who wants to be saved can be saved. It extends to every person.

B. It Extends to Every Place

It extends to every place. There's no special place that you have to be saved. You don't have to be saved in the front of a church. You can be saved on a street corner. You can be saved in a submarine. You can be saved in an airplane.

You know, there are some people who want to add to the gospel of Jesus Christ. They say, "In order to be saved, you have to believe on Jesus and then you have to be baptized. And, if you're not baptized, then you're not saved." Now, I believe in baptism so much that I'm called a Baptist. Somebody said, "You're in the King's army." I said, "No, I'm in the King's navy." I believe in baptism. But, baptism, whether a spoonful or a tank-full, can't save. If you make baptism necessary to salvation, you take the "whosoever" out of the Bible. Did you know that?

I was on an airplane riding along with a man. He was a member of a denomination who believes you have to be baptized in order to be saved. He was a very kind man. We had a wonderful conversation. We were discussing the Bible. I knew what he believed, so I asked him a question—I said, "Do you ever share your faith?" He said, "Yes, I do." I said, "Well, let's imagine that I'm sitting next to you. I'm a businessman. I've heard about Jesus Christ, but I'm not a Christian. I've been cheating on my wife, cheating on my expense account, taking God's name in vain. And, I'm on this airplane with you, and the pilot comes on the intercom and says, 'Ladies and gentlemen, I don't want to alarm you, but I have some very serious and grave news for you: We have lost power. We're over the mountains. There's no way that I can set this craft down gently. We're going to crash and burn, and we're in a glide pattern. We have about five minutes in the air before we hit the ground.'" I said, "Now, let's just suppose that happened. I'm sitting next to you."

Now remember, he believes you have to be baptized in order to be saved. "And, I say to him, 'Sir, are you a Christian?' And, you say, 'Yes.' Then, I say to you, 'I'm not a Christian. I'm lost.' And, I tell you about my sinful life, but I don't want to die and go to Hell: 'Sir, would you tell me how to be saved?'" He said, "Well, well, there are certain things you have to do." I said, "Well, tell me. Now, we've only got two-and-a-half minutes." He said, "Well." He said, "I wouldn't have a message for you." Now, you think about it. Is that not sad? "I would not have a message for you." Why? Because if baptism is necessary, I can't get baptized on that airplane. Friend, if baptism is necessary to salvation, a man in the desert can't be saved, a man in a submarine can't be saved, a man where there's no water can't be saved—I don't care where he is. So, you have to take the "whosoever" out of the Bible and say, "Whosoever would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and is fortunate enough to be near water, and is fortunate enough to have a preacher there to baptize him"—and some would say, "of my denomination"—"will be saved." Do you see what that does? It emasculates the gospel.

It takes the good news out of the gospel.

I am so everlastingly glad that I can say to anybody, anyplace, “*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and [you’ll] be saved*”—“*[you’ll] be saved*” (Acts 16:31). Why? Because it is totally, completely by grace. Listen, friend—it is the saving gospel. Believe it and be saved. Believe it and be strengthened. Believe it and be secure. It extends to every person. It extends to every place.

C. It Extends to Every Problem

And, it extends to every problem. When you take all of the air out of everything, when you step back and analyze life and you ask yourself what is it all about, there’s only one thing that really, ultimately matters—and that’s your relationship with God. There’s only one truth that has the answer to man’s three major problems (sin, sorrow, and death). There’s no other message that has an answer to sin, sorrow, and death but the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;

Buried, He carried my sins far away; Rising, He justified freely forever.

One day He’s coming—glorious day! (author unknown).

And friend, that is the gospel truth. That’s the gospel. Amen. That’s what *The Passion* is about: it is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, “[I’m] not ashamed of the gospel of Christ...it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that [believes]” (Romans 1:16).

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? And, if you’ve not yet believed and received, would you do it? And, if you will, I promise you on the authority of the Word of God, He will save you. I’m not saying that you’re going to sprout wings and get a halo. I’m not saying that you’re automatically going to have just incredible feelings—you may or you may not. Your emotions don’t have that much to do with it. It may show up in your emotions, but your emotions cannot measure it and your emotions do not prove it. It is the Word of God that you must trust—the promises of God that are *yea and amen*. And, if you want to be saved, I want you, right now, to give your heart to Jesus. And, I’m going to guide you in a prayer.

I want you to pray this prayer: “Dear God”—pray it sincerely—“Dear God, I’m a sinner, and I’m lost. And, sin is a debt I cannot pay. Sin is a defilement. It’s in my heart—I know it. Sin has dominion over me. I need deliverance from sin’s debt, and sin’s defilement, and sin’s dominion. Jesus, by Your death, burial, and resurrection, You, dear Lord, are able and willing to save me. And, right now, in this chair, in this auditorium, on this Sunday night, I receive You right now. Right now, this moment, I

receive You into my heart as my Lord and Savior. Come into my life. Forgive my sin. Thank You for paying my sin debt. Lord, cleanse me from the defilement of sin. Sin has defiled me. And Lord, deliver me from the power of sin and the dominion of sin. I trust You to do it right now. Thank You for doing it. Thank You, Jesus. I don't look for a sign. I don't ask for a feeling. I stand on Your Word. You cannot lie. You're now my Lord and my Savior, my God and my Friend forever. And, Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You and I will not be ashamed of You. Lord, I will make this public because You died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Now, look up here. We're going to sing an invitational hymn. Ministers of our church will stand at the head of each of these aisles to be welcoming those of you who'll be coming forward. And, precious friend, if you prayed that prayer with me—or, maybe at your kitchen sink, or maybe by your bed, maybe in your office, maybe driving your automobile, you prayed that same kind of a prayer—but you've not made it public yet, you owe it to Jesus—you owe it to yourself—to make it public. And, I'm going to invite you to do something tonight I think will be a blessing to you—to come openly and publicly before the family of God. Coming forward is your way of saying, "Look, I believe in the same Jesus you believe in. I've trusted Him as my Lord and Savior, and I'm coming to make it known." There's something about a public profession of faith that helps settle it and seal it, to shame to devil, to give glory to God, to give assurance in your heart.

So, what we're going to do—we're going to sing; and if you prayed that prayer—maybe tonight or maybe prior to this—but you've never acknowledged Christ openly, I want you to do it. You say, "Pastor, I don't know how to do that. What would I do?" Well, when you come forward, you just say to the minister, "I am trusting Jesus." What we will do is rejoice, give you some scriptures to stand on, answer any questions we can answer, and seal it in a prayer of thanksgiving with you. It'll take just a few moments. You'll be glad you did. Every child of God—every one—ought to make an open profession of his or her faith in Jesus like that, somehow, somewhere.

Then, there are others of you who need a church home. You're saved and you know it. You come to Bellevue. You're here on Sunday night. This is where God speaks to your heart. We're not just looking for more members, as such. This is a church, not a club. We're looking for brothers and sisters in Christ. We want to minister to you. We want you to minister alongside of us. If you need the fellowship of a local church—and everybody needs one. If not this one, one somewhere—I invite you to leave your seat, and come forward, and tell the minister, "I want to place my membership here." And, he'll tell you how you may become a member of this church. And oh, we would love to have you be a part of the Bellevue family of God, so you can say, "My church, my pastor, what *we're* doing," not "what *they're* doing." You need to belong.

There may be others of you tonight—when you saw this man baptized tonight, you said, “You know, that’s what I need: I need believer’s baptism.” Maybe you’ve been baptized by immersion but you weren’t saved; that’s like having your funeral before you die. And, you want now believer’s baptism. Or, maybe you were baptized some other method, but you want to be baptized as Jesus was, by immersion. You may come forward and say, “I want to make an appointment for my baptism.”

Some are coming, saying, “I’m trusting Jesus.” Others are coming, saying, “I want to place my membership here.” Others are coming, saying, “I want to be baptized and make an appointment for my baptism.”

Father God, I pray that You’ll just open the hearts of many during this invitation and that they might believe and receive the gospel and stand on it. In Jesus’ name. Amen. Step out and come.

Good News

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 07, 1996

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1–6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Annunciation of the Good News
 - A. The Penalty of Sin Has Been Removed
 - B. The Pollution of Sin Has Been Removed
 - C. The Power of Sin Has Been Removed
- II. The Anticipation of the Good News
 1. He Would Be Forsaken by His Followers
 2. He Would Be Falsely Accused
 3. He Would Be Abused and Beaten
 4. He Would Not Retaliate
 5. He Would Be Executed with Lawbreakers
 6. He Would Be Crucified
 7. He Would Pray for His Executioners While Dying
 8. None of His Bones Would Be Broken
 9. He Would Be Pierced
 10. They Would Gamble for His Clothing
 11. He Would Rise from the Dead
- III. The Authentication of the Good News
- IV. The Appropriation of the Good News
 - A. Believe It, Receive It, and You'll Be Saved
 - A. Believe It, Receive It, and You'll Be Strengthened
 - B. Believe It, Receive It, and You'll Be Secured

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to find in God's Word, if you would, please, 1 Corinthians chapter 15; and immediately, you'll recognize that is the great chapter on the resurrection of Jesus Christ—both His and ours. The theme of the message this morning is “Good News”—“Good News.” Now, the word *gospel* literally means, “good news”; that's what the Greek word means. And, even our English word *gospel* comes from the Old English “good spell” or “spelling out good things.” And, the word *gospel*—“good news”—is found over 90 times in the New Testament. So, are you ready for some good news? I hope that you are, because I want to tell you, the best news—the best news this world has ever heard—came from a graveyard just outside Jerusalem. “He is not here. He is risen. He

is risen indeed!”

Now, good news is not good news unless there’s the possibility of bad news. It’s the negation of the bad news that makes the Good News the Good News. Let’s read and see what we’re talking about—verse 1: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the [good news]”—“the gospel”—“which I [have] preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins”—that’s the bad news—our sins—“according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–4). We’re going to stop our reading there, but we’re going to read just a little more in a moment.

But, it is the bad news—our sins—that makes the Good News—the gospel—such good news. You see, when there’s the possibility of bad news, the Good News is sweet to the ears. If you’ve ever been to the hospital, as I have been many times when people are going through surgery, and you wait in that waiting room and you wait for the surgeon to come out, it seems like it is forever. Then, he comes through those doors. Sometimes he’s taking off those gloves, and he looks at you sometimes. And, he says, “I’ve got some good news”—“I’ve got some good news.” You know what that feels like, when he says, “There’s good news”? And, when you’ve got good news, you want to share it.

I heard of a man who was walking down the hall of a hospital, and a perfect stranger came out of a hospital room. He had a chart that showed temperature on it. He walked out and found this stranger—perfect stranger. And, he said, “Look at that! Her temperature is coming down!” It must’ve been his wife; he was just so thrilled. He had good news; he wanted to share good news.” When I was in seminary, the president of our seminary was Dr. Roland Q. Level, many years ago. And, Dr. Level said one day the War Department called him and said, “Are you the minister to thus and such a lady?” He said, “Indeed, I am.” He said, “We sent that woman notification that her son died in action, but he has not died. We know where he is; he’s alive. She believes he’s dead. Would you go tell that woman that her son is not dead—he’s alive? Now, we could send somebody from the army, but we’re afraid we wouldn’t know just how to do it. You’re her pastor. Would you tell her?” Dr. Level said, “Can you imagine how I must’ve felt—to be able to have the privilege to walk up to that door, knock on that door, tell that woman, ‘Your son is not dead—he’s alive’”? Folks, when we have good news, we ought to tell it. Shouldn’t we? And, I’m telling you again that the best news—the best news—is the gospel of Jesus Christ. He is risen from the dead, and He lives in me.

Now, look again at verse 1: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also*

ye are saved, if ye keep [remembering] what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you—now, underscore this next phrase—“*first of all*” (1 Corinthians 15:1–3). Do you see it? “*First of all*” (1 Corinthians 15:3). Now, he doesn’t mean that’s the first thing that he said; he means that is the main thing—that is the primary thing. Before you can say anything else, you have got to say this. He’s talking about the primacy of the Good News. This comes before anything else. This is the main thing. And, as we’ve often heard, the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. And, any church that does not preach the gospel is not worthy of the real estate that it stands on. Now, I want you to notice with me today, as we look at this passage, four things, okay?

I. The Annunciation of the Good News

First of all, I want you to look at what I’m going to call the *annunciation of the good news*. I mean, Paul said, “I delivered it.” By the way, that’s what a preacher is—he’s a newsboy; he’s not an editor. He’s to deliver the news. And, Paul said, “I have delivered unto you that which first of all I received” (1 Corinthians 15:3).

A. The Penalty of Sin Has Been Removed

Now, what is the annunciation of this good news? Well, first of all, it means that the penalty of sin has been paid, and that’s good news, because, you see, sin must be punished. God never can, God never will, God never has overlooked sin. If God were to let sin go unpunished, He would topple from His throne of holiness. **They say in the courtroom that when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is condemned. If a judge knowingly, willingly lets a criminal go free, then the judge becomes a criminal. And so, God would become unholy if He didn’t punish sin. Sin must be punished.** But, Jesus Christ the Son of God took that punishment upon Himself. He was a virgin-born, sinless sacrifice—no sin in Him. “But, Him who knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God unto Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). So, He carried our sins to the cross; and on that cross, as we saw in the Passion Play, He bowed his head. And, before He died, He said, “Tetelestai. *‘It is finished’*” (John 19:30). And, that literally means, “paid in full.”

In Old Testament times under Roman law, a man would be adjudicated guilty, he would be put in a prison, and on that prison door would be written the crime that he had done and the punishment. And, it would be nailed to his prison door. When the man had done his time, when he was to be released from prison, they would write across that prison sentence the same word Jesus said from the cross: “Tetelestai,” which means, “paid in full.” They wrapped it up and gave it to him, and it means, “The penalty has been satisfied. Now, you can go. This is your certificate that the debt has been paid.”

When Jesus Christ died upon that cross, He bowed His head in agony and in blood, and he said, “It is paid—it is paid—in full.” Friend, that’s good news—that is good news. I have the certificate of debt that I have been saved from the penalty of sin. That’s wonderful news. I will not go to Hell; I will not be damned. *“There is therefore now no condemnation [for those who] are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). And folks, if you believe in Hell, if you know there’s an eternity, I want to tell you that the gospel is good news, because it deals with the penalty of sin.

B. The Pollution of Sin Has Been Removed

But, not only does it deal with the penalty of sin. Look at it again—look at it. It says here that *“Christ died for our sins”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). That is, “He paid the penalty.” But now, continue to read: *“And that he was buried”* (1 Corinthians 15:4). Do you know that the burial of Jesus is part of the gospel—that Jesus Christ was buried? What do you do with a corpse? You put it out of the way; you put it in the grave, because, you see, Jesus—Jesus—not only dealt with the penalty of sin—He dealt with the pollution of sin. I mean, He carried the old person that we used to be and buried the old person with its sinful nature and all of that greed, and filth, and debauchery, and pollution. That has been buried with Christ in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. And, bless God, we don’t have to be haunted by the ghost of guilt. We have had not only the penalty of sin removed, but all the pollution of sin is taken away.

You see, if He just simply forgave me without cleansing me, my salvation is kind of weak. If you want to steal ten dollars from me and say, “Pastor Rogers, I stole ten dollars from you. Here’s the ten dollars. I’m sorry. Will you forgive me?” I can forgive you, but I couldn’t cleanse you. You’d still be a thief—still be a thief. But, you see, that’s the reason we love that song:

Be of sin the double cure;

Save from wrath and make me pure (Augustus M. Toplady).

You see the pollution of sin. We were buried with Christ—the old nature put in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, buried. The tomb is sealed, gone, buried. *“As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us”* (Psalm 103:12). Isn’t that wonderful?

I’m telling you, folks, that is good news. And, by the way, that’s what baptism pictures. The Bible says in Romans chapter 6, verse 4: *“we are buried with him by baptism unto death”* (Romans 6:4). The old person is gone, buried. That baptistery is a liquid tomb. The devil comes looking for Adrian, and the devil says, “Adrian is going to spend eternity in Hell.” No, because Jesus took the penalty. “Well, I’m still going to torment him about his wicked life.” You can’t do that—he’s dead. “Well, where’s the body?” You can’t find it—it’s buried; it’s gone. You can’t torment me about the penalty of

sin or the pollution of sin.

C. The Power of Sin Has Been Removed

But now, wait a minute. That's good news, but that's not all the good news. Jesus died—He dealt with the penalty of sin. He was buried—He dealt with the pollution of sin. But now, watch it. Go back and look again at the Word of God: *“that he was buried [for us full], and that he rose again”* (1 Corinthians 15:4). Jesus came out of that grave. You know what that deals with? The power of sin—the power of sin. You see, Jesus gave Himself for me, that He might give Himself to me. Jesus did not merely say, “Now the penalty of sin is gone, and the pollution of sin is gone. Now I'll give you a fresh start. It's up to you. You've got to do it from now on.” No, no, no, no. He gave Himself for me. Now, He gave Himself to me, and the life I now live I live by the face of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. And, we have resurrection life within us. The power of Jesus Christ is in us today because He lives—Jesus lives—within our hearts in the power of the resurrection. I love that.

You see, how do we know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? How do we know? How do we know He's not just another religious teacher? Well, the Bible tells us in Romans chapter 1, verse 4: *“[He's shown] to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4). Now, notice that phrase—*“the Son of God with power”* (Romans 1:4). Now, we have both the proof and the power of the resurrection. *“[He's shown] to be the Son of God with power”* (Romans 1:4). The resurrection was God's stamp of approval upon Him. He was not just some lunatic. He was not just some crazy person saying, *“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father”* (John 14:9). When God raised Him from the dead, that is proof positive He was absolutely, totally who He said that He was.

Now, I want you to... Let's have a little study in grammar, okay? Look at it—look in verse 3: the Bible says, *“How that Christ died for our sins”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). That's, in the Greek language, the aorist tense. Now, you say, “What does that mean?” It means, “It's done. It's finished once for all. It's done. That's it.” Now, He died (1 Corinthians 15:3)—that's aorist tense. And, *“he was buried”* (1 Corinthians 15:4). You see that? That's aorist tense. That is, “Once for all, it's done. It's finished. That's it.” He died. He was buried. But now, watch—*“and...he rose again the third day”* (1 Corinthians 15:4). That's not aorist; that's present tense. Now, what does that mean? Well, He is alive. He was alive. He always will be alive. There is never a time when He's not alive. You see, He's dead—that's finished. He's buried—that's finished. But, He rose—that is never finished—that's never finished.

I mean, if you refuse the Lord Jesus Christ now and walk out of this place an unsaved person without Christ in your heart, don't think that you're done with Christ.

You die, you'll be put in the grave, and then you will be raised in the resurrection of the just. And there, sitting—resurrection of the damned, rather—and there, sitting on the throne, is the Jesus Christ that you rejected. He is Lord. He is risen from the dead, and He is Lord. Now folks, if you're saved, that is good news, because it's dealt with the penalty of your sin, it's dealt with the pollution of your sin, and it has dealt with the power of your sin. And, I'm here to tell you, by testimony, by the Word of God, that sin has no power, that Satan has no temptation, the flesh has no allurements that the child of God cannot overcome in the power of the risen Christ. Amen? Amen. Hey folks, that's good news—that is good news! Paul said, "This is the gospel that I have 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). That is good news.

II. The Anticipation of the Good News

Now, I want you to notice something else: not only the annunciation of the Good News but the anticipation of the Good News. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: he says, "*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins*"—"Christ died for our sins"—now, notice the last part of this. Look at it; it's a blessing. Look—"according to the scriptures"—do you see that?—"according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Now, what scriptures was he talking about? Well, the New Testament had not yet been written. Did you know that the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ is in the Old Testament? That's what the Bible says—"that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Now, the scriptures affirm the resurrection, and the resurrection affirms the scriptures. For centuries, men who have understood the scriptures had been anticipating the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, because it was foretold. Now, that'd be a great blessing, if you understand that.

Now, who knows—who knows—the future? Do these silly people who follow the horoscopes? I hope you don't do that. You are so foolish if you do that. Do these people know the future? Of course not. The astrological magazines, and the soothsayers, and the prognosticators—that's such foolishness. The very best that they can give is an educated guess or something from demonic suggestion, but even the devil doesn't know the future. Put this verse down—in Isaiah 46, verses 9 through 10: "*Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me*"—now listen, here God gives His credentials—"Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done" (Isaiah 46:9–10). Only God can tell in ancient times the things that are not yet done.

Did you know—listen to me. We're talking about Christ dying for our sins, according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3)—did you know there are over 300 prophecies in

the Old Testament that relate to the Lord Jesus Christ? Over 300. Now, if you were to take one of these prophecies by themselves, maybe you could say, “That’s happenstance.” But, when you weave them together, they make a cord that cannot be broken.

Now, I want us to take some prophecies. Let’s just narrow it down. Are you ready to do this? Let’s just narrow it down and not take all of the prophecies concerning Jesus, but let’s just take the prophecies on things we’re dealing with today—dealing with his death, burial, and resurrection. Now, the Bible says that Christ died for our sins—that He was buried and that He rose again, according to the scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3). Now, is that really according to the Old Testament? Are you ready for a blessing? Get out a pen. Jot these scriptures down, if you want to.

1. He Would Be Forsaken by His Followers

For example, in the Old Testament, the Bible says that He would be forsaken by His followers. Zechariah 13, verse 7: “[Strike] the shepherd, and the sheep [will] be scattered” (Zechariah 13:7). Was that fulfilled? Mark 14, verse 50: “Everyone deserted him and fled” (Mark 14:50).

2. He Would Be Falsely Accused

Next prophecy—He would be falsely accused. Psalm 35, verse 11: “Ruthless witnesses came forward” (Psalm 35:11). Matthew 26, verse 60 shows the fulfillment: “Many false witnesses came [forward]” (Matthew 26:60).

3. He Would Be Abused and Beaten

That he would be abused and beaten—Isaiah chapter 50, verse 6: “I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting” (Isaiah 50:6). That’s Isaiah 50. Was that fulfilled? Listen to Matthew 26, verses 67 and 68: “Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?” (Matthew 26:67–68). Incredible fulfillment.

4. He Would Not Retaliate

And then, the Bible prophesied in the Old Testament that when they did this to Him, He would not retaliate—Isaiah 53, verse 7: “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). Was that fulfilled? Matthew 27, verse 14: “And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly” (Matthew 27:14). Indeed, it was fulfilled.

5. He Would Be Executed with Lawbreakers

The Bible prophesied in the Old Testament that when He was put to death, He would be executed with lawbreakers—Isaiah 53, verse 12: “he was numbered with the

transgressors; and he bare the sin of many” (Isaiah 53:12). That’s what the Bible said in prophecy. In the New Testament, in Matthew chapter 27 and verse 38: *“Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left”* (Matthew 27:38)—marvelous fulfillment of scripture.

6. He Would Be Crucified

The Bible prophesied that He would be crucified 800 years before He was born—before crucifixion was even known as a form of capital punishment, never carried out by the Jews. And yet, the Bible says in Psalm 22, verse 16: *“the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet”* (Psalm 22:16). Was that fulfilled? Luke chapter 23, verse 33: *“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him”* (Luke 23:33).

7. He Would Pray for His Executioners While Dying

The Bible also prophesied that when He was dying, He would pray for His executioners—Isaiah 53, verse 12: *“and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors”* (Isaiah 53:12). Was that fulfilled? Luke chapter 23, verse 34: *“Then said Jesus, Father forgive them; for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34).

8. None of His Bones Would Be Broken

The Bible taught in the Old Testament that none of Messiah’s bones would be broken—Psalm 34 and verse 20: *“He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken”* (Psalm 34:20). And, in the New Testament, we read in John 19, verse 33: *“But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs”* (John 19:33).

9. He Would Be Pierced

The Bible prophesied that He would be pierced—in Zechariah chapter 12 and verse 10: *“and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced”* (Zechariah 12:10). And then, we read in John 19, verse 34, in the New Testament: *“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water”* (John 19:34).

10. They Would Gamble for His Clothing

We read in the Old Testament that they would gamble for His clothing—Psalm 22, verse 18: *“[And] they part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture”* (Psalm 22:18). But, we read in John 19, verses 23 and 24, that’s just what they did: *“Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from [top to bottom]. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it [might] be”* (John 19:23–24). The Old Testament said, “They cast lots for my vesture” (Psalm 22:18), and these cruel Roman soldiers fulfilled the scriptures.

11. He Would Rise from the Dead

The Old Testament said that He would rise from the dead. Where did it say that? In Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 10: *“it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin”*—that is, “He’ll be killed.” And yet, the Bible goes on to say—*“he shall see his seed [as descendants], he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand”* (Isaiah 53:10). On the one hand, it speaks of His death. On the other, it speaks of His days as never ending. Was that fulfilled? Mark 16, verse 6: *“Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here”* (Mark 16:6). Oh folks, we’re just talking about prophecies that deal with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. I said over 300; I’ve just taken a handful. I’ve just narrowed the scope. I’ve showed you in the Old Testament the fulfillment in the New Testament.

Now folks, I want to remind you that most of these prophecies were not fulfilled by Jesus’ friends but fulfilled by His enemies—those who had the most to lose. Was this happenstance? Listen, if you were to take only eight—only eight—of the 300 prophecies that I have mentioned—and I didn’t mention—read—all 300—but just take eight of the prophecies concerning the Lord Jesus, and ask yourself what is the mathematical possibility that these could’ve been achieved by chance...

Dr. Peter Stoner is a statistician—a mathematician—and he’s done some work on this, and I want to tell you what he said. Now, get ready for a blessing. He said, “If you just took eight of these prophecies and asked yourself, ‘What is the chance that they would all be fulfilled in one person?’” He says, “The chance is one in a sextillion.” Now, do you know what a sextillion is? That’s a ten with 21 zeroes after it. Now, he said, “That’s the chance that just the prophecies could’ve been fulfilled by mere chance.” Now, here’s the way that he described it: he said, “If you were to take a space that,” he would say, “is 80,000 square miles. Now, not just a square mile—a square mile would be a mile this way, a mile this way, and a mile this way—but take 80,000 square miles. Then,” he said, “pack them with dimes, a ten-cent piece, stacked very close, edge to edge—80,000 square miles. Then, he said blindfold a man, mix all of those dimes, and let him go in there and find the right dime—the one that is marked.” He said, “That’s the mathematical possibility that just eight of these scriptures could be fulfilled by chance—not all of them.” And then, he said, “If you were take and add 31 more, then you would get the mathematical possibility of ten followed by 180 zeroes.” Oh, but what kind of a number is that? Well, that’s not a sextillion; there’s not a number in our language for that. And, that would not be all of these prophecies. We’re talking about—we’re talking about—300 prophecies. *“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3).

III. The Authentication of the Good News

There was the annunciation of the Good News—Paul said, “I delivered it.” There was the anticipation of the Good News—the Bible has prophesied it all of this time. What a confirmation of the Word of God! What a confirmation of the Son of God! Now, let’s go on. Here’s the third thing I want you to see—not only the annunciation of it, not only the anticipation of it, but the authentication of it. Notice, how the scripture goes on to say in verse 5: “*And that he was seen of Cephas*”—that’s Peter—“*then of the twelve*”—that’s the apostles—“*[And] after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some [have] fallen asleep*” (1 Corinthians 15:5–6).

Now, you talk about evidence to authenticate something! Listen, this thing was not done in a corner. It is an established fact; it is settled proof. Don’t tell me that these people were hallucinating. You don’t have 500 people hallucinating about the same thing at one time. It was not an hallucination.

Don’t get the idea that these people were lying. Why would they lie? Would they lie so that they would be tortured? Would they lie so that they would be put to death? *Friend, martyrs and hypocrites are not made out of the same stuff. A man may willingly live for a lie, but he will not knowingly die for a lie.* People lie to get out of trouble, not to get into trouble. But, these folks—they were no longer afraid of death, because they knew that He came out of the grave. Oh, the authentication of the gospel of Jesus Christ!

Dr. Simon Greenleaf was an outstanding Harvard professor. He died in 1853. He did a work called the “Treatise of the Law of Evidence.” Lawyers still study that; it’s considered to be the greatest work of its kind on the law of evidence that you would use in the court. Here’s what—here’s what—Dr. Simon Greenleaf said of the resurrection—I quote: “It was impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truth they have narrated had not Jesus actually risen from the dead and had they not actually known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.” And, that’s Dr. Simon Greenleaf, Harvard professor, eminent jurist.

IV. The Appropriation of the Good News

Now, here’s the fourth and final thing I want you to see. I have talked to you about the annunciation of the Good News. What it is—Christ died for our sins, He was buried, He was raised again. It deals—He deals—with the penalty, He deals with the pollution, He deals with the power of sin. I have talked to you about the anticipation of it—how He did it according to the scriptures, how the Old Testament prophecies are so wonderfully fulfilled in the New Testament. I have talked to you about the authentication of it—that He is shown to be the Son of God with power by, what the Bible calls, “*many infallible*

proofs” (Acts 1:3). Now, let’s come to the final thing and talk about the appropriation of it. How does this fit you? I mean, what does this have to do with you? Are we just going to come here today and say, “He is risen,” and go back home and not be changed? How do we appropriate this? How do we get it into our lives? Well, look in verses 1 and 2 again: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I [have] preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if [you] keep [remembering] what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–2).

A. Believe It, Receive It, and You’ll Be Saved

Now, how do you appropriate this? What happens? Well listen, he’s talking about believing and receiving. If you read it carefully, he says in verse 1: *“I’ve preached...which also ye have received”*—and then, in verse 2—*“unless ye have believed in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–2). Now, believe it, receive it, and you’ll be saved. That’s what he’s saying. It says here that you’re saved by this gospel in verse 2 (1 Corinthians 15:2). Do you see it? There’s no other way to be saved. If there’d been another way, God would’ve taken it. God never would’ve let His darling Son die in agony and blood upon that cross if there was some other way. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul says in Romans chapter 1, verse 16: *“I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation”* (Romans 1:16).

There is no other way. You aren’t going to be saved by sincerity. You’re not going to be saved by sentiment. You’re not going to be saved by service. You’re not going to be saved by sacrament. You’re going to be saved by the precious blood of Jesus, or you won’t be saved. I mean, it’s the gospel that saves. You say, “Well, I have my own way.” Well, the Bible says, *“There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death”* (Proverbs 16:25). And, God has told me to tell you that you’re going to be saved by Jesus or you’re going to die and go to Hell. You say, “That’s pretty blunt, Pastor.” Yes, it is. And, I wouldn’t be loving if I didn’t tell you that. There is no other way to be saved. *“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved [than the precious name of Jesus]”* (Acts 4:12). It is the gospel that saves. Believe it, receive it, and you’ll be saved.

A. Believe It, Receive It, and You’ll Be Strengthened

Now secondly, believe it, receive it, and you’ll be strengthened. Now, notice also verse 2: the Bible says, *“[Wherein] ye are saved”* (1 Corinthians 15:2). Now, that’s in the present tense—that’s in the present tense. It literally means, “wherein you are being saved—being saved.” You see, salvation is past tense: “I have been saved from the penalty of sin.” Present tense—“I’m being saved from the power of sin.” Future tense—

“I will be saved from the very presence of sin.” I have been saved from the penalty of sin. I am being saved from the power of sin. I will be saved from the presence of sin. And, this verse right here says, “You are being saved” (1 Corinthians 15:2). Now, why is that important? Because, friend, God’s not finished with us yet. You might look at me—you say, “Well, Adrian, you say you’re saved, but you don’t look so saved.” Well, you don’t look so good, either.

Now, let me tell you something—let me tell you something: God’s not finished with us—God is not finished with us. He’s not finished what He’s started. The Bible says in Philippians chapter 1, verse 6: *“Being confident of this very thing, that he [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 1:6). God is making us more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. Believe It, Receive It, and You’ll Be Secured

And so, listen, how do you appropriate it? Believe it—believe it and be saved, believe it and be strengthened. But, here’s something else: believe it and be secured. Look in verse 1: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I [have] preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand”* (1 Corinthians 15:1). The Bible says, *“God is able to make [you] stand”* (Romans 14:4).

You see, look, listen to me, folks—I’m talking to you about good news. It is good news that you can be saved, amen? There’s better news that you can be saved and know it. And, you ought to know it. If you could have it and not know it, you could lose it and not miss it. But folks, listen—if you have it, you ought to know it. And then, you can’t lose it, because he says this—look, look—he says, “It’s good news you can be saved. It’s better news that you can be saved and know that you’re saved. But, it is incredibly good news to know that once you’re saved, you can never lose it.” And, you say, “Pastor, if that is true, that is good news!” Well, it is true—it is true.

You see, we don’t keep Him; He keeps us. We are saved and kept by the grace of God. Look over in verse 10: Paul says, *“By the grace of God I am what I am”* (1 Corinthians 15:10). You’re not... If you’re saved by grace, you’re kept by grace. People say, “Well, what if you...what if you sin after you get saved?” Did I hear you say, “What if?” Maybe you don’t understand what sin is? *“To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin”* (James 4:17). The fault of foolishness is sin. *“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin”* (Romans 14:23). I wouldn’t trust the best 15 minutes I ever lived to get me to Heaven, much less some of my bad ones.

Friend, listen—believe it, receive it, and be saved. Believe it, receive it, and be strengthened. Believe it, receive it, and be secure. It’s all in the Lord Jesus Christ. Folks, what I’ve been trying to tell you is good news—it is good news. It is the gospel. It is amazing grace. I stand amazed—I stand assured—because of the news that I have

been preaching about. You say, “Well, He’s got me in His hands. What if I slip through His fingers?” Folks, you’re one of the fingers. You are part of the Body of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

Now, I’m finished, but let me tell you this good news: friend, it extends to every person. Can you hear my voice? This is good news for you. It extends to every place. God will save you right where you are, right on that back row of the balcony, young person, right now, He’ll save you today—every person, every place, every problem. You say, “You don’t know what I’ve done, Pastor.” No, but I want to tell you this: that *“the blood of Jesus Christ [God’s] Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). *“Thou your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”* (Isaiah 1:18). That’s good news—that’s good news!

Friend, Jesus has met the enemy, and He has conquered him. He’s not behind us in the tomb; He’s above us on the throne and within our hearts—those of us who know Him. Can you imagine a little procession—a funeral procession—of caterpillars, and these caterpillars are mourning? They have on their shoulders a cocoon, and they’re going along weeping for the poor caterpillar that’s passed on. They’re carrying this cocoon; and up there, in the sunlight, with shimmering wings, is an incredibly beautiful creature looking down at that little procession of caterpillars trudging through the mud. They’re feeling sorry for him, and he’s looking down on them, saying, “Oh, one of these days—one of these days—you’ll be like him.” Do you have a loved one? Do you have a loved one that’s gone to Heaven? Friend, don’t mourn—don’t mourn. Christ has conquered the grave. I tell you, we don’t have to be afraid of death anymore. Jesus—has brought the best news this world has ever heard. The best news—the Good News—is this: He is not here; He is risen. Amen.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed—no one stirring. Folks, what do you do with good news? Well, you believe it if it’s true and rejoice in it, and you tell it to others. Do you want to be saved? Do you? Would you pray this prayer? Pray this prayer right now—praying, “God, I need to be saved”—pray it—“O God, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe You died for my sins on the cross and took the penalty of my sin. I believe You were buried and took away the pollution of my sin. I believe that You rose again and broke the back of sin and the power of sin with your resurrection. I believe it. And now, Lord, not only do I believe, but I receive”—would you tell Him that?—“I receive You, right now, Lord—I do. Come into my heart”—ask Him—“Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Forgive my sin. Cleanse me. Save me, Jesus”—pray it and mean it—“Save me, Jesus”—ask Him—“Save me, Lord Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Did you? Then, pray this way: “Thank You for saving me. And now, Lord Jesus, begin to make me the person You want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

The Guarantee of the Gospel

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 26, 1989

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1–7

Sponsored by: Sponsor

*“And that he was buried, and that he rose again
the third day according to the scriptures.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:4

Outline

Introduction

I. The Scriptural Prophecy of the Resurrection

II. The Settled Proof of the Resurrection

III. The Saving Power of the Resurrection

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and find 1 Corinthians chapter 15. That's beyond a doubt the greatest chapter in the Bible on the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our resurrection through Him. And I want you to begin reading in verse 1 with me, and we're going to read right on through verse 8. If you didn't bring a Bible, there in the pew rack before you most likely there is one. First Corinthians chapter 15 and verse 1. We'll wait just a moment until you have it. It's good to hear those pages flutter. That's music. That's like angel's wings. All right. “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. 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, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, and then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the great part remain until, unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. And after that he was seen of James and then of all of the apostles, and last of all, he was seen of me also as one born out of due time.” This morning, I've got bad news and good news. The bad news is that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. The good news is that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; that he was buried, and that he was raised again the third day. Life is short. Death is sure. Sin, the curse. Christ, the cure. The word *gospel* means “good news.” And the apostle Paul here in this passage

calls it the gospel. Over ninety times in the Bible this term *gospel* is used, and it means “good news.” The best news this world has ever heard came from a graveyard just outside the city walls in Jerusalem. “He is not here, He is risen from the dead.” And I want us to think about that good news this morning because that’s the best news the world has ever heard. Easter is not bunnies and baskets and bonnets and baked hams. Easter is not candy and clothes and corsages. Easter is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave. Now I want us to see something about this good news that I’m going to call today, “The Guarantee of the Gospel.” Now it’s the gospel that saves, but how do we know the gospel is true? What guarantee do we have? Well, the resurrection is the guarantee of the gospel. The Bible says He was raised again for our justification. If He’s still in the grave, your hope of heaven is not half a hallelujah. He was raised for our justification. The resurrection is the guarantee of the gospel. But what is the guarantee of the resurrection? I mean, how do we know the resurrection is true? Well, I want you to look with me at what the apostle Paul has to say here in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, the first eight verses.

I. The Scriptural Prophecy of the Resurrection

And the very first thing I want you to see is something very wonderful that I’m going to call the scriptural prophecy of the resurrection. You got that? **The scriptural prophecy of the resurrection.** Look in verse 3, the last part. It says, “...that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” Do you see that? Look in verse 4: “...he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.” Now what Scripture is he talking about, Old Testament or New Testament? Obviously, the Old Testament because the New Testament had not yet been written. He’s talking about the Old Testament Scripture. It is the Old Testament Scripture that foretold the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, by the way, only God can foretell the future, did you know that? There’s no fortune teller can foretell the future, no soothsayer. Put away those silly horoscopes and all of those astrological magazines and all of that. That is, not only is it foolish, it is wicked. Put it away. Only God knows the future. Isaiah chapter 46:9-10: “...I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done...” God says, “There’s no one but Me who can foretell the future.” A preacher met a fortune teller one day, and she said, “If you’ll cross my palm with silver, I’ll tell you what you’ll be doing tomorrow at this exact time.” He said, “I’ll double the price if you can tell me what I was doing yesterday at this same time.” They don’t know. Oh, dear friend, ah, at best it is an educated guess. But, you see, the Bible is prophecy. And one of the great proofs that we believe, ah, accurately and reasonably is fulfilled prophecy. Did you know that there over 300 direct prophecies concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ? I mean, the life, death,

burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ – over 300. You see, it's not incidental. It's not accidental. It didn't just happen, ah, by chance. God knew ahead of time. He died according to the Scriptures. He was raised according to the Scriptures. Now there's so many prophecies – certainly we wouldn't have time to deal with 300 – but let me just narrow it down to just about a dozen prophecies or less that deal with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, dear friend, if you just took one prophecy and said, "Look how it is fulfilled," that probably wouldn't prove very much. But if you take a number of prophecies, as I'm going to show you in a moment, and show how all of these prophecies are fulfilled, what they do, every strand of prophecy begins to make a cable that cannot be broken. For example, ah, the Bible says in Zechariah 13:7 that Jesus was going to be forsaken by His followers. That prophecy says, "Smite the shepherd and the sheep will, ah, flee." And then the Bible fulfilled that prophecy. Jesus fulfilled that prophecy in Mark 14:15. The Bible says, ah, verse 50 rather: "Everyone deserted Him and fled." An exact fulfillment of prophecy. In the Old Testament, it said that He was going to be wrongly accused. Psalm 35:11 tells how wicked, ah, and false witnesses would accuse Him. And then in Matthew 26 the Bible says many false witnesses came forward to accuse Him. In the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah shall, ah, prophesied how Messiah would be abused. Who would think of Messiah being abused? But Isaiah 50:6 speaks of the Lord Jesus saying, "I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard. I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting." Now that's what the Old Testament prophesied. In the New Testament, in Matthew 16 the Bible tells how they spat in His face, how they struck Him with their fists, how they slapped Him and said, "Prophecy and tell us who hit You," an exact fulfillment of, of Scripture. Isaiah goes on to prophesy that when this happens, Jesus would do retaliate. He would not speak back. The Bible says He was oppressed and afflicted, and yet He opened not His mouth (Isaiah 53:7). Matthew 27 tells us that Jesus stood before Pilate and He answered him not a word, so much that Pilate marveled, an exact fulfillment of this Scripture that Jesus did not answer those who reviled Him. Then the Bible said in the Old Testament that when He was, ah, ah, taken and arrested, that He would be counted as a criminal, that He would be numbered with the lawbreakers. Ah, the Bible says in Isaiah 53:12 He poured His life unto death and was numbered with the transgressors. And then in the New Testament in Matthew 27 the Bible says when Jesus was executed, there were two thieves crucified with Him, one on His right hand, the other on His left, an exact fulfillment of prophecy. The Bible prophesied in Psalm 22 that Jesus would be executed by crucifixion. Psalm 22:16: "...they pierced my hands and my feet." Listen to me, my friend. When this was written hundreds of years before Jesus was born, hundreds of years before the Roman Empire, hundreds of years before death by crucifixion was even known. Crucifixion was a

Roman form of execution, not Jewish. The Jews executed by stoning. But yet there in, in Psalm 22:16, "...they pierced my hands and my feet." Luke 23:33 tells how they crucified the Lord Jesus, put nails through His hands and through His feet, an exact fulfillment of prophecy. In the Old Testament, it said that Messiah would pray for His, ah, those who executed Him, those who put Him on the cross. Isaiah 53:12 says He made "...intercession for the transgressors." And then we read there in Luke 23:34 where He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." In the Old Testament it was prophesied of Messiah that not one bone in His body would be broken. Psalm 34:20 says this: "He protects all of His bones; not one of them will be broken." And then in John 19 the Bible describes how when that soldier came to hurry along the death of those on the cross, when he came to Jesus, he saw that He was already dead and didn't break His legs (John 19:33). In the Old Testament the Bible says that His body would be pierced. Zechariah 12:10 in the Old Testament says, "...they shall look upon me whom they have pierced..." Read that in context and it is, it is clear that it's talking about the Lord. I wonder what our Jewish friends do about this prophecy. They're going to look upon God whom they have pierced (Zechariah 12:10). And in John 19:34 it tells how that Roman soldier with a spear pierced the side of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In the Old Testament it was prophesied that they were going to gamble for Jesus' garments. Psalm 22:18: "They divide my garments among them, and cast lots for my clothing or for my vesture." And then you read in the New Testament in John 19:23 and following where the soldiers at the foot of the cross divided His garments into four parts and then cast lots for that one seamless robe. It is an amazing thing; a minutely fulfilled detail. And then, of course, they prophesied, the Old Testament prophet Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would rise from the dead. Isaiah 53:10. The Bible says, "And though the Lord makes His life a guilt offering (that is, though He is put to death), He will see his offspring, and prolong his days..." That is, He's going to die, and yet He's going to prolong His days. He'll live forever. And, of course, that prophecy is the prophecy that we're studying today. Jesus did rise from the dead. You see, listen, listen. It is so important. I cannot emphasize this enough, that He died and He rose according to the Scriptures. Now I have just read to you just a handful of prophecies out of, of more than 300 prophecies. Peter Stoner is a great mathematician, and here's what he has done. He has taken the prophecies and worked out the mathematical probability that these prophecies could have been fulfilled by chance apart from the direct, ah, hand of Almighty God. And so Peter, Peter Stoner just narrowed it down to eight prophecies, just took eight out of the hundreds, just took eight concerning Jesus. And he said, "What are the mathematical probabilities that these eight prophecies could have been fulfilled apart from the hand of God?" Do you want me to tell you what the mathematical probability is? My dear friend, it is one in a septillion. Now, of course, I know you know

exactly how much a septillion is. But let me tell you that a septillion is ten followed by twenty-one zeroes. So you just put a ten and just, just keep writing the zeroes out. One chance in that. And, and to help you to understand it even better, let's just imagine that you were to take some, ah, take some dimes, a stack of dimes, and, and stack them together edge to edge as tightly as you could get them. And let's say that you do this for eighty thousand cubit miles. You got a mental picture of that? Eighty thousand cubit miles of dimes, as close as they can get together. Now mark just one of those dimes and put it in there any place. Then take a blindfolded man and turn him loose. The probability that he would reach in and pull out the right dime – that's one in a septillion. Now that's, that's just eight of these prophecies. Peter Stoner, the mathematician, says, "If you were to go on and add thirty-one more of these prophecies," then he says, "that it would be ten following by a hundred and eighty zeroes." What is the name of that? Not a septillion. And there is no name for it because there's not a name in the dictionary, ah, for, for a number that big. And even then you would not have fulfilled all of these prophecies. You see, dear friend, prophecy confirms the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ confirms prophecy. You see, He died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And if all of the other prophecies were fulfilled so minutely concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, why not this prophecy? Somebody says, "Well, He just arranged to have the prophecies fulfilled." You mean, He arranged to be born in Bethlehem? He, he, he arranged to have Himself crucified? He arranged to rise again the third day? Don't you realize that most of these prophecies were not fulfilled by His friends but by His enemies, those who had the most to lose by their fulfillment? Oh no, dear friend.

II. The Settled Proof of the Resurrection

The very first thing I want you to see, as we talk about the guarantee of the gospel, is the scriptural prophecy of His resurrection, the scriptural prophecy. He rose again according to the Scriptures. Now on this side is the scriptural prophecy. Now let's step over here and we've got something else, **the settled proof**. Prophecy and proof. Now I want you to see what the apostle Paul is saying. Now look in verse 5. He begins to talk about the proof of the prophecy. And the Bible says, "And that he was seen (after His resurrection), he was seen of Cephas (that means Simon Peter), then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. And after that, he was seen of James; and then of all of the apostles. And last of all he was seen of my also, as one born out of due time." Now, my dear friend, you have no greater proof, no greater testimony than an eye witness. And the apostle Paul is talking now of eye witnesses of the resurrection; what the Bible calls in the book of Acts, "...many infallible proofs..."

Now there are people who have tried to explain away the resurrection. The fact of Jesus is an historical event. Even secular history has that. The crucifixion of Jesus is a historical event. Secular history doesn't doubt that. But, you see, that morning in, in, ah, Jerusalem there was an empty tomb. Nobody disputes that – an empty tomb. Now they're just trying to say, "How do we explain the empty tomb?" Well, at that day the, the Sadducees, the Pharisees, the high priest said, "Well, we've got to explain it some way, so I'll tell you what lets do. Let's pay the guards and let the guards testify that the disciples came and stole the body." And you can read about that in Matthew 28:12 where the Bible says they gave them a great deal of money and they said to them, "You go say that the disciples stole the body while you were asleep." Now let's just imagine. If, if they wanted really to put all of this to an end, all they'd have to do is just hold a trial and, and, and a court hearing, ah, to find out what happened to the body of Jesus. Let's just imagine there is a court hearing like this and, and the judge has the guards there and he has the disciples there. The guards say the disciples stole the body. And, first of all, the judge, he begins to talk to the guards. He says to the guards, "What happened to the body of Jesus while you were guarding the tomb?" And the guards say, "Well, while we were asleep the disciples of Jesus, ah, stole the body." The judge said, "Did I hear correctly? You said while you were asleep? You're charged, ah, by the, by the Emperor to guard the tomb and you're asleep? All of you asleep at one time?" Ah, "Yes, your honor." "You were all asleep? Now what is the penalty for sleeping on guard duty?" "Well, it's death." "Ah. And you were all asleep?" "Ah, yes, your honor." "Ah, does the Governor know about this?" "Well, we guess he does." "And you haven't been arrested yet?" "Well, no." "Well, why not?" Embarrassed silence. They don't answer. And he says, "Now let me get this correct. You say while you were asleep the disciples stole the body, is that right?" "Yea, yes, that's right." "Well, if you were asleep, how do you know what happened?" "Well, ah, ah, we, we, we don't know, your honor." "Guards, hold these men for perjury. We'll have a trial later on for them." "Disciples, do you know where the body of Jesus is?" "Oh yes, we know where the body of Jesus is." "Ah, have you seen the body?" "Oh yes, your honor." "All of you have se....?" "Oh yes, we've all seen Him." "Just you?" "Oh no, more than five hundred at one time have seen the body of Jesus." "Well, where is the body then?" "In heaven." "What do you mean in, it's in heaven?" "Well, you see, your honor, God raised Jesus from the dead. He appeared to others. He appeared to us. We've seen Him in various places. We have eaten with Him. We touched Him. He came and went. And then, one day, ten days before Pentecost, He left Jerusalem, walked through the valley of Kidron, up the Mount of Olives, and we stood there and we watched Him as He ascended into heaven." "He's in heaven." "Do you solemnly swear this is true?" "We solemnly swear. We are witnesses." Now, my dear friend, what happens in a court of law when you have that many witnesses? Now

in this center section here, right about here, there are about five hundred people. What would happen in a court of law if you had five hundred people to come in and all testify, "We are eye witnesses?" Now others say, "Well, they were hallucinating." Five hundred people hallucinating at one time and over and over again? Well, somebody says, "They were lying." They were lying? Peter saw Him. Was Peter lying? Do you know how tradition says that Peter died? He was crucified upside down. All he would have had to have done to get out of that mess is just say, "Hey, I was, it was a lie. I take it all back. I take it all back." How did, how did Paul die? He said, "Last of all he was seen of me..." Had his head taken off. How did Paul live? He suffered shipwreck, prison, fastings, beatings, stoning. Why, before, before the resurrection of Jesus, when he was as Pharisee, he was a, he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He was, had the finest education that people could offer. He had a triple PhD. He was on the Supreme Court, the Sanhedrin, the Jewish inner council. He was, he had it made. And now he lives a life of deprivation, and so forth. Now you tell me why is he telling this lie? Why is he telling this lie if it is not true? I mean, why were these disciples willing to die? It's not just the Bible that says they died. I mean, secular history says they died. Now you tell me why? Some folks will live for a lie, but very few will knowingly die for a lie. Isn't that right? Sure. Hey, I want to ask you a question. Will you be honest with me? Nod your head this way, first of all. Okay. Okay. Now I'm going to ask the question. Have you ever, from the time you were born to this moment, ever told a lie to try to get out of trouble? Good. Thank you. Now, now. You told a lie to try to get out of trouble. Listen, folks. People tell lies to get out of trouble, not to get into trouble. Listen. When these disciples said, "We have seen Him. He is alive," why did they do that? Because they knew He was. And death held no more terror for them. And there was no such thing as trouble, ultimately, because they knew in Christ they had the victory. They were no longer afraid to die. And as I've told you before, until a man is no longer afraid to die, he's never ready to live. And these disciples told, yes, ah, the eye witnesses. You see, listen, listen, friend. On the one hand there's the scriptural prophecy; on the other hand there is the settled proof, eye witnesses. Doctor Simon Greenleaf, a Harvard professor, wrote the definitive work on evidence in a court. His book is called, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*. It's considered the greatest work of its kind. And Dr. Greenleaf, after studying the record, was completely convinced of the apostles' testimony. And I want to quote verbatim what this Harvard professor said. And I quote, "It was impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they had narrated had not Jesus actually risen from the dead, and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact." That's not a Baptist preacher talking. That, that's Harvard professor. Lord Darling, who is the former Chief Justice of England, once said, and I quote, "There exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial

(listen) that no intelligent jury in the world would fail to bring a verdict that the resurrection story is true.” That’s the reason the Bible says in the book of Acts, “...many infallible proofs...” Now think about the resurrection. Over here, propping it up on this one side, is the scriptural prophecy. Over here on the other side is the settled proof. Over here the Bible says it’s going to happen. Over here eye witnesses said it happened.

III. The Saving Power of the Resurrection

Now let’s put those two together and come to the third thing. The scriptural prophecy. The settled, ah, proof. And now I want you to see **the saving power**. I want you to see the saving power of His resurrection. Now the Bible says here in 1 Corinthians 15:1: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel (that is, the good news) which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved...” Now I’m talking about the saving power. “By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain.” And when he says, “keep in memory,” that is, don’t change the gospel. We don’t need a new and a modern gospel for a new and a modern age. Brother, it is the old gospel. It doesn’t change. If you change it, then you’re going to believe in vain. You’re going to believe something vain. “For I delivered unto you first of all...” Do you see the word “first of all?” That doesn’t mean it’s the first thing I said when I opened my mouth. That may have been, but that isn’t what this verse means. What he means is, of prime importance. This is first of all. This is the main thing. And as you know, somebody has well said, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” Right? Now this is first of all the main thing. “I delivered unto you first of all how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” Now here, here, my friend, is the saving power of the resurrection. He died for our sins according to the Scriptures. That is, for the penalty of our sins. Our sins deserved Calvary. On that cross you should have been there. He took our place. Our iniquity was laid on Him. And Jesus carried our sins to the cross. God has, has made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, Jesus, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. He took our sins. He carried our sins to the cross. There in agony and blood He suffered, bled, and died, and He paid the full penalty for our sins. Somewhere not long ago, I read these words: He paid a debt He did not owe because I had a debt I could not pay. He paid a debt He did not owe because I had a debt I could not pay. Now, wait a minute. That’s just part of the good news. So He paid for our sins. So we’re not going to hell. That’s wonderful. Hey, but look. It gets better. Let’s continue to read. Now, now He died for our sins (verse 3). Now look in verse 4: “And that he was buried...” Now why is the burial of Jesus Christ a part of the gospel? Because what do you do with a dead corpse? You bury it. You put it out of sight. You put it under the

ground. You get rid of it because it will decay. You bury that. Now, you see, dear friend, not only did Jesus carry my sins to the cross and pay for them, but He also placed my sins in the grave of God's forgetfulness. He carried away my sins. You see, on the cross, that's, that's the penalty of sin. In the grave, that's the pollution of sin. It's not just enough that He paid your sin debt. He cleanses you. He cleanses you. He takes the pollution of that sin. Your sin is buried. It is gone. It is forgotten. You're not just pardoned; you're cleansed. Be of sin, the double cure. Save from wrath and make me pure. You see, now, wait a minute. But you're not finished yet. You're not finished yet. He died for my sins. That's the penalty of sin. He was buried. That's the pollution of sin. But now, watch it. He was raised. That's the power of sin. See, listen. He overcame sin. He was raised, the Bible says, the third day according to the Scriptures. Now why is this? My dear friend, even if He were to forgive me today, the penalty of sin, and cleanse me today, the pollution of sin, I still need something else, don't I? And so do you. I need something more than a new start. I need a new life, a new life. And so, you see, listen. He gave Himself for me in death and then He rose to give Himself to me. See, the apostle Paul says, "This is the gospel wherein you stand." *Living - He loved me, dying - He saved me, buried - He carried my sins far away; Rising - He justified, freely, forever: And one days He's coming - O glorious day!*

Conclusion

See, folks, that's the good news. Now you have the scriptural prophecy. You have the settled proof. And then you have the saving power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And, my friend, that's the gospel truth. It really is. Let's pray. Heads are bowed. Eyes are closed. No one stirring. No one looking around. I want you to get very quiet, because we're not just here this morning to put on a show. We're not here just to hear music. Friend, the gospel is the best news this world has ever known. And, ah, it's good news. And I want to share the good news. The good news is that if you will receive Christ, the Bible says you're saved if you believe. That's what this verse says – if you'll believe. Now to believe doesn't mean to give intellectual assent. It means to trust and commit. You can believe in your head that Jesus was raised from the dead and go to hell. You must commit your life to Him. The Bible word *believe* means trust and commit. And I want to help you to do that. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I want to talk to the members of this church. You may be a Baptist and not be saved. I want to talk to members of other denominations and faiths. You can be Jewish, Catholic, Presbyterian, Lutheran and not be saved. I want to tell you how to be saved today. Pray a prayer like this, mean it from your heart. 'Jesus, I believe You're the Son of God. I believe You died on the cross to pay my sin debt. I believe that God raised You from the dead, and I trust You now as my Savior. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Lord Jesus.'

Pray that. Say it and mean it. “Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me.” Then pray this prayer:
“Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. Give me the power to make this
public before others. In Your name I pray, amen.”

Easter's Good News

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 20, 2003

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1–8

Outline

Introduction

- I. This Good News Is Sacrificially Provided
 - A. The Bad News About Sin
 1. Sin Is a Debt
 2. Sin Is a Defilement
 3. Sin Is Dominion
 - B. The Good News About the Cross
 1. It Deals with the Full Payment of That Debt
 2. It Deals with the Defilement of Sin
 3. It Deals with the Dominion of Sin
- II. This Good News Was Scripturally Prophesied
- III. This Good News Is Solidly Proven
- IV. This Good News Is Savingly Powerful
 - A. Believe It, Receive It, and You Will Be Saved
 - B. Believe It, Receive It, and Be Strengthened
 - C. Believe It, Receive It, and Be Secured

Conclusion

Introduction

Praise the Lord! What a great truth! What sin? It's gone in the grave of God's forgetfulness, and that's what we're talking about tonight as we prepare our hearts to celebrate communion together. First Corinthians chapter 15—where you were this morning. We're going to look at the first four verses, and we're going to be talking about Easter's Good News. The best news this world has ever heard came from a graveyard just outside Jerusalem: *"He is not here...he is risen"* (Matthew 28:6).

So many people talk about the gospel, and they don't understand what the gospel is. Sometimes they will make a statement; they hope you will believe it. They'll say, "That is the gospel truth." Whether it is true or not is not the point. It's certainly not the gospel truth unless it includes what I'm about to say. Sometimes a preacher will get up and put on a pair of hobnailed boots and walk up and down people's spines; and after they are bloody and wounded, he'll pour salt in and he'll preach hellfire, judgment, and damnation. And, by the way, that needs to be preached. I'm not opposed to that at all. And, they'll walk out and say, "He really preached the gospel tonight." No, he didn't. The

gospel is good news. What he's been preaching is the bad news. Now, you have to have bad news to make good news good, so you have to preach the bad news. You have to preach about sin and judgment. All of these things need to be preached to get us ready for the good news. It's the bad news that makes the good news good.

For example, if I were to walk up to you tonight and say, "I've got wonderful news..." You say, "What is it?" I say, "Your house is not on fire." Well, I'm glad my house is not on fire, but I never really thought it was, so that's not such great news." But, suppose you got a phone call, and they said, "Your house is on fire. It's burning to the ground." And then, I come up, and I say, "I've got wonderful news: that's not your house. Your house is not on fire." It's the bad news that makes the good news good.

Now, the bad news, we're going to see... Look, if you will, right here in 1 Corinthians chapter 15: "*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the [Good News]*"—that's what the word *gospel* literally means: the "Good News"—"*the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all*"—that means "of primary important"—"*that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures*" (1 Corinthians 15:1–3). Now, underscore the phrase "*our sins*" (1 Corinthians 15:3). That's the bad news: we are sinners—as I've said this morning, sinners by birth, sinners by nature, sinners by choice, sinners by practice, sinners under condemnation. "*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). "*There is none...good, no, not one*" (Romans 3:12). "*The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die*" (Ezekiel 18:4). "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). "*Our sins*" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

How many people here tonight are sinners? Lift your hand. All right. That's all of us. If you didn't lift your hand tonight, you just added to your sins a little bit of pride and dishonesty. We've "*all...sinned, and come short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23). I'm not proud of it, and I really don't want to minimize it. Sin is dark, devilish, diabolical, destructive, deadly. It's bad news. Now, what is the good news that makes the bad news... What is the bad news that makes the good news good and obliterates the bad news? Well, it is the gospel of Jesus Christ. Now, let me say several things about this good news.

I. This Good News Is Sacrificially Provided

This good news is sacrificially provided. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: Paul said, "*For I delivered unto you first of all*"—that is, "of primary importance"—"*that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins*" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Jesus died for our sins. The Good news is sacrificially provided. Jesus died because of our sins, for our sins. It was our sins that were the nails that held Him to the cross. Our hard hearts were the

hammers that drove those nails into His quivering palms and feet. He died for our sin.

A. **The Bad News About Sin**

Now, let me tell you what the bad news about sin is.

1. **Sin Is a Debt**

Sin, first of all, is a debt. Heaven has sued us for damages, and we cannot pay.

2. **Sin Is a Defilement**

But, beyond sin being a debt, sin is a defilement. Sin is not only what we owe; it is what we are. We are sinners defiled by nature. We have a depraved heart. You have to understand that. Man is condemned not only for what he has done but for what he is. *If you saw a rabid dog foaming at the mouth, that dog would be destroyed not because of what he has done—he may have bitten no one—it is what he is capable of doing.* It is the sin that's in our heart. Sin is a debt. Sin is defilement.

3. **Sin Is Dominion**

And, sin is dominion. We become slaves of sin. All of us, without the Lord Jesus Christ, are in debt to God, defiled by sin, and dominated by Satan.

B. **The Good News About the Cross**

Now, what does the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ do?

1. **It Deals with the Full Payment of That Debt**

First of all, it deals with the full payment of that debt. When Jesus said on the cross, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30), that literally means “it is paid in full.” Jesus paid it all. The sin debt is blotted out by the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. **It Deals with the Defilement of Sin**

But, not only does He deal with the debt of sin—He deals with the defilement. Not only does He deliver us from sin's penalty, but He also delivers us from sin's pollution. That's the reason we sing that song:

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.

Now, listen to this line:

Be of sin the double cure;
Save from wrath and make me pure (Augustus M. Toplady).

A man was in prison. They told him he had a pardon. He could go free. The man didn't rejoice. They said, “Why don't you rejoice? You're pardoned.” He opened his sheet and showed a cancer eating away at his very chest. He said, “What can be done about this?” You see, even if he's pardoned from prison, if he has that defilement, if he has that sentence of death in his body... We all do—we all do—apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, Jesus not only by His sacrifice pays our sin debt, but Jesus deals

with our sin defilement.

3. It Deals with the Dominion of Sin

And then, Jesus deals with our sin dominion. Sin will no longer have dominion over us. Now, let's do a little word study here. Look at it again, if you will, here, and look in verse 3: "*Christ died for our sins*" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Now, in the Greek language, that literally means "once for all." It's what we call the *arias tense*. It is done; it is finished. It is over—period. "*[He] died for our sins*" (1 Corinthians 15:3)—that is, "once for all." He was buried. *Arias tense*—He's buried. That's it. Once for all—buried, *period*.

Now, notice, again, though at this Scripture here: "*And*"—verse 4—"*that he rose again the third day*" (1 Corinthians 15:4). That is not in the *arias tense*; that's in the present tense. Now, what it means is "He died—that's it. He was buried—that's it. He was raised—He still is raised, also will be raised." Well, what does that mean? It means you can never get rid of Jesus—you never get rid of Jesus. I mean, if you say, "Well, I'm not going to accept Him. I'll be rid of Him"—no, you'll die and rise in the Judgment, and there He'll be sitting on the throne. He's raised. He was raised; He is raised—always will be raised. He died—it's done. He's buried—it's done. He's raised, and He continues to be raised.

Now, what does that mean to me? That means that not only has He dealt with the debt of my sin, not only has He dealt with the defilement of my sin, but He has dealt with the dominion of sin. Jesus Christ gave Himself for me, that He might give Himself to me. And, there's One living in Adrian right now, and His name is Jesus. And, the life I now live I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. And, it is not Adrian—it is Jesus—living in me. Thank God for that. You see, that's the sacrifice that provides it. Oh, thank God for the cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!

II. This Good News Was Scripturally Prophesied

Now, here's the second thing about the Good News: the Good News not only is sacrificially provided, but, according to this text, the Good News was scripturally prophesied. Now, notice verse 3 again: "*For I delivered unto you*"—here's Paul speaking—"*all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins*"—now, notice this phrase—"*according to the scriptures*" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Now, what scriptures is he talking about? Friend, the New Testament had not been written. He's talking about the Old Testament scriptures.

What is the Old Testament about? The Old Testament is about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, if you missed that, you're not going to have the key that unlocks the Bible. The Old Testament is about the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He "*died for our sins according to the scriptures*" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Our salvation is not an afterthought. It's not that God said, "Oomph, now what am I going to

do?” No—no. Christ was in the heart and mind of God before He swung this world into space, and so was our salvation.

Now, God knows the future. Now, we have these fortunetellers today who tell the future. As a matter of fact, I heard the other day that the Psychic Hotline has gone bankrupt. I wonder if they knew they were going to do that? They don't know the future, my friend. These horoscopes—if you've got the horoscope in your home, get it out; get rid of that. These astrological magazines, and soothsayers, and prognosticators—none of them knows the future. Only God knows the future. Put this verse down—Isaiah 46, verses 9 and 10: *“Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me. Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure”* (Isaiah 46:9–10). God speaks of things not yet done. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow are all alike to the Almighty. And so, Jesus *“died for our sins according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Let me give you some scriptures—Old Testament—that were fulfilled in the New Testament, concerning the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For example, the Old Testament said that He would be forsaken by His followers—Zechariah 13, verse 7: *“smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered”* (Zechariah 13:7). Fulfilled—Mark 14, verse 50: *“And they all forsook him, and fled”* (Mark 14:50).

The Old Testament said that Jesus would be falsely accused in Psalm 35, verse 11: *“False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not”* (Psalm 35:11). Fulfilled—Matthew 26, verse 60: *“But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses”* (Matthew 26:60).

The Old Testament says that Jesus would be horribly abused—Isaiah chapter 50 and verse 6: *“I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting”* (Isaiah 50:6). Fulfillment—Matthew 26, verses 67 and 68: *“They did spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands, Saying, Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?”* (Matthew 26:67–68).

The Old Testament says that when they did this, He would not retaliate—Isaiah 53, verse 7: *“He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth”* (Isaiah 53:7). Fulfillment—Luke 23, verse 34: *“Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots”* (Luke 23:34).

None of His bones were broken—Psalm 34, verse 20: *“He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken”* (Psalm 34:20). Fulfillment—John 19, verse 33: *“But when they*

came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs” (John 19:33).

His body would be pierced—Zechariah 12 and verse 10: *“And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced”* (Zechariah 12:10). John 19, verse 34—here’s the fulfillment: *“But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith there came out blood and water”* (John 19:34).

The Old Testament says that they would gamble for His raiment—His clothing. Psalm 22, verse 18: *“They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture”* (Psalm 22:18). John 19—here’s the fulfillment—verses 23 and 24: *“Then the soldiers, when they...crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did”* (John 19:23–24).

The Old Testament prophesied that Jesus would rise from the dead. Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 10, which I call *the gospel according to Isaiah*, speaks of His death and says, *“Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand”* (Isaiah 53:10). Do you see what he’s saying? He dies; and yet, He prolongs His days. How can this be? Mark 16, verse 6: *“And he saith unto them, Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him”* (Mark 16:6). These are only a handful of the prophecies in the Old Testament that tell us that Jesus *“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Let’s just take eight of these prophecies. Now, there are over 300, but let’s just take eight of these prophecies. And, I want to share with you what Dr. Peter Stoner, a world-renowned mathematician and statistician, had to say about taking just eight of these prophecies. He says, *“According to the laws of statistical analysis and probability, what is the probability that just eight of these prophecies could be fulfilled without any error at all?”* He says, *“The probability is one chance in a sextillion.”* Now, what is a sextillion? Well, that’s one with 24 zeros after it. One—here’s the one—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24. One chance—one chance—in a sextillion that just eight of these prophecies could be fulfilled.

Now, that’s hard for us to visualize; and so, here’s what he says: he says, *“Take a stack of dimes and put them edge to edge, as close as you can stack them.”* And, he

says, “Make this stack 80,000 cubit miles—80,000 miles of dimes this way, 80,000 miles of dimes this way, 80,000 miles of dimes this way (a lot of dimes). Now,” he says, “Take a man, and blindfold him, and drop him in. Stir them all you want, and let him choose one dime that has been thusly marked—and that’s one chance in a sextillion, now—sextillion.” Then, Dr. Stoner goes on to say, “Suppose you were to take not just eight of these prophecies, but you added 34 more? Then what would the chances be? This is a ten followed by 180 zeros.” Well, what number is that? It’s so big it’s not in the dictionary. There’s no word for it. And, that would not exhaust all of the prophecies.

Now, our good news is sacrificially provided. It is scripturally prophesied. *“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). The scriptures explicitly and implicitly say a vital “amen” to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

III. This Good News Is Solidly Proven

Here’s the third thing: the Good News, which is sacrificially provided, scripturally prophesied, is solidly proven—it is solidly proven. Notice here in chapter 15, verses 5 through 8: it speaks of the resurrection of Jesus, and it says, *“And that he was seen of Cephas”—that’s another word for “Peter”—“then of the twelve: [And] after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. [And] after that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all”—Paul says—“he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time”* (1 Corinthians 15:5–8).

Think of the appearances of the risen Lord. He appeared to Peter, He appeared to the 12, He appeared to James, and then He appeared to 500 persons all at once. Some people say, “Well, they had an hallucination.” Are you telling me that 500 people all had the same hallucination all at the same time and were willing to die for it? As we said this morning, the disciples laid down their lives for their belief in the Resurrection because they’d seen Him, they’d touched Him, they’d handled Him. They knew! Men do not willingly die for a lie. And, I told you this morning that martyrs and hypocrites are not made of the same stuff.

Dr. Simon Greenleaf—he is called, by students of law, one of the greatest law professors who ever lived. He was a Harvard professor. He died in 1853. He wrote a book called, *A Treatise on the Law of Evidence*—studied in law schools today. Dr. Greenleaf studied the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and here’s what he said in his own words, concerning the testimony of the apostles: “It was impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truth that they narrated had not Jesus actually risen from the dead and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.” Let me read that again—this is a professor who deals with the law of evidence: “It was impossible that they”—the apostles—“could have persisted in affirming the truth that

they narrated had not Jesus actually risen from the dead and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.”

The Good News—sacrificially provided. The Good News is scripturally prophesied. The Good News is solidly proven by the evidence—these who saw Him, touched Him, testified of Him.

IV. This Good News Is Savingly Powerful

Now, fourthly and finally, this Good News is savingly powerful. It is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Look again in verses 1 and 2: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–2).

A. Believe It, Receive It, and You Will Be Saved

Friend, listen to me: first of all, believe it, receive it, and you will be saved. There is no other way that you can be saved apart from the gospel. “Pastor, how are you so certain?” Well, first of all, the Bible declares it. If there were some other way for men to be saved, if other religions are just as good, then I’ve lost my respect for the Almighty. Why would Jesus—why would God—allow His darling Son to die in agony and blood upon the cross if there is another way? I have no respect for a God like that. I’d be afraid to meet that God in a dark alley—a God who would let His Son, Jesus, die when there are other ways to be saved. Why not just say, “My beloved Son, don’t go through that agony. There are many ways to be saved”? No, you’re saved by the gospel. Believe it, and be saved. And, he says, “If you hold it fast.” (1 Corinthians 15:2 NASB) Now, what does he mean by that? “Don’t change it. Don’t amend it. There’s no need to embellish it. There’s no substitute for it—not sincerity, not sentiment, not service, not sacrament.” It is the saving gospel. There’s only one gospel. Believe it, and be saved.

B. Believe It, Receive It, and Be Strengthened

Number two: Believe it, and be strengthened. The word *saved* is in the present tense, also. Now, let me tell you about salvation. I have been saved from the penalty of sin. I am being saved from the pollution of sin. One day, I will be saved from the presence of sin. The word *saved* is in the present tense. Not only has He forgiven my sins, but He is in me now, as I’ve already tried to say, saving me and giving me victory day by day. He’s not finished with me yet. Philippians 1:6: *“Being confident of this very thing, he [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* Believe it, friend, and be saved. Receive it, believe it, and be strengthened.

C. Believe It, Receive It, and Be Secured

Believe it, receive it, and be secured. Look again in verse 1: “*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand*” (1 Corinthians 15:1). I stand amazed. I stand secure. If Jesus Christ, who saved me, doesn’t keep me saved, then it’s right back on my shoulders and I’m not going to make it.

Suppose you fall overboard and you’re on an ocean liner in the middle of the briny deep—1,000 miles to any shore—and you can’t swim. You need to be saved. Suppose a man comes in a motorboat and begins to circle you, whips out a book, and begins to read to you about swimming and tell you the laws of swimming, and gives you a lecture about the Australian crawl, and the backstroke, and breaststroke. What good does that do you, as you *blub, blub, blub*? Suppose that man doesn’t come to you as a teacher. Suppose he comes to you as a judge. Suppose he says, “You fool. You shouldn’t have been standing near the edge of the ship. You were careless. You fell over. You deserve what you’re getting. You’re going to drown.” That man is no savior; that man is a lawyer and a judge.

Suppose another man comes in and says, “Look, you’re having difficulty. Let me show you what to do.” And, he dives in, and begins to swim all around you, and says, “You see how this is done, don’t you? Look at me.” That man is not a savior; he’s only an example. Suppose the man reaches in, and pulls you out, and puts you in the boat, and starts out with you to bring you to the shore. And then, he looks at you, and decides he doesn’t like you, and throws you overboard. He’s not a savior; he is a probation officer. I’m telling you, in Jesus we have a Savior—a Savior, someone who lifts us up and brings us on. He is the Savior. That’s the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

It is a gospel whereby we are saved. It is the gospel whereby we are strengthened. It is the gospel by where we stand and are secured. I say, “Hallelujah for the cross, and hallelujah for the empty tomb!” That’s what we’ve come to celebrate.

Conclusion

Father God, seal it to our hearts tonight, as we celebrate the Lord’s Supper. In Jesus’ holy name. Brother Jim, let’s stand and sing.

The Gospel of Truth

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 3, 1988

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1–8

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Declaration of the Gospel
 - A. The Penalty of Sin: Christ Died for Our Sins
 - B. The Pollution of Sin: Christ Carries Away Our Sin
 - C. The Power of Sin: Christ Was Raised from the Dead
- II. The Transformation of the Gospel
 - A. The Gospel Saves
 - B. The Gospel Sanctifies
 - C. The Gospel Secures
 1. You Can Be Saved
 2. You Can Know That You're Saved
 3. You Can Know That You'll Never Lose Your Salvation
- III. The Confirmation of the Gospel

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take your Bible this morning and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15? And, if you know anything about God's Word, right away you know that is the great chapter in the Bible on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And, right in the very heart of the gospel is the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Today, I want to speak to you on what I'm going to call "The Gospel Truth"—"The Gospel Truth."

Now, every now and then, when a man wants to underscore the fact that he's telling the truth, he'll say something and he'll say, "That's the gospel truth." And generally, it's not even truth; he tries to back it up that way, but it may be true and still not be gospel truth. It may be as true as the gospel but not gospel truth. Or, sometimes we'll have a preacher who will preach an excoriating message against sin; he will just read the catalogues of sin to the people and pay his respects to every sin in the book. And, he more or less walks up and down people's spines with a pair of hobnailed boots; and when he's finished, he pours the salt in the wounds and he preaches, "Hell—hot, judgment—sure." And, people go out and say, "Boy, he really preached the gospel." No, he didn't; that is not the gospel. Friend, that's the bad news that makes the good news good. The gospel is good news; the very word *gospel* means "good news."

Now, you've got to have the bad news. As a matter of fact, without the bad news the

good news is not good. I believe in preaching on Hell. I believe if we had more Hell in the pulpit, we'd have less Hell in the community. I believe in preaching on Hell. There is a Hell. And, my friend, that's not the gospel. The good news is that Christ came to save us from... This word *gospel* is used over 90 times in the New Testament, and it literally means "good news."

If someone were to ask you to explain the gospel, could you explain the gospel? If someone were to ask you, "What is the gospel?" would you know what the gospel is? I hope you will by the time we have finished this Easter message on the gospel truth. Easter is not about baskets, bunnies, and bonnets; Easter is about the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, listen to what the Apostle Paul said: *"Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I [have] preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all"*—now, he doesn't mean first in chronology; he means first in importance. This is the main thing—*"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, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: [And] after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. [And] after that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time"* (1 Corinthians 15:1–8).

Thank God for the good news of the gospel. Now, it the gospel that is good news; we ought to want to tell it. I heard of a man who was walking through the corridor of a major hospital, and a perfect stranger came out of a room there—a sick room, a hospital room—a perfect stranger came out and took this man—was walking down the corridors by the shoulders and turned him around. The man had a chart; it was a chart where a fever had been charted, and he pointed this chart to the man who was walking down the hall. And, he said, "Look, sir. Look—her temperature is coming down." The man inside of the room was so impressed with that good news that he wanted to come out and share it with a perfect stranger. His wife's temperature had broken; it was such good news he could not keep it to himself. Well, my friend, when there's good news, we ought to want to tell it. And, the best news this world has ever heard about came out of a graveyard just outside of Jerusalem—that our Lord Jesus has been risen, raised from the dead: "He is risen! He is risen indeed!" (Luke 24:34).

I. The Declaration of the Gospel

Now, I want us to think about that good news this morning—that gospel, that gospel truth. And, the very first thing I want us to think about is what I'm going to call the

declaration of the gospel. Now, what the Apostle Paul here says is that he has declared the gospel: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel”* (1 Corinthians 15:1). Well, if somebody wanted you to declare the gospel—said, “Make it plain”—how would you declare the gospel? What would be your declaration of the gospel?

A. **The Penalty of Sin: Christ Died for Our Sins**

Well, the gospel involves three major factors. Let’s look in verse 3. Here’s what Paul declared; here’s what Paul delivered: *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received”*—number one—*“how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3). That’s the very first thing that Paul declared—*“that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures”* (1 Corinthians 15:3).

Now, when the Bible says that *“Christ died for sins”* (1 Corinthians 15:3), that means that Jesus Christ died as a substitute, He took our place, He took the Hell that we deserved, He took the suffering that we deserve, He took the shame that we deserved, He took the sorrow that we deserved, He took the separation that we deserved, He took the sentence of death that we deserved, He took it upon Himself. The Bible says, *“Him that knew no sin God hath made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). And so, all of our sins were put upon the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ carried those sins to the cross; and on the cross, He died for our sins.

And, my dear friend, first of all, the gospel is good news because the penalty of sin is taken care of—the penalty of sin. Get that in your mind—the penalty of sin. There is a penalty of sin. *“The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die”* (Ezekiel 18:20). *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). The Bible teaches that God does judge sin. One-half of one sin will never escape punishment. All sin is punished. Even forgiven sin is punished. It’s just a matter of who bears the punishment. The sin that is forgiven you is forgiven because it is punished in Jesus. You need to understand this: sin is never overlooked. If God were to overlook sin, God would no longer be a Holy God. Do you know what the chief attribute of God is? It’s not, contrary to popular opinion, love, though He is a God of perfect love. But, the chief attribute of God is what? Holiness—holiness. If you had ransacked all of the lexicons and all of the dictionaries in the world to get one word that would describe God, it would have to be the word *holy*: *“Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD [God] of hosts”* (Isaiah 6:3). And, what does that mean? It means that God cannot count sin. God is the holy Other of sin; He is the antithesis of sin. The Bible says that God is *“of purer eyes than to behold...iniquity”* (Habakkuk 1:13). God can never let sin go unpunished. If God were to let sin go unpunished, He would cease to be a Holy God.

They say in a courtroom that when a guilty man is acquitted, the judge is

condemned. That means if a judge knowingly, willingly, deliberately lets sin go unpunished, the judge himself becomes a sinner. Now, my dear friend, that is all the more true of our dear God: if God failed to punish sin, God would topple from His throne of holiness. It's unthinkable that God could let sin go unpunished.

But, the good news of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, He took our place, He became our substitute. *"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him"*—on Jesus. Hallelujah!—*"the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6). My sin was put on Christ. Christ carried that sin death to the cross, and on the cross He paid the price in full. Now, get it down big, plain, and straight—this Easter, your sin will be pardoned in Christ or it will be punished in Hell, but it will never be overlooked. Okay? God never overlooks sin. He can't; it's impossible that God would overlook sin. And so, what is the good news of Easter? What is the declaration of the gospel? First of all, the gospel deals—the gospel deals—with the penalty of sin.

B. The Pollution of Sin: Christ Carries Away Our Sin

Secondly, the Gospel also deals with the pollution of sin. The Bible says not only that He died, but the Bible also says that *"he was buried"* (1 Corinthians 15:4). Notice in verse 4: *"And that he was buried"* (1 Corinthians 15:4). Did you know that the burial of Jesus is a part of the gospel? That's a part of the gospel that many times we leave out, but He was buried. Now, why is the burial of Jesus Christ a part of the gospel? Because not only does the gospel deal with the penalty of sin—it also deals with the pollution of sin. What do you do with a dead body? You put that dead body in the grave where it decays and corrupts. And, it is gone, it is put out of sight, it is covered up, it is buried. Now, what does that tell us? Dear friend, that when Jesus Christ died for us, not only did He die to forgive what we did, but He died to change what we are. He took all of the corruption of our sin and carried it to the grave with Him, and it is buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. And, God remembers our sin against us no more, and we don't need to be haunted with the ghost of guilt. That sin is put in the grave, it is buried, it is carried away.

Now, if Brother Bob were to steal ten dollars from me, and I say, "Brother..." And, he comes to me, and he says, "Pastor, I stole ten dollars from you. I'm sorry. Here's ten dollars back. Forgive me." I would forgive him, but I couldn't cleanse him; he'd still be a thief. But, you see, when Jesus—when Jesus—saves us, not only does He deal with the penalty of sin—He died for us—but He deals with the pollution of sin—He carries away our guilt. That's what that song "Rock of Ages" that we sing about...

Be of sin the double cure

Save from wrath and make me pure (Augustus M. Toplady).

He died, he saves from wrath, he was buried, he makes me pure, he carried my sins to the grave. It is a double cure—not just forgiven, but cleansed, friend. When Jesus Christ sees... When God sees a saved sinner, God does not see somebody who is just forgiven but still dirty—you're cleansed; you're pure. The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin.

Years ago, I read about a man who was languishing in a prison; he had been there for many years. Some people had worked to get him pardoned. Finally, they got him pardoned, and the queen signed the pardon. And, they took that pardon to that man who was there in that prison—that dark prison. He'd been there for so long, and they said, "Sir, we've got good news—wonderful news: the queen abandoned you. Here, sir, is your pardon." The man didn't rejoice. The man showed no emotion. The man showed no jubilation. They said, "Don't you understand? You have been pardoned. The queen has pardoned you." With that, the man unbuttoned his shirt and pulled it back, and there was a cancerous growth eating away at his chest. And, the man said, "What can the queen do about this?" You see, it's not just that we need to be pardoned, friend; we need to be cleansed. We need to... not just the penalty of sin—it is the pollution of sin.

Be of sin the double cure;

Save from wrath and make me pure (Augustus M. Toplady).

So, Jesus Christ is put in the grave; He's buried. And, God deals with the pollution of our sins.

C. The Power of Sin: Christ Was Raised from the Dead

Now, wait a minute—also, the Bible says, "And He was raised again" (1 Corinthians 15:4). Look there in verse 4: "and He was raised again the third day"—"He was buried and He was raised again the third day according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:4). And, by the way, it's all according to the scriptures. This was not accidental. It is not incidental; it is fundamental. It was in the heart and mind of God before He ever created the world; and for centuries, the Bible had foretold the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. One of the great truths of the inspiration of the Bible is that all of these things were done according to the scriptures.

Now listen, you've got a problem if you're not saved—that's the penalty of sin. You have another problem if you're not saved—that's the pollution of sin. But, you've got even another problem—and that's the power of sin. But, when Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, then God also demonstrates His mighty power over sin, because the Bible says in Romans, "*[He's shown] to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead*" (Romans 1:4). The mighty power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead is that resurrection power that lives in us today. And, the Apostle Paul said, "*[Oh,] that I may know him, and the power*"—"the power"—"of his resurrection"

(Philippians 3:10). And, when you're saved, because Jesus Christ is alive—because He lives—sin has no power, temptation has no allurements. The devil has no temptation that the child of God cannot overcome through the resurrected Christ. He lives in us; He gives us power, friend. That's the good news; that's the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And, so many people don't understand the power that is there. When Jesus Christ died, and was buried, and rose again, He broke the back of sin, death, and Hell. My friend, that is the gospel truth. Now, that's the declaration of the gospel.

II. The Transformation of the Gospel

But secondly, I want you to notice what I'm going to call the transformation of the gospel. What happens, therefore? What do we do with this good news? What does it do? Well, I want to tell you it does three things.

A. The Gospel Saves

First of all, it saves. Look in chapter 15 and verse 1: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; [And] by which...ye are saved”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–2). Now, you're saved by the gospel; you're not saved by any other thing. You are saved by the gospel. But notice what he says: *“By which...ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I [have] preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:2). Now, what does that mean—*“if [you] keep in memory what I [have] preached unto you”* (1 Corinthians 15:2)? Paul is saying that it is only the gospel that saves. The word “keep in memory” literally means “to hold fast” what I have preached unto you (1 Corinthians 15:2). What Paul is saying is there are not two ways or three ways to be saved; there's only one way to be saved, and that is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Get a bulldog grip on the gospel. Don't let anybody move you away from the gospel. The apostle Paul said to the Galatians, “I am amazed that you are so soon removed from the gospel of Christ to another gospel which is not enough” (Galatians 1:6).

Friend, what is the gospel? The gospel is that you are saved by grace. Look down there in verse 10: The Apostle Paul says, *“I am what I am...[by] the grace of God”—“by the grace of God”* (1 Corinthians 15:10). The gospel is the gospel of grace. Get a hold on it: it doesn't need to be amended, it doesn't need to be embellished, it doesn't need to be substituted. Some people say, “Well, we need a new and a modern gospel for a new and modern age.” Oh, no, no, no—there is but one gospel, and you are saved by that gospel.

B. The Gospel Sanctifies

But, not only are you saved by the gospel, but, my dear friend, you are sanctified by the gospel—you are sanctified by the gospel. This is present tense. This word *saved*—“by

which you are saved”—and that means that you are *continuing* to be saved. You see, dear friend, I said that there is the power and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Well, when I receive what Christ did for me, the living Christ comes into me; and day by day by day, He is saving me from the power of sin. So many times in my life I am tempted to sin. You say, “Brother Rogers, you’re tempted to sin?” Oh, every day, in many ways. “Oh,” you say, “well, I thought you were a better man than that.” I hope I never get better than Jesus, and Jesus “was tempted in all points like as we are” (Hebrews 4:15).

Now friend, listen, all of us are tempted; but thank God, there is power in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am being saved. Philippians 1:6 says, “*He [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it.*” I am being saved day by day by day. Jesus Christ delivers me, and He delivers you, and He delivers all of those of us who put our faith in Him. There’s the sanctifying power of the Gospel.

C. The Gospel Secures

1. You Can Be Saved

But, not only are we transformed by the saving power and the sanctifying power—oh, but listen—by the securing power of the gospel. Now, notice what he says here in verse 1: “*Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand*” (1 Corinthians 15:1). Look at the word *stand*. Actually, it means that “wherein you have been made to stand.” You stand in the gospel. That is, God, when He saves you, He doesn’t just, “Now, Jim Whitmire, I’m going to save you, and I’m going to give you a brand new start.” That’d be pretty good if He did, that but you’d blow it by this afternoon. There are a lot of people who think that’s the gospel—that God just forgives our past and gives us a new start. Oh, no, friend.

2. You Can Know That You’re Saved

Listen, it is wonderful that we can be saved; it is even more wonderful that we can be saved and know it. You say, “Adrian, do you know you’re saved?” Absolutely, I know I’m saved. You say, “Well, you sure are cocky.” Oh, no—you don’t understand. You say, “You sure have a lot of confidence in yourself.” No, as a matter of fact, do you know...how I know I’m saved is that I don’t have any confidence in myself. See, my confidence is in Christ. If you have any confidence in yourself, then you’ll never know that you’re saved; you’ll always wonder, “Did I do enough? Am I good enough. Am I strong enough?” But, the Bible says, “*To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness*” (Romans 4:5).

3. You Can Know That You’ll Never Lose Your Salvation

Friend, let me tell you something: it’s wonderful that you can be saved; it’s even more wonderful that you can know that you are saved. But, I’ll tell you something thrice wonderful—that you can be saved, that you can know that you are saved, and that you

can know that you can never ever lose your salvation. Now friend, you'll have to admit, if that is true, it's wonderful. And, it is true. The Bible says we stand in the gospel—we stand in the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1). Well, you say, "Yeah, you stand, but what if you decide you don't want to stand anymore?" Friend, the Bible says in Romans chapter 14 and verse 4 that *"God is able to make [you] stand"* (Romans 14:4). The Bible says in Jude verse 24, He *"is able to keep you from falling"* (Jude 1:24). Hallelujah! Listen friend, we don't keep this salvation; this salvation keeps us. That's good news—that is good news.

Listen, what is the declaration of the gospel? The declaration of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, that He was raised again the third day. Now, my dear friend, what is the transformation of the gospel? It is through the gospel we're saved, it is through the gospel that we are sanctified, and it is in the gospel that we are secure.

III. The Confirmation of the Gospel

Now, the third and final thing I want you to notice with me this morning is not only the declaration of it and the transformation that comes by it, but I want you to notice the confirmation of the gospel—the confirmation of the gospel. How do we know that the gospel is truth? Well, we know the gospel is true by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The Bible says in the Book of Romans chapter 1 and verse 4: He is shown *"to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4).

Now, they said that Jesus was worthy of death; they said that He was a fraud, a fake, an impostor, a blasphemer: "He's worthy of death; He is death-guilty. Crucify Him." And, they did. That was the adjudication of their court, but there was a higher court that reversed that decision and raised Him from the dead. The Bible says, *"[He is shown] to the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead"* (Romans 1:4). And so, Jesus Christ is raised from the dead and shown *"to be the Son of God with power"* (Romans 1:4).

Now, how do I know the gospel is true? Because God raised Him from the dead. "Oh, but," you say, "wait a minute—how do you know that God raised Him from the dead?" Well, the Book of Acts says that *"he shewed himself alive...by many infallible proofs"* (Acts 1:3). There was a lawyer, Francis J. Lamb, who took the resurrection account. He was a very well noted jurist, and he studied the resurrection account. He studied all of the evidence. And, after he finished, he wrote a book of almost 300 pages of which he showed by every law of jurisprudence, every law of legal procedure, that in a court of law it can absolutely be proven beyond a shadow of any doubt that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Scholars tell us that there's more evidence that Jesus Christ came out of that grave than there is that Julius Caesar ever lived.

Now, this is what—this is what—Paul is saying here. Paul is saying, “We’re not giving you some fairy tale.” Listen, he says *“that he rose again on the third day according to the scriptures”*—and notice in verse 5—*“And...he was seen of Cephas”*—that means, “Peter,” “Simon Peter”—*“then of the twelve”*—well, right away, you’ve got 13 witnesses there—*“[And] after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remained unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. [And] after that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time”* (1 Corinthians 15:4–8). If there was ever a man to have been unlikely to have believed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it was the Apostle Paul—a scholar of scholars, proficient in 18 languages, the equivalency of a triple PhD. Here was a man who studied in the feet of the Gamaliel. He was a part of the Sanhedrin. He was a persecutor of the Church; and yet, the Apostle Paul now is a believer in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He has the audacity to stand up and preach that before the Sanhedrin and all of his brethren. My dear friend, in any courtroom, when you have 500 witnesses who will all say the same thing, the judge has to take that into account.

Now, what I’m trying to talk to you about is the confirmation of the gospel. The confirmation of the gospel is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and the confirmation of the resurrection are the eyewitnesses who saw Jesus Christ. Many of them—all but the Apostle Paul...all of them but the Apostle John—of the apostles died martyrs. As I told you before, *a man may live for a lie, but what man will willingly, knowingly die for a lie?* But, secular, profane history tells us these men died as martyrs. Why? Because death had no more terrors for them. They had seen the risen Christ; they knew He had conquered death, and they knew that in Him they lived and they could not ever be permanently harmed by what the world calls *death*. As I told you before, *no man is ready to live until he is no longer afraid to die; but when he is no longer afraid to die, for the first time, strangely enough, he’s ready to live*. And, these people—these people—knew that Jesus Christ had come out of the grave—over 500 people at one time. You can’t call that *mistaken identity*; you can’t call that... They saw the Lord. Can you imagine this?

Now, Matthew chapter 28 tells us the Sanhedrin paid the guards to say the disciples stole His body (Matthew 28:12–13). And, by the way, the great question is, where is the body of the Lord Jesus? I mean, that was the great question. If they, had wanted just prove the resurrection, all they would have to do was just produce the body of Jesus. I mean, the Romans didn’t want the resurrection of Jesus taught; the Jewish leaders did not want it taught. If they had the body, all they had to do was produce the body, but they didn’t have a body to produce.

But now, let’s suppose—let’s just suppose—that they are going to have a trial and

they subpoena these soldiers, and these soldiers, and before the judge. And, the judge says to these soldiers, “Do you promise to tell the truth—the whole truth—and nothing but the truth? Do you swear?”

“Yes, I do.”

“All right, what is your occupation?”

“We’re soldiers.”

“Soldiers of whom?”

“We’re Roman soldiers.”

“Were you assigned to guard the tomb of Jesus?”

“Yes, your honor. We were assigned to guard the tomb of Jesus.”

“You were on guard duty the night the body disappeared?”

“Yes, your honor, we were.”

“You are a professional soldiers?”

“Yes, your honor, we are.”

“And, you were to guard the body? Were strict orders given to you?”

“Yes, we were to guard the tomb and to keep the tomb.”

“Now, what were you doing when the body of Jesus disappeared?”

“We were asleep, your honor.”

“All of you asleep at the same time?”

“Yes, all were asleep.”

“And, you were given orders to guard the tomb?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“But, you say you were asleep?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“What is the penalty for sleeping on guard duty?”

“Well, it’s death, your honor.”

“And, you were asleep?”

“Yes, we were asleep.”

“Have you been reprimanded by your commander?”

“No, we haven’t.”

“Why not?”

“We don’t know why not.”

“Well, you were asleep? Under the penalty of death, you were asleep?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“And, you say the disciples stole the body while you were asleep?”

“Yes, your honor.”

“Well, if you were asleep, how do you know what happened to the body of Jesus?”

“Well, your honor, we don’t know how we knew while were asleep.”

Can you see the audacity—the stupidity—of such an argument—that these men who were Roman soldiers, with a seal of Rome on that tomb, have the audacity to say that they are asleep? It was absolutely unthinkable that those disciples stole that body.

Who would have rolled away the stone? Who would have moved away the stone? That stone was four-and-a-half- to five-feet tall; it weighed one-and-a-half to two tons. The Bible says that that stone was not simply *rolled* away; the word actually was it was “moved” away. It was like it exploded from the door. It was off in another place; it skipped on up the hill. How did that happen? Suppose they put these disciples on the stand:

“Do you promise to tell the truth—the whole truth—and nothing but the truth?”

“Yes, your honor, we do.”

“Do you know what happened to the body of Jesus?”

“Yes, your honor, we know where it is.”

“Where is the body of Jesus?”

“In Heaven.”

“In Heaven—what do you mean by that?”

“Well, God raised Him from the dead.”

“How do you know God raised Him from the dead?”

“We saw Him. We talked with Him. We handled Him. We ate fish and a honeycomb with Him. We fellowshiped with Him. For 40 days He was with us.”

“How many of you saw Him—one of you?”

“All of us saw Him.”

“Just you alone?”

“Oh, no, your honor, over 500 at one time. We saw Him. He is alive.”

Now, my friend, I’m going to tell you there is truth. Jesus Christ is alive. But, the greatest evidence is the evidence of the changed lives of people like the Apostle Paul—that there’s no way—no way under this earth—to explain what happened to the Apostle Paul other than the resurrection of Jesus Christ. He said, “I met Him that day on the Damascus road, and my life was changed.”

Now, my dear friend, listen—the declaration of the gospel is this: Christ died, He was buried, He was raised again. That’s the declaration of the gospel. The transformation of the gospel is this: you are saved by the gospel, you are sanctified by the gospel, you are secured by the gospel. The confirmation of the gospel is this: that Christ raised Him from the dead. It is absolutely shown to be the power of God.

Now, let me tell you about this gospel, friend: it is sufficient—it is sufficient; it is sufficient for all people, all people, all people. A while back, both Bob and I were traveling. I got in the front seat to witness to the cab driver. It was a man from Nigeria. I shared the gospel of Jesus Christ with that man, asked him if he understood the gospel.

He didn't. I said, "May I—may I—explain it to you?" He believed in reincarnation, and I explained the gospel to this man. The Holy Spirit of God took my words—because it was not me but the Spirit of God—and opened that man's heart. That man said to me, "Well, if I believe what you tell me, my ancestors—where are my ancestors?" I said, "Sir, wherever your ancestors are, they want you to be saved, I can tell you that much. They don't want you to die without Christ. They could say, if they could come back, 'Receive Christ as your personal Savior.'" What a joy to watch that dear man, as he bowed his head and asked Christ to come into his heart! And, I sent him, this week, a thing of tapes to help him get started in the Christian life. But here, my friend, what I'm trying to say is the gospel is for all people. It is for all places. Any time, anywhere, any place where anybody calls upon the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ they'll be saved. That's the reason, dear friend, that salvation must be by grace. Baptism doesn't save—doesn't help save—you. Church membership doesn't save you. It doesn't help save you. You can call upon Jesus, and He saves you anytime, anyplace. For the Bible says, "[For] whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD" (Acts 2:21). I want to tell you every person, every place, and every problem is handled by the gospel.

If you were to take all of the problems that mankind has, and you could steal all of those problems, let me tell you, they're all just going to be just three problems: sin, sorrow, and death—that's all. I mean, when you analyze every problem, it is sin, sorrow, and death. And, the gospel is the answer to every problem that man has. Ultimately, the gospel and the gospel alone is the answer to sin. The gospel and the gospel alone is the answer to sorrow, and only the gospel has the answer to death.

My friend, do you have the gospel? Death is not a terror to those of us who know the Lord Jesus. Somebody pictured a lot of little caterpillars: these caterpillars are crawling along in the filth, in the mud, and in the dirt. On their back they have a cocoon. Out of that cocoon, one of their own has escaped. That cocoon is all that they have left, and they are carrying that cocoon on their back in a funeral procession. And, all of these little caterpillars are weeping and mourning for their dear departed brother, and they have that cocoon on their back. And, they're just singing a funeral dirge, as they carry all they have—just the remains, just the cocoon. And, they're carrying that cocoon on their back. And, up above them in the sunlight is a gorgeous, beautiful butterfly flitting around in God's sunlight and in God's blue sky. And, they're down there feeling sorry for him, and he's up there feeling sorry for them, down there in the dirt, down there in the mud. My friend, I want to tell you Jesus Christ has conquered death. And, those of you who have loved ones who have gone on—they're more beautiful than that butterfly—made like the Lord Jesus Christ. And, don't weep for those who know the Lord Jesus. Christ has conquered, and in Christ we have... And, I want to tell you one more time, the best news this world has ever known came out of a graveyard just outside

Jerusalem. He is risen—risen indeed!

Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed—no one stirring and no one looking around. I want to ask you, now, do you know Jesus Christ? Are you saved? What a wonderful, wonderful day to be saved! How is a man saved? The Bible says, "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31). And, that word *believe* means "trust" and "commitment." Father, I pray that many today in this service will trust Christ and be saved. Holy Spirit of God, bring Your conviction power. In Jesus' dear name. Amen.

The Ironclad Guarantee of the Gospel

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: March 31, 1991

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1–8

*“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I received, how
that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures.”*

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3

Outline

Introduction

I. The Prophecy of the Resurrection

- A. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Forsaken by His Followers
- B. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Wrongly Accused
- C. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Mercilessly Abused
- D. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Not Retaliate
- E. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Crucified with Lawbreakers
- F. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Crucified
- G. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Pray for Those Who Were Executing Him
- H. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Not Have One Broken Bone
- I. It Was Prophesied That Jesus’ Body Would Be Pierced
- J. It Was Prophesied That Men Would Gamble for Jesus’ Clothing
- K. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Rise from the Dead

II. The Proof of the Resurrection

III. The Power of the Resurrection

- A. The Full Payment of Sin
- B. The Free Pardon from Sin

Conclusion

Introduction

I want to talk to you tonight about the ironclad guarantee of the gospel. Easter is not primarily—or really, not at all—about bunnies, and baskets, and baked hams; not candy, clothes, and corsages. Easter is about the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Now, the word *gospel* means “good news,” and that word *gospel* is found at least ninety times in the New Testament. And, in the scripture that I’m going to read to you tonight, you find not only the gospel, but the ironclad guarantee of the gospel, because the scripture I’m going to read to you tonight tells us that the gospel is the death, burial,

and resurrection of Jesus. And, the fact that He died for our sins may just simply be a statement were it not for the Resurrection that proves that He had the authority to die for our sins because God raised Him from the dead and, therefore, the guarantee, the validity, of the gospel is really the Resurrection.

Now, listen to it, and see how Paul argues it—1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 1: *“Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all”*—now, He doesn’t mean “the first thing I ever said,” but he means here “of prime importance”; that is, “of first importance,” “first of all,” “the main thing.” And, as somebody has well said, “The main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing.” What Paul is saying here is, “I have delivered unto you as the main thing”—*“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: And that he was seen of Cephas”*—now, the word *Cephas* here is another word for Simon Peter. Cephas, Simon Peter—*“then of the twelve”*—that is, the twelve apostles—*“[And] after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. [And] after that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as one born out of due time.”* (1 Corinthians 15:1–8)

Now folks, when we’re dealing with life and death, when we’re dealing with eternity, when we’re dealing with salvation, we want to be sure. We want to know that we know that we have an ironclad guarantee.

I. The Prophecy of the Resurrection

The very first thing I want you to see that Paul uses as a guarantee is what I’m going to call “the prophecy of the Resurrection”—“the prophecy of the Resurrection.” Look in verses 3–4: *“For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins”*—now, notice the next little phrase here—*“according to the scriptures”*—do you see that? Just underscore it: *“[He] died for our sins according to the scriptures.”* (1 Corinthians 15:3) Well, what scriptures? When Paul wrote this, there was no New Testament. The scriptures that Paul is referring to were the Old Testament scriptures, scriptures that were written before Jesus Christ was born literally, physically of a virgin here on this earth. And then, look, if you will, in verse 4—*“And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.”* (1 Corinthians 15:3–4) Now, what the Apostle Paul is saying is that the gospel is not an afterthought. It’s not an incident. It’s not an accident. It was something in the heart and mind of God, and it was something clearly and plainly foretold according to the Scriptures.

And, may I say this: that there are a lot of people who like to talk about the future. I mean, you can pick up any magazine in the supermarket as you're checking out your groceries, and you can read about horoscopes and astronomical prognostications by the soothsayers of our day. And, the prognosticators—there's a Greek word that describes all of that; it's called "baloney"—these people who are trying to tell you the future. Why, even the devil doesn't know the future. Only God knows the future. Put this verse down: Isaiah 46:9–10: God says, *"I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things...not yet done."* (Isaiah 46:9–10) Only God knows the future. Only God knows what will happen one millisecond from now or one millennium from now. The future is in God's hands.

And, the Bible tells us that *"Christ died...according to the scriptures...that he was buried, and...rose again...according to the scriptures."* (1 Corinthians 15:3–4) Did you know that there are over three hundred prophecies in the Bible dealing with the Lord Jesus Christ—three hundred prophecies? Now, just one fulfillment of prophecy may not be enough to convince you that we have a guarantee in the gospel, but, my dear friend, three hundred prophecies taken together make a cord that cannot be broken, impossible to break.

Let me just give you—and you won't have time to turn to these scriptures; I've looked them up and jotted them down—let me just give them to you. And, I want you to listen to *"how that Christ died...according to [prophecy]."* (1 Corinthians 15:3)

A. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Forsaken by His Followers

For example, in Zechariah 13:7 it was prophesied that He would be forsaken by His followers. Zechariah says, *"Smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered."* (Zechariah 13:7) And then, we read the fulfillment of that prophecy in Mark 14:50: *"[Everyone deserted] him, and fled."* (Mark 14:50)

B. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Wrongly Accused

Well, let me give you another fulfillment of prophecy. The Bible prophesied that He would be wrongly accused—Psalms 35:11. The Bible says that *"ruthless witnesses came forward."* (Psalms 35:11) And then, when Jesus was put on trial, we see the fulfillment of that in Matthew 26:60: *"many false witnesses came [forward]."* (Matthew 26:60)

C. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Mercilessly Abused

Or again, the Bible prophesies in Isaiah 50:6 that the Lord would be mercilessly abused. For example, it says, *"I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pull out the beard: I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting."* (Isaiah 50:6) That's what Isaiah had to say. And then, look, if you will, in Matthew 26:67–68. Matthew records that *"they spat in His face, they struck Him with their fists. Others slapped Him*

and said, Prophecy unto us, Christ. Who hit you?” (Matthew 26:67–68)—an exact fulfillment of prophecy.

D. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Not Retaliate

The Bible prophesied that the Messiah would not retaliate when people did this. Isaiah 53:7 says, *“He was oppressed, and...afflicted, [and] yet he [did not open] his mouth.”* (Isaiah 53:7) Matthew tells us of the fulfillment of this prophecy in Matthew 27:14: Jesus, when He was being bullied by Pilate, made no reply—not even to a single charge. (Matthew 27:14) *“As a lamb...before her shearers is dumb, so he [opened] not his mouth.”* (Isaiah 53:7)

E. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Crucified with Lawbreakers

The Bible tells us and prophesied that, when He was crucified on Calvary’s hill, that He would be crucified with lawbreakers. Isaiah 53:12: *“he...poured out his [life] unto death: and...was numbered with the transgressors.”* (Isaiah 53:12) And, when Jesus was executed, that prophecy was fulfilled in Matthew 27:38: the Bible says, *“[And] two [robbers]”—that is, “two malefactors”—“[were] crucified with him, one on [his] right hand, and [one] on [his] left”* (Matthew 27:38)—an exact fulfillment of prophecy.

F. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Be Crucified

Now, this is Old Testament. The Bible prophesied that He would be crucified, and this is one of the most remarkable prophecies because crucifixion was not known when this psalm was written. That’s a Roman form of capital punishment. But, eight hundred years before the Crucifixion, by the pen of David, the prophecy comes in Psalms 22:16: *“they [have] pierced my hands and my feet.”* (Psalms 22:16) Luke records the fulfillment of this prophecy in Luke 23:33: *“And when they [came] to the place...called [the skull], there they crucified him.”* (Luke 23:33) And, you know that crucifixion is the piercing of the hands and the feet.

G. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Pray for Those Who Were Executing Him

The Bible prophesied in the Old Testament according to the Scriptures that when the Messiah was dying, He would pray for those who were executing Him. The Bible says in Isaiah 53:12: *“he...made intercession for the transgressors.”* (Isaiah 53:12) And then, we find in Luke 23:34, while hanging on the cross, Jesus prayed, *“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34)—exactly as the Bible said that He would make intercession.

H. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Not Have One Broken Bone

A remarkable prophecy is that, while Jesus would be abused mercilessly, that not one bone would be broken. For example, in Psalms 34:20, the Bible says, *“[The Lord*

protects] all [of] his bones: not one of them [will be] broken.” (Psalms 34:20) But, in the Crucifixion, when the soldiers came to ensure that those malefactors and Jesus were dead, it was a common practice to break their legs to hasten the death. But, the Bible says in John 19:33: *“But when they came to Jesus, and [found] that he was [already] dead, they [did not break] his legs.”* (John 19:33) The Bible said, “Not a bone would be broken.” (Psalms 34:20)

I. It Was Prophesied That Jesus’ Body Would Be Pierced

The Bible prophesied that His body would be pierced. In Zechariah 12:10: *“they [will] look upon me whom they have pierced.”* (Zechariah 12:10) And, the Apostle John says in John 19:34 that rather than breaking the legs, instead one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear—an exact fulfillment of prophecy. (John 19:34)

J. It Was Prophesied That Men Would Gamble for Jesus’ Clothing

The Bible prophesied in the Old Testament that men would gamble for the clothing of the Lord Jesus. In Psalms 22:18, the Bible prophesied, *“They [divide] my garments among them, and cast lots [for] my [clothing].”* (Psalms 22:18) Then, the Apostle John tells us in John 19, beginning in verse 23, how this took place: “When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took His clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. Let us not tear it, they said one to another. Let us decide by lot”—that is, the casting of dice—“who will get it” (John 19:23–24)—a marvelous fulfillment of prophecy.

K. It Was Prophesied That Jesus Would Rise from the Dead

And then, the Bible prophesied that Jesus Christ would break the bonds of death, that He would rise from the dead. In Isaiah 53:10, after the Bible tells of the death of the Lord Jesus, it says in verse 10: “And though the Lord makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring and prolong his days.” (Isaiah 53:10) That is, He’s going to die; and yet, He’s going to live. And, of course, this is fulfilled. Mark tells us of the angel there at the empty tomb who said, “Don’t be alarmed. You’re looking for Jesus, the Nazarene, who was crucified. He is risen.” (Mark 16:6)

Now, my folks, beloved brothers and sisters, I have just given you a handful of prophecies. Remember I told you there are some three hundred. You see, *“Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures...he was buried...he rose again...according to the scriptures.”* (1 Corinthians 15:3–4)

Now, let’s have a little mathematical fun. If you were to take just eight of these prophecies—just eight—and ask what the mathematical chances that just eight of these prophecies would be fulfilled, what would happen? Well, Dr. Peter Stoner, who’s a mathematician and is one who deals in the law of probabilities and that science, said if

you were to take just eight of these prophecies and say, “What is the chance that eight of these prophecies would be fulfilled in one individual—what is the mathematical chance?” do you know what it is, my dear friend? It is one in a septillion that just eight of these prophecies, mathematically, could be fulfilled in one person—one in a septillion. Well, what is a septillion? Well, that’s ten with twenty-one zeroes after it. Now, just get that figure in your mind. Or, here’s the way that Peter Stoner put it: he said, “If you can imagine a stack of dimes stacked up, closely packed edge to edge—a stack of dimes in a mass of some eighty thousand cubic miles”—now, have you got a picture of not eighty thousand linear miles; cubic miles. Eighty thousand cubic miles of dimes—“Now, you mark just one”—not in eighty thousand dimes but in eighty thousand cubic miles of dimes”—Mark just one. And then, put a blindfold on a man, and ask him to go into that cubic pile of dimes and pick out one dime.” Now, according to Dr. Peter Stoner, that is the mathematical probability that all eight of these prophecies would be fulfilled in one person. But, my dear friend, we’re not talking about a mere eight; we’re talking about three hundred of these prophecies. It would be a simple matter just to take thirty-one more of them and add to the list that I’ve given. And then, Peter Stoner says, “The chance is like one in ten followed by one hundred and eighty zeroes.” You say, “Pastor, what is that?” That’s not a septillion. You say, “What is it?” I can’t tell you because they don’t have a name for it in the dictionary. I mean, nobody knows a number that big. I mean, there’s no way that you can even describe a number like that. You see, “[Jesus] died...according to the scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3)

II. The Proof of the Resurrection

Now, my dear friend, one of the guarantees of the gospel is fulfilled prophecy. Scriptural prophecy confirms the Resurrection, and the Resurrection fulfills scriptural prophecy. But, not only do I want you to see the prophecy—the scriptural prophecy—but I want you to also see the settled proof. God says it’s going to happen; He prophesies it. And then, on the other hand, after it happens, He gives eyewitnesses.

Now, continue to read here in verse 5, and we’re looking in this same chapter. The Bible says, “*And that he was seen*”—not only did He die according to the Scriptures, but He was seen—“*of Cephas, then of the twelve: [And] after that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. [And] after that, he was seen of James; then of all [of] the apostles. [And] after that, he was seen of me also, as...one born out of due time.*” (1 Corinthians 15:5–8) Paul said, “I’m not telling you something I heard.” He said, “I’m telling you something I’ve seen. I saw the risen Lord.”

And, my dear friend, I want you to think of the proof of these eyewitnesses—to Peter, the twelve, to James, five hundred, all of the apostles, and then to Paul himself.

You see, what did they say? How did they explain away the empty tomb? Well, the Bible tells us in Matthew 28:12 that they bribed some people and said, “You tell them that the apostles came to the graveyard that morning and stole His body,” and they paid them money to do this. (Matthew 28:12–13) And so, this was the rumor around Jerusalem: the disciples stole the body.

Can you imagine what would have happened if there had been a board of inquiry? And, they brought those guards in there, and you say, “Do you know where the body of Jesus is?” “Yes.” “Where’s the body of Jesus?” “Well, while we slept, the disciples stole the body.” “What? You’re Roman guards and you slept while on guard duty? What is the penalty for sleeping on guard duty?” “Well, death, Your Honor.” “Well, does the governor know about this?” “We suppose he does.” “Have you been arrested?” “Well, no.” “Well, why not? And, you say that while you were asleep, they stole the body? Is that right?” “Yes.” “Well, if you were asleep, how do you know what happened?” Case dismissed! Dear friend, listen, there’s no way to explain this. Listen. They say, “Well, you know, it was an hallucination. The disciples thought they saw the body.” An hallucination? My dear friend, one person may have an hallucination, but have you ever heard of five hundred people having an hallucination at the same time? *“He was seen of...five hundred...at [the same time].”* (1 Corinthians 15:6)

Somebody says, “Well, the disciples were lying.” Do you think Simon Peter was lying—crucified upside down for a lie? Do you think the Apostle Paul, who said, *“He was seen of me”* (1 Corinthians 15:8)—do you think he was lying and had his head cut off? I mean, secular history tells how these people died. *Now, a man may live for a lie, but few that I know of, if any, will die for a lie.* Oh, they may die for a lie not knowing it’s a lie, but would these people, who knew that they had not seen the Lord, pretend that they had seen the Lord and die for a lie when they could save their skin by saying, “Oh, it’s not so. I did not see Him”? My dear friend, these were eyewitnesses. People lie to get out of trouble, not into trouble. But, these people did not mind saying, “I have seen the Lord,” even if it meant they died a martyr’s death because they’re no longer afraid of death.

As a matter of fact, Dr. Simon Greenleaf, an outstanding Harvard professor who died more than a century ago in 1853, wrote a book that’s studied still by law people and lawyers today. It is a treatise on the law of evidence. This book, considered one of the greatest of its kind, a foundational work in law... Dr. Simon Greenleaf said this: he became completely convinced that the disciples were telling the truth. And, let me give you Dr. Greenleaf’s words. He said, “It was impossible that they could have persisted in affirming the truths they have narrated had not Jesus actually risen from the dead and had they not known this fact as certainly as they knew any other fact.” Now, that’s not a Baptist preacher talking. That is a man of law, and letters, and jurisprudence. Lord

Darling, a former Chief Justice of England, once said—and I want you to listen to this quote: “There exists such overwhelming evidence, positive and negative, factual and circumstantial, that no intelligent jury in the world would fail to bring a verdict that the Resurrection story is true.” That’s an incredible statement. The Bible says that He’s “[shown] to be the Son of God with power” by many infallible proofs. (Romans 1:4)

III. The Power of the Resurrection

Now, I’ve talked to you about the prophecy and the proof of His resurrection. Let me talk to you very briefly about the power of it—the power of it. What is the power of it?

A. The Full Payment of Sin

Well, first of all, it means that our sins have been paid for—the full payment of sin. Look in verse 3: “*For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received...that Christ died for our sins.*” (1 Corinthians 15:3) Oh, my dear friend, when He bowed His head on the cross, He cried out, “*It is finished,*” (John 19:30) and that means “paid in full.” Somebody put it beautifully: “Jesus paid a debt He did not owe because I had a debt I could not pay.”

B. The Free Pardon from Sin

Jesus died for me—there’s the full payment of sin—but not only the full payment, but the free pardon from sin. Look in verse 4: not only did He die, but “*he was [also] buried.*” (1 Corinthians 15:4) Do you see that? Did you know that the burial of Jesus is part of the gospel? Don’t leave it out. You see, He died, my dear friend, He died to pay for my sin, but He was buried to put my sin away. You see, He buried my sin in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, and thank God I don’t have to be haunted by the ghost of guilt. This is what Toplady meant when he wrote that song, “Be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure.” He died for my sin, the penalty. He was buried for the pollution.

And, my dear friend, He rose the third day to take away the power of sin. Look in verse 4: “*and...he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.*” (1 Corinthians 15:4) You see, the resurrection of Jesus Christ is God’s stamp of approval upon Jesus. We’ve often said, “Jesus is Lord, liar, or lunatic.” Either He’s a lunatic who thought He was God and wasn’t, or a liar who knew He wasn’t God and claimed to be, or the Lord that He was. How do we know what He was? Well, Romans 1:4 says, “[He’s] *declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead.*” (Romans 1:4) That’s how we know. My dear friend, He rose—He rose—and that’s the power over sin. That’s the power that’s in my life.

Conclusion

Now folks, let me tell you something: you're never done with Jesus and you're never finished with Jesus, whether you're saved or lost. Now, when the Bible says, "He died," (1 Corinthians 15:3) that's in the aorist tense in the Greek. That means "He died; that's it." It's once and for all. He'll never die again. It's over. He was buried. That's in the aorist tense. It's over. It's fixed. It's in the past. It's done. But, when the Bible says, "*He rose,*" (1 Corinthians 15:4) that's in the present tense. That means "He was risen, still is risen, and always will be risen," see.

Let me tell you something, unsaved person: you may run from Him all the days of your life, but when you die and open your eyes in the resurrection of the damned, the Lord Jesus will be there on the throne. He is risen. You have a date with Deity. Oh, but if you're saved, what a blessing to the saved! He died to give Himself for us. He rose to give Himself to us. A dead Savior can save no one, but I serve a risen Savior. He's in the world today.

Freedom from the Performance Trap

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 13, 1994

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:9–10

Outline

Introduction

I. The Ruin of Perfectionism

- A. It Can Harm Your Relationship with Yourself
- B. It Can Harm Your Relationship with God
- C. It Can Harm Your Relationship with Others
- D. It Can Harm a Church

II. The Revelation of Perfectionism

- A. Are You an Idealist or a Realist?
- B. Do You Set Impossible Goals for Yourself and for Others and Then Fail to Fulfill Them?
- C. Do You Try to Be the Best or to Do Your Best?
- D. Are You Project-Minded or Process-Minded?
- E. Do You Dwell on Failure, or Do You Learn from It?
- F. Do You Resent Criticism, or Do You Learn from It?

III. The Release from Perfectionism

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles; and today, we're going to find two Bible texts. Put a bookmark, first of all, in Galatians 3:3, and then turn to 1 Corinthians 15; and we're going to start in verse 9 there. I'm going to read Galatians 3:3 first and then 1 Corinthians 15, beginning in verse 9. Today, I want to speak to you on this subject: "Freedom From the Performance Trap." I think many of us have gotten into this problem trying, somehow, to make ourselves acceptable to God, and we've gotten into this thing called perfectionism. Now, you may not think that this applies to you, but stay tuned.

All right. We're in a series on grace. Read Galatians 3 and verse 3: "*Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*" (Galatians 3:3). Then, 1 Corinthians 15 verses 9 and 10—here's the Apostle Paul: "*For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not*

I, but the grace of God which was [within] me—or, “*which was with me*” (1 Corinthians 15:9–10).

Now, *perfect* is a beautiful word, but *perfectionism* is an ugly word. What is perfectionism? Well, perfectionism is that disease of judging yourself by your achievements. Now, we’re not here to teach psychology—certainly not humanistic psychology—but I want you to listen to how a psychologist described perfectionism: “perfectionists are those whose standards are beyond reach or reason—people who strain compulsively and unremittingly toward impossible goals and who measure their own self worth entirely in terms of productivity and accomplishment.” Does that apply to you—“I judge myself by how I perform; and, therefore, I must perform”?

The key words for the perfectionists are these: “I must, I should, I ought.” And, there are perfectionists around us. They’re miserable people; they’re caught in a trap. They do not understand the grace of God. **One man joked that his wife was such a perfectionist—when he’d get up in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom, he’d come back and his side of the bed would be made up. He said that she had such an aversion to mess that she put newspapers under the cuckoo clock. There are people like that. They are compulsive; they are driven.**

I. The Ruin of Perfectionism

I want you to notice today—and we’re talking about the grace of God, and just studying for this message liberated me—I want you to see, first of all, what I want to call the *ruin of perfectionism*. “*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you...? ...having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*” (Galatians 3:1–3). Perfectionism is a thief: it promises rewards, but it steals joy and it steals satisfaction. Why? Because perfectionism is an unattainable goal. There are no perfect people in this present world. Therefore, if you are a perfectionist, you have set an impossible goal for yourself; and, therefore, you will be constantly faced with frustration and failure.

A. It Can Harm Your Relationship with Yourself

Now remember, if you get the idea in your head that God is going to accept you on the basis of your performance, do you see what a trap that is? Think about it. If you get in your mind that God is going to accept you on the basis of your performance—your quiet time, your Bible study, your giving, your witnessing, your holy life—if you get that in your mind, do you see what a trap that is? Because you will never know if you’ve done enough—you’ll never know if you’ve done enough. You will never, ever truly feel accepted.

B. It Can Harm Your Relationship with God

You see, folks, if we could achieve perfection, we wouldn’t need a Savior. And, if you’re

a perfectionist and caught up in the performance trap, number one, you may end up angry with God because things don't work out just right, everything is not neat, everything is not perfect—a tree fell on your house—and something is going to happen that's going to make you, perhaps, a little angry with God. Maybe you're going to be afraid of God. You couldn't please your parents; and now, you can't please God.

We get the idea that God is up there in Heaven sitting on a white throne, and He's judging us. He's sort of a spiritual terrorist. He's sort of a angry parent. He's sort of a hard-nosed schoolteacher, and He's saying, "David gets a C-. Bob did terrible. Scotty did all right, but he sure could do better." And, that's the idea that we get of God. He's up there doing this, and we're never able to live up to the demands that we have placed upon ourselves. We begun in the Spirit, we got saved, and now we're trying to prove to God just how good we can be.

You'd say, "Well, at least, Pastor Rogers, you'll get a lot more done." Did you know that perfectionists are not the most productive? Did you know that? As a matter of fact, I read—in preparing for this message, I read—an interesting statistic: that those who are perfectionists...as they graded—psychologists graded— these people, and they found that on an average they earn \$15,000 a year less than normal people. I mean, these people are trying harder because they're spending so much detail time and spending so much time polishing gnat's eyelashes that they never really get down to what really counts.

C. It Can Harm Your Relationship with Others

But, not only will perfectionism harm you and take the joy out of your life, and you never really feel accepted before God, but it harms others. I mean, a perfectionist is intolerable of failure in other people; therefore, he's intolerable to live with. Pity the man married to a perfectionist—pity the woman married to a perfectionist—because you never, ever will please your mate, because they're not pleased with themselves and they're not pleased with you. God have mercy upon children whose parents are perfectionists. These parents want their children to be perfect so they can prove to all the world that they are perfect parents.

Norman Wright, a Christian counselor, gives this example—I want you to listen to it; I copied it down verbatim: "June's home was a showcase. The furnishings, the decor, even the *Architectural Digest* magazines fanned out on the coffee table were perfect. The drapes were hung without the slightest sag. Each picture was placed at the same height to the exact millimeter. Even her pantry was alphabetized. Nothing was irregular in this house except, perhaps, the woman whose perfectionism was evident in her surroundings. She constantly drove herself and her offspring to maintain an immaculate house, but her children had difficulty relaxing and enjoying the house. Rarely did they

bring their friends over a second time. June paid meticulous attention to details. She was precise in everything she did, but it was never enough. She always felt her home and her children fell short of the mark. Whenever guests showered her with compliments, she beamed, but the satisfaction never lasted. ‘It could be better.’ Unfortunately, the amount of time June spent maintaining a showcase home was far out of the proportion to the result. As a perfectionist, her standards were too high—impossibly high—and it is likely that her parents’ standards were just as lofty, programming her to accept nothing less than perfection; and now, she’s passing this malady on to her children as well.”

The perfectionist—he holds standards that he does not reach for himself, and he judges others by not reaching those standards. One of the finest things that you could learn to do would be to let others know that you are not perfect, and they’ll relax a little bit—not because they learn it but because they learn that you’ve learned it. They already knew it—they already knew it. **One man was standing up in a testimony meeting, and one of these denominations believe in spiritual perfection that you—sinless perfection—that you can reach a state in life where you never sin any more. And, he was standing up giving this testimony about that he never sinned, and he went on and on and on. After a while, a little woman stood up in the back of the church; it was his wife. She said, “Remember John, I’m here.” You see, they already know this. Perfectionism harms others.**

D. It Can Harm a Church

And friend, it can ruin a church. **One man was going around looking for a church. “Well,” he said, “what kind of church are you looking for?” He said, “Well, I’m looking for a perfect church.” His friend said, “There’s no such thing; but if you happen to find one, don’t join it—you’d ruin it.” And, that is true. There are no perfect churches. A church is a fellowship of sinners saved by grace, who understand that’s what they are. And, I tell our new members when I speak to them, “The church is the only organization I know of that you have to confess to be bad before you can join, unless it’s Hell’s Angels.” I mean, you have to say, “Look, I am somewhere in progress, in process, but I am not yet perfect.”**

Do you get the idea that a perfect church would be a church filled with perfect people? Did you ever get that idea? It wouldn’t be. I mean, if everybody in this church—if all of the people out here today—were all Spirit-filled, walking in perfection, this church would be a miserable failure. Why? That’d be like saying, “The perfect society is the society where there are no babies, where there are no children. The perfect home is the home that never has any children—no dirty noses, no dirty diapers, no fingerprints on the windowpane.” That’s not a perfect home.

Friend, a perfect church—a wonderful church—is a church where you have people who are in all stages of progression, who are growing. I mean, who's going to teach these people? Who's going to minister to these people? Who's going to help them to grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? A perfectionist in the church, boy—he is a miserable person, and he makes everybody else miserable. The fellowship is never sweet enough for him. A teacher is never prepared enough for him. The sermon is never good enough for him. The music is never spiritual enough for him (or for her).

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, didn't Jesus say, *'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father...in heaven is perfect'* (Matthew 5:48)?” Yes, He said that. But, even there, the word *telosk* does not mean, “without fault.” It has the idea of being complete. It has the idea of being whole. It has the idea of wholesome. It has the idea of maturity. Friend, Jesus supplies the only perfection that you will ever obtain 'til you get to Heaven. And, you need to understand that it is not perfection that God is looking for from His children; it is excellence—excellence.

II. The Revelation of Perfectionism

Now, let me talk to you a little bit about the revelation of perfectionism—the marks of it. You want to take a test? Want to see whether you've got it? Not everybody does, but a great number of people here—and the man behind the pulpit, this morning—have a strong tendency toward it. All right, now, now listen—let me give you some tests.

A. Are You an Idealist or a Realist?

Number one: Are you an idealist or you a realist? The perfectionist is an idealist; the person who has excellence is a realist. Now, Jesus was not an idealist; He was a realist. I mean, He knew human nature, and He said to His disciples, “I have many things to tell you, but you're not able to bear them, right now.” (John 16:12) Jesus looked at people this way. Jesus, when He looked at Simon Peter, He knew that Simon Peter was going to deny Him. Jesus was not surprised at what was in human nature. But, the perfectionist is an idealist; he's not a realist.

B. Do You Set Impossible Goals for Yourself and for Others and Then Fail to Fulfill Them?

Secondly, do you set impossible goals for yourself and for others and then fail to fulfill them? For example, have you said, “I'm going to lose 30 pounds in a month.” You've never lost 30 pounds in all your life, yet you set this goal. Well, the perfectionist does this. He constantly sets unattainable goals for himself.

And yet, I want you to notice the wisdom of the Bible. When God told the children of Israel to go take the land of Canaan, you would have thought that perhaps He would

have said, “Now listen, go in there, and you clean all those Canaanites out, and you just take this land all at one time, and don’t you let up, back up, shut up, until you have taken it all and taken it right away.” But, that isn’t what He said. In my quiet time the other day, I came across this verse, and it really blessed me—Exodus 23, verses 29 and following: God says, concerning Canaanites, *“I will not drive them out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land”* (Exodus 23:29–30). God said, “You’re not going to get it all right away. You’re not going to get in a year. You’re going to take the land of Canaan little by little.” Now, the perfectionist wouldn’t like that verse at all.

C. Do You Try to Be the Best or to Do Your Best?

Let me ask you another question: Do you try to be the best or to do your best? A perfectionist has to be the best. He has to be number one. He’s unsatisfied if somebody has attained more, if somebody does a better job, if someone’s house is decorated a little better, if someone’s yard is a little neater, if somebody’s car is a little cleaner. He can’t stand that. He’s got to be number one. He can’t accept himself.

But, I want you to listen to a key verse that deals with perfectionism: Romans chapter 12, verses 3 and 4. Now, Paul is talking about grace; and remember, Paul said, “I am what I am by the grace of God”—“I am what I am by the grace of God” (1 Corinthians 15:10). Paul had accepted himself. But now, listen to what he says to us—Romans 12, verses 3 and 4: *“For I say, through the grace give unto me”*—now, catch the word *grace*—*“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). That is, don’t think with such lofty thoughts that you can never attain to them; but, on the other hand, understand that by the grace of God you are what you are.

The grace of God exalts a man without inflating him, and it humbles a man without debasing him. The person who has excellence says, “I am what I am by the grace of God.” The person who’s a perfectionist says, “I ought to be what I am not and perhaps never could be.” Do you value yourself by what you do or by what you are? See, this is what we’re talking about. Do you try to be the best or to do your best?

Remember when Jesus was visiting Mary and Martha? Mary was sitting there at the feet of Jesus. Martha came up with flour up her elbows. She’d been in the kitchen, perspiration on her brow. She says, “Jesus, pardon me, I know You and Mary are... I know ya’ll are having a discussion on all this. Ya’ll are having a little Bible conference there. But Jesus, would You tell Mary to come in the kitchen and help me?” Remember that? I really believe that Martha was a perfectionist. I think she probably had a

subscription to *Better Homes and Gardens*. But, do you know what? “Mary,” Jesus said, “had chosen the better part.” Mary had accepted who she was and who Jesus was, and Jesus was far more pleased with Mary’s devotion than Martha’s meatloaf. Really? We need to understand this, friend: that we don’t have to be the best; we have to just simply do our best—to be what we are by the grace of God.

D. Are You Project-Minded or Process-Minded?

Let me ask you another question: Are you project-minded or process-minded? “Well,” you say, “what’s the difference?” Well, a perfectionist—he always has goals out there, and he’s always striving to reach those goals. He’s discontent until the project is done; but when the project is done, he’s never satisfied with it. And, he always starts another one. He is afraid of success; success, to him, would ruin everything. So, he just keeps on pushing. Or, perhaps he won’t even start a project, because his procrastination says that it’s got to be perfect and he knows he can’t obtain it. And, both of these are heads and tails of same coin.

Are you, ladies, married to a man—when you start on a trip, his idea is to get to where you’re going? And, you’re not going to stop for groceries, you’re not going to stop for a restroom, you’re not going to stop for anything else, because this man—*mmm*—“We’re going.” And, when he gets there—“We got to go home”—*mmm*. You know anybody like that? That’s the perfectionist. I mean, your bladder could be giving you pains, but he’s not going to stop. That’s the person who never learns to enjoy the trip. He never learns to look, to pull out, to stop over, because he is so project-minded. He’s the kind of guy that’ll turn on the outside lights and mow the yard at midnight. I mean, it’s got to get finished—projects and things. But, Jesus said in Matthew 6:33: “*seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*” The Bible says in Psalm 127 and verse 2: “*It is vain...to rise up early, to [stay] up late, to eat the bread of sorrows*” (Psalm 127:2).

E. Do You Dwell on Failure, or Do You Learn from It?

Let me ask you another question: Do you dwell on failure, or do you simply learn from it? A perfectionist can’t let go of his failures; he just can’t do it. He feels that he has to punish himself because he failed. After all, God will not forgive him, so why should he forgive himself? But, the apostle who said, “I am what I am by the grace of God”—he said, “I persecuted the Church. I made havoc of the Church. But, I am what I am by the grace of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9–10)—he was able to let go. He said in Philippians 3, verse 13: “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are [present], I press toward the mark for the prize*” (Philippians 3:13–14). Have you been able to let go of the past? You say, “What a fool I was! What a fool I was!” Why don’t

you start saying, “What a fool I am for saying what a fool I was”? Learn this: you can fail and not be a failure. The perfectionist can’t let go of the past.

F. Do You Resent Criticism, or Do You Learn from It?

Let me tell you this: Do you resent criticism, or do you learn from it? Well, if you really want to make a perfectionist angry, criticize him or her. Now, he deeply resents criticism because it only affirms and confirms his most painful thought: “I am not perfect.” And, the perfectionist wants to be loved above all things. If he gets the idea that somebody doesn’t like him, his own life is ruined—it comes crashing down. But, I want you to think of the Apostle Paul, who said, “I am what I am by the grace of God” (1 Corinthians 15:10). He said in 1 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 3: *“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment”* (1 Corinthians 4:3). That doesn’t blow me out of the water. You see, a healthy person is not shipwrecked by some criticism. As a matter of fact, he’ll learn from it.

III. The Release from Perfectionism

Now, let me come to the third and the happy part of this thing. How do we get free of this? And friend, it’s in all of us. Sometimes it’s put in by over-demanding parents. We get our concept of God from our concept of our parents. And, if you are raised by a perfectionist mother or a perfectionist father, or if you came out of a very narrow doctrinaire type of preaching, you may have had a person who has motivated you by guilt, not by grace. And, if I have ever stood up in this pulpit and motivated you to give, or to win souls, or to anything out of guilt, please forgive me—please forgive me—because that’s not the way God moves; that’s not the way God works. Maybe, maybe, it’s the church background you’ve come from—the family background. Maybe it’s just the way you’re wired psychologically. But, what is the freedom now? What is this grace of God that we’ve been talking about—God’s amazing grace—where you can say, “I am what I am by the grace of God”?

Learn by God’s grace that He has already accepted you—He has already accepted you by grace. Here’s your verse; put it down—Ephesians 1, verse 6: *“To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved”* (Ephesians 1:6). You don’t have to earn acceptance. That acceptance comes by grace, and that’s the reason when you learn this grace, you want to praise God for this grace—*“to the praise of the glory of his grace”* (Ephesians 1:6). Don’t get the idea that God is making a list of how many quiet times you’ve had, how much Bible study you’ve had, how many chapters... You know, “A chapter a day keeps the devil away. If I don’t do my quiet time, I’m going to get the Hong Kong colic.” And, it’s an awful thing.

I used to come on Sunday mornings as a young preacher, feeling, “O God, I didn’t

pray enough. O God, I didn't study enough. O God, I'm not ready to preach"—and absolutely totally defeated, thinking, "If I could have just done a little more, if I could have just worked a little harder, if I could have just prayed a little more..." How wonderful to learn that I am accepted by God's grace! God is not the God of push and shove. God is not the God of more and more, faster and faster, harder and harder.

*Grace is God's acceptance of us; faith is our acceptance of God's acceptance of us—
grace is God's acceptance of us; faith is our acceptance of God's acceptance of us.*

I have noticed that there are some people who just can't get the assurance of their salvation. I mean, they're always saying, "Well, you know, I just don't feel saved." And, they're constantly coming to get saved again. They've been baptized so many times the tadpoles know their social security number. Do you know what these people's problems are, primarily? It is not a spiritual problem; it is a psychological problem—it's a psychological problem. They cannot accept the fact that God has accepted them.

One of the greatest songs ever written—we sing it a lot around here:

Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bidst me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come (Charlotte Elliott).

"To the praise and glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6). What a wonderful song!

You remember the story in the Old Testament in 2 Samuel 9? It's the story of a man named Mephibosheth. Mephibosheth—that's a hard name to say. I've never met a baby... I've met some named Peter, Paul, Philip, Bartholomew. I've never met a baby named Mephibosheth, but it's a good name—just hard to say. But, David and Jonathan in the Old Testament made a blood covenant that meant they would love one another, and everything that David had belonged to Jonathan, and everything that Jonathan had belonged to David. And, this covenant pertained not only to David and Jonathan but to their offspring.

Now, Jonathan's father was King Saul, who hated David and tried to kill David. Saul died, and then Jonathan died; and David is now the king. Now, Jonathan had a son, and Jonathan's son was Mephibosheth, And, David became king, and he came to Jerusalem there to the royal palace. And, David said—he called a counselor, and he said, "Is there anybody here left of the house of Saul?" They said, "Ah..." The purge is about to begin, but they didn't understand what David was up to. He said, "Is there anybody here that's left of the house of Saul, that I may show the kindness of God to him for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Samuel 9:3). Jonathan—remember, David was in a blood covenant with Jonathan. "That I may show the kindness of God unto him for Jonathan's sake?" (2 Samuel 9:3). And, there was an old servant there named Ziba, and Ziba

spoke up and said, “Well, yes. There is one. David had a son. He’s crippled; he’s lame in his feet. His name is Mephibosheth. He’s in a dark, dingy, dusty hideaway in a place called Lodebar.”

Now, he had fled out there because he was afraid that David might come and get him; and all of his life, he was afraid of David. David said, “Go bring him.” And so, the royal entourage comes up to this dusty hideout, and old Mephibosheth pulls his crippled body up the window; and he sees it’s the king’s company, and he said, “He’s found me. This is it—this is it. He’s going to kill me because I’m of the house of Saul. I’m a son of Jonathan.” He didn’t know about the blood covenant. And, old Mephibosheth is taken before King David, and there’s King David on his throne. Mephibosheth’s crutches, perhaps, just go out beneath him, falls on the floor, little old weak knees can’t hold him up. He has a crippled body. He sits there quivering like a bird in a trap, as if to say, “David, get it over with. Be merciful. Kill me.”

And, David says, “Oh no, I don’t want to kill you. You’re a king’s son. I want to share your inheritance. I want to show you kindness. I want you to eat at my table like one of my sons.” Mephiboshath can’t take it in. And, he says in the Scripture, “Why would you do this to a dead dog like I am?” (2 Samuel 9:8). That’s what he called himself—a dead dog. And, here’s what David said: David said, “Mephiboshath, I’m not doing this for you; I’m doing it for Jonathan. I’m doing it for Jonathan’s sake. I made a covenant with your father.” And, Mephibosheth says, “You mean it?” And, at that moment, Mephibosheth had to accept or reject the covenant. What do you think he did? He said, “Well, I don’t understand it. I can’t explain it. But, I like it; let’s do it.”

And so, here, the next morning, this guy who had been in that old dusty dingy hideout way up there in the backwoods hating David and fearing David—the next morning, he awakens on silken sheets. He’s got servants all around him. They say, “What time would my Lord Mephibosheth like his bath? What robe would my Lord Mephiboshath like to wear? What would my Lord Mephiboshath like for breakfast, this morning?” And, there he is—he comes down to breakfast the king’s son, and he sits there at that table with that white linen tablecloth. And, those shriveled legs beneath that tablecloth cannot even be seen by the whiteness of that cloth. He looks around. He says to himself, “You know, I don’t really understand all this, but I sure like it. Pass the marmalade.” And, as the marmalade is passed, he looks on David’s wrist, and there’s a scar where David and Jonathan made a blood covenant. He understands—it’s all because of a blood covenant.

You say, “What does that have to do with us?” The Bible says, “*To the praise of the glory of [God’s] grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*” (Ephesians 1:6). And, the Bible says, “*Be ye kind...tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you*” (Ephesians 4:32). Now, get this—David, for

Jonathan's sake, received Mephibosheth. God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you. The devil will get you in an argument, and the devil will tell you you're not good enough, you haven't done enough, you don't deserve it. Don't argue with him. He's right. Just point him to the blood covenant and step out of the way. Let him argue with God. Friend, you're not accepted on the basis of who you are but what He did—what He did. It's grace.

Paul said, "I made havoc of the Church of God, but I am what I am by the grace of God" (1 Corinthians 15:9–10). When you understand this, friend, it frees you—not to do less; you do more, but it's oh so different. Now, you're burning the oil and not the wick. Friend, now you're doing what you do as unto God. You have been freed from the performance trap. Learn to accept God's grace. And then, learn to accept yourself, because if God has accepted you, you can accept you. You can say, "I am what I am by the grace of God."

And then, you know what? Do you know what? You'll be able to accept others, and you'll stop being so horsy, and you'll stop being so demanding, and you'll stop being so critical, and you'll stop being so judgmental, and you'll begin to be more loving. And, when you are, you'll raise a lot better kids than any perfectionistic parent ever raised. And, you'll have a better husband, and a better wife, and a finer home, and you'll get a lot more joy when you can say, "I am what I am by the grace of God." *"O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you? ...Are [you] so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, [to think that you'll be] made perfect [in] the flesh?"* (Galatians 3:1–3). "I am what I am by the grace of God" (1 Corinthians 15:10). Does that mean that I won't work? Does that mean that I won't serve? Does that mean that I'm going to be lazy—slovenly? Does that mean that I hold a lower standard? No, my standard is excellence. But, I am what I am by the grace of God.

Conclusion

Father, seal the message to our hearts. Now, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed—no one stirring, no one looking—if you're not certain that you're saved today, I want to help you to be saved. Did you know that you can step today from death to life, from judgment to salvation? Today, you can be saved by the grace of God. I mean, right now, you can receive God's grace. The Bible says, *"For by grace are [you] saved through faith"* (Ephesians 2:8). Would you like to put your faith in the God of all grace? Would you pray like this, while your head is bowed?

"Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know that You want to save me. Lord, I'm a sinner, and I need to be saved. I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. I believe He died on the cross for my sin. And, I open my heart. I trust You, Jesus, now. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, save me, Lord Jesus"—pray that from your heart—"Save me,

Lord Jesus. Save me, Lord Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Then, by faith, pray this way: “Thank You for saving me. I don’t deserve it. I’ll never earn it, but I receive it as the gift of Your grace. And, I’ll love You and live for You the rest of my life. And, help me, Jesus, to never be ashamed of You. In Your wonderful name I pray. Amen.”

If There Had Been No Easter

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 12, 1987

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:12–20

Outline

Introduction

- I. Preaching Would Be Profitless
- II. Faith Would Be Foolish
- III. The Disciples Would Be Deceivers
- IV. Sin Would Be Sovereign
- V. Death Would Have Dominion
- VI. The Future Would Be Futile

Conclusion

Introduction

This morning, would you take God's Word and turn with me to 1 Corinthians 15. And we're going to be thinking on this subject: "If There Had Been No Easter." In just a minute, I want to share with you from the Word of God. But before I share with you from the Bible, I want to ask you a question:

Have you ever heard of a man named Harry Houdini? Many of you have. He died in October of 1926. But his claim to fame was that he was a magician who specialized in spectacular escapes. As a matter of fact, he was said to have laughed at locks and to have sneered at fetters. They said of Harry that he had the flexibility of an eel; he had the lives of a cat. They did all kinds of things to try to incarcerate him. They would seal him in coffins—he would escape. They riveted him into a boiler—he escaped. They sewed him up in canvas bags—he escaped. They locked him in a milk can—he escaped. They sealed him in a beer barrel—he escaped. They put him in a maximum-security prison, and old Harry somehow got out. But then, in October 1926, Old Man Death laid his hands upon Harry Houdini, and put him in a grave; and, he has yet to escape. As a matter of fact, he told his wife, "If there is any way out, I will find it. If there is any way out, I'll make contact with you—and, we'll do it on the anniversary of my death." For 10 years, she kept a light burning over his portrait. At the end of 10 years, she turned out the light. Death had Harry, and he couldn't escape.

Death laid his hands on the Lord Jesus Christ, also. And Death put Jesus in a rock-hewn tomb. And there was a stone in the mouth of that tomb, and the seal of the Roman government was placed upon that tomb. But on the third day, Jesus Christ stirred Himself. He rose from the sleep of death. And He left those grave clothes that

were wrapped around him like a butterfly would forsake a cocoon. And Jesus Christ passed through the walls of that rock-hewn tomb. By the way, the stone wasn't rolled away to let Jesus out—it was rolled away to let the disciples in to see that Jesus had come back.

And Jesus Christ is alive. He is not behind us in a tomb; He is before us on a throne. We thank God for that. But I want to ask you a question: Suppose that had not happened. Suppose Death still held Jesus, like it does Harry. Then, what? Suppose there had been no Easter.

Well, the Apostle Paul talks about that, and I want you to see what he's talking about here in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, verses 12 to 20. The Apostle Paul asks a question: *"Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept"* (1 Corinthians 15:12–20).

Now the Apostle Paul mentions a thing unthinkable. The thing unthinkable is this: suppose there had been no Easter; suppose Jesus Christ is still in that grave. If that is true, he says there are six tragic things that you need to consider—if there is no Easter.

I. Preaching Would Be Profitless

The very first of these is that preaching is profitless. Look, if you will, in verse 14: *"And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain"* (1 Corinthians 15:14). Now the word *vain* means, "empty; futile; with no purpose; a colossal waste of time." Listen. Ladies and gentlemen, if there is no Easter, then you and I are wasting our time by being here; I'm wasting my time by preaching, and you are wasting yours by listening, and we all ought to do something else.

Our preaching is vain. It is futile. It is worthless. It is profitless. There is no profit in it, if Christ is still in the grave. Why is that? Because, ladies and gentlemen, the heart of the gospel is this—do you want me to tell you what the gospel is? You'll find it in the first few verses of 1 Corinthians chapter 15. It is that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He was raised again on the third day, according to the Scriptures. And the Apostle Paul says, friend, this is the gospel. And there is no preacher who can preach the gospel, unless he preaches the resurrection of Jesus. And without that,

preaching it's profitless; a man might as well not preach. We'll just close up shop and go home.

One poor, misguided, benighted preacher stood in his pulpit and said, as some try to say today, that the body of Jesus Christ still lies in a nameless tomb grave, but His deathless spirit marches onward. Do you know what that man ought to do? He ought to get out of the pulpit and get an honest job. That's what he ought to do. If he doesn't believe that Jesus Christ came out of that grave, then his preaching is vain, vacuous, empty, meaningless, and futile. If Christ be not raised, then our preaching is vain.

II. Faith Would Be Foolish

And then, he mentions something else in verse 14: Not only is preaching profitless, but faith is foolish, if Christ is still in the grave. Notice he goes on to say, in verse 14: *"And your faith is also vain"* (1 Corinthians 15:14). That is, you're trusting something that doesn't deserve your trust. I mean, who wants to put his faith in Jesus, if Jesus is dead? It's not enough to believe that Christ died for your sins, if you don't believe that God raised Him, also, from the dead. Your faith is vain. The Bible says, *"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and...believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, [then] thou shalt be saved"* (Romans 10:9). But if you don't believe that God raised Him from the dead, then your faith is foolish.

You see, this is the difference between Jesus Christ and the other founders of the other religions: They lived; they died; they are dead. Jesus lived; He died; and, He rose again. Friend, there is no need to follow a loser. Jesus has escaped death. And the Bible says—the Apostle Paul said it in Romans 1:4: *"[He is] declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead."* How do I know He is the Son of God? How do I know that He can save me? How do I know the Bible is true? How do I know the promises of God are yea and amen in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 1:20)? I'll tell you how: God brought Him from the dead, and that was God's stamp of approval on all that He said, and did, and taught. He was shown to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. We don't serve a dead Savior. A dead Savior is nobody's Savior.

A little boy was in the classroom, and the teacher gave this assignment: Write an essay on the world's greatest living man. Some wrote about the President. Others wrote about members of Congress. Some wrote about people in the entertainment world. Some wrote about people in the sports world. Some wrote about scientists and philosophers. But one little boy—this little boy—wrote about Jesus Christ, an essay on Jesus Christ. When the teacher received the paper, she said, "Son, that's a nice paper, but you misunderstood the assignment—I said the world's greatest living man." He said, "But teacher, He is alive."

He is alive. We don't serve a dead Savior. But listen. If Christ be not raised, then preaching is profitless. If Christ be not raised, then faith is foolish—to trust somebody who is dead and can do nothing for you.

III. The Disciples Would Be Deceivers

The third thing I want to say is, friend, that, if Christ be not raised, then the disciples are deceivers. Look, if you will please, in this passage of Scripture, as we continue to read in verse 15—Paul says: *“Yea, and we are found”*—now underscore this—*“false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not”* (1 Corinthians 15:15). Now I want you to catch the gist of Paul's argument. Paul is not saying that, if Christ is still in the grave, then we were mistaken. That's not what he says. He has said that. If Christ has not been raised, then we are false witnesses. Do you know what a false witness is? That's somebody who gets in a courtroom, and knowingly, willingly, deliberately perjures himself, and becomes a liar. A liar! He commits perjury. He tells a lie. He is a false witness. He knows better.

Now friend, I want you to understand what Paul is saying. Paul is saying we have testified that Jesus Christ is alive. We have seen Him. Many of the disciples talked with Him; they ate with Him; they fellowshiped with Him; they touched Him; they handled Him—all after His resurrection. “Well,” you say, “Pastor, how do you know they didn't just make it up? How do you know that they didn't just boast up a good story about Jesus Christ, to save face?” I'll tell you how I know. Friend, most of these disciples paid with their very lives—blood—for their testimony and for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. They suffered; they bled; they died—because they believed in Jesus Christ.

Now listen to me. Hypocrites *and* martyrs *are not made of the same stuff*. *A man may live for a lie, but few will die for a lie*. But these people testified. They said, “He's alive; we know He's alive.” And they sealed their testimony—many of them—with their lives.

But you're faced with this conclusion: that, if Jesus Christ is still in that grave, then those disciples were liars, and fakes, and frauds, and con artists. Are you going to tell me the Apostle Paul was a knave? Are you going to tell me that Peter was a rascal? Are you going to tell me that John was a liar, and that these people have pawned off onto the world a colossal fraud? Common sense says *no*. But you'll have to accept that as the conclusion, if Christ is still in the grave.

IV. Sin Would Be Sovereign

But now watch. Fourthly, if there be no Easter, if Christ is still in that grave, here's another tragic affect: Sin is sovereign, if Christ is still in the grave. Look in verse 17, if

you will: *“And if Christ be not raised your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins”* (1 Corinthians 15:17). What does that mean? That means, ladies and gentlemen, that, if Christ is still in the grave, then God did not accept the payment for your sin. Because, you see, when God raised Him up, that was the proof positive that full payment had been made. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul said, in Romans 4:25: *“[He] was delivered up for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”* Now what that means is that He died for our sins, but that was incomplete until God raised Him from the dead—*“delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”*

Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ, I wouldn’t give you half a hallelujah for your hope of Heaven. The fact that He died for you is not important, unless He also rose from the dead, which was the stamp of approval and authenticity upon the full payment for your sins. No resurrection—no Savior. No Savior—no forgiveness. No forgiveness—no justification. No justification—no cleansing. No cleansing—the penalty of your sin is upon you. If the penalty of your sin is still upon you, then you are destined for death and Hell, and you’re still in your sins.

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;

Buried, He carried my sins far away;

Rising, He justified freely forever;

One day He’s coming—O glorious day! (J. Wilburn Chapman)

Thank God that we’re no longer in our sins, because we have a risen Savior who has paid the price for our sins.

V. Death Would Have Dominion

Now I want to mention another consequence if there be no Easter: If Christ is still in the grave, then not only is sin sovereign, but, my dear friend, death also has dominion. Look, if you will please, in verse 18: *“Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished”* (1 Corinthians 15:18). Your mother, your father, your children, and your loved ones—they are dead and gone. You’ll never see them again. They are in the grave to rot—to decay. That’s it—it’s over; it’s ended. Death has won, and life is a colossal bad dream.

Are you going to ask me to believe that the Intelligence that created this universe intends for it all to run down into the grave—that we are born crying, live complaining, and die disappointed? That’s it? I mean, all we can hope for—any of us—is to get sicker, and sicker, and sicker, until we die; and, it all just ends in a veil of tears, and we rot and decay in the ground—that’s it? I’m supposed to believe that? That some great grand scheme of things—that made an entire universe and created something called man—is to cause us all just to die? And Death is a monster that has dominion? No friend, I can’t believe that. I can’t accept that.

Yesterday, I went out to a home, because one of the members of our church—his wife of many, many years died suddenly this past week. And I went out to put my arms around that good and godly man to pray for him. And I want to tell you, though I saw sorrow on his face, I saw the light and the hope of Heaven in his eyes, as we prayed and talked. We talked about that grand reunion there on the other shore.

I'm so everlastingly glad that I have that kind of a gospel to preach. I'm so glad that it doesn't all just end in a veil of tears, as we say goodbye—never, never, never, never to meet again—and our loved ones have perished, and that's it. Oh no, my friend.

In Rome, the Christians were persecuted—in the Colosseum, and in the Roman Circus—and were made sport of—put to death—so that they had to move underground. Many times, they met under the ground in the catacombs. There are miles and miles of tunnels dug underneath the surface of the city of Rome, and these catacombs are about four-, seven-, or eight-feet wide, and about eight-feet tall. I've walked through many of them. I've walked close to a mile in the catacombs.

On the walls of the catacombs are niches, dug out, where they buried their dead. Not only did the Christians bury their dead there, but the pagans also buried their dead there. And read the inscriptions on those tombs—oh my, dear friend—then you're going to find out the difference between hope and hopelessness. Listen to what some of those pagans said when they put inscriptions upon the tombs of those dead, departed loved ones. One said, "Live for the present hour, since we're sure of nothing else." Another: "I will lift up my hands against the gods who took me away at the age of 20, though I had done no harm." Another: "Once I was not, and now I am not." Here's another: "Traveler, curse me if you pass, for I am in darkness and cannot answer." How different from the words placed upon the tombs of the Christians—words like this: "Here lies Marcy, put to rest in a dream of peace." Or, here's another: "Lawrence, to his sweetest son, carried away by the angels." Here's another: "He went away in peace." And another: "Victorious in peace, and in Christ."

What a difference it makes! What a difference—because Christ has been raised!

A seminary professor lost his wife when she was a young woman. She died an untimely death. He had a little preschool boy with him. He went to take that preschool boy to the funeral home to see the body of his beloved wife. They had embalmed her beautifully. She was there—almost lifelike. The little boy looked at his mother, and the dad tried to explain to him this inexplicable thing called death, and tried to tell the little boy that they would not see Mommy again, until they saw Mommy in Heaven. The little boy couldn't understand death; he wasn't familiar with death. He said, "No, Daddy; you're wrong. Mommy is just asleep. I've seen her like that plenty of times. She's asleep. She can wake up." And then, he began to say, "Wake up, Mommy! Wake up, Mommy! Mommy, wake up! Wake up, mommy!" And with tears, that professor put his

hand on the shoulder of that little preschool boy, and said, “Son, you can’t wake her up, but when Jesus comes, He’ll wake her up.”

Friend, He will—He will. *“The dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,”* dear friend, *“to meet the Lord in the air”* (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

VI. The Future Would Be Futile

But I’m telling you, dear friend, if there be no Easter, then Death has dominion—Death has conquered. I’ll tell you something else—here’s the next tragic result if there be no Easter: not only does Death have dominion, but also, the future is futile. Notice, in verse 19, what the Apostle Paul has to say: *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Corinthians 15:19). What does that mean? That means, folks, that, if this is all there is, then it is just bad news. The good times are but for a moment, and it’s going to get worse. You’re going to get sicker. You’re going to have problems. You’re going to get infirm. Some greedy malady—some disease—is going to begin to gnaw away at your body. One by one, you will see your loved ones stripped away by death.

Ernest Hemingway said, “It’s as though we are a colony of ants living on one end of a burning log.” I mean, you think about the people who are without Jesus: I mean, what do they look forward to—a hole in the ground? I don’t believe you ought to drink and get drunk. But friend, if I didn’t know Jesus, then I think I might get drunk and stay drunk. I’m not recommending that. I’m recommending that you know Jesus. I am recommending that you come to Christ.

Listen. Without Christ, *“we are of all men most miserable.”* This whole thing of time and space is a bad joke. It makes no sense, and it’s chaotic, if Christ be not raised. The future is fearful and futile, if Christ be not raised. But friend, I want to tell you, He has been raised. Notice verse 20: *“But now is Christ risen from the dead”* (1 Corinthians 15:20). And because He is, preaching is profitable; faith is feasible; the disciples are dependable; sin is subdued; death is defeated; and, the future is fabulous—because Christ has been raised from the dead. He has taken the sting out of sin. He has taken the gloom out of the grave. He has taken the dread out of death. And He has given to us a hope that is steadfast and sure.

Conclusion

Years ago, I heard a fable about a spider who saw a great massive lion go into a cave. The spider was envious of the great King of the Jungle, and the spider said to himself, “I will imprison that lion—that beast—in this cave.” So while the lion was asleep in the cave, the spider began to spin a web across the mouth of that cave. Back and forth, and

up and down, he spun, and spun, and spun, until he almost spun himself away. And then, the little spider sat down by the side of the tomb—by the side of that cave, as it was—and said, “Now the mighty beast is my prisoner. No longer will he seek his prey in the dark of the night in the jungle. No longer will he bask in the golden sunlight. Now I have taken him captive. He is my slave.”

But the old lion awoke from his nap, shook the dust from his mane, gave a yawn, stretched himself, and then let out a roar that echoed through the valley and over the hill. Then, he walked out of that cave and never even knew that the spider’s web was there.

Infidelity and hate wove a web of unbelief across the tomb of our Savior Jesus Christ. But the Lion of the Tribe of Judah has risen from the dead, and He’s never even known that the devil’s flimsy web was there. Jesus is alive. He’s alive, and He lives in my heart.

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified, freely forever;
One day He’s coming—O glorious day! (J. Wilburn Chapman)

What If There Had Been No Easter?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 20, 2003

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:12–20

Outline

Introduction

- I. Preaching Would Be Profitless
- II. Faith Would Be Foolish
- III. The Disciples Would Have Been Deceivers
- IV. Sin Would Be Sovereign
- V. Death Would Have Dominion
- VI. The Future Would Be Fearful

Conclusion

Introduction

First Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 9: *“Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him”* (1 Corinthians 2:9). Thank God there is something that goes beyond our imagination, and it is God’s wonderful, wonderful provision for those who die in the Lord. Hallelujah for that!

I want you to use your imagination. I want you to imagine pale King Death and whiskered Father Time as they have a conversation outside the empty tomb. My daughter Janice is going to share with you:

Father Time met pale King Death a’ sitting by a tomb.

“Hello, old friend. I guess you’re here to seal somebody’s doom.”

“You might say that,” replied Death, a smile slid up his face.

Inside reposed that Jesus man, who said He’d save the race.

“And you, Time—why you stopping here? Don’t you got things to do?”

“I come each day, and draw the veil, and let the morning through.”

“Say, why you guarding just one grave with all your vast domain?

Seems like you’d be out rambling around and smiting folks with pain.”

“Well, this One’s something special. He challenged me, they say;

Said He’d rest here just three days then stir and walk away.

Now I’m the conqueror, you know. They don’t talk up to me;

When I steps in to cut ’em down, it’s for eternity.”

“Well, I sure can testify to that,” responded Father Time;
“I ain’t seen one shake off the dust since you’ve been in your prime.”
“Well, I got other things to do. I must be on my way.
I’ll see you when I come back by to make another day.”
Next day, Time ambled by again: “And how are things?” he queried.
“Kind of quiet,” Death replied. “I’m starting to be wearied.
You won’t see me here when you come back by this way tomorrow.
I’m anxious to be on my way to spread some grief and sorrow.”

Next day, Time was quite surprised to see Death a’ quivering on the ground in frightful agony.

His eyes were set; his throat was marked—his clothes in disarray.
It wasn’t difficult to see that Death had had his day.

“What happened, Death?” said Father Time. “What makes you look so bad?”

“I’ve never seen you shake this way or look so scared and sad.”

Death pulled himself up on a rock a’ looking sick and humble,
Hung his head, and wrung his hands, and Time could hear him mumble,

“Was sitting here before the dawn, about to take my stroll,

When all at once, this whole wide world begin to real and roll.

That great, big stone jumped off the door and skipped on down the hill;

Then everything grew dark and quiet, seemed like the earth stood still.

I saw Him standing in the door. He didn’t move or speak—

Just looked at me, and all at once I felt so tired and weak.

He came and got a hold of me and threw me to the ground;

He put His foot here on my neck, and He took my keys and crown.

Two angels came to talk with Him; they glistened like the sun.

He said, ‘The job’s all finished, boys; redemption’s work is done!’

And as they passed the garden gate, I heard Him say just then,

‘He’s setting free the captives and giving gifts to men.’”

Time and Death met once again, off yonder by the gate.

“How are you, friend?” asked Father Time. “I’ve wondered ’bout your fate.”

“I’m just a lowly servant now. I’ve little time to roam.

I just open up this old gate and help the saints go home!”

—Elwood Quaid

At that empty grave, old Death met his match. Thank you, Janice.

Take God's Word and find, if you would, 1 Corinthians chapter 15. An unthinkable question—What if there had been no Easter? What if Jesus Christ stayed in that tomb? What if death had conquered—if there had been no Easter? Well, the Apostle Paul deals with that question here, beginning in verse 12. Listen to it—1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 12: *“Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept”* (1 Corinthians 15:12–20).

The greatest escape artist of all time was a man named Harry Houdini. He died in 1926. Some of you may never have heard of him, but he was the sensation of his time. It seemed there was no way to imprison Harry. He would be put in the best jails; and in a few moments, he would be out. They would put handcuffs on him—they seemed to fall away. They would sew him up in canvas bags—out he would come. They would rivet him in huge milk cans, but out he would come. He would be sealed in boilers and welded in—out he would come. He would be put in a coffin—chains around that coffin, dump it in the river—out he would come. Some thought he had supernatural powers. He had the flexibility of an eel. He had the mind of the genius. He had the lives of a cat. Fulton Osler said, “That man could escape from anything but our memories.” But, in October 1926, Harry Houdini died.

Now, he had experimented with contact with the dead—necromancy, clairvoyance, fortune telling. And, he felt that all of these were fakers, and he would expose them; and they hated him. But, he still wondered, “Can anyone truly escape from death?” He told his wife—gave her a secret code word: “that on my birthday, I will try to contact you. Sensitize your mind. Be ready for a contact.” They had a code word. She, on his birthday, would light a candle and sit before his picture. One year—he did not contact her. Two years, three years, four years, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten. On the tenth year, she extinguished the candle and never tried again. Old death held Harry. He did not escape. Jesus went into the tomb. He stayed there three days, and He walked out like a butterfly bursting from a cocoon. Leaving the grave clothes in that tomb, Jesus Christ came forth. He is a risen Savior. He did what Harry could not do.

But, the question comes—a thing unthinkable: suppose Jesus Christ is still in that

grave; suppose Jesus did not rise from the dead. I want to tell you six tragic things that would be true if Christ is still in that grave.

I. Preaching Would Be Profitless

Number one: Preaching would be profitless. What we're doing today would be an exercise in futility. Look, if you will, in verse 15—verse 14 here of our text: *“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:14). Folks, you're wasting your time; I am wasting my time. If Jesus Christ is still in the grave, this is a very profitless thing that we're doing now. Preaching is vain—it is empty—if Christ is still in that grave.

Every liberal preacher who does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ ought to go get an honest job. Let me tell you what a preacher said. It's amazing. He said—and I quote, speaking of Jesus: “His body lies in a nameless Syrian tomb, but His deathless Spirit goes marching on.” Somebody ought to call for that man's credentials. Jesus Christ is alive, for that man is an imposter, and he is a fake and a fraud and has no business in anybody's ministry. This is the gospel—that Christ died for our sins, that He was buried and rose again the third day; and without that, the man has no gospel to preach.

I heard of a time back when haircuts were 50 cents, back in the olden days. A preacher went in the barbershop and got a haircut, and he started to pay the barber. The barber said, “No, that's all right. You're a pastor. I'm not going to charge you.” The pastor said, “No, I want to pay.” He said, “No, I will come listen to you preach, and I'll take it out in preaching.” The pastor said, “I don't have any 50-cent sermons.” The barber said, “That's okay—I'll come twice.” I want to tell you that a sermon that does not believe in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, as far as I am concerned, is a profitless, worthwhile exercise in futility.

II. Faith Would Be Foolish

Number two: Not only is preaching profitless, but if Jesus Christ is still in the grave, faith would be foolish. Listen again to verse 14: *“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:14). Why would that be? Well, why put faith in a dead Messiah? You see, faith is no better than its object. A dead man can't save anyone. Our faith in Jesus Christ is not worth anything if Jesus Christ is still in the grave. How do we know that He is the Son of God? How do we know that He is God incarnate? The Bible says He's shown *“to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4). Confucius died; he's dead. Old Buddha died; he's dead. Mohammad died; he's dead. Jesus Christ is alive; He's alive.

A teacher asked the students to write an essay on the greatest living man. One

student wrote an essay on Jesus Christ. The teacher said, “Son, that’s a good essay, but I said ‘living man.’” The student said, “Teacher, He is alive.” He is alive. We don’t put our faith in a dead Messiah. He’s “*declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*”—Romans 1, verse 4 (Romans 1:4). But, if He’s still in that grave, preaching is profitless, faith is foolish.

III. The Disciples Would Have Been Deceivers

Number three: The disciples are deceivers if Jesus Christ did not rise. Look, if you will, in verses 15 and 16: Paul goes on with his argument and says, “*If Christ be not risen... Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised*” (1 Corinthians 15:14–16). Now, notice what he’s saying. Look again in verse 15: “*we are found false witnesses*” (1 Corinthians 15:15).

Now, get the whole thing. Paul is not saying if Jesus is still in the grave, then we’re mistaken. It’s one thing to be mistaken; friend, it’s another thing to be a false witness. What Paul says is, “If Jesus Christ is still in the grave, then we’re telling a lie—we’re telling a lie.” Now, you have to ask yourself this question, therefore: Were the disciples liars? Were they deceivers? If so, why? Why would they deceive? Why would they lie? “Well,” you say, “people lie for gain.” What gain did they have if Jesus Christ is still in the grave? How did they die? They died as martyrs. They were tortured. They were persecuted. They were burned at the stake. They reddened the mouths of lions. They were stoned. They were crushed. They were humiliated. Now, listen to me—hypocrites and martyrs are not made of the same stuff. People tell lies to get out of trouble, not to get into trouble. *A man may live for a lie, but few, if any, men will willingly die for a lie, if they know it’s a lie.* These people are saying, “Listen, we have seen Him. We have touched Him. We have handled Him.” Are you going to tell me that Simon Peter was a con man? That John the apostle was a crook? That the Apostle Paul, who wrote most of the New Testament, was a known perjurer, and a deceiver, and a false witness, and these men would die for a lie? Of course not. But, if Christ is still in the grave, preaching is profitless, faith is foolish, the disciples would be deceivers.

IV. Sin Would Be Sovereign

Now, let’s look at the next thing: if Jesus Christ is still in that grave, sin would be sovereign. Sin has won. Notice in verse 15—chapter 15, verse 17: “*And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins*” (1 Corinthians 15:17). All of us have sinned. There’s not a’ one who’s not sinned. Who in this congregation can say, “I’ve never sinned”? Not a’ one. But, if Jesus Christ is in the grave, you are a sinner by birth, by nature, by practice, by choice, and you have no hope of forgiveness apart from the

death of the Lord Jesus Christ. God cannot just overlook your sin. If God were to cease to judge sin, God would cease to be holy. If God were to merely overlook sin, God would topple from His throne of holiness. God never lets sin go unpunished. *Your sin will be pardoned in Christ or punished in Hell, but it will never be overlooked.* But, if Jesus Christ is still in the grave, that means that God did not accept the sacrifice of Calvary.

How do we know that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? How do we know that Jesus Christ was not just a religious fanatic? How do we know that Jesus Christ was just someone with a martyr complex, who happened to get crucified and that's it? How do we know that God accepted the sacrifice of Calvary? The Resurrection. The Bible says He *"was delivered for our offences, and...raised again for our justification"* (Romans 4:25).

Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever (J. Wilbur Chapman).

No resurrection—no Savior. No Savior—no forgiveness. His death without His resurrection cannot save anybody. He *"was delivered for our offences,"* the Bible says, *"and [He] was raised...for our justification"* (Romans 4:25). But, if Christ is still in the grave, none of us have half a hallelujah's hope of Heaven, because Christ is still in the grave and we *"are yet in [our] sins"* (1 Corinthians 15:17). And *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23). *"The soul that sinneth, it shall [surely] die"* (Ezekiel 18:20). Now, if anything had been lacking in His beautiful life, in His sinless atonement, God would have left Him—the Father would have left Him in the grave.

V. Death Would Have Dominion

All right. Next, if Jesus Christ be not raised, then death has dominion—death has dominion. Look, if you will—not only is sin sovereign, but death has dominion—look in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 18: *"Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ [have] perished"* (1 Corinthians 15:18). Do you have a loved one—a father, mother, brother, sister, child? Forget it—they're gone; they've perished. That's it! It is over! Death has dominion if Jesus Christ is still in that grave. Life is nothing but a cruel joke. All any of us can look forward to is getting sicker, finally winding down to the grave, being cremated or covered with dirt, letting greedy microbes eat away at our flesh, and that's it—that's it! Death has dominion. The dead have perished. Are you going to tell me something as wonderful as a human life—something as glorious as the bond between humans—has no more meaning than that—just to die, and back to the ground, and that's it? That's what we're looking forward to?

I've preached many funerals. I'll be preaching one this Tuesday. I tell you the

hardest thing for me at a funeral is to stand by the casket and watch the loved ones come and look upon that lump of clay before they close the casket. Brother Dale, you've done that so many times. You know what I'm talking about. I was at a funeral. The beautiful flowers were there all banked up. I walked around looking at the flowers. I saw one beautiful bouquet. You could tell it was done by the grandchildren. This was an elderly man, a saint on this earth, a dear member of this church. And, on the floral offering, it said, "To Pop-Pop" Pop-Pop—that's what they called him—Pop-Pop. And, I thought of the grandchildren having to say goodbye to grandpa (Pop-Pop). And, I stood there, as is the pastor's habit to do, as people come by, and I saw that precious widow—these people who'd walked together for more than half a century. And, I watched her. She's a lady of great faith. This was not despair. But, she walked up, and laid her hand on his sleeve, and touched him, and patted it a couple of times, and turned and walked away. And, I thought to myself, "Is that it? Is that all there is to life? Pop-Pop is gone, and he's gone? The husband is gone, and he's gone after those years—that marvelous creature, down to the dirt, down to the earth? No!" Death does not have dominion. Christ is risen. Those that have fallen asleep in Christ have not perished. He is alive.

You can go to Rome and go to the Catacombs. The Catacombs are those underground tunnels—more than 600 miles of these underneath Rome, dug in the soft clay, about eight-feet-tall, about *that* wide, maybe five-feet-wide in places, niches in the side where the pagans and the Christians would bury their dead beneath the ground. You can walk through those Catacombs. There are some 60 different ones there in Rome. I've been in them on a number of occasions. You can read the inscriptions that the pagans left there for their dead. You can see there's no hope, only despair. Listen to some of them: "Live for the present hour since we're sure of nothing else." Here's another: "I will lift up my hands against the gods who took me away at the age of 20, though I had done no harm." Here's another: "Once I was not, now I am not. I know nothing about it, and it's no concern of mine." Another: "Traveler, curse me not as you pass, for I am in darkness and cannot answer." That's pagan death. Let me read some of the inscriptions of the Christians—how different they were: "Here lies Marcia. Put to rest in the dream of peace"; "Lawrence, to his sweetest son, carried away by the angels"; "Called, he went in peace"; "Victorious in life, victorious in peace, and victorious in Christ." What a difference Jesus makes!

I was in the hospital yesterday after the sudden death of one of our dear members. How sweet it was to gather in that corridor there in the emergency room and to sing together with brothers and sisters in Christ "Because He Lives, I Can Face Tomorrow." How great to know that there is a God who, in the form of man—the Lord Jesus Christ—grappled with the iron bars of death and is victorious. And, I'm here to tell you that dead

does not have dominion because Christ rose.

VI. The Future Would Be Fearful

Now, number six: If preaching is profitless, if faith is futile—friend, if sin is sovereign, if death has dominion—then the future is fearful. The future would be fearful. Look, if you will, in verse 19: *“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Corinthians 15:19). A wise man once said, “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.” Would you agree to that? I do. If Jesus Christ walked out of that grave... You see, friend, without the Resurrection, we’re just poor deluded fools. *“We are of all [people] most miserable”* (1 Corinthians 15:19), and the future is fearful. Jesus Christ is the One who walked out of that grave. And, He took the sting out of sin. He took the dread out of death. He took the gloom out of the grave, and He has given us a hope that is steadfast and sure (Hebrews 6:19).

And so, I’m going to die if Jesus doesn’t come soon. You’re going to die if Jesus doesn’t come soon. We look back at those pictures—remember them. Most of those folks you saw—folks, they’re already gone. One of the days, if the Lord tarries, they’ll be looking at you and say, “Yeah, I used—I used—to know him. I used to know her.” We’re gone, gone, gone! But, gone where? Gone where? What is your future? Is it fearful? Not if Jesus rose from the dead.

Albert Einstein was a genius. *Time Magazine* didn’t call him the *Man of the Year*; *Time Magazine* called him the *Man of the Century*. Old Albert Einstein knew so much, but he was absent-minded like a lot of people. Albert Einstein was on a train going from Princeton, in the account that I read, and the conductor came by to punch the ticket. Einstein couldn’t find his ticket. He’s looking in his vest, looking in his briefcase, couldn’t find his ticket. The conductor said, “Dr. Einstein, don’t worry. I know you bought a ticket. I know who you are, Dr. Einstein. Don’t worry. That’s fine—that’s fine.” And so, the conductor went on down, punching the tickets, and he looked back, and Dr. Einstein is down on his knees looking under the seat. He goes back, and he says, “Sir, it’s all right. Dr. Einstein, I know who you are.” He said, “And I know who I am. I just want to know where I’m going.” Do you know where you’re going?

Do you know who you are in Christ? Have your sins been forgiven? Are you sure that Jesus Christ is in your heart? If so, then I want to tell you, friend, preaching is profitable, faith is feasible, the disciples are dependable, sin has been subdued, death has been defeated, and the future is fabulous. We know where we’re headed.

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer?

Things Unthinkable

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 11, 1982

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:13–20

“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:14

Outline

Introduction

- I. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then Our Preaching Is Vain
- II. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then Our Faith Is Vain
- III. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then the Apostles Are False Witnesses
- IV. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then You’re Still in Your Sins
- V. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then Your Loved Ones Have Perished
- VI. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then We Are Most Miserable

Conclusion

Introduction

Now, I want us to look, please, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15—1 Corinthians chapter 15—and I want us to look in verses 13 and 15; and then, we’re going to consider some more verses. But, to begin with, verses 13 and 14: *“But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain”* (1 Corinthians 15:13–14). I want us to think today on this subject: “Things Unthinkable”—“Thinking on the Unthinkable.” And, what is that? What is this thinking on the unthinkable? I want you to think with me for just a moment about what would be true if Christ had not been raised—what unthinkable things, what solemn certainties, would be facts that we’d have to grapple with if Jesus Christ is still in that grave.

Now, I want to tell you, friend, He’s not. In case you have any doubt in your mind, He’s not. Paul doesn’t have any question in his mind as to whether or not Jesus rose from the dead. But, back in Paul’s day, there were some who were saying, “Oh, you can believe in Christianity without believing in the Resurrection.” And, we still have some today who would do the same thing. I call them *liberals* or *modernists*. They try to jettison the great truths of the faith. They’ve tried to do away with such things as the verbal inspiration of the Bible. They’ve tried to dismiss such things as the virgin birth of the Lord Jesus. They have ridiculed such things as the blood atonement. They try to

somehow explain away the bodily resurrection. And yet, they have the unmitigated gall to call themselves Christians. They're not Christians at all. They might bear the name Christian, but anybody who doesn't believe in the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ has no right to call themselves a Christian. One of these noted preachers said, "Now, while the body of Jesus smolders in a nameless Syrian grave, His deathless spirit marches on." Now, that may sound good, dear friend, but Paul is going to tell us what we need to reckon with if Christ is not raised from that grave. And, I'm not talking about His spirit being free and active; I'm talking about His body coming out of the grave.

There was a skeptic who was talking to a girl, one time, and this little girl was a Christian with all of her heart. He was trying to shake her faith, and he said, "Well now, young lady, Christianity is not the only religion there is, now. There are plenty of religions in the world, and there are plenty of Messiahs in the world. And, there are plenty of Christs. Which Christ do you believe in?" She thought for a while, and then she said, "I believe in the One that was raised from the dead." Amen? That's the One I believe in—the One who was raised from the dead. And who is "[shown] to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead." (Romans 1:4) But what if Christ be not risen? What would we have to reckon with if Jesus is still in the grave? There are six solemn conclusions—I want you to look at them.

I. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then Our Preaching Is Vain

First of all, in verse 14: "*And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain*"—"our preaching [is] vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14). Now, what does that mean? It means it's a waste of time. I wasted my time when I prepared this sermon, and you're wasting your time by listening to it, if Christ is still in the grave. You ought to be trimming the tulips. You ought to be home doing some spring housecleaning—ought to be out working a job somewhere. If Christ is still in the grave, I have been wasting my time for thirty years preaching the gospel. I wasted my time in college and seminary getting ready to preach it, and I ought to quit this and go out and get an honest job, if Christ is still in that grave. All of this is so much sound and fury, signifying nothing. And, the little moral precepts and the platitudes and all of that—you might as well go get those from Aristotle, Plato, someone else. If Jesus Christ is still in the grave, preaching is vain; it is worthless.

Now, I don't believe it is. God called me to preach. I'm sure of my call to preach. I've said it before almost jokingly, but somewhat truly: I'm more sure of my call to preach than I am of my salvation. I've doubted my salvation on a few occasions, but I've never really doubted my call to preach since the Lord laid His hand upon me and called me to preach His wonderful gospel. And, how I praise Him for it! And, I've seen the gospel work. I don't believe that preaching is profitless. I want to tell you, friend, I preached the Bible long enough to see this book—preaching the resurrected, risen Christ—I have

seen it literally, literally transform and change lives. There is power—power—in the Word of God. But, Paul says, “If Christ is still in that grave,” he says, “then our preaching is vain” (1 Corinthians 15:14).

II. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then Our Faith Is Vain

But now, go on and look, if you will—not only does he say that our preaching is vain, but he says also that your faith is vain. Look again in verse 13: he says in verse 13, “[And] if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain” (1 Corinthians 15:13–14). Not only am I foolish for preaching, but you’re foolish for listening, if Christ is still in that grave. You’re putting your faith in something that has no basis. You see, faith is no better than its object.

Out in Los Angeles, many, many years ago, there was a man who was called the *Human Fly*. That is, he could climb right up the sides of walls, buildings, and he was very much like the Spider Man who climbed the Sears Tower here in Chicago not so long ago. He could just go up the sides of buildings. He would put his fingers in the crannies and the nooks of that building—the window ledges. And, I don’t know whether he was doing it with the approval of the police or not, but up the side of that building he was going. And, it was a grand crowd there, watching this man as he ascended higher and higher, from windowsill to windowsill, from ledge to ledge, and there he went. But, finally he came to a place when he was very near the top, when he needed to get his handhold on something else. And, he looked for something to hold to, and there was a little aperture just coming out there—something that it was just beyond his fingertips. But, he had a good footing, and his body was like tinsel steel; and so, he gave a spring and grabbed this thing that was jutting out. And, when he did, his hand closed around it, and he went crashing to the ground. When they came to that dead body and opened up his fingers, what they found was a handful of spiders webs and dried froth that had looked to him like something solid and something substantive, and that’s all he had in his hand. Friend, I want to tell you, that’s all you have in your hand if Christ is still in that grave. You put your faith in something that doesn’t count—you’ve done something more foolish than that man did. And, I want to tell you, if Christ is not risen, my preaching is vain, and your faith is vain. And, you’ll go crashing down just as surely as that man did, if Jesus is still in that grave.

III. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then the Apostles Are False Witnesses

I want to mention...I want you to see with me a third thing that is true if Christ be not raised: “If Christ be not [raised], then...[the apostles] are...false witnesses” (1 Corinthians 15:14–15). I want you to look, if you will now, in verse 15: “Yea, and we are

found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not" (1 Corinthians 15:15). Now, pay close attention here. The Apostle Paul doesn't say, "If Christ be not raised, then we're mistaken." That's not what he says. It's one thing to be mistaken; it's another thing to be a false witness. What Paul is saying is this: if Christ is still in that grave, we are liars, we are frauds, we have perjured ourselves, we are cheats, we are knaves, we are con artists—we have told you that we have seen and heard something that we haven't seen and heard. Now, make that clear in your mind: it's not just that they were mistaken, but they were deliberately uttering falsehoods, because, you see, the apostles were eyewitnesses of His death, of His burial, of His resurrection. They talked about that which they'd seen, they'd heard, they'd handled of the Word of life. They said, "These are not cunningly devised fables. We know—we know that we know."

Now, dear friend, if I tell you I've seen something and I haven't seen it, it's not just that I'm making a mistake; I am deceiving you. Now, I want to ask you a question: After having read the Bible and reading things like the 14th chapter of John that John wrote, do you believe that John was a con artist? After reading the Bible and reading the 8th chapter of the Book of Romans, do you believe that Paul was a knave and a liar? Dear friend, listen—you cannot believe that these men who wrote this book deliberately set out to falsify the records so as to deceive people. It is impossible for my mind to accept that, as I know the character of these men written in this book. You see, these men were willing to die for the truth that they preached—the apostles. Don't think that the apostles had it easy because they believed in the resurrection of Christ. Their lives were put in jeopardy because they preached the resurrection from the dead. This is the reason they were hunted, and hounded, and put to death. And, they died in agony and pain—these early apostles.

Now, it is possible that some man might want to deceive people in order for personal gain. But, what did these people gain, had they been deceivers? Friend, they certainly didn't get money out of it. They certainly didn't get pleasure out of it. They were hunted, hounded, and put to death. What I'm trying to say is this: they died a martyr's death, and *hypocrites and martyrs are not made of the same stuff. A man may live for a lie, but he's not going to die for a lie.* How did these early disciples die? Peter was crucified upside down. Andrew—he was crucified. Matthew—he was put to death with a sword. James, the son of Alpheus, was crucified. Philip—crucified. Simon—crucified. Thaddeus was pierced with arrows. James, the brother of Jesus, was stoned to death. Thomas was speared to death. Bartholomew was crucified. James, the son of Zebedee, was put to death by the sword. Now, you tell me that these men knew it was all a lie—these men knew that it is some cunningly devised fable—and yet they were willing to live and die that way. I tell you, that is absurd! But, if Christ is still in that grave, they were false

witnesses—not just merely mistaken, but men who had deliberately perjured themselves. Oh, the early Christians also believed that He came out of that grave. That’s the reason they gladly faced death. That’s the reason they were willing to embrace the stake. That’s the reason that their blood would redden the mouths of lions—because they knew that they knew that they knew that they had victory over death.

Go back with me to the city of Ephesus. There’s a huge arena. There yhey’re having the athletic contest, and the chariot races go round and round. Then, the wrestlers wrestle. Then, the runners run. And then, they throw the discus, and then they hurl the javelin. Then, after a while, the crowd gets restless, and they shout, “Bring on the Christians! Bring on the Christians!” Your eye goes down there to the end of that arena, and you see a huddled mass of humanity. I can see an old grandfatherly-like figure, see a young handsome man holding hands with his wife. I can see some teenagers there. I can see a pregnant mother, a few children. They’re not well dressed. They’re huddled together. They’re on their knees; they’re praying. My eye goes quickly to this end of the arena, and I see some cages filled with ravenous lions. They are insane with hunger. They have been tormented by their captors; they have been made to be mean and fierce. And so, the Christians are brought to the middle of that arena, and with great glee the doors of that cage are opened by those who want to torment these Christians.

I want you to see these Christians as they start to sing. I don’t know what they would have sung then because we don’t have their hymnbook, unless it’s the Book of Psalms. But, I believe if they had our hymnbook, they probably would have been singing,

*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 (John Newton).*

And, I believe, as those lions started that way, they must have been singing something like this:

*When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
Than when we’d first begun (John Newton).*

I believe, dear friend, that they had a faith that was beyond death, and over death, and victorious concerning death, because they knew that they knew that they knew that Jesus had come out of that grave.

IV. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then You’re Still in Your Sins

But, if Christ is still in that grave, then preaching is vain—faith is vain. The apostles were

false witnesses, if Christ is still in that grave. But, let's go on. Go on and look—look in verses 16 and 17: *“For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; [and] ye are yet in your sins”* (1 Corinthians 15:16–17). Now, I want to tell you, friends, if Jesus Christ is in the grave, you're in your sins. Now, what does that mean? It means that there's no possibility that your sins can be forgiven, if Christ was not raised.

Now, I want to say something here that perhaps needs some understanding: the death of Christ on the cross, without His resurrection, cannot save you. If Christ died on the cross and that's all that happened, then Jesus was just one more religious leader, just one more religious psycho, just one more fanatic, one more person who claimed to be sent from God. Do you know what was the proof positive that God accepted His payment for sin? Do you know what it was? The Bible tells us in Romans chapter 4, verse 25, that He *“was raised again for our justification”* (Romans 4:25). He died for our sins because of our sins, but He was raised in order that we might be justified. He *“was raised...for our justification”* (Romans 4:25). And, if He's still in the grave—I don't care if He did die for you—if He's still in the grave, your hope of Heaven is not worth half a hallelujah. He is *“[shown] to be the Son of God [by] power...by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:4). This is what proved Him to be, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure, what He claimed to be, and it shows that God accepted the full payment for what He did on the cross. Had there been anything wrong with that sacrifice, Jesus still would have been in the grave. That's the reason we sing,

*Living, He loved me; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever;
One day He's coming—O glorious day! (J. Wilbur Chapman).*

But, if Christ is still in the grave, you are still in your sins, and you, my dear friend, will go out into eternity to face a God that you do not know.

V. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then Your Loved Ones Have Perished

But, let me mention another thing—not only are you still in your sins, but your loved ones have perished, if Christ is still in the grave. Continue to read. Look, if you will, in verse 18—in verse 18: *“Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished”* (1 Corinthians 15:18). What does that mean? It means you won't see them anymore. It means your mother, your daddy, your brother, your sister, your wife, your husband, your children—when they die, they're gone. They're like this vegetation that will rot and disintegrate. They're like a dog, a cat, a cow—like a snake, like a fly, like an insect. When they die, they're gone; they have perished. You'll never see them again if Christ is still in the grave. Or, even if they don't perish that way, they'll perish forever in Hell,

but they will perish. And, you will never have the hope of seeing them again if Christ is still in that grave. But, thank God—I know I'll see my loved ones again, and I know that you can see your loved ones again, too. How terrible it must be to live without that hope!

Madame Curie, who, along with her husband, discovered radium, and led into radiology, and X-ray, and all of these things—Madame Curie evidently did not know the Lord, because when her husband died in 1906, she was so grief-stricken that she seemed never to have gotten over it. Madame Curie wrote to him every day in her diary, and her writings were so morose. On one page, she said something like this: “I was there when they dug that dark hole, when they lowered you into the ground, when the dirt fell upon you, when they buried you. And, you are gone, and you're gone forever.” And then, she wrote this three times in her diary: “this is the end of everything.” And then, she said it again: “this is the end of everything.” And then, she said it again: “this is the end of everything!” Not if you know Jesus, friend—not if you know the Lord Jesus, not if they know the Lord Jesus. But, *“If Christ be not risen...then they...which [have] fallen asleep in Christ [have] perished”* (1 Corinthians 15:14–18).

I read about a father and son who were in a shipwreck. And the ship went down and both the father and the son were holding to a piece of debris. And they were holding in those rough seas with all of their might. And the son was not as strong as the father, and his grip slipped off of that piece of floating wreckage that they were holding on to. And the father reached out for him, but the son drifted away beneath the waves. The father passed into unconsciousness. When he awakened, he awakened in a fishermen's hut. Someone had found him and rescued him. He was in a soft, clean bed, and he awakened and realized he'd been saved. But then, his heart was filled with grief because he could see the face of his son slipping beneath the waves. But then, when he turned and opened his eyes, there on the bed beside him was his son, alive and well. And friend, the billows of death have come to sweep away our loved ones. But, I want to tell you, we'll close our eyes in this world and open them in the next to meet the face of those that we've long since lost—those loved ones who have gone on before us, who have been carried away by the waves and the billows of death. We will see them again, but not if Christ is still in that grave.

VI. If Christ Is Not Risen, Then We Are Most Miserable

Let me give you another solemn conclusion: if Jesus Christ be not raised, if Jesus Christ is still in the grave, then the Bible teaches that *“we are of all [people] most miserable”* (1 Corinthians 15:19). Look, if you will, in verse 19 of this same chapter: *“[And] if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable”* (1 Corinthians 15:19).

Now, we need to slow down just here a little bit and think, because I've often said—and I mean it—I would be a Christian if there were no Heaven and no Hell; just to know

the Lord Jesus Christ in this life would be a blessing to me. But, I want to hasten to say that I could not be a Christian if the Bible teaches there's a Heaven and a Hell and there is none, because that would mean that the Bible is false, you see. Now, that would mean, dear friend, that *"if Christ be not risen...we are of all men most miserable"* (1 Corinthians 15:14–19). And, that doesn't mean that the Christian life is miserable. Don't feel sorry for me because I'm a Christian. I'm having a wonderful time. Don't think that Christians have it worse than lost people. Lost people take more trouble to go to Hell than we take to go to Heaven. Did you know that?

I thought about that man who was sleeping under that stage down there in the church. I thought about the things that he had to do, the way he had to connive to work. I thought, "My goodness, that's harder than getting an honest job!" I mean, they almost did him a favor when they put him in jail. At least he's got a place to sleep. It's amazing the difficulty that people take in order to go to Hell. Don't get the idea that it's some miserable price that you have to pay in order to get to Heaven. Living the Christian life is not like taking bad-tasting medicine in order to make you well. It's not hard to be a Christian. I've been preaching for a long time, and there's one thing I've never heard: I've never heard any real, true Christian say, "I'm disappointed in Jesus." I've never heard anybody who's not a Christian say, "I want to tell you how much the dear sweet ole' devil means to me," either. No, no. Let me tell you something, friend: it's not hard to be a Christian. Jesus said, *"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and [I'll] give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for [my yoke is easy and my burden is light]: and ye shall find rest [for] your souls"* (Matthew 11:28–29). The Bible says, *"The way of [the transgressor] is hard"* (Proverbs 13:15). Not hard to be saved—it's hard not to be saved.

Well, what, then, does Paul mean when he says, *"If in this life only we have hope...we are of all men most miserable"* (1 Corinthians 15:19)? He doesn't mean that it's miserable here but it's going to be better there. That's not what he's saying. He's not saying that we're just willing to endure something horrible here so we can have pie in the sky, by and by. This word—*"we are of all men most miserable"* (1 Corinthians 15:19)—means that we are of all men most to be pitied. Why? Because we think that we have something we don't have.

Suppose there's a woman here in our city who has the idea that she's wealthy, and she's not wealthy. And, she wears paste pearls, and brass rings, and glass diamonds. And, she has worthless pieces of paper that she calls her stock, and she says she has oil stock, and she has goldmines, and all of these things. And, everybody knows she's just a poor, demented, old, foolish woman. And yet, she says, "Look how wealthy I am!" You see, she has no substance here, and she has no hope hereafter. Now, that's the way Christians are if Christ is still in the grave. We're like that woman going around with

paste pearls, and glass diamonds, and brass rings, bragging about what we have, and we don't have anything. We're of all people to be pitied—that's what he's saying. How pitiable, how miserable we are, if Christ is still in that grave!

Well, is He still in that grave? Do you think Paul thought so? I want you to look in verse 20—look in verse 20: “*But now is Christ risen from the dead*”—no *ifs, ands, buts*, or peradventure about it—“*now is Christ risen from the dead*” (1 Corinthians 15:20). You say, “Brother Rogers, how could Paul be so sure? And, how are you so sure?” Well, the Bible says in Acts chapter 1, verse 3, that Jesus “*shewed himself alive...[with] many infallible proofs*” (Acts 1:3). Now, you think of that word—“infallible proofs.” Now, dear friend, no stutter, no stammering, no peradventure—I can say I know that I know that I know that I know that Jesus Christ is alive, that He rose from the dead. “How can you be so sure?” Well, if a man has infallible proof, he ought to be sure. Now, you say, “Where does this proof come from?” I’ve been studying all this week on proofs of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. I’m certainly not going to try to give them to you here, because it’s long—it’s technical and involved.

There were two notable lawyers. One man named Lord Littleton, another man named Gilbert West, who were in England, who decided that the Bible was a bundle of blunders and a book of fabrications. And, they decided that they would put their legal minds to the Bible to prove two foundational facts of the Bible to be false: number one, that Jesus Christ came out of the grave—they were going to prove that to be false; and, number two, that the Apostle Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, as the Bible says that he was, because since Paul wrote most of the New Testament, if they could discredit that conversion, they would be able to discredit the New Testament. So, these men parted ways to do their research. They met a year later. West was going to discredit the resurrection. When Gilbert West met Lord Littleton, Lord Littleton said, “And Gilbert, how did your study go—your investigation? Have you written your book? What are the results?” Gilbert West said to Lord Littleton, “Sir, I must confess to you that I came with a prejudice in mind, believing that Jesus Christ had not come out of that grave. But, after having examined the evidence now for over a year, I am totally convinced that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, and I have become a Christian.” When he said that, Lord Littleton smiled. And, he says, “Why are you smiling?” He said, “For I, sir, have been examining the record of the so-called conversion of the Apostle Paul that I was strongly prejudiced against, but I have come, after examining the record honestly and openly for a year, to be convinced that the Apostle Paul was converted on the road to Damascus, as the Bible teaches, and I, too, have become a Christian.” Those books are in existence today by Gilbert West and Lord Littleton, these men who examined the record and found the infallible proof.

Attorney Francis Lamb put the New Testament to a legal test, like would be done in

a court of justice, and he wrote a book. And, after 248 pages, he said this—here's his conclusion; listen to what Francis Lamb said: "Tested by the standards and ordeals of judicial science, by which questions of fact are ascertained and demonstrated in contested questions in courts of justice, the resurrection of Jesus Christ stands a demonstrated fact." Friend, there is more evidence that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead than there is that Julius Caesar ever lived. And, that's not a vain statement—that's not an empty statement. Christ "*shewed himself alive...by many infallible proofs*" (Acts 1:3). We're going to talk more about this tonight, but I don't have a legal mind and you're not a lawyer. And, aren't you glad you don't have to be a lawyer to be saved? And, aren't you glad lawyers can be saved?

Conclusion

Now, what I'm trying to say to you, dear friend, is this—that I cannot stand up here and argue you into believing the resurrection. That's not it. Listen, if ten of Thomas's friends could not convince him that Jesus Christ was alive, I couldn't convince you. But, I'll tell you what did convince Thomas: he met Jesus. And, you can meet Him, too. Do you know there's something supernatural about believing in the living, risen Savior? You don't believe in Christ because you figure it out. *Anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of.* But, I want to tell you that Jesus Christ is alive today, and the way that you can know He lives is the same way that I knew that He lived as a teenage boy, when I repented of my sin and trusted Him. And, He lives within my heart. His living Spirit convicted me of my sin. And, there's something about the Holy Spirit that bears witness that this is true. God "*[has hidden] these things from the wise and the prudent, and [God has] revealed them unto babes*" (Matthew 11:25; Luke 10:21). And today, dear friend, you can say with the Apostle Paul, in verse 20, "*Now is Christ risen from the dead*" (1 Corinthians 15:20). But, you can say more than that—you can say, "He lives, and He lives within my heart."

On this Easter Sunday, you can become a Christian. Did you know that? Today, you can be born again; today, you can have the joy that floods my heart and the joy that is filling the hearts of Christians around the world. Today, you can be born again by receiving Christ as your personal Savior and Lord. I want you to receive Him today. I want you to pray and ask Him into your heart. I want you to say, "Lord Jesus, forgive my sin, come into my heart, and save me."

You say, "Brother Rogers, would He save me if I did that?" Yes, He'll save you. I promise you on the authority of the Word of God He'll save you if you believe that God raised Him from the dead. Listen, the Bible says "*that if thou [shall] 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). You say, “Brother Rogers, what shall I do, again?” Just say, “Lord Jesus, I want You to save me. I repent of my sin. I receive You as my Lord and Savior today.” And, He will save you, and that means your sins will be forgiven. It means that Christ will come and live in your heart. It means that one day you’ll die and go to Heaven. It means, furthermore, that one future day your body will come out of that grave, and as Christ was raised from the dead, so will you be raised, if you’ll trust Him as your personal Savior.

The Day Death Died

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 04, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:20–26

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Resurrection That Defeats Death's Keeping Power
 - A. Jesus Is the Firstfruits
 - B. Jesus Is the Last Adam
 - II. The Rapture That Defies Death's Killing Power
 - III. The Reign That Destroys Death's Kingly Power
- Conclusion

Introduction

Be finding, would you please, 1 Corinthians chapter 15. And, as you're finding it, look up here and let me tell you something that you probably already know and don't want to think about: but people die. You die. I die. Everyone dies, with one exception: if Jesus comes before we meet death, then those of us who are Christians will not die. But, with every second, every tick on your clock, somewhere, someplace in the world, somebody dies. And, they die in strange ways.

I have in my files different ways that people have died. I clipped this from *The Commercial Appeal* a while back. Here's what the story said: "New York UPI"—listen to it—"A woman, making a phone call on a New York street, was struck in the head and killed yesterday by a flowerpot that was knocked off an eighth floor window ledge by lightning. Amelia Lynch, 28, died after the pot fell on her head, police said." There she is making a phone call and a flowerpot, struck by lightning, falls on her head. Listen to this: "Harold Lee Dunkin was mowing his lawn. His wife and two children were watching. Suddenly, Dunkin grabbed his left side, walked a few steps, staggered, collapsed, and then died. A half-inch piece of wire, no bigger than a pencil lead, had been hurled into his head by the power mower he was using." His death was sudden—cutting the grass and a small piece of wire enters his head. And, here's one that is strange: "Carlos Bumbus was fishing in the Philippines. Police reported that he opened his mouth to yawn. A fish jumped in and became stuck in his throat." It sounds funny. It wasn't funny to Carlos. A fish jumps in this throat. He choked to death before the fish could be pulled out.

You know, the Bible says, "*There is but a step between me and death*" (1 Samuel

20:3). We feel so secure in this place, but that little heartbeat there, as somebody said, is “a muffled drum beating a funeral march to the grave.” We’re going to die. And, sometimes you say, “Well, I’m not going to die that way. I’m going to die a natural death.” May I tell you there is no such thing as a natural death? All death is unnatural. It is the root and the fruit of sin.

First Corinthians 15—look, if you will, in verse 20: *“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death”—*that’s the reason I said that death is not natural—*“since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam”—*that’s the first man—*“all die, even so in Christ”—*He is the last man—*“shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and [all] power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”* (1 Corinthians 15:20–26).

We’re talking today about the death of death. Very frankly, people don’t like to talk about death very much; and if you don’t know the Lord, I don’t blame you. You talk to an unsaved man about death, and he’ll change the subject like he’s changing channels on the television set. You know, man is the only creature who knows that he’s going to die, and he’s trying desperately to forget it. That’s the reason we all have such an obsession with youth. That’s the reason when a man gets to be a certain age, he wants to buy a sports car. And, that’s the reason that the ladies sometimes spend too much money on cosmetics. All of this together is just this obsession we have with living; we don’t want to die.

And, I don’t want to be somber about it, but I’m telling you, one of these days, unless Jesus tarries, death is going to lay his icy hands on you. And, if you’re a doctor, one of these days, you’re going to write your last prescription. If you are a mother, you may just even kiss your little helpless babies goodbye and die. And, even those babies sometimes have to drop their toys and grapple with the iron strength of death. I said every time the clock ticks somebody died. And, one of those ticks is for me, and one is for you; and we never know when that is going to come. Death is a fact, and death is a foe. But, while death is a decided fact, I want to tell you, death is a defeated foe—death is a defeated foe. And so, the message today is not sober; it’s not sad news. We can laugh in the face of death if we know the Lord Jesus Christ. And so, I want to talk to you a little bit about the day that death died. I want to give you some good news, which is the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which speaks of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave—His triumph over death. Three things I lay on your heart:

I. The Resurrection That Defeats Death's Keeping Power

Number one: I want you to see the resurrection that defeats death's keeping power—that defeats death's keeping power. You know, death has the idea that he can keep you, that he can keep me. But, Jesus said, "Oh, no. Death, you cannot keep Me." You see, Jesus willingly, vicariously laid down His life. He said, "No man taketh my life from me. I lay it down of Myself" (John 10:17). Jesus was the only person who ever decided to die. You say, "Well, no. If a person commits suicide, he decides to die." No, he doesn't. He's going to die anyway. He just decided the time of his death. Jesus was the only One who decided to die. He did not have to die. "*The wages of sin is death*" (Romans 6:23). Jesus was not a sinner. There was no seed of death in the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus willingly, voluntarily, vicariously laid down His life. Death thought he had a victory. And so, old Death, King Death—and by the way, the Bible calls Death a king. In Romans chapter 5 and verse 14, the Bible says, "*Death reigned*" (Romans 5:14). That is, Death ruled. And so, old King Death laid his icy, bony hands on the Lord Jesus Christ and shackled Jesus with the bonds of Death. And Jesus, in that tomb, lay cold, and stiff, and stark. And, old King Death clapped his bony hands, and he shrieked a horselaugh; and he said, "I have Him. He's mine. I am going to keep Him."

But, after three days, the Lord Jesus stirred, and He majestically rose from His resting place—I said, His *resting place*. He got up from that stone slab. You know what He did? His face was covered with a napkin. He turned around and folded the napkin. I love that. When the disciples came in, they found that napkin that was over His face, folded. How did you leave your bedroom this morning? There's no hurry. He's in complete control. He folds that napkin and leaves it there. And, there is that cruel king of terrors, Death, sitting upon the throne, and this time Death has a terrified look because no one has done that before. And, Jesus now begins to walk toward Death. Death cowers in the corner of that tomb that has become Death's dungeon. Jesus reaches up and pulls Death from the throne, cast him to the dungeon floor. Jesus puts His heel on the neck of Death. Jesus reaches down and pulls the sting out of Death. Jesus puts the crown upon His own head and walks out of that tomb a risen, living, victorious Savior. Jesus did more than survive death. Jesus defeated and decimated death in that tomb.

And, our Scripture says that Jesus is two things: the Bible says, first of all, that Jesus is the firstfruits, and then, secondly, it says that Jesus is the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:22–23). Notice this:

A. Jesus Is the Firstfruits

First of all, He's the firstfruits. Look in verse 20: "*But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept*" (1 Corinthians 15:20). You see, in the Old Testament times, when they were going to have a harvest, the priest would go into the

field and he would take a sheaf of the first ripen grain. That was called the *firstfruits*. And, he would bring it to the temple, and there, in an elaborate ceremony, he would wave it before the Lord. It was called *the Feast of Firstfruits*. This was called a *wave offering*—just waving this handful of wheat before the Lord. And, what it was—it was a promise and a prophecy that, because there are the firstfruits, the harvest is to come. And, the one who gave the firstfruits is the one that they were depending upon for the harvest. Now, Jesus is the firstfruits, ladies and gentlemen; we are the harvest. Because Jesus came out of the grave, we are coming out of that grave, also.

B. Jesus Is the Last Adam

And then, secondly, not only was Jesus the firstfruits, but Jesus is the last Adam. Look, if you will, in verse 22: *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming”* (1 Corinthians 15:22–23). Now, the first Adam lost it all. The second Adam, the Lord Jesus, bought it all back for us and became victorious over the grave.

I was reading a story of some men who were climbing the Matterhorn. I’ve seen the Matterhorn several times. It is a majestic mountain. And, there were four who were going up the side of the Matterhorn. There was an experienced mountain climber, who was the lead guide, and then there was a tourist, and then there was another mountain climber and another tourist. All of them had been given instruction how to climb that dangerous ascent and go up the Matterhorn. They were doing well until the one at the end, the fourth man, slipped, and he lost his grip and his footing; and he fell over the precipice. When he fell, he dragged his guide over with him. And, when he dragged his guide over with him, that one dragged the next tourist with him. The lead guide, when he felt the tug on the rope, realized what was happening, dug both of his feet in as hard as he could, and put his pick in the ice, and held on with all of his might. The others were dangled beneath him. And finally, they got their footing back, and they were all safe. When I heard that story, I thought of our Lord Jesus Christ. The first man, Adam, fell, and all of us have fallen with him. But, thank God for the last man. Thank God for Jesus, who has defeated death, Hell, sin and the grave. In the first man, we fell, but in the last man, we are redeemed.

You see, what is the Bible saying? He’s saying that Christ is the firstfruits; we are the harvest. Adam ruined it, but Jesus bought it back for us. “Pastor, do you believe in the resurrection?” Yes, I do. “Can you be sure of the resurrection?” I am absolutely sure. There is more reason to believe that Jesus Christ came out of that grave than there is that Julius Caesar ever lived. Now, that’s the truth.

Now, first of all, the man who wrote what we’re reading was an eyewitness. Look over in verse 8: he says, speaking of Jesus, *“And last of all he was seen of me also, as*

one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8). That is, he tells about all of the people who saw the Lord Jesus—how He appears to the disciples, how He appeared to 500 people. Somebody said, “Well, they were having an hallucination.” You think 500 people have a hallucination at one time? And then, Paul says, “Look, I am an eyewitness. He’s seen of me.” Well, you say, “How do we know he wasn’t lying?”

Well, look, if you will, in verses 14 and 15 of this same chapter: He says, *“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ: whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not”* (1 Corinthians 15:14–15). Now listen—“false witness.” He doesn’t say “mistaken.” A false witness is somebody who knows better and yet tells a lie. Do you think the Apostle Paul was a false witness? Do you think these early disciples were liars? You see, if Christ is not risen and they said that He’s risen, then they are false witnesses. Well, then you have to ask yourself this question: Was Simon Peter a rascal? Was the Apostle Paul a con artist? Was the beloved John a deceiver—not mistaken, but were they deceivers? Were they false witnesses? If you say, “Yes, ” I want to remind you that these men suffered, bled, and died for their faith. Now, *men may live for a lie, but no man knowing, willingly dies for a lie*. Martyrs and con artists are not made out of the same things. Men do not go to prison and to the flogging post for a fairy tale. Men tell lies to get out of trouble; they don’t tell lies to get into trouble. But, these people believed so much that Jesus Christ was the firstfruits and the last Adam that they testified gladly and freely that He is risen.

And friend, because He is risen, we will rise also. He is the first fruits, and one of these days there’s going to come a shout from the lips of the Lord Jesus when He returns, and that shout is going into the tombs of the multiplied who have named Him as Lord and Savior. And, He’s going to hear it... We’re going to hear the shout that Lazarus heard that prefigured this in John chapter 11 (John 11:43). Our Lord is going to step down from His majestic throne in the Glory, and the shout will be this, I believe: “Come forth—come forth.” And, the voice of the Savior will roll through the length and breadth of Satan’s ruined empire and bring it crashing down. And, at the command of the Lord Jesus Christ, the sea will heave and give up the dead which is in it. And, they’re going to be raised and made like unto His glorious body. And, the winding sheets of the desert will give up the dead that are in them, and the battlefields of this world will give up the dead that are there. And, graveyards will, perhaps, look like a plowed field, as the Lord Jesus says, “Come forth.”

Well, you say, “Pastor, that sounds supernatural.” I’m glad you’re understanding it—I’m glad you’re understanding it. Look, if you will, in verse 36—or verse 35: *“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?”*—that is, “How is this possible?”—*“How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”*—You know what the Lord says

to you? “The answer is in your garden—the answer is in your garden. Go look in your garden.” Look in verse 36—*“Thou fool, that which thou sowest”*—that is, “that which you plant”—*“is not quickened”*—“made alive”—*“except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body”* (1 Corinthians 15:35–38). You see, folks, the resurrection is illustrated by a seed that dies. That seed—small, insignificant—goes into the ground, and out of it comes life—far more glorious, far more spectacular than that which went into the ground. But, there is a continuity between that which went into the ground and that which comes out of the ground. And so, each time you plant a seed, think of the resurrection.

But, you say, “Pastor Rogers, there is a difference in a seed and a human being, because in the seed there is still a germ of life, but in a human being, when you put that corpse in the ground, there is no more germ of life.” No, see, that’s where you’re wrong—that’s where you’re wrong. There is a part of you that never dies. You need to understand that. There is a continuity. Just as there’s a germ of life that remains in that seed, there is a germ of life that remains in you. The real you never died. Jesus says, *“[He that] liveth and believeth in me shall never die”* (John 11:26). You’re looking at a man that can never die. Now, this seedpod may go into the ground, but Adrian is never going to die.

You see, it’s not this particular bit of hide, and hair, and skin, and bone that our Lord is going to raise up. We get a brand new set of corpuscles every few years. We’re sloughing off old cells, and we’re putting on new cells every day. Question: Do you have the same body that you had when you were a baby? Think about it. Do you have the same body you had when you were a baby? Well, yes, no—I mean, you must have been a beautiful baby; but baby, look at you now. I mean, it is the same body? Yes. Is it the same body? No. You are the same, but you’re losing cells and gaining cells. I read that an average person will eat 50 tons of food in his lifetime. No wonder we look like we do—50 tons of food. Well, we’re taking on new life, and we’re sloughing off old life; but there is a continuity of life that is there.

In 1963, I first crossed the Mississippi River. I was going to San Francisco to a Southern Baptist Convention across that river—the first time I’d ever been through Memphis, never dreamed I’d be living here. Now, I want to ask you a question: When I crossed the Mississippi River, is that the same river today that I crossed in 1962? Well, yes, but there’s not one drop of water in that river today that was in it then, but it is the same river. Now, what does all of this say? There is a continuity to us that goes beyond this particular bit of hide and hair.

Let me give you a great scripture; I enjoy sharing this—Psalm 139, verse 16: the

Psalmist is talking about how he was being formed in his mother's womb, and it's a wonderful statement. It says this: "*Thine eyes*"—talking to God—"*did see my substance, yet being unperfected*"—that is, "incomplete." Now, that little baby in the mother's womb is a baby. It's just not yet perfected; it is not yet complete—"*and in thy book*"—watch this—"*in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them*" (Psalm 139:16). Before I came into being, God had a book; and in that book, all of my members were written. You know what we call that today? DNA—DNA. God just had my schematic—God had my plan—that's in His book before there were any of them. There is a unique individual named Adrian. There's a unique individual named David, Jim, Bob. We are all unique. And, God has the schematic, God has the plan, God has the DNA. And, when God gets ready to raise up Adrian, He's just going to put that in His computer and say, "Give me an Adrian," and up I'll come. You see, God has my plan in Him. Don't think that God has to run all over the universe looking for my new corpuscles. It is the me that unifies me—the genetic code. You know, if man—listen—if man can take the genetic code from one cell and clone an entire being, don't you think that Almighty God can raise the dead? Think about it.

I was reading about old King Tut. You know, Howard Carter in 1922 entered the tomb of King Tut. And, I've seen those artifacts that were taken out of that tomb. But, one thing that many people don't know is that he found some seeds that were in that tomb. Those seeds were 3,000 years old. They were planted and they sprouted—3,000 years old. Don't think that... Listen, if God can preserve a seed for 3,000 years, He's going to have no difficulty raising us up. And so, what we're trying to say...we're talking about the resurrection—the resurrection, friend, that just destroys death's keeping power. It's the resurrection that defeats death's keeping power. The devil and all of the hosts of Hell can't keep us in the grave.

II. The Rapture That Defies Death's Killing Power

Now, there's a second thing I want you to see today—not only the resurrection that defeats death's keeping power, but here's some good news: there's the Rapture—the Rapture—that defies death's killing power. You know, death can't even always kill. Not everybody's going to die. Look, if you will, in verse 51. We're in chapter 15. Look, if you will, in verse 51: "*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep*"—now, the word *sleep* here is the term for "death" for a child of God. Just as when you lay down last night, you awakened this morning. When you lay in the grave, you're coming out. So, he calls it *sleep*, when you lie in the grave—"*Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed*" (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

Now, what the Apostle Paul is talking about here is some people who are alive who will never die. Millions, perhaps billions, will never die when Jesus comes. Now, he begins this statement in verse 51 with the word *behold*. That means, “pay attention”: “Behold, I’m about to tell you a sacred secret”—“*Behold, I shew you a mystery*” (1 Corinthians 15:51). This word *mystery* comes from the Greek work *mysterium*, which means, “something that is hidden, something that is not previously revealed.” Did you know that Daniel didn’t know about this? Isaiah didn’t know about it. Jeremiah didn’t know about it. Ezekiel did not know about it. Nahum did not know about it. None of the Old Testament prophets knew about this. This was a sacred secret. Paul tells us in the Book of Ephesians, chapter 4, that this secret was revealed to him—Ephesians chapter 3, verses 3–5: he said, “There was given a divine revelation” (Ephesians 3:3–5). You see, the Old Testament prophets had the idea that... They believed in a resurrection. Even old Job said, “*I know that my redeemer liveth... And though...worms destroy [my] body, yet in my flesh shall I see God*” (Job 19:25–26). The Old Testament prophets knew about the resurrection, but they did not know about the Rapture. The Rapture—the taking away of millions of people without dying straight to Heaven—is a New Testament truth that was revealed to the Apostle Paul. It’s a sacred secret that we have learned here in the Church Age. “Behold,” he says, “I’m going to tell you a secret. I show you a mystery: we’re not all going to sleep, but we shall all be changed. *‘In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump*” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

Now, the Bible makes this clear. Put in your margin “1 Thessalonians chapter 4, verses 16 and 17”: Paul elaborates here and he says, “*For the Lord himself*”—and by the way, the Second Coming of Jesus is “the Lord Himself,” not death, not some event in history, as some people try to tell us, but the Lord himself—“*shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first*”—that’s the harvest: Christ, the firstfruits, then the dead in Christ—“*Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). Notice the Apostle Paul said, “we.” The Apostle Paul was looking for Christ to come in his lifetime. Don’t get the idea that we’re waiting on some event in prophecy to be fulfilled. Friend, Jesus may come at any time. From the time He went up ’til the time He’s coming back, He is always on the verge of coming back. That is, we should live in expectancy of the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, “*the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). We call this the *Rapture*. Paul called it *caught up*. The word *Rapture* is not found in the Bible, but don’t let that bother you. The word *missions* is not found in the Bible. The word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible. The Rapture is taught in the Bible. The Bible calls this being “caught up.” It

comes from a Latin word—*rapere*—which means “to catch away” or “to move away.” Can you imagine what it’s going to be like when the Rapture happens—I mean, if it happens today: the trumpet sounds, the shout is given? The dead in Christ rise first, and then... Why do they rise first? Well, we’ve got a six-foot head-start on them. “*The dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which [remain] and [are alive] shall be caught up...with them*”—same time, simultaneously—“*to meet the Lord in the air*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

People driving down the expressway and you’re sitting there talking to your partner. All of a sudden there’s no driver. Can you imagine that? Even worse: you’re in an airplane—there’s no pilot. Here’s the quarterback calling. You say, “Hut—hut.” Suddenly, he’s gone. Who’s going to hand the ball off? I mean, people in the stands say, “You talk about a hidden ball play! Now, that’s something! Where’d they all go?” Here’s a professor who is lecturing in his class. He is a professor of religion at a liberal college, and about eight students are gone. He’d say, “Where’d they go? Well, we can get along without them. They were the ones always causing trouble in this class—always trying to prove their point by the Bible.” Can you imagine the Rapture takes place next Sunday? A minister in his clerical robes stands before his congregation and says, “Well, I’m happy to see you here today after the upheaval, the cataclysm. Who knows what happened to all of these people? How thoughtless of them to disappear like that. It was probably God’s judgment upon them for standing in the way of our one-world government and the utopia that we’re to have.” I don’t know how the devil is going to tell it, but the devil is a master liar. But, I’m telling you that “*the dead in Christ shall rise first*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). We which remain and are alive—we’re going to be caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

And, don’t get the idea that we’re waiting on some sign. We’re not looking for antichrist; we’re looking for Christ. We’re not looking for some sign. There’s no sign that has to come. The early Christians were looking for Jesus. Listen to what Jesus said in Mark chapter 13, verses 32–37: “*But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels [who] are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. Take ye heed*”—that is, “Jesus in His humanity—Jesus in His humanity—did not even know the time of His return”—“*Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is. For the Son of Man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch*”—now, notice what Jesus is saying to you—“*Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at cockcrowing*”—that is, “in the morning”—“*or in the morning: Lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch*” (Mark 13:32–37). That is, just be ready. In such an hour as you think not, He’s coming. The trumpet may sound, just as those trumpets

sounded in the balcony this morning, before I finish this message.

Now, what are we saying? Jesus—Jesus, the Lord Jesus Christ—by His resurrection, has decimated death’s keeping power. Death cannot keep us. But, Jesus also has defied death’s killing power. Death can’t even kill everybody.

III. The Reign That Destroys Death’s Kingly Power

But now, here’s the third thing: Jesus, by His reign—we’ve talked about His resurrection; we’ve talked about the Rapture. Now, let’s talk about His reign—Jesus, by His reign, destroys death’s kingly power. You see, death had a dominion; death ruled. Remember again, Romans chapter 5 and verse 14: the Bible says, *“Death reigned”* (Romans 5:14). But, death is no longer a king since Jesus has come. His keeping power is defeated. His killing power is defied. His kingly power is destroyed.

Here’s a great verse; I rejoiced in this verse this week—2 Timothy 1:10: *“But [there] is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death”—*don’t you love that? He said, “All right, death, you’re abolished”—*“and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”* When Jesus has raised the last saint, what a day that’s going to be! Then, the Bible says, *“Death and hell were cast into the lake of fire”* (Revelation 20:14). Death itself is going to go to Hell. I love that. I praise God. Look, if you will now, in verse 54: *“So when this corruptible”—*that is, “this old decaying body of ours”—*“shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is [your] sting? O grave, where is [your] victory?”—*Can you hear the mockery—the sacred mockery—there that Paul is giving?—*“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:54–57). And then, go back to verse 25—speaking of Jesus: *“For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death”* (1 Corinthians 15:25–26). That means when the last saint is raised, then all the mopping-up battles are done, and death itself is cast into the lake of fire (Revelation chapter 20) (Revelation 20:14).

Many of you are not old enough to remember World War II. I was a little boy. I can remember when my daddy told me, “Son, we’re at war.” I remember December 7th. I remember getting on my bicycle and riding down to Northberg School, where I went to school, sitting on the bicycle shed there and pondering, “What does it mean to be in war?” I remembered when the rationing came. I remembered when we gathered scrap iron. I remembered we followed those battles in the Pacific and those battles in Europe. And, we read the newspapers every day; and if we went to the picture shows (we called it then), or the movies, we would sometimes see a newsreel. And then, I remember,

Brother Bob, a day when they announced that the Japanese had surrendered. Oh, V-J Day. I've never seen anything like it in my life—never in my life. Everybody in that town, it seemed like, went down in West Palm Beach down to Clematis Street, which is the center street in town. You've never seen such jubilation. You've never seen such shouting. You've never seen such dancing. You've never seen such rejoicing, because the United States had won a victory—a final victory—and Japan had surrendered. And, they called it *V-J Day*.

And, there was dancing in the streets. Where we lived in West Palm Beach, there, because the shipping lanes were up and down the Gulf Stream there in the Atlantic Ocean, we could not burn the lights in our city. All the headlights on the automobiles were painted half black. Nobody could burn lights in the house unless the shades were down. All the neon signs in the city were off. All the streetlights were off, because we would not want to silhouette the American ships there for the Germany U-boats there off the coast of West Palm Beach. But oh, friend, there was dancing in the streets, and the lights came on again all over the city. I saw those neon lights, and I saw those headlights, and I saw those lights on the lampposts. Friend, I'll tell you, there's coming a day more glorious than that, when Jesus steps out of the Glory. Oh, I tell you, the lights will come back on, and we're going to leap, and dance, and shout, and praise God. And, we're going to mock the enemy, and we're going to say, "Oh death, where is your sting? Grave, where is your victory?"

Then, he says—listen: "*The sting of death is sin*"—it's sin that causes us to die. Sin has a stinger in it that causes death—"*and the strength of sin is the law*"—"the law" (1 Corinthians 15:56). God's holy law says that sin must be punished. But, the Lord Jesus Christ, our glorious Savior that we talked about, went in and grappled with the iron strength of death. Jesus rose. And, as I told you earlier, Jesus Christ pulled the sting out of death, and Jesus Christ paid the full penalty of the law; and Jesus satisfied the law. Therefore, when He comes, those who've died and gone to the grave are going to say, "Ha ha, ha, grave, where is your victory?" And, those of us who have never died at all—we're going to say, "O death, where is your sting?"

A mother and her two children were in the park. They were having a wonderful time until one of those big old bumblebees came, and lighted on little brother, and stung the little boy. He began to cry and scream like any child would, and a big swelling place came up there on his arm. And, that bee was still buzzing around and buzzing around, and the little girl was petrified. And, the mother said, "Darling, darling—wait a minute." As she was wiping brother's tears away, she said, "Look darling, look down here on brother's arm." And, right in the middle of that swelling was that bumblebee's stinger. "You know, a bee can only sting once—did you know that?—cause he leaves his stinger. You see that, darling? Sweetheart, he can buzz; he can fight you. But

sweetheart, he can't hurt you. He left his sting in brother—he left his sting in brother.” And, I want to tell you, friend, death may buzz around you, and death may frighten you; but our elder Brother, the Lord Jesus, bears that sting. Thank God. Jesus took the sting out of death. Jesus took the pain out of parting. Jesus took the gloom out of the grave, and He has given us a hope that is steadfast and sure. And, Jesus has defeated death's keeping power, Jesus has defied death's killing power, and Jesus has destroyed death's kingly power. And, our God reigns. Amen. That's what it's all about.

Now—now listen: he says, *“Be ye [therefore] stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58). That's the last verse—verse 58.

It pays to serve Jesus, it pays everyday.

It pays every step of the way (Frank C. Huston).

Friend, if you are following Satan, I'm going to tell you, you are following a loser. You're going to die and go to Hell. But, if you're following Jesus, you'll live forever because He has become the death of death.

Conclusion

Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. How many of you would say, “Pastor Rogers, I am absolutely, totally sure if I'd die today, by the grace of God and according to the Word of God, I know that I would go straight to Heaven”? May I see your hand? Hold it up. Praise God. Take them down.

Now, if you couldn't lift your hand, I know that you're interested in spiritual things or you wouldn't be here. Maybe you've just never really gotten it settled, and maybe you don't have that full assurance; but today, you would like that assurance. You would like to be saved. You would like to know, beyond a shadow of any doubt, that you're going to Heaven. And, you can know. Listen to God's Word—Romans 10:9–10: *“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.”* That is, if you believe enough in your heart to openly and publicly confess it, you'll be saved. *“With the heart man [believes] unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation”* (Romans 10:10).

I want you to pray like this: “Dear God, I know that You love me and want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me and promised to save me if I would trust You. I do trust You, 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, and I receive You now as my Lord and Savior. And, I'll believe in my heart, and I will confess it with my mouth. I'll not be ashamed of You, because You died for me. Thank You for saving me. Amen.”

The Resurrection Body

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 10, 1977

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35–58

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Perplexing Problem
- II. The Plain Picture
- III. The Particular People
- IV. The Promised Perfection
 - A. Changed from Corruption to Incorruption
 - B. Changed from Dishonor to Glory
 - C. Changed from Weakness to Power
 - D. Changed from a Natural Body to a Spiritual Body
- V. The Perfect Pattern
- VI. The Predictive Period
- VII. The Proper Praise

Conclusion

Introduction

Chapter 15—we're continuing our study in 1 Corinthians, and today we're thinking on this subject: "The Resurrection Body." Note verse 35: "*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*" (1 Corinthians 15:35). Now, when a Christian dies, his spirit goes to be immediately with the Lord. There is no such thing as soul sleep. We close our eyes in this world to open them immediately upon the face of the Savior. Second Corinthians, chapter 5, and verse 8: "*...to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 5:8). So, you see, man is not a body. Man has a body, and his body is called an earthly house. You live in a man-house. A dog lives in a doghouse. We all just have a house that we live in, and our body is called that earthly house. And, we need to be able to make this distinction.

Somebody, on an occasion, asked John Quincy Adams, "And how is John Quincy Adams today?" Now, John Quincy Adams, at this moment, was 80 years of age and was somewhat infirm, and this is the way he answered: He said, "Thank you for asking. John Quincy Adams is quite well, but the house in which he is living is becoming rather dilapidated. In fact, it will soon be quite unlivable, and I shall have to move out anyway, now. But, John Quincy Adams is doing quite well, thank you." You see, he had learned the truth, had he not? That there is a difference between the man and his body.

The body is the house that we live in. But, having said that, let me say this: That does not mean that your body is not important, or that God is finished with it, when you die. When God saves you, He is going to save you completely—“*And I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23)—God is going to redeem your body.

Now, when Adam sinned, Adam died immediately in his spirit. He died that moment, when God moved out of Adam. He died immediately in his spirit, but then he died progressively in his soul. The Bible says, in the Book of Genesis: “Dying thou shalt die” (Genesis 2:17). And then, he died, ultimately, in his body. It took about 800 plus years for the effect of that sin in his spirit to catch up with his body, you see. He died immediately in his spirit. Are you listening? Progressively, in his soul—ultimately, in his body.

Now, when God saved you, he undoes what sin did; and so, when you get saved, you are justified immediately in the spirit. You are sanctified progressively in your soul, and you will be glorified ultimately in your body. You see, God is not finished with you yet. There’s still more to come, and you can say, “Thank God for that.” But, there is still more to come. And, that “more to come” we call “the resurrection of the body.”

I. The Perplexing Problem

Now, I want you to notice this study this morning under seven brief headings. First of all, I want you to notice the perplexing problem. Look in verse 35: “*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?*” (1 Corinthians 15:35). Now, that’s a perplexing problem. How are the dead raised up? My, that seems almost impossible; or, with men, it is impossible. It’s hard for man to comprehend such a thing as the resurrection of the body. And, let me say right here, friend, we’re talking about the resurrection of the body.

The liberal, the modernist, and the doubter come along with prating terms about the resurrection of the spirit, or the resurrection of the soul. Never in the Bible does the Bible use the term for *resurrection* for anything other than the body. Don’t forget it. That is just silly talk—to talk about the resurrection of the spirit. The spirit is not resurrected, and the soul is not resurrected—they don’t need to be resurrected; they never die. It is the body that is resurrected; and when we speak of the resurrection, we’re speaking of the body. Never forget that. Never forget that.

Well, how are the dead raised up? Well, dear friend, why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead? I mean, after all, if He made us out of nothing but the word of His power, then how much easier it will be for Him to resurrect us out of something—if He made us, to begin with, out of nothing? You don’t have to worry about the resurrection of the body if you believe in God. I don’t know what kind of God you believe in, but mine is quite sufficient, thank you.

II. The Plain Picture

All right, so there is a perplexing problem to some—but only to the doubter, only to the materialists, and only to the man who does not believe in God. Secondly, not only do I want you to notice the perplexing problem, but I also want you to notice the plain picture—the plain picture—beginning to read, now, in verse 36: *“Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: but God giveth it a body”* (1 Corinthians 5:36–38).

Now, what happens? Every farmer in West Memphis, Arkansas, and down here in the delta, and these others, knows what happens when they put a kernel of grain—whether it be a cotton seed, or whether it be a kernel of corn, or whatever it be—when they put that in the ground, they know what happens to that seed. There’s a sense in which that seed dies, but it doesn’t die—that is, it dissolves, it disintegrates, it comes to pieces, it rots in the ground, but out of that death there comes new life—more great, more glorious, more grand, and more magnificent than the seed that is put in the ground.

You say, “Wait a minute, there is a principle of life that stays in that seed.” I’m glad that you caught that point. You say, “In the body there is no principle of life that remains.” That’s where you’re wrong, friend. There’s a part of me that can never die. Did you know that? Jesus said: “And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:26). And, just as that seed has a germ of life, Adrian Rogers has a germ of life. God’s Holy Spirit is living in my spirit, and though my body may go into this grave, there is a continuing me—there is a continuing life—that will stay there. And, we see the illustration of the resurrection in nature every day and bless God in this beautiful springtime. Haven’t we seen it? Hasn’t it been wonderful and glorious?

An old story is of Michael Faraday, who was a chemist. And, a lady brought to Michael Faraday a gold cup to have its gold content analyzed. And, as he had it in his laboratory, it slipped from his hands and fell into a casket of chemically pure acid and was dissolved—a lady’s precious golden cup. Well, Michael Faraday was not to be outdone, but he put into that acid the proper reagent that caused the gold to particulate out to a dust at the bottom. He poured the acid carefully off and washed the gold particles that were in the bottom. And then, he sent it to the man who had originally made the cup and received the pattern and the mold. He melted the cup down, poured it into that mold, and had again, the same cup. And then, he wrote to the lady. This Mr. Faraday made a cup from the grave of the cup where there was no cup. The cup had been dissolved, and the particles were scattered throughout the acid. The cup was a new one, although made of the old materials and was exactly like the old one. I think that’s a pretty good illustration of the resurrection where our Lord just takes these

particles that seemed to have been dissolved.

You see, that brings a problem to someone; they say, “Well, now look, how’s God going to do that?” There’s a fellow who worked in a sawmill in Mississippi and lost a finger. And then, he was drafted, went to Vietnam, and lost a foot. And then, he became a missionary, died in Africa, and was buried there, and became the bark of a tree when that tree finally absorbed him. And, how’s God going to get all those particles together? Look how we’ll be all scattered out. Well friend, I’m made up of particles from everywhere right now. I’m made of raisins from California, of apples from Oregon, of beef from Kansas, and of swamp cabbage from Florida; it’s all come together to make me up, right now, what I am. I am just simply a gathering of particles, from all over, that are revolving around a continuing principle. You see, it’s not the particles that make me. Those particles will change every seven years as we slough off old cells and get new cells, but there is a continuing principle that makes you and me.

Psalm 139, and verse 16, is very interesting. You can turn to it later—just jot it down—but it says this: that “*all my members*”—that is, my features, my facilities, and so forth—“*were written, [in God’s book]...when as yet there was none of them*” (Psalm 139:16). Do you know what that means? Before I was, God had my plan; before I was, God said this is an Adrian Rogers, and He drew it. And, this is a Jim Whitmire, and He drew it. And, God just made that plan. Now, when God gets ready to resurrect me, it’s not the particles that He’s bringing back—it is me and it is my body, my same body, made according to that plan, before there were any of them. And, God will go through His plan book and say, “There’s an Adrian—that’s what I want,” and bring him back. You see, it’s a wonderful thing that God is doing, and the illustration that God gives us is the illustration of a seed. So, first of all, there’s the perplexing problem, and then, Paul says, well, there’s the plain picture. We see it every day; we see it every day in nature.

III. The Particular People

Now, the third thing I want you to notice is the particular people, or we could say—but you might take offense—the *peculiar* people, the people who are going to be raised up. Now, the reason why I used the words *particular people* is that we’re not all going to be the same in the resurrection. We’re going to be individuals. We’re going to be different.

Begin reading, again, in verse 38: “*But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body*” (1 Corinthians 15:38)—his own body, his own particular body. All flesh is not the same flesh. There is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beast, another flesh of fish, and another of birds. I want to ask you a question: How did Paul know this without a microscope and modern biology? How did he know that? Every doctor knows that today; but how does Paul know that? “*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*” (2 Peter 1:21).

All right now, look: *“There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead”* (1 Corinthians 15:40–42). Now, what is he saying? He is saying that different seeds have different bodies. He’s saying that even the celestial bodies are different. He’s saying that God, who made the billions of stars, made no two alike. God is the God of the original. God doesn’t make copies; He makes originals—no two snowflakes alike, no two leaves alike, and no fingerprints alike. When we get to Heaven, we’re not going to be a carbon copy.

I heard of a little fellow who got a fingerprinting set for Christmas, and he kind of had a huff. And, his daddy asked him, “What’s wrong?” He said, “Well, I’m mad at J. Edgar Hoover.” He said, “Well, why are you mad at J. Edgar Hoover?” He said, “Because he’s a liar.” He said, “Well, why?” He said, “In this book on fingerprints, J. Edgar Hoover said that no two men have the same fingerprints.” He said, “I know at least three men who have the same fingerprints.” And, his dad said, “Who is that?” He said, “Well, you, Santa Claus, and whoever it was that broke into my piggy bank.”

But, you know the truth of the matter is that there are no two men who have the same fingerprints. And, when we’re resurrected, we’re not going to be just a bunch of faceless people with wooly robes and halos, sitting on white clouds, and plucking a harp. We’re going to be as different then as we are now—and look around. We’re going to be as different then as we are now. *“To every seed his own body”* (1 Corinthians 15:38).

People sometimes ask the question: “Will we know one another in Heaven?” Of course we will. Somebody asked Charles Haddon Spurgeon this question: “Will we know one another in Heaven?” His answer was classic: he said, “We know one another now. Will we be bigger fools in Heaven than we are now?” Oh yes, you’ll know your precious mama; you’ll know your children; you’ll know your daddy; you’ll know your family—oh, what a time it will be there on that great Resurrection Day. Oh, we’ll not have the same relationships, as such; but we’ll know one another in a sweeter relationship—in a fuller relationship. Friend, it’ll not be lost—it will be the plus of the resurrection, and so, we have the particular people.

IV. The Promised Perfection

Now, the next thing that I want you to notice is the promised perfection, because we’re going to be the same—but oh, how much better! Notice, beginning in verse 42: *“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption”* (1 Corinthians 15:42). Now, somebody may say, “Brother Rogers, to be honest, I don’t

want my body back again.” And, every time that you get a look at your photograph, you may be dissatisfied with it. Just wait awhile—just wait awhile. You say, “Well, you know, I just don’t have a proper IQ; I’m just not as smart as I’d like to be.” You’re probably a lot smarter than you think that you are, but you just don’t have anything to think with. Now, you see, your brain that you think with is a part of your physical equipment, like your hands, your ears, and your nose. And, some people got a bigger brain—just like some people got a stronger hand. But, in the resurrection, you’ll have more to think with, and then, you’ll know how smart you really are, because God will just make you over again.

A. Changed from Corruption to Incorruption

It is sown. Listen, listen—It will be changed from corruption to incorruption. There’s hardly a person that’s listening to me—if you’ll just think about it for a second—who doesn’t feel a pain somewhere, right now, and we’re all going through that—that process of corruption. Somebody said, “I’m suffering from the four B’s: baldness, bifocals, bulges, and bunions.” From the crown of his head to the sole of his feet, He’s just feeling that old deterioration that takes place. And, of course, it does, because of the sin nature that’s in us. There is a corruption that is taking place, but, bless God—the change is going to be from corruption to incorruption. No more sighing, no more crying, no more dying, no more parting, no more pain, no more doom, and no more gloom—it’s gone from corruption to incorruption.

B. Changed from Dishonor to Glory

Not only will it be changed from corruption to incorruption—again, it will be changed from dishonor to glory. Look at, in verse 43: *“It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory”* (1 Corinthians 15:43). You cannot imagine the glory that will be displayed in your resurrection body. The difference has been described to be as the difference in the repulsive hairy caterpillar that crawls into the cocoon, becomes that chrysalis, and then, goes through that metamorphosis where it comes out the glorious monarch butterfly. What a change! But the change that will come in us will be greater than that.

You ladies look down there at that diamond that you’re wearing on your hand. And, you see that diamond that your husband gave you when he wanted to become your husband. He said, “Wilt thou?” And, you wilted. You look down there at that diamond, and that diamond is made of carbon—the same thing that coal is made of. Look at the old black messy lump of coal, and then look at that diamond. What is the difference? It’s the same substance, but it’s been changed. Someone has well said that coal is carbon in humiliation; a diamond is carbon in glory. Right now, we are in humiliation, but one day, the same person will be raised up in glory. “It is sown in dishonor,”—and how we’ve dishonored these bodies of ours through sin and dissipation—“but it will be raised in glory.”

You know, too many people have a wrong concept of what happens to man. They believe in the theory of evolution. And, they think that man has been progressing—that man started in sort of a small insignificant way, and that he has progressed, that, you know, he has been evolving, and every day and every way, he's getting better and better. But, he is but an orphan of the apes, and now, trying to prove it, I think that he makes a monkey of himself. But, he's trying to prove, through his ancestry, that he has evolved. But, that isn't what the Bible teaches. To the contrary, the Bible teaches that man started out as a glorious creature, and thousands of years of sin has scarred, marred, and disfigured man.

I was reading, the other day, in a secular source, that even in a brilliant man like in Einstein he uses two-fifths of one percent of his brain capacity. I know some who I don't think even approximate that—two-fifths of one percent. Think what God gave man when He made man and told Adam to have dominion over all of the works of his hands.

You see—we haven't really understood what man is like. When God created man, in all of his glory, you just cannot imagine. Suppose that you'd never seen a railroad train, and then one day, you saw a train wreck. Well, you wouldn't have seen the train yet; you've seen the train wreck. Look around you. You haven't seen a human being yet—all you see are wrecks that are here this morning, and I'm one of them—see. We have been wrecked, scarred, and marred by sin, but one of these days, dear friend, we're going to be made like Jesus.

C. **Changed from Weakness to Power**

Now, thirdly, it's going to be changed from weakness to power. Look in verse 43: *"It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power"* (1 Corinthians 15:43). Say, haven't you wanted to do things that you've not been able to do? Haven't you wanted to express yourself and failed? Haven't you wanted to serve God and not been able to do it with all of the fullness? You know, won't it be great when God gives us a power, you know, that takes hold of these old weak bodies of ours? We'll be able to study, praise, learn, and sing.

Oh dear, how I'm going to sing when I get to Heaven! I'll be so much better than Brother Whitmire is, when I get there. The Bible says that the last shall be first, and I'll just be able to sing and serve, and we will serve the Lord. We're not going to be sitting around, strumming a harp. The Bible says that His servants shall serve Him; and oh, how we'll serve Him with that full power! We will be able to do what we need to do without the limitations of this old sinful body that we live in.

Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,

Prone to leave the God I love. (Robert Robinson)

Yes, it'll be changed from weakness to power. The limitations of earth will not be known

in Heaven.

D. **Changed from a Natural Body to a Spiritual Body**

And next, it will be changed—and I want you to slow down and think with me now. Look at verse 44—it will be changed from a natural body to a spiritual body. Notice verse 44: *“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body”* (1 Corinthians 15:44). Now, be very careful. It does not say that it is raised a *spirit* body; it says that it is raised a *spiritual* body. It is now a natural body. Now, that word *natural* is the same word as *soulish*. And, you can accurately translate that, *“It is sown a soulish body”*—not a *soul* body, but a *soulish* body. *“It is raised a spiritual body.”*

You say, “What’s the difference?” There is a very important difference: There is no such thing as a *spirit body*; a *spirit body* is a contradiction in terms. That’d be like saying a *cold-hot*, an *up-down*, or a *filled vacuum*. I mean, it’s just a contradiction in terms. You can’t have a *spirit body*; it’d be like a *silent noise* or a *round square*. You see, either it’s a spirit or a body—not a *spirit body*; it is a spiritual body.

Now, no longer a soulish body. We, today, are soulish, even though we may be Spirit-filled. We operate from a certain soulish principle, and we’re bound to certain carnal laws. But, when we’re resurrected, we will operate according to spiritual laws, rather than soulish laws. And, we’ll operate, motivated by pure spirit, and we will be spiritual beings—purely spiritual beings—though we will have a resurrection body. I hope that you understand that.

V. **The Perfect Pattern**

Now, the next thing that I want you to know is found, beginning in verse 45—the perfect pattern. What are we going to be like? We’ll begin reading: *“And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul;”*—he had a soulish body; now, watch it—*“the last Adam was made a quickening spirit”* (1 Corinthians 15:45). Who is the last Adam? The last Adam was Jesus—Jesus.

Do you remember that Christmas carol we sing: “Second Adam from above, reinstate us in Thy love?” (Charles Wesley). *“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven”* (1 Corinthians 15:46–47). Now, after having understood this, there are really only two men that have ever lived—Adam and Jesus. And, you are in one or the other. *“In Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Corinthians 5:22). I hope that you’re in Christ today.

Now, listen to the conclusion, therefore, in verse 48: *“As in the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And*

as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:48–49). Now, I don’t know whether you understand what that says or not, but let me put it in plain English: Folks, one of these days, we are going to be like Jesus Christ. We will bear the image of the heavens. We’ll no longer be like Adam, the earthy; we will be like Jesus, the heavenly. He is the perfect pattern.

Many people want to know what we’re going to be like; and friend, there are questions I cannot answer, that you cannot answer, and that no one can answer, but there are questions that we can answer. There are some things we can’t be dogmatic about. Now, let me show you what I mean. *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God”* (1 John 3:2). There are some things that we can be bull-dogmatic about. We can say, *“Praise God! I’m dogmatic about that.”* *“And it doth not yet appear what we shall be”* (1 John 3:2). You can’t be dogmatic about that, because the Bible says: *“It doth not yet appear...”* (1 John 3:2). But now, watch this: *“But we know”*—now, we’re getting bull-dogmatic—*“that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:2). Isn’t that great? I don’t have to know the details.

I can say, with the Psalmist in Psalm 17, verse 15: *“I shall be satisfied, when I awaken, with thy likeness”* (Psalm 17:15). Oh, to be like Jesus will be good enough for me! Oh, He has a resurrection body—a glorious body! And, I want to tell you: Jesus was not some ghost when He came out of that grave—He said, *“Touch Me. A spirit doesn’t have flesh and bone, like you see me having”* (Luke 24:39). Jesus didn’t have what some would call a *spirit body*. He had a spiritual body. It was not subject to the limitations of gravity. He was taken up out of their sight. He was subject to the limitations of materialism. He was in that room. He appeared to them. The doors were shut. He came out of that tomb before the stone was rolled away. It wasn’t rolled away to let him out; it was rolled away to let them in. His body, though it was a body that can be touched, handled, and that could share food, was a resurrection body. You could put your fingers in the nail prints; but yet, it was a spiritual body. Ah, yes—glory to God—the perfect pattern is Jesus Christ. The Bible calls Him the *“first fruits of them that slept”* (1 Corinthians 15:20). That means that He’s the pattern of all the rest of the harvest.

VI. The Predictive Period

The next thing that you’ll notice is beginning in verse 50—what we call the predictive period. Now, when will all of this take place? When’s it going to happen? Beginning in verse 50: *“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption.”* That is, there’s going to have to be some change before we can move into that glorious final kingdom. *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep,”*—that is, not everybody is going to die before the climax of things—*“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed”* (1 Corinthians

15:50–51). Can you say *amen* to that? Ha! We shall all be changed. There's going to come a transformation—a glorious, wonderful transformation.

You see, God is not finished with us yet. And, some of you may be looking at us, and saying, “You Christians don't look too hot.” I say, “Wait a minute, will you? Ha! Wait a minute. Give God time.” *“We shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality”* (1 Corinthians 15:51–53).

When will it take place? It will take place when Jesus comes. When is Jesus coming? Right now, perhaps, or maybe fifteen minutes from now. You say, “I don't think so.” Well, that's why I think that He's coming: *“For in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh”* (Matthew 24:44). And, if you don't think that He's coming, then that's the best sign that I know of that He might. He's coming quickly as a thief in the night. The Bible calls it “in the twinkling of an eye.” Suppose that it were right now; suppose that you were to hear that trumpet blast and the voice of the archangel say, *“Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him”* (Matthew 25:6). Oh, it's coming, and coming soon—surely, swiftly, certainly—according to the Word of God. The prophesied period is the second coming of the Lord—the predicted period.

VII. The Proper Praise

Now, finally, I want you to notice, as we conclude this message, the proper praise. What should our attitude be? Well, continue to read in verse 54, through the end of the chapter: *“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting?”* (1 Corinthians 15:54–55). You know, death does have a sting, if you don't know the Lord.

I heard of a little boy and a little girl who were playing in the garden. And, a big old bumblebee came up and stung the little boy. And, of course, he started to cry, and the place swelled up, and his mother came and tried to render first aid. And, the little sister started to cry, too. And, she seemed to be more frightened than brother. And, mama said, “Honey, why are you crying?” She said, “Because that bee that stung brother may sting me.” And, the bee was still buzzing around. Mother said, “Sweetheart, come here—I want to show you something.” She said, “You see right there on brother—you see that little thing? That's the stinger. That old bee when he stung brother lost his stinger, and he'll never sting anybody again.” I want to tell you, dear friend, that old bee called *Death* may buzz around you, but Jesus took the sting out of death. Did you know that? Jesus took the sting out of death. And, Jesus took the gloom out of the grave. And, Jesus took the pain out of parting. And, Jesus gives a hope that is steadfast and

sure.

And so, we, as Christians, can say, “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:55). You see, there are two classes of people who will be there: those who never died and were changed in a moment, and those who died and were raised. Those who never died will be able to say, “O death, where is your sting?” Those who were raised will be able to say, “O grave, where is your victory? Goodbye. I’m getting up; you can’t hold me any more than you could hold my Lord.” How we ought to break forth! That’s the reason why the Apostle Paul climaxes this chapter by saying: *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Conclusion

Did you read about that lady, the other day in the paper, who wanted to be buried in her Ferrari? Do you know what that is? Her sports car. And, the poor, dear lady said, “I want to be reclined at a certain angle.” Do you know what’s wrong with her? This is the only world she must know. Oh, dear friend, isn’t it wonderful that we don’t have to look to holding onto this old world, and say, “Bury me in my sports car?”

I want to tell you, friend, there’s coming a day when the things of this world will seem like so much trash when we rise in glory in our resurrected bodies.

It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,
It pays every step of the way,
Though the pathway to glory may sometimes be drear...
It pays to serve Jesus each day. (Frank C. Huston)

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). Let us pray.

The Resurrection Body

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 19, 1981

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35–58

“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”

1 CORINTHIANS 15:35

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Consternation of the Skeptic
- II. The Confirmation of the Seed
- III. The Conformation to the Savior
- IV. The Consolation to the Saint

Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to be finding in your Bibles, please, 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and we're going to begin our reading in verse 35—1 Corinthians chapter 15. Death is an awesome subject. In the past few days, Joe Louis, “The Champ,” died. He won many battles. He had a fighter's heart. But, Joe Louis was not able to overcome death, and neither shall you, for the Bible says, *“It is appointed unto [man] once to die.”* (Hebrews 9:27) That is, you're going to die physically, unless the Lord comes first, that is. Death is appointed to all of us.

Now, we hear a lot of statistical information about death. We talk about how many young people die, and how many old people die, how many people die at home, how many people die in their automobiles, how many people die of starvation, how many people die of a natural death. Incidentally, there is no such thing as a “natural death”; all death is unnatural. God did not intend it; God did not plan it. It is a result of the intrusion of sin into this universe. But we call them “natural deaths.” And we have all kinds of statistical information about dying. Well, there's a new statistic out on death that you need to be aware of. Are you ready for it? One out of one people die. Okay? One out of one. That's talking about all of us, and we need to be aware of it so we can understand how to deal with this thing called death. But we don't need to be frightened by death. We can be like that little lady who had walked with the Lord Jesus so many, many years^F and finally, when it came time for her to die, her loved ones were around her

trying to comfort her, and she said, “Don’t worry about me. I am tickled to death to die”—“I am tickled to death to die.” She was getting ready to go and meet the wonderful Savior. She could say that because of the Resurrection Day that we celebrate today.

Now, let me tell you that when a Christian dies, his spirit goes to be immediately with the Lord. We need to understand this. Some people have the idea that the spirit goes to the grave to sleep until the Resurrection, but that is not so. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 8: *“to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 5:8) Now, let me say that again: *“to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.”* (2 Corinthians 5:8) You need to make a difference between you and your body. Your body is the house that you live in.

When John Quincy Adams was eighty years of age, somebody came to John Quincy Adams and asked him, “How is John Quincy Adams today?” He said, “John Quincy Adams is doing very well today, thank you, but the house in which he is living is rather dilapidated. As a matter of fact,” he said, “before long, it will be unsuitable to live in at all, and I will move out of it. But John Quincy Adams is doing very well today, thank you.” Oh, he learned a wonderful secret: that this house is a body—this body is a house—in which we live. The Bible calls it *“our earthly house.”* (2 Corinthians 5:1) But the truth of the matter is that we move out to move back in.

† Have you ever passed a building and seen a sign on it that said something like this: “Closed for Alterations”? What does that mean? It means that for a while, the business is shut down; the occupant, the owner, moves out; the workmen move in—they repair, fix up, redecorate that building (whatever they’re going to do to it)—and then the owner moves back in. Something similar to that happens when we die: we move out; God resurrects, and repairs, and fixes up—well, He doesn’t really repair; He just makes it over all brand new—and then we move back in.†

That’s the truth that I want to share with you today. What happens when we move back in? What about this resurrection body in which we live and which we will live? It’s going to be exciting and wonderful.

I want you to pay attention. You see, when Adam died, Adam died three ways. In the Garden of Eden, God had said to Adam, *“In the day that [you eat] thereof [you will] surely die.”* (Genesis 2:17) That is, “When you disobey me, you’re going to die, Adam.” Adam did disobey God, and he died. But how did he die? Well, he died three ways. He died immediately in his spirit. Then, he died progressively in his soul. Actually, the Scripture says, “Dying thou shalt die.” (Genesis 2:17) So, he died immediately in his spirit. He died progressively in his soul. He died ultimately in his body. Have you got that? Immediately in his spirit, progressively in his soul, ultimately in his body. His body went on to live for hundreds of years, but ultimately, his body died. Now, when you get saved, God just reverses the process. When you receive the Lord Jesus Christ into your

heart and into your life, you are justified immediately in the spirit, you are sanctified progressively in the soul, and you are glorified ultimately in the body. You see, God's not finished with you yet.

You look at me, and you may say, "Well, Mr. Rogers, you don't look so redeemed." Well, God's not finished yet. The Bible says in Philippians chapter 1, verse 6: "*he [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" (Philippians 1:6) And we're waiting now for the redemption of the body. Not only is God saving my spirit and my soul, but He's saving my body. And, one day, as we're going to see, our vile bodies are going to be made like unto the glorious resurrected body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

I. The Consternation of the Skeptic

Now, keep that in mind, and let's look in verse 35. We're reading here in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 35. Now, the Bible says here, "*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?*" (1 Corinthians 15:35) Now, the first thing I want you to notice is the consternation of the skeptic. He says, "*How are the dead raised up?*" (1 Corinthians 15:35)—"How can this be? How can such a thing be that God should raise the dead? And if they are raised, what are they going to look like? With what body are they going to come?"

Now, it's extremely hard for a man to comprehend the resurrection of the body—it really is. And may I say here, parenthetically but emphatically, resurrection always refers to the body. Don't go around talking about the resurrection of the soul. The Bible never uses that kind of language. Don't talk about the resurrection of the spirit. It is the body that is resurrected, and it's just double-talk to talk about the resurrection of the spirit or the resurrection of the soul. It is the body that is resurrected.

You see, that causes problems for some people. They say, "You mean that God's actually going to go down into the earth and gather up these particles?" Well, friend, He who made worlds out of nothing to begin with is certainly going to be able to raise our bodies up out of something. Don't you realize that we're talking about the power of Almighty God? You say, "Well, that smacks of the supernatural." That's what I'm talking about today; I'm talking about the supernatural. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said, "Everything seems miraculous until we get used to it." I mean, we see things that, if we didn't understand them or were not used to them, we would call them "miracles" today. But, just simply because we seem to be used to it, we somehow accept it. I want to tell you, our God is a God of might and miracle. So, first of all, you see the consternation of the skeptic.

II. The Confirmation of the Seed

And then, Paul begins to answer with what I call “the confirmation of the seed.” Look, if you will, now, in verse 36: Paul says, *“Thou fool”*—actually, the King James is a little kind here. Paul just literally says, “Fool”—*“that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die”*—now, he’s talking about a seed. You sow seeds. And he says, “Seed does not come to life, or is not made alive, except it first die.” It decays and rots in the ground—*“And that...thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or...some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him...to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh...there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds.”* (1 Corinthians 15:36–39) Incidentally, isn’t it marvelous that Paul knew this before the day of microbiology? He’s saying there’s one protoplasm of mankind, another protoplasm of beasts, another protoplasm of fish, another of birds. Of course, you know that’s a scientific statement, but how did Paul know that back in this day? Well, I’ll tell you how Paul knew it: *“holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”* (2 Peter 1:21) Amen. That’s how Paul knew it.

And then, he goes on to talk about astronomy, and he said, *“There are...celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. [And there’s] one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory”*—how did he know that without a telescope? All those stars are little pinpoints of light, but the Apostle Paul knew these things by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He’s still talking now, however, about the concept of planting and reaping a seed, so he goes on in verse 42 to say—*“So [is] also...the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body”*—or, a “soulish body”—*“it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”* (1 Corinthians 15:40–44) Now, Paul says, “Every time you see a seed that’s planted and sprouts, you ought to be able to believe in the Resurrection,” and Paul just calls us foolish. Those of us who’ve ever seen a seed sprout and watched it grow, we’ve seen the Resurrection just demonstrated before us in that little seed.

† This year my son-in-law, who is Minister of Evangelism for The First Baptist Church of Euless, Texas, gave to Joyce and myself for a Christmas gift some tulip bulbs. And, but, you know, he knew that when he gave those bulbs, he also had to plant them; and so, he came in our backyard this year—and Joyce has always wanted some tulips—and he took those old, rough, brown bulbs and planted them in that cold and frozen soil. And I went out there and looked at those things, and they looked so ugly. And we waited and waited, and then the springtime came† and up came that blade out of that dirt and then

the glorious tulips that bloomed. And what a thing of joy and beauty they were for us! And that should have been to us and to you a confirmation of the Resurrection.†

You know, people have difficulty understanding the Resurrection because they say, “Now, Brother Rogers, be reasonable. Here’s a man who goes over and fights in a war in Vietnam. And he gets his leg blown off, and it’s buried over there. And then, he comes to work in a sawmill in Arkansas and cuts off a thumb, and it’s—something happens to it over here—and it’s buried over here. And then, he becomes a missionary in Tanzania, and he dies over there. And then, they put him in a grave over there, and after a while, his body dissolves and decays. And an old root of an oak tree goes down there and absorbs him, and he turns into acorns. And something comes along and eats those acorns. And,” you say, “Brother Rogers, where is he? I mean, after all, how is God going to bring all this back together?” I don’t mean to be gruesome about it, friends, but really, you know there’s a dissolution that takes place. We just go on out, and the particles go everywhere; they’re scattered all around. How is God going to bring all that back together?

† Well, friend, I want to ask you a question: How can you take a watermelon seed and put it in the ground and that watermelon seed have enough sense to suck a watermelon out of that ground? Now, you think about it. Have you ever thought about that? I ponder every time I eat a watermelon, and I look at the seeds—I do. I ask Joyce about it every time. I say, “Honey, you know, a seed is the smartest thing I’ve ever seen.” You can put a seed in the ground, and it all depends on what kind of seed it is. If it’s a watermelon seed, it’ll find all the watermelons in the ground. If it’s a cantaloupe seed, it’ll find all the cantaloupes in the ground. If it’s a peach seed, it’ll find all the peaches. They’re all down there. Friend, everywhere you walk, you’re walking on fruit. Did you know it? It’s all in there; it’s down there. And that seed goes in there and finds it and brings it out.

Now friend, if you’ve never seen a seed or heard of a seed, you’d say, “That’s impossible,” right? You’d say, “Oh, no. That...that... Don’t tell me there’s something sweet and succulent and juicy down there in the ground.” The seed knows where it is, and it goes and finds it and brings it out. And I won’t have any difficulty of myself being made up of particles from all over the world. I’m already made up of particles from all over the world. I’m made up of bananas from Miami. I’m made up of apples from Oregon, and raisins from California, and swamp cabbage from Florida, and so forth. That’s what makes me *me* right now. You see, we’re already made up of particles.†

You say, “But Brother Rogers, how do you know those same particles are going to come back together?” They don’t have to come back together—not those same particles. What makes me *me* is not this particular skin that I have, not this particular

hair that I have, not this particular muscle and sinew and bone. Physiologists tell us that we actually change bodies about every seven years. Old cells are sloughing off. New cells are being born. I got out a reference book last night and looked up some facts, and I... Just to deal with the bloodstream, for example. I found out in our bloodstream we have about twenty-five billion white cells and about twenty-five trillion red cells. Now, that's a lot of cells now—twenty-five trillion red cells, twenty-five billion white in round figures, give or take two or three. All right, now that's how many just in the bloodstream that the average person has. And I found out that the life of a white cell is maybe as short as twelve hours—the white cells. And I found out that the red cell—the life—is about a 120 days. Now, you think of it: in the next twelve hours, you're going to have to come up with about twenty-five billion white cells, so get to work. I mean, you're losing fast sitting here talking to me, and think what you're going to have to do to get twenty-five billion red cells in the next 120 days. Well, you see, new ones are coming; old ones are going.

¶ I want to ask you a question: Tom Clayton over there—is he the same person he was when he was a baby? A little baby boy is born there—and I'm sure he was a beautiful baby. Now, there he was as a little baby. Now he is a man. Now, I want to ask you, does he have the same body or does he have a different body? That's hard to answer. It is the same, but it's not the same. There wasn't a time he moved out and moved into someone else's body. There is a continuing relationship between that old body. And yet, there's not a particle of him that was alive when he was a little baby that's alive now; and yet, he's exactly the same person.¶

Now, what I'm trying to show you is this: that in the Resurrection, God does not have to raise these particular particles that make up my body right now for me to be resurrected. I found a verse of Scripture that really made it plain to me one day, and I was reading in Psalms 139. And, in Psalms 139, I came to verse 16, and I said, "That's it! That is the verse I've been looking for that explains this same thing." You know, the psalmist is praising God for how he was created in his mother's womb, and he realized that when he was in his mother's womb, that he was a person and that he was the handiwork of God. Oh, how we ought to stand against this abortion business with all of our heart, soul, and mind! You read Psalms 139 and see what God is doing there in the mother's womb. But then, he says something very interesting there, and I'm going to read just a portion of one verse—Psalms 139, verse 16. This is what he said: he said, "*In thy book [were] all [of] my members...written...when as yet there [were] none of them.*" (Psalms 139:16) Now, you think about that: "*in thy book [were] all [of] my members...written...when as yet there [were] none of them.*" (Psalms 139:16)

One day, God decided He was going to make a fellow named Adrian Rogers; and so, God went to His drawing board, and God designed an Adrian Rogers. You say,

“What for?” I don’t know, but He did. He designed an Adrian Rogers, and He said, “He’s going to be this way, this way, this way.” He designed my eyes, my nose, my ears, my hands, my feet—“*all [of] my members were written [in His book where] there [were] none of them.*” (Psalms 139:16) I mean, before I was conceived in my mother’s womb, God had it in His mind, and God has a plan for me. That plan is on file in the glory. And when God gets ready to resurrect me, He’ll just go to His file, pull out an “Adrian Rogers,” stick it down, and up I’ll pop. That’s the way it is, friend.

Listen, let me tell you something: you see, there is a coercive force; there is a life principle, and that life principle is around a certain design that God designed for me and nobody else. And, God has a design for you, and God has a design for you, and God has a design for you. And, “in God’s book were all of your members written before there were any of them.” (Psalms 139:16) That’s a tremendous thought, isn’t it? And, you see, when God gets ready to raise you up, it doesn’t matter what particular particles He uses; it matters what design He uses, what plan He uses. God has a plan for you. You are a particular person in the heart and mind of God.

But somebody says, “But, wait a minute—wait a minute. There’s a difference. The analogy is weak because when a seed goes into the ground, that seed never ever really dies. That germ of life continues on in the seed, and, therefore, the plant comes forth. But when you die, you’re dead.” No, mister, that’s where you’re wrong. Just as the seed never really dies, the Christian never really dies. Do you ever hear where Jesus said, “[*He that] liveth and believeth in me shall never die*”—“*never die.*” (John 11:26) You see, there’s a life principle that God preserves that will never die; and so, the analogy stands. There is a part of me that will live, and though my body may decay, “*to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.*” (2 Corinthians 5:8) And when God gets ready at that Resurrection Day, He says, “Just as we put a seed in the cold earth, and after a while the sun comes out and that little old seed nestling there in the bosom of the earth begins to feel life, and it stretches and splits off that little brown overcoat, and there it pushes its way up through the sod, and there comes that glorious life out of what seemed to be a rotting and a decaying seed,” God says, “every springtime I’m preaching a resurrection message to you”—“every springtime.” With the lilies and the flowers and what have just been through here as Memphis has turned to bloom is God’s way of promising life everlasting through the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There is the confirmation of the seed.

But now, you see, you put a seed in the ground, and what comes out of the ground is much more glorious and beautiful than what goes into the ground. And how we need to understand, dear friend, that we’re going to be so changed! We’re going to be so improved. You know, there are a lot of people who say, “To be very honest with you, Brother Rogers, I don’t want my body back. If I had my choice, I’d just rather have

something else.” Friend, you will like it when you see it because it will be the same body, but it is going to be changed. If you look in a mirror and you don’t like what you see, just wait a while—you’ll be better. Maybe you say, “Well, I’m just not as smart as I would like to be.” If you’re tempted to worry about your IQ, forget it. Intelligence only has to do with your brain equipment, and your brain is a part of the body. You’re a lot smarter than you think you are; you just don’t have the right equipment to think with. In the Resurrection, you’ll get better equipment, and then you’ll be surprised just how smart you are when you’ve got more tools to think with. You see, you’re a very intelligent person, and I may be a whole lot more intelligent than I have brainpower to think with. I’m not really playing on words, friend. I want to tell you, in the Resurrection, we’re going to get all that God wants us to have, and we are going to like it. It’s going to be such a great improvement.

Look, if you will, in verse 38. We’re talking now about the seed. And, Paul says, “*But God giveth it [of the] body*”—“*God giveth it a body*”—“*as it hath pleased him...to every seed his own body.*” (1 Corinthians 15:38) Now, what does that mean? It means that we’re not all going to be alike in the Resurrection. I have a firm conviction there will be as much difference in the Resurrection between us as there is right now. I mean, we’ll be different. We’ll be recognizable. We’re not going to lose our own unique personality. Why did God make us the way He made us if He did not have something in mind? And so, there will be a distinctiveness about us through all eternity. There won’t be any imperfections, but we’re going to be different.

You know, so many times people say, “Will we know one another in heaven?” Of course we will. We’re not going to be absorbed into some gaseous mass, or we’re not going to be turned out like a factory making cookies with a cookie cutter. We’re going to be all individuals, and God will give “*every seed his own body.*” (1 Corinthians 15:38) You see, no two flowers are alike. No two snowflakes are alike. No two grains of sand are alike. And no people are alike. You say, “Well, what about identical twins?” They have different fingerprints. *God never make copies; He always makes originals*—always. He never makes copies.

‡ A little boy got a fingerprinting set for Christmas, and someone asked him what he thought about it. He said, “Well,” he said, “I like it all right, but,” he said, “the man who wrote this book didn’t know what he was talking about.” He said, “What do you mean?” He said, “In this book, this man said that no people have the same fingerprints.” He said, “I know three people who have the same fingerprints,” said, “Daddy, and Santa Claus, and whoever it was that broke into my piggy bank.” ‡

But the truth of the matter is that God never makes duplicates; God always makes originals. And what a thrill that is! What a blessing to think that “*every seed [has its] own body.*” (1 Corinthians 15:38) And we’re going to be individuals. You know, on the

Mountain of Transfiguration, there were three there who had already died and gone to heaven and come back, and there was Moses, and Elijah, and Jesus. And the disciples recognized Moses. They recognized Elijah. They recognized Jesus. You see, there is going to be this diversity. It's very much like a seed. The analogy is a very beautiful analogy.

But what an improvement there is when you put a seed in the ground! Look at the change that takes place. Notice what Paul is saying here in verse 42: *"So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; [but] it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."* (1 Corinthians 15:42–44) What a change there's going to be! What an improvement there is going to be! Friend, you just cannot imagine the transformation that's going to take place in you.

✚ Think of the ugly, repulsive caterpillar who spins the cocoon around himself. And then, after a while, that metamorphosis takes place, and that cocoon splits, and out come a glorious Monarch butterfly. Is that the same creature that went in? Yes, the same, but how different! Is this glorious Easter lily here the same as the seed that was planted? Yes, the same, but how different! You ladies who are wearing a diamond ring—do you know what that diamond is made of? Carbon. You look at a lump of coal. Do you know what that's made of? Carbon. But, what is the difference? The lump of coal is carbon in humiliation; the diamond is carbon in glory. You see, it's the same but so different—so different.✚

What a transformation there is going to be in the Resurrection! I don't even have words to describe it.

✚ There's going to be a greater difference than the acorn that goes into the ground and the mighty oak tree that comes out of the ground. Can you look at the two? See the acorn; see the oak tree, and this came out of that. When you're discouraged and feeling a little blue, take a look at an oak tree and see what a nut can do. Listen, friend, there's going to be that kind of a transformation in you. As this one seed goes into the ground and out of that seed comes glorious, marvelous, matchless, indescribable, beautiful life, that's what the Resurrection is going to be.✚

And notice what Paul says here. I want you to see something here very plain in verse 44: *"It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."* (1 Corinthians 15:44) Now, pay attention right now, and don't miss this point. It does not say that it is raised a spirit body. Jesus, after His resurrection, said, "Touch me. Handle me. A spirit doesn't have flesh and bone as you see me have." (Luke 24:39) It does not say a "spirit body." Spirits don't have bodies; that's why they're spirits. To say a "spirit body" is a contradiction in terms. That'd be like saying a "round square," a "filled vacuum." It's a

contradiction in terms. There is no such thing as a spirit body.

Now, there are some people who try to explain away the Resurrection, and they say that the Spirit of Jesus was raised from the dead. Mister, the body of Jesus was raised from the dead. Don't you ever forget it. It was the body of Jesus. "Well," you say, "then what does it mean 'a spiritual body'?" Well, right now we are animated by a force called a "soul force" or a *psuchikos* force—the natural force. We just have natural life. But in the Resurrection, our bodies are going to be animated by spiritual power, and they're going to be subject to spiritual rather than natural laws. That means that we're going to throw off all of the bondage that we're held down with now by the natural life in which we live, but it will still be this very same body that is raised. I don't know that we could even begin to comprehend what we're going to be like.

¶ Suppose Brother Tom Clayton and myself were to be able to cast ourselves ahead of time in time and somehow to be transported into heaven to see what things are going to be like in heaven. And, Brother Tommy and I are just walking down that golden street. You know, here men worship gold; there they pave the streets with it. Amen? We're going to be walking down that golden street and looking around. And Tom says to me, "Pastor, I want to see Jesus. Let's see if we can find Jesus." And after a while, we see some glorious, magnificent creature with a face shining like the noonday sun, and I say, "Tom, I believe that's Jesus. Let's go up there in a hurry." And we walked up there, and we say, "Are you Jesus?" And He just smiles and says, "No, no, no. Of course I'm not Jesus. Who can compare with Jesus?" And I say, "Well, you're not Jesus. You're somebody marvelous and wonderful. You must be an angel—and not just an ordinary angel; you must be an archangel. Are you Michael?" "Oh," he says, "I'm not an angel at all." I say, "Do you mean to tell me that you're a glorified human being in a glorified body?" He says, "Yes, I am." "Oh, I've never seen anything just like this. Why, you must be Moses, or maybe you're the Apostle Paul. Who are you?" He says, "Guys, I'm Bob Sorrell. Didn't you recognize me?" I'd say, "Bob, I hardly knew you. Man, you really changed. What a change!" Friend, that's what I'm trying to tell you. What a transformation there's going to be! It's like the seed that goes in the ground, and who can compare what goes in with what comes out?¶

III. The Conformation to the Savior

And so, you see, first of all, the consternation of the skeptic. And then, you see the confirmation of the seed. And then, thirdly, the conformation to the Son. Look, if you will please—or, to the Savior. That'll help us to understand it a little bit more—look in verse 45: "*And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit*"—there were two. The word *Adam* means "man." The first man was the man we call "Adam." The last man was the man we call "Jesus." He's the last

Adam—“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual”—now he’s comparing Adam and Jesus—“The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven”—now notice verse 48—“As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.” (1 Corinthians 15:45–49)

Now, what’s he saying? He’s saying, right now, we’re in the image of Adam. You know, I hear people talk about all of us “in the image of God.” Well, friend, that’s not exact language to say we’re “in the image of God” today. It was Adam who was made in the image of God, but in Adam the image of God was marred and disfigured when Adam sinned and fell. And then, the Bible says that Adam “[brought forth] a son in his...likeness, and after his image.” (Genesis 5:3) You see, we’re not exactly in the image of God. You couldn’t look at us and get a real good idea of what God is like. You don’t think God’s in this bad of shape, do you? Look around. I mean, do you think, really, that we’re in the image of God? No. It was Adam that was in the image of God, and that image was marred and defaced. And we’re all in the image of Adam; and, therefore, we’re bearing the marks and the scars of sin, and we’re feeling the power of decay. We’re bearing the image of the earthy, but the Bible says that one day we’re going to “bear the image of the heavenly.” (1 Corinthians 15:49) What does it mean? Not only the confirmation of the seed, but the conformation to the Savior: we are going to be like Jesus.

Now, there are a lot of questions people can ask about the resurrection body. And some of you’ll come up to me later on, and you’ll say, “Now, Brother Rogers, I have a little baby that died. Will the little baby be a baby or will it be full-grown?” Somebody else says, “What kind of food will we be able to eat? Will we have to have food? How will we be able to travel?” And you’ll ask me all kinds of questions. And you know what I’m going to say when you ask me those questions? “I don’t know.” So don’t ask me, you hear? I don’t know. You say, “Well, you’ve been to seminary. You’re supposed to know.” No. I want to tell you something else: you don’t know. I’m going to tell you something else: these seminary professors don’t know. And you don’t have to feel bad about not knowing.

Let me tell you something. Let me show you what the Bible has to say about what we’re going to be like there in heaven. Look in 1 John chapter 3, verse 2, or just write it down: “Beloved, now are we the [children] 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) Now, what does that mean? Well, it means, friend, that there are some things we do know and there are some things we don’t know. “Now are we the [children] of God” (1 John 3:2)—so you ought to know that you’re saved. You ought

to be able to say, “Praise God! I know that I’m a child of God.” There are some things we ought to know, but there are some things we do not know right now. *“It doth not yet appear what we shall be [like].”* (1 John 3:2) And if anybody tells you he knows, he’s lying; he doesn’t know. *“It doth not yet appear what we shall be like: but we know that, when he shall appear, [we’ll] be like him.”* (1 John 3:2) And friend, that’s good enough for me. It ought to be good enough for you. There are some things we can’t be dogmatic about. There are some things that we can be bull dogmatic about.

Just write this scripture down: Psalms 17, verse 15. Here’s what the psalmist said, I believe, when, by inspiration, he was anticipating the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the transformation of our bodies. Here’s what he said: *“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness”*—he’s looking forward to that time when we see Jesus face to face. We will behold His face in righteousness. And then, he says—*“I shall be satisfied, when I [awaken in] thy likeness.”* (Psalms 17:15) You see, we’ll have to be like Him to see Him as He is. We couldn’t stand it if we weren’t made like Him. We’d just wither and die in His presence. He *“[dwells] in...light [that] no man can approach unto.”* (1 Timothy 6:16) But, dear friend, when we’re made like Him, then we can see Him as He is and dwell with Him. And I know that you can say with me, “I’m going to like it—whatever my resurrection body is going to be like. Even though *“it doth not yet appear what we shall be...we know that...[we’ll] be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”* (1 John 3:2) Glory, hallelujah for the confirmation of the seed and the conformation to the Savior.

IV. The Consolation to the Saint

Now, there’s one last thing I want to say. We’ve talked about the consternation of the skeptic: he always has problems worrying about how this is going to happen. *“How are the dead raised up?”* (1 Corinthians 15:35) We’ve talked about the confirmation of the seed: the seed confirms the Resurrection; it’s God’s great object lesson put into nature. We’ve talked about the conformation to the Savior: we’re going to be like Him; we’re going to bear the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, the last thing I want you to see is the consolation to the saint. What a blessing this is to us! What a thrill this is to us!

Look, if you will, as we continue to read in verse 51: *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin[and the strength of sin is the*

law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore—and friend, that *therefore* relates to this whole passage—*Therefore, my beloved brethren*—he’s talking to you now; listen—*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*” (1 Corinthians 15:51–58)

*It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day,
It pays every step of the way,
Though the pathway to glory may sometimes [seem] drear,
[...]
It pays to serve Jesus each day.*

—FRANK C. HUSTON

We have the victory through the Lord Jesus Christ, and we can serve notice to every greedy microbe and to the decaying process that may take place when we go into the grave that, though we go in, we’re coming out. And, as Job said, *“Though...worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh [I’ll] see God.”* (John 19:26)

Now friend, that’s what Easter is all about. The same God that raised up Jesus Christ is going to raise us up, and what a consolation that is! We can look at death and smile at death because the sting of death is taken away. Death has lost its sting. That’s what Paul says: *“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.”* (1 Corinthians 15:56) But he asks this question: *“O death, where is thy sting?”* (1 Corinthians 15:55)

† I found out something about a honeybee: a honeybee can sting only one time. But once a honeybee stings you—the honeybee has barbs on its sting—and when he plants that stinger there into your flesh and he pulls away to escape, he mortally wounds himself because the stinger cannot be withdrawn. And that bee can only sting one time, and in stinging you, he has killed himself. My friend, I want to tell you something: Jesus took the sting of sin—Jesus took it. And that old bee may buzz; he may frighten you, but he’ll never sting you—not if you know the Lord Jesus Christ. For Jesus in His flesh took the sting out of death. He took the pain out of parting. He took the gloom out of the grave. And Jesus gives a consolation to the saint that is strong and steadfast, and that’s the reason the saints can sing—in verse 55: *“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?”* (1 Corinthians 15:55)†

Go back with me to something I mentioned a while back—the Transfiguration. Jesus said that the Transfiguration was a portrayal, a prophecy, and a picture of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. At the Transfiguration on the mountaintop, you have the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in miniature, and remember that Jesus was there, and then Moses and Elijah. Why, of all of the people, were Moses and Elijah selected? Well,

Moses—what happened to Moses? Moses died on Mount Nebo, and God performed his funeral. So Moses died, but what happened to Elijah? Elijah never died. How did Elijah go to heaven? You know, don't you? In a chariot of fire, in a whirlwind. In a chariot of fire, he was just taken to heaven; he was raptured. All right, so, there, at the Transfiguration, you have two categories of persons. There's the Moses crowd: they represent the people who are going to be resurrected when Jesus comes. And there's the Elijah crowd: they represent the people who are going to be raptured when Jesus comes. And so, this is the twofold anthem of the redeemed. When Jesus comes, the raptured crowd is going to say, *"O death, where is thy sting?"* (1 Corinthians 15:55) And the resurrection crowd is going to turn around and look at that empty grave and say, *"Huh, grave, where is your victory?"* (1 Corinthians 15:55) That's what this is—the anthem of the redeemed. We're going to be swept up to meet the Lord in the clouds forever.

Conclusion

Friend, friend, friend, listen to me. Just as there's a resurrection of the saved, there's going to be a resurrection of the unsaved. And one of these days *"the sea [will give] up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [will deliver] up the dead which were in them."* (Revelation 20:13) And those shrieking, moaning dead will stand before the Great White Throne to be judged. It's that time that the Negro spiritual says:

*I went to the rock to hide my face,
And the rock cried out, "No hiding place,
No hiding place down here."*

Friend, I'm telling you, not only the saved are going to be raised, but the unsaved are going to be raised. The saved are going to be raised to rapture in glory in heaven. The unsaved are going to be raised to face Almighty God at the Judgment Seat of Christ. You cannot crawl up in the grave and pull the dirt over your face and hide from God. It's time to get saved, folks, time to give your heart to Jesus. It's time to know the Lord Jesus Christ as your personal Savior. What a shame it would be—what a tragedy it would be—for you to come and celebrate Easter and not be saved, friend, because if you don't know Jesus, Easter isn't something to celebrate; it's something to regret, because Easter proves that you're going to be raised to the Judgment if you don't know Jesus. *Your sin will be pardoned in Christ or it will be punished in hell.* But if you believe in the Christ that was raised from the dead, you'll be saved.

I want to close this message with a question. I'm ready for it. Are you ready for it? Here's the question. I want to make a statement; then I want to ask a question. The statement is this: Christ lives. The question is this: Do you? Do you? "Oh," you say, "my heart's beating." That's not life; that's existence. Jesus said, *"[I've] come that [you] might*

have life, and...have it more abundantly.” (John 10:10) Do you want that life, that resurrection life, that life that Jesus bought for you? Listen to this word: *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God [has] raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.”* (Romans 10:9) Do you believe God raised Jesus from the dead? Are you willing to trust Him as your personal Savior? If you are, He’ll save you today, and you can live with Him in a glorified body through all eternity.

Let’s bow together in prayer. Father in heaven, bless as we give the invitation. And I pray that many today will say “yes” to Christ. In His name. Amen.†

The Resurrection Body

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 15, 2001

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35–58

Outline

Introduction

- I. It Is Illustrated with Grain
- II. It Is Individualized with Uniqueness
- III. It Is Infused with Perfection
 - A. From Corruption to Incorruption
 - B. From Dishonor to Glory
 - C. From Weakness to Power
 - D. From a Natural Body to a Spiritual Body
- IV. It Is Identified with Jesus
- V. It Is Immortalized with Victory

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you be finding 1 Corinthians chapter 15, which is the resurrection chapter in the Bible? And, we're going to be thinking today about the resurrection body. There's something very wonderful that's going to happen to these bodies of ours. If you know Christian theology, you know that when the believer dies, his spirit goes immediately into the presence of the Lord. The Bible says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord (1 Corinthians 5:8). So, you may have some loved one whose body is out yonder in the cemetery, but their spirit is with our Lord, rejoicing with Jesus face-to-face, which the Bible says is far better.

I have a friend—a doctor friend—from Arkansas. Rex Russell—Dr. Rex Russell—had his grandmother to die, and they had taken her down to the funeral home; they were going to have visitation, and they had her body laid out in a particular room. They were going down to view the body. Dr. Russell said to his little boy playing in the back yard, “Would you like to go with me?” And, he said, “Grandmother has gone to Heaven”—Great-grandmother for the little guy—“Great-grandmother has gone to Heaven, but we are going to go down and see her.” A little confusing to the boy. So, the boy got in the car, and they went down to the funeral home and went into that room; and there she was. He looked at her for a while; he looked all around—looked back at her again and said, “So this is Heaven?” Wasn't Heaven. No, the body stays here for a while to rest in the good clean earth until the resurrection, but there is coming a

resurrection of the body. These literal bodies are going to be raised up.

I heard about a man in England whose name was Solomon Peas, and he died—thought he'd have a little fun, so he had this put on his tombstone: "Beneath this sod and beneath these trees lies the body of Solomon Peas. But, this ain't Peas; it's just the pod. Peas shelled out and went to God." And, that's so good. This is just the pod that we live in. The Bible calls it our *earthly house*, but the Bible teaches that one of these days there will be a resurrection of the human body.

Now look, if you will, in chapter 15 and verse 35: "*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?*"—implying, "How is that possible? And, if it were possible, what would it be like?"—"How are the dead raised up?"—speaking of the probability or the possibility of it—"and with what body do they come?" (1 Corinthians 15:35)—questions about the resurrected body. So, that's what we're going to think about; and friend, we're thinking about you. If you're a child of God, this is your future, so you need to pay attention. How are the dead raised up?

Now, some people think that this is scientifically impossible to have the resurrection of the human body. Well friend, scientifically, it may be. We're not talking about science; we're talking about Almighty God. Acts 26 and verse 8: Paul said to King Agrippa, who doubted the resurrection, and he said something with inexorable logic—he said, "*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*" (Acts 26:8). Now, he didn't say that God should raise the dead but *that* God should raise the dead. I mean, if you admit the fact of God, you won't have any difficulties with miracles, amen? Friend, listen—if you can get past Genesis 1:1 in the Bible, you won't have any difficulty with the rest of it. Genesis 1:1 says, "*In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.*" If God can make the heavens and the earth out of nothing, certainly He can raise a human body out of something. Say "amen" to that. I mean, "*Why should it be thought a thing impossible with you, that God should raise the dead?*" (Acts 26:8).

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great preacher of yesteryear, said, "Everything that God does is wonderful until you get used to it." I mean, you think of all of the miracles—things that, if you've never seen a seed before and then saw what a seed would do—you'd say, "That is incredible." We're just used to it. Everything that God does is wonderful until we get used to it. Now, there are five things I want us to learn about your body—your resurrected body, your resurrection body.

I. It Is Illustrated with Grain

Number one: it is illustrated with grain—it is illustrated with grain. Look now in verse 36—Paul begins to answer that question: "*Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened*"—the word *quickened* here means "made alive"—"*except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may*

chance of wheat, or some other grain” (1 Corinthians 15:36–37).

Now, Paul does not use just a mere seed here as an illustration but a particular kind of seed—grain. He says that the resurrection is like grain—like wheat—that’s put in the ground. It dies, it rots, it decays, and then it fructifies and comes back as life. Now, he didn’t say that it’s like an apple seed, an orange seed, an avocado seed; but he said it’s like grain. What is the difference? Well, in an apple, the fruit of the apple seed is an apple. But, the fruit of a grain of wheat is another grain of wheat exactly like it. So, Paul is using a little exactitude here. He says it’s like grain: you put grain in the ground, and it dies, and then it comes back again, beautiful, wonderful, and brand new.

You say, “Well, Adrian, that’s not a particularly good analogy, and here’s the problem with your analogy, Adrian...” Well, number one, it’s not mine; it’s Paul’s. “But, here’s the problem with that,” your mind says, “You know, when a grain of wheat goes into the ground, it only appears to die. It decays, it rots, but there is a germ of life that stays in that seed; and therefore, the seed reproduces. But, when you’re dead, you’re really dead.” Wrong. There is a part of you, friend, that never dies. There’s the spiritual nature in you that does not die. That’s the whole point of the thing. Jesus says, “He that lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:26). Your ever-living spirit cannot die, and that spirit is that which your resurrected body is going to be raised up around; and so, don’t have difficulty with the idea that it is illustrated by a seed that rots. It is a wonderful, beautiful analogy.

Now, somebody says, “But, wait a minute, Pastor. How is that possible?” I mean, you think about it—how the body—the human body—disintegrates. Here’s a man who’s born in Florida and then he perhaps grows up, enlists in the army, or he’s drafted and he goes overseas, and he gets in a battle, and he loses a leg to a landmine, and the leg is buried somewhere overseas—maybe in Vietnam. And then, the man comes back to the United States, and he goes up to New York. And, he gets a job in a lumber mill, and cuts off a finger, and leaves that finger there; and then, he finally is called to be a missionary, and he goes to Africa, and he dies in Africa, and they bury him in Africa beneath an apple tree. And, the apple tree reaches down, and absorbs that man, and turns him into apples, and then—what’s left of him into apples. And, the apples fall on the ground; a pig comes along and eats them. “Now Pastor, where is he? Where is he? You tell me how God is going to raise him up.”

Well friend, don’t let that bother you. You see, our bodies...this particular body that you have right now is not the one you had ten years ago. Did you know that? You see, I am the same person I was when I was a baby. But, I was a beautiful baby, but look at me now. You see, we’re constantly changing. You have 25 billion white blood corpuscles, more or less—I haven’t counted mine this morning—in your body. And, they live about 12 minutes. So, you’re sitting there; and as you’re sitting there, your white

blood corpuscles are dying. And, you've lost 25 billion of them since the service started. Did you feel them go? All right, they were going. You have about 25 trillion red blood corpuscles; and they last about 120 days, but they're going. You're constantly changing. There's not a particle in your body that was here, say, ten years ago. You're changing; you're adding particles, and you're leaving particles—adding and leaving.

In 1963, I crossed the Mississippi River for the first time. I was going out to California, and I said, "There's the mighty Mississippi." I'd seen it for the first time. Now, if I were to go down and look at that same river today, would I see the same river? Yes, but not one drop of water is in that river today that was in that river in 1963. Now, it's the same river. There's not a particle in my body that was in my body then when I crossed the river that long ago. You see, we are constantly changing, but there is a life principle that makes my body my body and not your body; it is my body. We know now, as we have gone into how the molecular structure of the body—and we know something about what the scientists call what DNA—that your body has a particular structure that makes you *you* and me *me*. It's not the particular hide, hair, skin, bones that I have right now, but there is a principle in me that makes me *me*.

For example—and it's amazing how exact the Bible is—in Psalm 139, verse 16, here's what God says about a baby in his mother's womb; listen to this: "*Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect*"—that is, "God, You saw me in my mother's womb. You saw my substance. I was unperfect." That is, "I'd not been mature"—"*and in thy book*"—listen—"*in thy book all my members were written...when as yet there were none of them*" (Psalm 139:16). Even before I was conceived, the omniscient God had all my members written in a book. There is the DNA—that incredible plan—for Adrian, and for you, and for each of us written in a book. Before there were any of them, "*which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them*" (Psalm 139:16). In "*all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them*" (Psalm 139:16). So, what makes a body the particular body it is? The stem cells—that DNA that's in there; and then, in continuance, the body is fashioned (Psalm 139:16).

Now, it is God who made everything out of nothing, who will take the particular plan that He has for you. And, when the resurrection comes, God will go into His book. He says, "There's an Adrian Rogers. Put him in the thing." And, up comes Adrian with a brand new body; but yet, in reality, it is the body that He has given me. It is illustrated with grain—it is illustrated with grain. The grain of seed goes in the ground; there's a life principle that remains: that grain of seed comes out of the ground a brand new grain of seed. No particles in the old grain are in the new grain; and yet, it is part of the old grain. Understand it? No. Believe it? Yes. Amen. All right, it's illustrated with grain.

II. It Is Individualized with Uniqueness

Number two: it is individualized with uniqueness—uniqueness. Now, don't get the idea that God is going to make us all the same when we get up to Heaven, that we're going to be a group of clones up there. No, we're not! God makes no copies; God only makes originals. Look in verse 15—chapter 15, verse 38: *“But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body”* (1 Corinthians 15:38).

Now, we're not all alike in Heaven. God makes no two stars alike (1 Corinthians 15:40), he goes on to say. God makes no two bodies on earth alike. God is a God of uniqueness. God makes no two snowflakes alike. God makes no two leaves on a plant exactly alike. God makes no set of fingerprints exactly alike. God is a God—not of replication, but God is a God of infinite variety and differentiation. So, you will be you in the resurrection; I will be me in the resurrection. We're not all just some part of some amorphous group of *whatevers*. We are going to be unique and different.

A little boy got a fingerprint set for Christmas, and somebody asked him how he liked it—said, “Well, I like it pretty well, but,” he said, “The guy who wrote this thing was a liar.” “What do you mean he was a liar?” He said, “Well, he wrote in the instructions—it says, ‘No two human beings have the same fingerprints.’” He said, “I know one person at least who has the same fingerprints.” Say, “Who's that?” He said, “Santa Clause, Daddy, and whoever it was that broke into my piggy bank.” It was the same person—the same person. God makes us unique.

When you get to Heaven, you'll be you, I'll be me. We'll howdy; we'll fellowship. And, on the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah appear—we talked about this on Heaven Sunday—when Moses and Elijah appeared, Moses was Moses, Elijah was Elijah, Jesus was Jesus. The disciples had never seen them before, but they knew them. They didn't need any introductions; they were absolutely unique. So, your body is individualized with uniqueness. That means we'll know one another in Heaven.

III. It Is Infused with Perfection

Number three: not only is it illustrated with grain, not only is it individualized with uniqueness, but, number three, it is infused with perfection—infused with perfection. Look now in verse 42: *“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body”* (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). It will be the same, but it will be infused with perfection.

You know, you say, “Pastor Rogers, I'm not sure I want my body back again. If you only knew all the pain, and the trouble, and the heartache I have in my body, well...” Though, you'll be satisfied with it, but I'm going to show you that, as a matter of fact, you

will like it very much. If you don't like the way your photograph looks when you get it back, just wait. If you don't like what your IQ is like right now, just wait. A lot of us are smarter than we're able to perform. For example, your brain is the gray matter. That has to do with your intelligence. Your mind uses your brain to think with. Your mind and your brain are not the same thing. **Your mind is to your brain what a pianist is to a piano. Some folks have a grand piano, and some of us have a spinet. Isn't that right?** But, in the resurrection, you're going to have a mind that is going to be able to...to think with. So, it's going to be an incredibly new wonderful body.

A. From Corruption to Incorruption

Look, for example, in verse 42: it is changed from corruption to incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:42). Now, what does *corruption* mean? It means "that which decays." We're sitting here decaying. I mean, we are dying right now. We're dying by degrees. And, each time our heart beats, it's just as the poet said: a muffled drum beating a funeral march to the grave. So, our body is corrupt, but it's going to be raised in incorruption.

B. From Dishonor to Glory

It's going to be changed—verse 43—from dishonor to glory (1 Corinthians 15:43). Now, God wants us to have a glorious body. Which of us today would say that our bodies now are glorious? No. I mean, we say, "I'm grateful for what God has given me," but I'd be awful vain to say, "It is glorious." And, even if it is glorious, just wait a while. But, God is going to give us a glorious body—from dishonor to glory. It'll be the same body, but it will be changed.

Ladies, look at that diamond on your finger there. What's the difference between that diamond and a lump of coal? You say, "For one thing, the size." Well, I'll tell you, both are carbon—both are made of carbon. The diamond is made of carbon; the coal is made of carbon. The coal is carbon in humiliation; the diamond is carbon in glory—same substance, only improved and changed. You see an ugly repulsive caterpillar, and then you see a beautiful monarch butterfly—what's the difference? Well, the caterpillar is the creature in humiliation; the butterfly is the creature in glory. It is the same, but it has been changed. And so, we're going to go from corruption to incorruption; we're going to go from dishonor to glory.

You see, most of us have never really ever even seen a man as man was intended to be. You don't realize what God made when He made you. If we were to see Adam and put Adam in here after Adam came off God's assembly line and put him up alongside one of the men in this congregation, you'd realize that we are in dishonor, not in glory. You see, centuries of sin have marred, and scarred, and debilitated mankind. We have something between our ears called a *brain*. I alluded to that before. I read in a

scientific journal that the most brilliant of persons will use less than two-fifths of one percent of his brain capacity—two-fifths of one percent (the most brilliant person). Incredible ability that God has put into the human being that has been marred, and scarred, and dampened, and disfigured by sin.

Suppose you had never seen... Suppose you have never seen a train—a railroad train—never seen a railroad train at all, and there's a train wreck. And, I take you out to see that train wreck, and I say, "There's a train." Well, have you seen a train? Well, it's debatable. I guess you could say you've seen a train, but what you're really seeing is *what?* A train wreck. Now, you take Chris over there. Look at Chris. Now, you think that's a man? That's not a man; that's a wreck. He's a wreck; he's not what God intended a man to be. He's now in dishonor. One of these days, he will be in glory.

C. From Weakness to Power

And then, again, look, if you will—it's changed from weakness to power in verse 43 (1 Corinthians 15:43). Have you ever wanted to sing, or serve, or preach, or pray, or witness, or just worship better than you do? One of these days, all of the limitations of this earth will fall away, and no more weakness, no more sighing, no more crying, no more dying, no more trying. We will have that perfection that God wants us to have.

D. From a Natural Body to a Spiritual Body

And then, again, look in verse 44: it's changed from a natural body to a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:44). That's what verse 44 says. Not a natural body—the word *natural* means "soulsh"; it's a *psychikos* body. A soulsh body—it's a body motivated by soulsh principles rather than by spiritual principles. Now, pull over here and park here just a moment. He doesn't say a "spirit body"; he says "*a spiritual body*" (1 Corinthians 15:44). Sometimes people trying to escape the idea of a bodily resurrection—say, "It's just a spirit body." There's no such thing as a spirit body; that's a contradiction in terms. **A spirit body would be like a square circle. A spirit body would be like a silent noise. A spirit body would be like a filled vacuum. It's a contradiction in terms. It is a spiritual body, not a spirit body.** Jesus said, "*A spirit has not flesh and bones*" (Luke 24:39). It's raised a literal actual body, but it will be motivated by spiritual principles, not by soulsh principles. It will be liberated from the soulsh principles and be given spiritual principles. There will be a body. As I told you during Heaven Sunday, Heaven is a real place for resurrected bodies. And, there will be a resurrected place for you to put a resurrected foot on. Heaven is a real place. Jesus said, "*I go to prepare a place for you*" (John 14:2).

IV. It Is Identified with Jesus

Now here, number four: it is identified with Jesus. This new body is identified with the Lord Jesus. Look now in verse 45: "*And so it is written, The first...Adam*"—who was the

first Adam? Adam. Huh, easy question. All right—*“The first...Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam”*—who was the last Adam? Jesus—*“was made a quickening spirit”*—*“a life-giving spirit”*—*“Howbeit, that was not first which was spiritual, but that which is natural”*—in other words, Adam, the natural man, came before Jesus, the spiritual man—*“and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven”*—so, the second Adam is Jesus—*“As is the earthy, such are they that also are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly”*—now, here’s the key; look in verse 49—*“And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly”* (1 Corinthians 15:45–49).

Now, right now, I have the image of the earthy. Who is the earthy? Adam. One day I’m going to have the image of the heavenly. Who is the heavenly? Jesus. So, right now, I’m like Adam in my body; one day, I’ll be like Jesus. See? You’re looking at a man who one day’s going to be like Jesus. Is that not incredible? I will be an individual. It’ll be my same body, but my body will be like the Lord Jesus Christ. God is going to conform me to the image of Jesus Christ. I’m going to bear His image.

You know, every now and then we’ll hear people say, “Well, we’re all in the image of God.” Wrong. Look around. You think God’s in this shape? We’re not in the image of God; we’re in the image of Adam. The Bible says we bear the image of the earthy (1 Corinthians 15:48). Adam was in the image of God, but that image was marred and disfigured when Adam sinned; and now, the Bible says Adam brought forth a son after his likeness and in his image (Genesis 5:3). See? We’re in the image of Adam. But, one day, we will be transformed into the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Now, I don’t know exactly what we’re going to be like, but I’ll tell you what I do know: 1 John chapter 3, verse 2: *“Beloved...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). Now, you can ask me questions I can’t answer about our resurrected body; and you could ask the Apostle John, and he couldn’t answer it. He said, *“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). Some things you can’t be dogmatic about—some things you can be bull-dogmatic about. We’re going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, and Jesus had a real body. He was not a phantom; He was not a ghost after His resurrection.

As a matter of fact, put in your margin “Luke chapter 24” and begin in verse 36—Jesus is speaking after His resurrection to His disciples: *“And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are [you] troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my*

hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet” (Luke 24:36–40). You see, Jesus was real. He could be touched; He could be handled. He ate food. He fellowshiped with them. He had a real body—a resurrected body—and so will I. We’re going to be made like Him.

And, here’s a wonderful verse for this Easter morning—Psalm 17, verse 15: *“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness”*—won’t that be a day?—*“I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness”* (Psalm 17:15). The old body goes down to the grave. Resurrection morning, it wakes up and there it is—just like the Lord Jesus Christ and yet the individual you.

V. It Is Immortalized with Victory

Now, here’s the fifth thing about this body—this resurrected body: it is immortalized with victory—it is immortalized with victory. Now, begin in chapter 15, and look in verse 51: Paul says, *“Behold, I shew you a mystery”*—what is a mystery in the Bible? It’s not like a murder mystery written by Agatha Christie. A mystery in the Bible is a sacred secret that you could only know by divine revelation and something you would not figure out by human prognostication. It says here—*“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep”*—that is, not everybody on earth is going to die. There are millions alive right now who may never die—*“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we”*—inferring those who are still living—*“shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal”*—the word *mortal* means “that which dies,” from the Latin *mortis*. Why we call it a *mortuary*—*“this mortal”*—“that which can die”—*“must put on immortality”*—“that which can never die”—*“So when this corruptible”*—“that which decays”—*“shall put on incorruption”*—“that which can never decay”—*“and [when] this mortal shall have put on immortality”*—now, watch this—*“then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory”*—and then, Paul begins to spiritually swagger a little bit, and he begins to boast a little bit; and he says—*“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:51–57). It is immortalized with victory. We become immortal, and we have victory; and we can look at death and say, “Death, where’s your sting?” We can look at the grave and say, “Grave, where’s your victory?” This is the two-fold anthem of the redeemed.

You see, some will die and go to the grave before Jesus comes; others will be alive when Jesus comes. Those who are alive and never die—they can look death in the face and say, “Death, where is your sting?” And, those who come out of the ground can turn

back, and look at the grave that tried to hold them, and say, “Grave, where is your victory?” Now, *“the sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law”* (1 Corinthians 15:56). We’re sinners; that’s why we die. *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23). That’s the sting of death—is sin.

A little boy and his sister were with the mother in the garden, and a big old bumblebee—you’ve seen those kinds that come out—landed on the little boy and stung him. He began to cry and jumped up in his mother’s arms, and the bee began to buzz around their head. And, the little girl was frightened to death. The little boy by this time had his tears dry, and the mother said, “Sweetheart, you don’t have to be afraid of that bee.” She said, “But he stung brother.” She said, “Yes, but come over here and look,” and there on brother’s hand was the stinger—still in that flesh. And, she pulled it out and said, “See there? He left his stinger in brother; and because brother was stung”—said—“you can’t be stung, because that bee has lost his stinger.” I want to tell you, the Lord Jesus took the sting of sin for me and for you. And, old Death may buzz; he may frighten you. But friend, the sting is gone because of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“O death, where is [your] sting? O grave, where is [your] victory?”* (1 Corinthians 15:55).

Jesus has taken the pain out of parting, the dread out of dying, the gloom out of the grave, and Jesus has given us a hope that is steadfast and sure. And, it’s like Paul is just flinging an insult to death and sin; and he begins to boast, and he says, “Look, I can fling my body into the grave, and I can serve notice to every greedy microbe—this corruption will put on incorruption. I’m coming up out of that grave. I have a promise of a resurrected body.” “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). But, the body itself is going to be raised and given a new life. That is, friend, victory—Easter is about victory. *“Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:57).

It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day (Frank C. Huston).

That’s the reason it says, *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be [therefore] steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58). It pays to serve Jesus. It’s all of this and it is Heaven, too. Yes, my spirit is going directly to Heaven; but one of these days—one of these days—my body is going to be raised up from the dead, gathered around that principle that makes me uniquely me, that which is written in God’s book. But, I’m going to rise, and I’m going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ. And, it’s going to be glorious; it’s going to be wonderful. That’s what Easter is all about.

There’s a story that preachers love to tell at Easter, and I can understand why. I think it’s the best Easter illustration I’ve ever heard in my life. There was a war angel named Napoleon. If you kids study history, you’ve got to study history of France. You study the history of France—you’re going to study about old Napoleon. Napoleon, this

demon of war, this angel of war—Napoleon had it in his mind he was going to conquer the world—a little guy, a brilliant man. And then, Napoleon finally was captured. He was put into exile at Elba, but he escaped, went back to Paris, and he reorganized his army and began to march again, still to subject the world to himself. And, there—there—ensued a battle. Lord Wellesley called the Duke of Wellington, who came against Napoleon, and the battle was joined at a place called Waterloo. You never would have heard of Waterloo—never at all ever even heard of Waterloo—had it not been for this battle. And so, here comes Napoleon; here comes the Duke of Wellington. They battle; Napoleon is ignominiously defeated by Wellington.

Now, back in those days, they didn't have CNN. How you going to find out how the battle ended? Well, they're waiting for news of the battle back in London, and a ship sails up the harbor, there by Westminster Cathedral. And, the man on deck the ship begins to send a message through Semaphore Flags. Each position stands for a letter; and so, they're standing there in the tower of London—or, excuse me—in the tower there at Westminster Cathedral. And, they're beginning to read this semaphore, and it begins to spell out, "W-E-L-L-I-N-G-T-O-N—Wellington, Wellington. It's about Wellington!" Then again, he began to spell, "D-E-F-E-A-T-E-D. Oh, Wellington defeated." And, a thick London fog rolled in. It was all the message they had, but that was enough to break their hearts. The word went through the city and the country: "Wellington has been defeated—Wellington has been defeated." But then, the fog lifted, and the man continued the message: "Wellington defeated the enemy at Waterloo." What a difference when the fog lifted!

When Jesus was on that cross, the demons of Hell said, "Jesus is defeated. Satan has won." But, I'm going to tell you that Calvary was Satan's biggest mistake, because Jesus defeated the enemy at Calvary. And, on that Easter morning when the fog lifted, we saw, as Paul Harvey would say, the rest of the story—the rest of the story.

That's why I love Easter; that's why I love the celebration of our Savior who suffered, bled, and died, and walked out of that grave. And, because He lives, I can face tomorrow.

Conclusion

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. You know, the important thing today is really that you come to know Jesus Christ. Would it not be tragic for you to come and celebrate the resurrection and then be lost, and die, and go to Hell? God wants to save you, and He will save you. I can't think of a better day to be saved than on the day that we celebrate Easter. So, if you're not certain that you're saved, let me help you to get certain today. Would you like to pray and receive Him? I'm not asking you just to turn over a new leaf or promise to be a better person;

I'm asking you today to receive the gift of eternal life. For the Bible says, "*The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 6:23). You can receive that gift right now by faith, if you will.

Mean business now. We're not playing games. Be as sincere as you've ever been, and pray like this: "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. I believe You are the Son of God. Thank You for dying for my sin. Thank You for taking my place on the cross. Thank You for paying my sin debt. I believe that God raised You from the dead. And, I now open my heart; and by faith, like a child, I trust You as my Lord and Savior. I don't ask for a feeling; I don't look for a sign. I just stand on Your Word. I trust You, Jesus. Forgive my sin; cleanse me, Lord. Thank You for doing it. Come into my life; take control of my life now. I receive You as the Lord of my life and my dear Savior. Save me, Jesus"—pray that out of your heart—"Save me, Jesus."

Did you ask Him? Then thank Him: "Thank You for doing it, Jesus. I trust You to do it, and that settles it. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. And, Lord Jesus, because You've saved me, I will live for You and I will never ever be ashamed of You. You just give me the courage to make this public. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Your Resurrection Body

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 11, 1993

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35–58

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Perplexing Problem
- II. The Plain Picture
- III. The Particular People
- IV. The Promised Perfection
- V. The Perfection Pattern
- VI. The Predicted Period
- VII. The Proper Praise

Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 15, would you please? Today, we want to have a Bible study on something that concerns you very much. I want to talk to you not about what you are now, but what you will be. And, the title of the message is "Your Resurrection Body." Now, that ought to concern you, because the body that you have now is going into the grave, if our Lord tarries. But, it will be raised up and made to a new glorious body.

Now, death is a very real fact. As I've told you before, the newest statistic on death is this—that one out of one people die. That's a statistic. And, sometimes you may say, "Well, I escaped death narrowly. I was in a plane crash, an automobile wreck." Or, "I was very sick, and I was very close to death." Well, you weren't close to death. You did not die. You are closer to death now than you've ever been. And, "your heartbeat," as someone has poetically said, "is a muffled drum beating a funeral march to the grave." The only thing between you and that grave is that faint heartbeat in your bosom. Now, you say, "Pastor, don't be morbid on Easter." I'm not being morbid. I just want to tell you that death is a fact. But, when you die as a Christian, your body goes to the grave, but your spirit ascends to God. The Bible says in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 8: "*to be absent from the body...[is] to be present with the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

Some years ago, somebody asked John Quincy Adams, when he was an old man—80 years old—"How is John Quincy Adams today?" And, he said, "Well, John Quincy Adams is quite well, and thank you for asking. But," he said, "the house in which he is living is becoming quite dilapidated, and before long, it will be unlivable and I must move

out. But, John Quincy Adams is doing quite well, thank you.” He realized that his body was a house that he just simply lived in, and your body is a house that you live in. And, one day, you will move out and go to Heaven. *“To be absent from the body...[is] to be present with the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 5:8).

I think I told you some time ago about a man names Peas—P-E-A-S—who died, and they put on his tombstone, “This ain’t Peas; it’s just the pod. Peas shelled out and went to God.” Well, that is true. The body is the pod in which we live, and the Bible calls the body *“our earthly house”* (2 Corinthians 5:1). *“To be absent from the body...[is] to be present with the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 5:8). But, God is not finished with your body. Your body, one day, will be raised up. *It’s almost like a man who has a business. And, he wants to remodel his business, so he moves out and the workmen move in. And, he puts a sign on the door: “Closed for alterations.” That’s what happens to you. When you die, your body is closed for alteration. Your body goes to the grave, and you move out. And then, God will raise up your body, renewed, restored, and made like unto the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, like the owner of that shop moves back into his business, you will move back into your risen, glorified body.*

You see, when God saved you, He did something very wonderful for you, but He’s not finished with you yet. The Bible says, *“He [who] hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”* (Philippians 1:6). When Adam died—I’m talking about the first man who ever lived, Adam—he died immediately in his spirit. He became spiritually dead. He died progressively in his soul. He got more and more wicked until he was redeemed. But, he died ultimately in his body. His body went down into the grave. He died immediately in his spirit. He died progressively in his soul. He died ultimately in his body. Now, when you get saved, God just reverses what the devil did. And, when you get saved, you are justified immediately in your spirit, you are sanctified progressively in your soul, and you will be glorified ultimately in your body. God is not finished with you yet. There is more to come. Your body is not yet redeemed. There is coming the resurrection of the human body.

I. The Perplexing Problem

Now, I want us to think about that, this morning, and I want us to look here in 1 Corinthians chapter 15 and find out what our resurrected body, your resurrected body, is going to be like—1 Corinthians 15, verse 35: *“But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”* (1 Corinthians 15:35). Now, that is what I want to call a “perplexing problem”—a “perplexing problem.” When I tell you that your body is going to be raised, the question comes to your mind—and rightly so, “How are the dead raised up? How is this possible? And, with what body do they come? What are we going to be like? It’s extremely hard for us, as human beings, to think about the

resurrection of the human body. And, I want to say this—and be very, very careful here: when we talk about the resurrection, we’re talking about the body—not the spirit, not the soul. The Bible never speaks of the resurrection of the spirit—the resurrection of the soul. The spirit—the soul—doesn’t need to be resurrected. It is the body that we’re talking about.

You say, “Well, Pastor Rogers, very frankly, I have a scientific bent, and I have a philosophical mind. And, it is hard for me to accept the fact that God will literally raise dead bodies.” Well, I don’t know why that’s hard for you. I mean, if God created the worlds out of nothing, surely He’s able to fashion a resurrected body out of something. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul said to King Agrippa in Acts chapter 26 and verse 8: “*Why should it be thought a thing incredible [to] you, that God should raise the dead?*”—“*Why [do you think it is] incredible...that God should raise the dead?*” (Acts 26:8).

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great preacher of yesteryear, said this—and I want to quote it to you: he said, “Everything God does is wonderful until we get used to it.” When we become accustomed to the wonders of creation, we just say, “Well, that’s natural,” and we forget the Creator. But, don’t count God out when we’re talking about the resurrection of the dead. A perplexing problem—how are the dead raised up? And, with what body do they come?

II. The Plain Picture

Now, look, if you will, in verse 36—Paul answers that question: “*Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain*” (1 Corinthians 14:36). Now, Paul was a wonderful teacher; and so, there is a perplexing problem. And then, he gives a plain picture—a very plain picture, something we can see, something we all experience, and that is a seed that dies. It is buried, it rots, it decays, and yet, out of that seed there comes new life. And, God says that your resurrection body is very much like a seed.

Now, we call death “the grim reaper.” Death is not the grim reaper; it is the sower. When you die, you’re simply sowing a seed; you’re putting a seed in the ground. Somebody says, “I don’t see how God can raise up a body. Be reasonable. Here’s a man who’s gone to Vietnam, and there, he stepped on a landmine and lost his right leg. But, he gets a fitting, and comes back to this country, and goes to work in New York in a mill. And there, he loses two fingers. They are disposed of in an incinerator somewhere. Then, this man, later on, gets saved, and he’s called to be a missionary. He’s got a leg already in Vietnam and two fingers in New York. And, he goes to Africa, and he dies in Africa. And, they bury him there in a shallow grave by an apple tree. And, that apple tree goes down, and absorbs him, and turns him into apples. Those apples fall on the

ground, and a pig comes along and eats them. Now,” they say, “tell me—how is God going to raise that man up?” You see, God says, very much like a seed—very much like a seed. You put a seed in the ground—all the particles of that seed dissolve; and yet, there is a kernel of life in that seed that doesn’t die.

Now, you say, “Well Pastor, wait a minute. The analogy doesn’t fit—doesn’t fit. I mean, a seed never really dies. I mean, the seed is not really, really dead. I mean, there’s life in the seed, but when you die, you’re dead.” That’s where you’re wrong. Friend, there’s a part of me that never dies—there’s a part of me that never dies. Jesus said, “[*He that lives*] and believeth [*on*] me shall”—what?—“*never die*” (John 11:26). There is that continuing life principle that never dies. And, if God wants to bring back the particular particles of my body, He’ll have no difficulty bringing me from wherever I’m dissolved, if He wants to do it that way. Very frankly, I don’t think He’s going to, but you’re looking at a man already that is made up of particles from all over the world. I’m made up of corn from Iowa, and beef from Kansas, and apples from Oregon, and swamp cabbage from Florida. Listen, all of those things are already making me right now. But, it is not the particular particles of my body that God is going to raise up. We’re constantly getting new bodies. You don’t have the same body you had several years ago. There’s not a particle in your body that was in your body several years ago. Those molecules are being sloughed off, and new ones are coming on all the time.

Question: Are you the same person you were as a baby—yes or no? You are the same person, but you’re not the same person. Is your body the same body you had as a baby? Yes, but no. I read somewhere that in a lifetime, a person consumes—are you ready for this?—fifty tons of food. You look around—you can believe it, can’t you? Fifty tons of food in a lifetime. Why? Because we’re constantly taking on new molecules. We’re sloughing off old molecules. And yet, there is a continuity that we call “the body.”

In 1963, I think I saw the Mississippi River for the first time. I was going to San Francisco, and I was driving. And, I drove across the Mississippi River; I drove across the bridge right here in Memphis, Tennessee. I never dreamed I would be a pastor in Memphis, Tennessee. I looked down at the Mississippi River. I could go down there today and look at that river today. Question: Would I see the same river that I saw in 1963? Well, yes and no. It is the same river, but not one drop of water that was in it when I saw it then is in it now, but it is the same river.

Now, what am I saying? Your body that God raises up is not necessarily the same particles that are in your body right now. Let me give you a key verse that helps understand all of this: Psalm 139:16. This talks about how God created your body. It’s a wonderful verse—Psalm 139, verse 16. And, by the way, it is a good verse to teach us that we ought not to abort little babies. Here’s what it says. The psalmist is speaking to God, and he said, “*Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect*”—that is, “I’m

not complete yet”—*“and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there were none of them”* (Psalm 139:16). Before my hands, my feet, my eyes, my ears, my countenance, before they were, God had a book.

Did you know that God has a book on me? Did you know there is a specific schematic for me, and nobody else has that particular plan—just me? And, all of my members were written in God’s book before there were any of them. The genes, the chromosomes, the genetic pattern that makes me unique is in God’s book, and that is me. When God raises me up, He’s going to raise me up—not these particular particles, but there is, in God’s plan, a unique individual, a body that is organized around a schematic that God has ordained in eternity. And, when God gets ready to raise me up, God will put in His heavenly computer, say, “I want an Adrian Rogers,” and up he will come. You see, God is a wonderfully great God. And, I am the same person I was as a little baby; and yet, not one particle that was in me as a baby is in me now. But yet, I am organized around God’s plan. Don’t count God out, friend, when you talk about the resurrection. God gives us a picture, and He says it’s like the seed—the seed that goes into the ground. It dies, it is buried, it rots—and yet, there is a continuing life that circles around a principle that brings out of that ground an individual.

III. The Particular People

Now, here’s a third thing I want you to notice: not only a perplexing problem, not only the plain picture, but I want you to notice what I’m going to call “the particular people.” Look in verse 38 now: *“But giveth [the] body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh”* (1 Corinthians 15:38)—literally, “all protoplasm is not the same protoplasm.” Now, that is, there is a different flesh: one kind of flesh—a man, another kind of flesh—a beast, and another of fishes, and another of birds. That’s a great scientific statement that was put in the Bible before the day of microbiology—that is, that the different forms of flesh are different. Any physician today would tell you that the flesh of a human being is different than the flesh of an animal and so forth.

And then, Paul goes on to say here—before the days of our great telescopes, he talks also about astronomy in verse 40: *“[and] there are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial”—*that means, “heavenly and earthly”—*“but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun...[one] glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star [differs] from another star in glory”* (1 Corinthians 15:40–41). Now, what’s he saying? *“God giveth [thee] a body as it hath pleased him”* (1 Corinthians 15:38). We are going to be particular people when we get to Heaven; we’re not all going to look alike. That may be comforting to you—that God is the God of individuality. God never makes copies; God always makes originals.

No two leaves are alike. No fingerprints are alike. No snow prints are alike. God makes no two individuals identical. And so, we're going to know one another when we get into Heaven. We're not going to be absorbed into some homogeneous mass, some metamorphosed nothing. We are going to be people and individuals.

On the Mount of Transfiguration, there was Jesus, and Moses, and Elijah. Moses and Elijah already died, but they were brought back from the other world. And, the disciples recognized Moses. They recognized Elijah. They recognized the Lord Jesus. They were there, prefiguring the resurrection of the human body.

Somebody asked Charles Haddon Spurgeon, whom I've already quoted, "Will we know one another in Heaven?" He said, "Well, we know one another now." "Will we be bigger fools when we get to Heaven than we are now?" "No, the truth of the matter is, we will really know one another. And, my body—my resurrected body—will be different from yours, and your resurrected body will be different from mine."

IV. The Promised Perfection

Now, here's a fourth thing that I want you to notice: not only the particular people, but I want you to notice the promised perfection. Notice verse 42: "*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption*" (1 Corinthians 15:42).

Now, you may say, "I don't want my body back again, thank you. I'm sick of it. I don't like my photograph when I look at it. And, very frankly, I was behind the door when the gifts were given out. I just wish I could get somebody else's body and not my own." Well, you may be a lot smarter, for example, than you think you are. You say, "Well, my IQ is not as high as it ought to be." Well, your IQ has to do with your brain equipment; and so, you just need a better brain to think with. It doesn't mean you're not smart; it just means you don't have the right tools to think with. So, when you get to Heaven, you'll have a better brain. You'll be a lot smarter than you think you are. You're going to be changed from corruption to incorruption. Look at it. Do you know what the word *corruption* means? It means "that which dies."

I don't want to be...but, may I tell you what you're doing, sitting there? Corrupting. That's what we're all doing: we are just sitting there corrupting; we are decaying. We are coming apart. It doesn't get better, folks; it just gets worse. Just say, "This is as good as it's going to get; from now on, it's down hill. It's getting worse." Oh, you may put a little blip in it by taking some vitamins and so forth. But, by and large, our bodies corrupt. But, when we get to Glory, your new body will be incorruptible. It'll be changed from corruption to incorruption; it will be changed from dishonor to glory.

Look, if you will, in verse 43: "*It is sown in dishonour*"—we're sinful creatures; the curse of sin is upon us—"*it is raised in glory*" (1 Corinthians 15:43). There's going to be such a difference between what we are now and what we shall be. We'll be the same,

but oh, how glorious we will be! Look at the cocoon—the repulsive caterpillar—and then look at the beautiful butterfly. Are they the same? Yes, they’re the same, but they are different. Ladies, look at the diamond on your finger, if you have an engagement ring there or a diamond ring there. Do you know what that ring is made of? It’s made of the same thing that a lump of coal is made of. But, coal and diamond are both carbon. Coal is carbon in dishonor, diamond in glory. It’s the same substance, but it is different.

So many people have the idea that we have evolved and that we are on our way up. Man has not evolved; man has devolved. You can believe you’re an orphan of the apes if you want to, but I don’t believe that monkey mythology one little bit. I believe Adam was made in the image of God, but I was made in the image of Adam. And, the image of Adam has been scarred and marred by sin.

Suppose you had never seen a train—not in all of your life had you seen a railroad train. Then suppose, by chance, the first train you ever see is a train wreck. Let’s suppose that a train has gone off the rails; it has piled up on itself. There is bent and twisted metal, and the train is lying on its side. It doesn’t function as it ought. And, I say to you, “Have you ever seen a train before?” No. Well, there’s a train. Well, question: Have you seen a train or not? Well, in a sense, you’ve seen a train, but what you’ve really seen is a train wreck. Did you know you’ve never really seen a man? I mean, look at Bob Sorrell. Now, that’s not a man; that’s a wreck. Now, you’ve never really seen a man. All we have seen is men and women who are marred and scarred by sin. *“It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness”*—look in verse 43—*“it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power”* (1 Corinthians 15:43). We all are weak: we’re weak morally, we’re weak mentally, we’re weak physically. We are not able even to do what we want to do. I never preach a sermon that I’m satisfied with. I don’t think a musician ever sings a song that he or she is satisfied with. I wish my prayer life were better. I wish I had more capacity to think, to learn, to remember, to articulate. Don’t you? We all do. We feel we’re so weak. And, even at our best we feel so inadequate. Sown in weakness, but it’s raised in power (1 Corinthians 15:43).

One day, you’re going to serve God with the power that you want to serve Him with. One day, you’re going to be able to fulfill every God-given desire to praise, to glorify Him. And oh, when we get to Heaven, Brother Jim, you’ll hear me sing, and I’ll sing a lot better than you, because the last will be first.

It’s going to be so wonderful—it’s going to be so wonderful—that we when we get to Heaven, we are going to glorify our Lord from corruption to incorruption, from dishonor to glory, from weakness to power, and then, in verse 44—look at it—from a natural body to a spiritual body. *“It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body”* (1 Corinthians 15:44). Now, when it says, “a spiritual body,” that doesn’t mean that we’re going to be a ghost. We will have a body. Again, it does not say a “spirit-body”; it says a *“spiritual*

body” (1 Corinthians 15:44). You say, “Now, wait—what’s the point there?” Well, there are some people who try to do away with the idea of a bodily resurrection by saying, “Well, it’s just a spiritual body.” It doesn’t say it is a spirit-body. The word *spirit-body* is a contradiction in terms. “Spirit-body” would be like saying “a filled vacuum”—would be like saying a “round square” or a “silent noise.” It is a spiritual body. The word *natural* is the *psychikos*, or soulish body. We’re motivated now by soulish principles, but in our new body—our spiritual body—we will live according to spiritual laws. But, we will have a spiritual body, and how wonderful that will be!

V. The Perfection Pattern

“Well,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, there is a promised perfection, but I want to know just exactly what it will be like. I have a lot of questions.” Well, here’s the next thing I want you to see: it’s what I want to call “the perfection pattern.” What is the pattern of your new body? Well, God has already given us a pattern. Look in verses 45 to 50, if you will: *“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening”—or a “life-giving”—“spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural”—now, what does that mean? Adam came before Jesus in human history—“and afterward that which [was] spiritual”—Jesus came after Adam in human history. Verse 47—“The first man is of the earth, earthy”—that was Adam—“the second man is the Lord from heaven” (1 Corinthians 15:45–47). That is Jesus. Now really, there are only two people who have ever lived: Adam and Jesus—really. And, you’re either in Adam, or you’re in Christ. “In Adam all die...in Christ...all [are] made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:22) is what the Bible says.*

Now, look in verse 48: *“As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly”—that is, if you are only in Adam, you are just like Adam. You’ll die like Adam, and everything that belongs to Adam belongs to you. But, if you’re like Jesus, everything that belongs to Jesus belongs to you. Now, look in verse 49—“And as we have borne the image of the earthy”—that is, we, right now, are in the image of Adam. We are not in the image of Jesus yet—“we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Corinthians 15:48–49).*

Now, here’s the perfect pattern. What am I like now? I’m like Adam. What will I be like? I will be like Jesus. Amen? What is my resurrection body going to be like? I have now the image of Adam. “Adam brought forth a son after his image” (Genesis 5:3). I hear people say, “Oh, we’re all in the likeness of God.” Well, look around. You don’t think God is in this shape, do you? I mean, look, friend—we are in the image of Adam, marred and scarred in dishonor, a natural body. But, one day, we’re going to be in the image of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What will we be like? The biggest clue is this: we will be like Jesus.

Some verses for your margin: Philippians 3, verse 21—it speaks of the Lord, and it says, *“Who shall change our vile [bodies]”—that’s what he calls our bodies, “vile bodies”—“that it might be”—our vile body—“that it [might] be fashioned like unto his glorious body”* (Philippians 3:21). Right now, it’s a vile body. One day, it will be a glorious body. “Well,” you say, “Pastor, I’ve got some questions. How old will we be? Will we have to eat? Will we have to knock on a door, or can we walk right through it? Can we fly? Could we visit other planets? Will we live in families?” I can answer all those questions. One answer: I don’t know. But, that doesn’t bother me, because you don’t know either. And, if you say you do know, then you’re just lying or you’re dumb. First John 3, verse 2—put it down. Listen: *“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be”—it doesn’t appear yet—“but we know that, when he shall appear”—Jesus—“we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is”* (1 John 3:2). And, that’s good enough for me. There are some things you can’t be dogmatic about, and there are some things you can be bull-dogmatic about. You can’t be dogmatic about what we’re going to be like, but you can be bull-dogmatic to say that we’re going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, let me say this about the Lord Jesus Christ: Jesus literally came out of that grave. Jesus had a resurrected body. In John chapter 20, the Lord Jesus came with His disciples: *“[and] the doors being shut, [He] stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you”* (John 20:19). *“Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing”* (John 20:27). The Lord Jesus had a resurrected body that could be touched; it could be handled. He ate food with them. There are many mysteries about the resurrected body that God has not shown us. *“It doth not yet appear what we shall be [like]”* (1 John 3:2). But, I want to say with the Psalmist in Psalm 17, verse 15: *“[But] as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: [and] I shall be satisfied, when I awake, [in] thy likeness”* (Psalm 17:15). Don’t you love that? *“I shall be satisfied, when I awake, [in] thy likeness”* (Psalm 17:15). Whatever it is, you’ll like it. Whatever it is—whatever your resurrected body is—you will be satisfied. And, you will say, “Lord, You did it just right.” And, that is the perfect pattern: we’re going to be like the Lord Jesus.

VI. The Predicted Period

The next thing I want you to see is what I want to call “the predicted period.” When are we going to get our resurrected body? Well, look, if you will, in verse 51: *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep”—that is, not everybody is going to die before Jesus comes—“but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”—and I’ve heard that the twinkling of an eye is the fastest movement of the human body—“at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised*

incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

Now, the Apostle Paul included himself in that, because Paul expected Christ to come in his lifetime. Was Paul right or wrong to expect Jesus to come in his lifetime? Paul was right. Every Christian ought to be expecting Christ to come in his lifetime. There is the eminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can all say we expect Christ to come in our lifetime. We’re to be looking for the Lord Jesus Christ at any moment. And so, he says, “He’s coming in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye; the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52)—“*For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible*”—that means, “that which dies”—“*shall...put on incorruption*”—that which can not decay—“*and this mortal*”—that which dies—“*shall put on immortality*”—that which can not die—“*then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 15:53–57).

Now, this old world has seen some great days. It was a great day at Bethlehem. It was a great day at Calvary. It was a great day that Easter morning. But, the greatest day, in my estimation, is the climax of them all—when Jesus comes again. And, He is coming—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. And, when He does, “*the dead in Christ [will] rise first*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16). There’s coming a great getting’ up morning. Our bodies are going to be changed. If you’re in the grave, your body will be raised from the grave. If you’re alive and living, your body will be changed.

I read somewhere years ago about a battle. Some men on the battlefield—they were fighting, and many men were slain on the battlefield. The others were weary from war. And, as the sun set, these men on the battlefield who had won the victory wrapped themselves in their blankets, rolled up, and slept on the ground. That night, there came a snow, and the snow covered everything. The living men and the dead men were covered with snow. In the morning, when the trumpet sounded, those who were alive came out from that snow, and those dead bodies were left beneath that snow—those who had fallen on the battlefield yet lying there, having not been disposed of. It’s something like that, when our Lord comes. There’s coming the first resurrection. The trumpet shall sound, “*and the dead in Christ shall rise first...to meet the Lord in the air*” (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17). And, we’re going to be changed, made like our Lord, and raised to greet Jesus face to face.

And, you know, the Bible says here that there’s going to be like an anthem here. Look, if you will, in verse 55—here is the two-fold anthem of the redeemed: “*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*” (1 Corinthians 15:55). If Jesus were

to come today, there are two categories of individuals. First of all, there will be those who will say, “*O death, where is thy sting?*” (1 Corinthians 15:55)—those of us who, if Jesus were to come right now, we would never feel the sting of death. So, as we rise in the air, we can mock death, and we can say, “Ha hah, you didn’t sting me! You didn’t sting me!” But, others are in the grave. They can come up from the grave, and they can say, “Ha hah, you didn’t hold me—you didn’t hold me.” “*O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?*” (1 Corinthians 15:55). Remember we told you that Moses and Elijah appeared with the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration? How did Elijah go to Heaven? He never died. He was in a chariot of fire, a whirlwind, taken to Heaven. That’s the Elijah crowd, who will say, “*O death, where is thy sting?*” (1 Corinthians 15:55). And Moses—the Moses crowd will say, “*O grave, where is thy victory?*” (1 Corinthians 15:55). When is this going to happen? In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. We don’t know; I don’t know. Nobody knows. But, soon—and very soon, many of us feel—Jesus Christ is coming again.

VII. The Proper Praise

Now, that brings me to the final point, and that is the proper praise. Having said all of this, Paul just sums it up. And look, if you will, here in verse 57: “*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore*”—listen to me, friend—“*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as [you] know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 15:57–58). Why did the Apostle Paul give us this incredible chapter? Why? He’s not trying to make better theologians out of us. He’s not just trying to fill our heads with facts. He’s not just trying to say, “I’m going to satisfy your curiosity, so now you can know about the resurrected body.” That’s not it. Therefore—it’s not to make a better a theologian out of you, but to make a better Christian out of you. “*Therefore*”—“*therefore*”—“*my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

It pays to serve Jesus, it pays every day.

It pays every step of the way,

Though the pathway to Glory may sometimes [seem] drear,

It pays to serve Jesus each day (Frank C. Huston).

Conclusion

A mother—a young mother—died. The dad didn’t know whether or not to take his little boy to the funeral home. He didn’t know whether to let that little boy see that mother in the state of death or not. He thought, “Maybe—maybe—he needs to remember Mama

like she was, or maybe he needs to know that Mommy is really dead to help him to get it settled in his mind.” That’s a big, big thing, when it’s a small child. He decided it would be best to bring that little boy to the funeral home. He brought that little boy to the funeral home, lifted him up, and he looked down into the face of that mother that held him and rocked him, kissed away his tears, sung to him. He said, “Mommy, wake up. Mommy, wake up. Wake up, Mommy. Wake up.” And, that daddy said to that little boy, “Son, you can’t wake her up. But, when Jesus comes, He’ll wake her up”—and He will. And, all that are in the grave will hear the voice of the Son of God.

“Therefore”—therefore, therefore—“my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58). Isn’t it wonderful that we don’t just have to look forward to a hole in the ground? Isn’t it wonderful? You see, because He lives, we live also. Christ is risen. He is risen indeed. You weren’t ready. Christ is risen—He is risen indeed. Christ is risen—He is risen indeed. And, because He lives. we live also.

Father, seal the message to our hearts. In Jesus’ wonderful name. Amen.

The Day Death Died

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 30, 1997

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:45–58

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Sovereign Majesty of Our Redeemer
- II. The Sacred Mystery of the Rapture
- III. The Steadfast Ministry of the Redeemed

Conclusion

Introduction

First Corinthians chapter 15, if you would. In a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 45, but let me just say that we are talking today about the victory that the Lord Jesus Christ has won over death. The title of our Bible study this morning—"The Day Death Died"—"The Day Death Died."

Now, death is a monster to be dealt with, and with every tick of your watch, somewhere on Planet Earth, a soul dies. People are dying. All around people are dying; and yet, we don't want to think about death. We don't want to face death. You mention death and people will change the subject like they're switching channels on television.

People die, and they die in strange ways. Harold Lee Duncan was cutting his grass. His wife and children were watching. Suddenly he seized his left side, crumpled to the ground, and he was dead. A small, half-inch piece of wire no bigger in diameter than a pencil lead had been flung by that power mower into his head, entered his brain, and he died instantaneously. A fisherman—a true story—a fisherman in the Philippines was fishing in his boat. His name was Carlos Umbus. He yawned, stretched out and yawned. A fish jumped out of the water and into his throat, and he was strangled before they could do anything for him. Yawning in a fishing boat—the next moment he is dead. Death is a fact, and people die suddenly, instantaneously, and in strange ways. Wasn't it Mark Twain who said life is a losing proposition—you'll never get out of it alive? He was wrong—he was wrong. And, this message is set to prove that he was absolutely, totally wrong—very, very wrong.

There are three things I want us to see in the scripture that we are going to read in just a moment, and I'll tell you what they are ahead of time: I want you to see the sovereign majesty of our Redeemer. I want you to see the sacred mystery of our Rapture. And then, I want you to see the steadfast ministry of the saints, now, of the

redeemed.

Now, look, if you will, as we read this scripture, and see if you can find those things. First Corinthians and read with me now beginning in verse...chapter 15, beginning in verse 45: *“And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening”—that is, “a life-giving”—“spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural”—that is, “the first Adam came before Jesus”—“and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man”—the second Adam—“is the Lord from heaven. And as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:45–58).

I. The Sovereign Majesty of Our Redeemer

Now, think for just a moment about the sovereign majesty of our Redeemer. Why is He King? Why is He Lord? He has risen from the dead, and He is Lord. Jesus came out of that grave, and Jesus became the death of death.

Now, listen to me—when Jesus walked out of that grave, He did more than survive death. Are you listening? He decimated death. He didn’t survive death; He destroyed death. He is called the *first fruits*, and He is called the *last Adam*. Look, if you will, in the scripture again here in verse 47—look at it: *“The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven”* (1 Corinthians 15:47). He is called *the second man*. Or again, look over in verse 22, if you will; He is called the last Adam: *“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive”* (1 Corinthians 15:22). He is the last Adam. The first Adam was the Adam that married Eve, and the last Adam is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, in the first man, we all fell; in the second man, we are all redeemed. I read

somewhere of some men who were climbing the Matterhorn—that majestic mountain in Switzerland—and there were four of them together. There were two guides and two tourists. First of all, there was a guide, then there was a tourist, then there was a guide, and then there was a tourist. And, they were going up that steep icy slope, and they were all tied together. Now, the first man tied to the rope was a tourist. And, he put his foot down on the ice, and he slipped, and he swung over the side. When he did, he was tied to the second man, who was the next guide, who was a skilled Alpine climber; but he was dragged over. When he went over, he pulled the next man over. Now, the lead guide felt the tug on the rope; he knew what was happening, and he dug his cleats in, and put his pickax into the ice, and bulged his muscles, and held for all he could hold. And, these other three men were dangling, but they finally got their feet back on; and all four of them went up the mountain together. Now folks, I want to tell you that first man who slipped was Adam, but that last man who held was Jesus. We're all tied—we're all tied together. But, thank God—thank God—for that last man, the Lord Jesus Christ, who has survived for us.

Now, not only is Jesus, in this passage of scripture, called the *second Adam*, or the *second man from Heaven*, but He is also called the *first fruits of them that slept*. In the Old Testament—in the Old Testament—when they were having a harvest, the priest would go out into the field and they would find a sheaf of first ripened grain. They would take that into the temple, and they would have a real ceremony called *the Feast of the First Fruits*. And, they would take that sheaf of grain, and they would wave it before the Lord and then put it on the altar. What it was, was thanksgiving to God and an act of faith, saying, “Lord, this typifies the harvest that You’re going to give us.” Now, Jesus is the first fruits of the resurrection. He, my friend, has appeared in Heaven for us, and His resurrection will be our resurrection. When He comes again, we’re going to have the harvest, of which the Lord Jesus Christ is the first fruits.

“Adrian, are you sure that Jesus Christ is sovereign over the grave? Are you sure that He came out of that grave?” Absolutely. Do you know who wrote this 15th chapter of 1 Corinthians? It was Paul, and Paul saw the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus. And, look in verse 8, if you will. He’s talking about all of those who were eyewitnesses. And, the Bible says... Well, let’s go to verse 5: “*And that he was seen of Cephas*”—that’s...his name is Peter—“*then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present [hour], but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time*” (1 Corinthians 15:5–8). Now, what the Apostle Paul is saying is, “Look, this is not a fairy tale. We saw Him. This is an eyewitness account.”

Now, I want to ask you a question: What possible motivation could the Apostle Paul

have for telling a lie? What possible motivation could those apostles and those witnesses have for telling a lie, if Jesus Christ was still in that grave? If He was still in that grave, that would mean that He had lied to them, that He had betrayed them. And, besides that, what possible thing could they gain by telling a lie and saying, “Yes, we saw Him,” when they did not? Look in verses 14 and 15 of this same thing: he says, *“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain”—*that is, “it’s all a colossal waste of time if He’s still in that grave”—*“Yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ”* (1 Corinthians 15:14–15). Now, they would—listen, it’s not that they would have been mistaken—they would have been false witnesses. They would have perjured themselves. They were liars.

Now, you read the way these men lived, read what they said, and answer this question: Do you believe that the Apostle Paul was a knave? Do you believe that Simon Peter was a liar? Do you believe that these people were con artists? You see, it’s not that they were deceivers; it’s not that they were merely mistaken. “Well,” you say, “maybe they were trying to earn something.” Friend, do you know what they earned? Martyrdom. Martyrs and hypocrites are not made of the same stuff. Men may live for a lie; some men may foolishly die for a lie, like those people out in California. They may die for a lie, but how many people will *knowingly* die for a lie—I mean, when they know that the lie they are dying for is indeed a lie? Those foolish people who died by suicide foolishly believed what they believed. But now, if these apostles had not seen the Lord Jesus Christ, why would they say that they had seen Him? Why would they die for a lie? Hypocrites and martyrs are not made of the same stuff.

I was reading Charles Colson. You know, Charles Colson was one of President Nixon’s closest advisers in the Watergate scandal. Charles Colson later became a Christian. And, Charles Colson told about how Watergate just unraveled. He said Ehrlichman called him one night at his house and said there’s been a break-in at the Democratic National Headquarters, and he said he knew then we had trouble in the White House. But, he said, several weeks later, he said that John Dean walked into the White House, and they were sitting there—came into the oval office, and John Dean said to the President, “Mr. President, there is a cancer growing on the presidency.” So, they put their heads together to see how they could control it, what they could do, but they said that John Dean began to get nervous, and he walked out of there, and he got a lawyer—began to talk to a lawyer. And then, in a few days, he came to the prosecutors. And, in order to protect himself, he said, “If you will give me immunity, I’ll tell you what has happened,” and he turned state’s evidence.

And then, he said the whole thing began to fall—the whole thing began to cave in. They could not keep the lie a lie. “Why,” he said, “we were the 12 most powerful men in

the world there, in that office, and,” he said, “we could not keep a lie going for three weeks.” Why? Because somebody said—John Dean said—“I’m not going to go down with this lie. I’m not going to suffer for a lie.” So, he told the truth in order to save his own hide. Don’t you think these early apostles—some of them who lived for 40 years after that—would have told the truth in order to save their own skins? Of course they will. Listen folks—men may live for a lie; they may mistakenly die for a lie, but they will not knowingly, willingly die for a lie. But, these men smiled at death, because they knew that Jesus Christ had walked out of that grave.

Friend, listen—this is our resurrected Savior that we’ve just sung about. When Jesus died, He became the death of death. When He rose again from the grave, He sealed that deed.

II. The Sacred Mystery of the Rapture

Now here’s the second thing I want you to see: not only the sovereign majesty of the Redeemer, but it follows, as night follows day, you’re going to see the sacred mystery of the Rapture. What does His resurrection have to do with our resurrection?

Well, our resurrection—we are the harvest; He is the first fruits. So, Paul follows this up a little bit. If you will, look in verse 51: he says, *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep”—*that is, “not everybody is going to die”—*“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed”* (1 Corinthians 15:51). Sounds like a motto we could have in the church nursery: *“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed”—“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality”* (1 Corinthians 15:51–53).

Now, notice what he says: *“Behold, I shew you a mystery”* (1 Corinthians 15:51). Now, how does that sentence begin? *“Behold.”* It means, “Pay attention.” Are you paying attention? The Apostle Paul is telling you to pay attention: *“Behold, I shew you a mystery”* (1 Corinthians 15:51). Now, why does he call it a *mystery*? Well, it’s a sacred secret. A mystery in the Bible is something that you could not figure out yourself. Human wit, wisdom, and ingenuity, scientific investigation would never show it to you. It is a truth revealed by divine revelation. And, this is a mystery—it is a sacred secret—that had been a secret for many years. It was not revealed to the angels. It was not revealed to the Old Testament prophets. It was a mystery—not revealed to Isaiah, to Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel. They didn’t know about this mystery until, in the last days, God revealed this mystery. The secret is out. And, what is the secret? Millions upon this earth will one day go to Heaven without dying, and those who know the Lord Jesus Christ, who sleep in the grave, will be raised up. We call this the *sacred mystery of the*

Rapture.

Now, the word *rapture* is not found in the Bible. It's a Latin word which means, "to transport something from one place to another." But, the words *catching up* are used in the Bible, and Latin is just the way to describe that. In Hebrews chapter 11, this thing that we call the *Rapture* is called the *translation* (Hebrews 11:5). In 1 Corinthians chapter 4, it is called *being caught up* (1 Corinthians 4). So, what is this sacred secret? Well, it means that one day—perhaps today, perhaps today—millions of people are going to be transported from this earth into Heaven.

Hal Lindsey, popular writer, put it this way; he says how it might be: he said, "There I was driving down the freeway; and all of a sudden. the place went crazy—cars going in all directions and not one of them had a driver. I mean, it was wild! I think we've got an invasion from outer space. Another scenario: it was the last quarter of the championship game, and the other side was ahead. Our boys had the ball. We made a touchdown and tied it up. The crowd went crazy. Only one minute to go and they fumbled. Our man recovered. He was about a yard from the goal, when *zap!*—completely gone, just like that. Another scenario: it was puzzling—very puzzling. I was teaching my course in the Philosophy of Religion, when all of a sudden three of my students vanished. They simply vanished. They were quite argumentative, always trying to prove their point from the Bible. No great loss to this class, however. I find this disappearance very difficult to understand. Another scenario: as an official spokesman for the United Nations, I wish to inform all of the peace-loving people of the world that we're making every human effort to assist those nations whose leaders have disappeared. We have issued a general Declaration of Condemnation in the General Assembly concerning these heads of states. Their irresponsibility is shocking. Here's another scenario: my dear friends, in the congregation, bless you for coming to church today. I know that many of you have lost loved ones in this unusual disappearance of so many people; however, I believe that God's judgment has come upon them for their continual dissention and quarreling with the great advances of the Church in our century. Now that the reactionaries are removed, we can make progress toward our great and glorious goal of uniting all mankind into a brotherhood of reconciliation and understanding."

Well friend, one of these days, they are going to have to explain the fact that we are not here—we're gone. Now, the living saints will be changed in a moment, and the dead saints will be raised from the grave. There is going to be a resurrection. You see, God is not finished with us. When we die, we go in the spirit immediately to Heaven, but the body goes to the grave to await the resurrection. When Adam sinned against God, he died immediately in his spirit, progressively in his soul, and ultimately in his body. When our Lord redeems us, He puts that in reverse: we're justified immediately in the spirit, sanctified progressively in the soul, and glorified ultimately in the body. God is not going

to leave these bodies of ours in the grave. We are coming out of that grave.

You say, "Adrian, do you really believe that?" Yes, I really believe that. You say, "Isn't that a little supernatural?" That's it. You've got it. That's it. The whole creation is supernatural. God made everything out of nothing. You think He can't raise me out of something? Of course He can—of course He will. That's the reason the Apostle Paul said to an incredulous king, whose name was Agrippa, in Acts chapter 26 and verse 8: "*Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?*" (Acts 26:8). In this chapter, Paul gives an illustration of it. Look, if you will, in chapter 15, verse 35: "*But some man will say, How are the dead raised up?*"—"I mean, good night, how's this going to happen?"—"and with what body do they come? *Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die*"—when you put a seed in the ground, that seed has to die before it comes back to life—"And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but a bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain. But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body" (1 Corinthians 15:35–38).

Now, the Apostle Paul says, "Why should you marvel at the resurrection? Every time you put a seed in the ground, you have a picture of the resurrection. A seed goes into the ground, it dies, it is buried, it dies, it rots, but out of that seed comes new, glorious life—more glorious than the seed that went in the ground." "But," you say, "Now wait a minute, Adrian, what about—what about—a person whose body has been in the grave for two or three millenniums? I mean, his body is disintegrated. How can God raise it up? I mean, where are all of the particles?" Well folks, you need to understand that it's not the individual particles that God is concerned about. You see, every few years we get a new body, insofar as the particles are concerned. We don't have the same body we had ten years ago, unfortunately. Our body keeps changing, and each year it gets a little less than it was before. "Well," you say, "then it's not the same body?" Of course it's the same body. *I'm the same person I was when I was a child of six months old, and yet there is not one particle that was in my six-month-old body that's in my body today. The first time I crossed the Mississippi River was in 1963. I drove across the Mississippi River. There's not one drop of water in that river today that was in it when I crossed it in 1963, but it's the same river.*

Now, what is our Lord going to raise up? Well, He's going to raise up me—not this particular hide, hair, blood, bone, and corpuscle, but it is me. You say, "What is the difference?" Well, the difference is what those people who are trying to clone people now have discovered. There is something that makes me *me* and you *you*, and it's DNA. And, if they can take a mammal—a sheep—and reproduce a mammal out of one cell, how have they done that? Well, in that cell is encoded all of the characteristics of that particular life, and that is God's blueprint—that is God's schematic—for an

individual. That is what makes you *you*—that encoding that God has put into you.

Now, God has a blueprint on every one of us. Let me give you a wonderful verse—Psalm 139 and verse 16: *“Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect”*—he’s talking about us in our mother’s womb—*“and in thy book”*—listen to this—*“in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them”* (Psalm 139:16). That’s an incredible verse. God had a book on me, and God said, “That is an Adrian Rogers. That is his DNA. That is his genetic code.” And, God saw that being developed in continuance, and that unique individual is me. You are a unique individual; and, by the way, in this sermon series on prophecy, we’re going to talk about cloning. But, we’re not going to do that right now, except to say this—except to say this, folks: that there is a unique person that God made. God built into you a genetic code; and when God gets ready to raise you up, He’s not going to have to fish around for any particular particles. He is going to raise you—that person that is united around that genetic code that He has allowed to go into the grave. We are coming out of that grave—hallelujah! It is going to be wonderful.

Now, when is this Rapture going to take place? When? Well, I don’t know, but let me tell you something: he says it’s going to take place, in verse 52, *“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”* (1 Corinthians 15:52). Now, what time is it historically? And, we’re going to talk about this in our series on prophecy. But, what time is it on God’s clock, historically? Did you know that the year 2000 is fast approaching. Now, there have been now 6000 recorded years of human history. What is six in the Bible? And, we’ll talk about this in our series on prophecy. Six is the number of a man. There have been 6000 years of recorded history. *“One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”* (2 Peter 3:8). Now, Exiguus, who was a philosopher and a mathematician, was the man who gave us our modern calendar. He did that in A.D. 532. And, he figured the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, they’ve gone back and recalculated, and they’ve found out that he set the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ wrong. Jesus was literally born in 4 B.C. So, you know what that means? If Jesus was born in 4 B.C., do you know when the year 2000 begins? 1997—this year.

“Now,” you say, “well, well Adrian, are you saying that Jesus is coming back this year?” Yes, perhaps. We don’t know when He’s coming, but it’s very interesting—it’s very interesting that *“one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years [is] as one day”* (2 Peter 3:8). We are on the threshold of a new millennium; and folks, I am telling you, you talk about signs in the sky. You talk about epics that would make us think that we are living in cataclysmic days! These are pregnant days, to say the least.

But now, here’s the point: from the time that Jesus went away to the time that He is come again, He could have come at any moment. We are not waiting for some sign to

be fulfilled. Those things may encourage our faith in a way, but they don't prove that Jesus is near. He could have come at any time. You say, "Well Pastor, aren't we living in the last days?" Well, the last days began at Pentecost. First John 2, verse 18: *"Little children, it is the last time"—"it is the last time"* (1 John 2:18). John said that 2000 years ago. The Second Coming of Jesus is always imminent. The early Christians looked for Jesus to come. Philippians 3, verse 20: Paul said, *"For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Philippians 3:20). He told those in Thessalonica, in 1 Thessalonians 1, verses 9 and 10—he said, *"For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven"* (1 Thessalonians 1:9–10). Those early Christians 2000 years ago were waiting for Jesus. The Apostle James said in James chapter 5 and verse 8: *"stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh"* (James 5:8). Paul told Titus in Titus 2, verse 13, we are to be *"looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ"* (Titus 2:13).

Folks, what am I saying? I am saying that Jesus may come before I finish this message. Always it has been, since Jesus went back to earth, the last days. Now, we have an idea we're living in the last part of the last days—surely—and we're 2000 years closer to the Second Coming of Jesus than they were in Paul's day. But, I'm telling you, from the time that He went up, people were remembering the message of those angels which said, *"Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing [thus] into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you...shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11). So, we are watching and waiting for the Lord Jesus Christ to come, and He may come at any moment.

III. The Steadfast Ministry of the Redeemed

So, what have we talked about? We've talked about the sovereign majesty of our Lord: He rose from the dead and became the death of death. And then, we talked not only about the sovereign majesty of the Redeemer but the sacred mystery of the Rapture. And now, let's move to the third and final thing. And, the third and final thing, folks, is the steadfast ministry of the redeemed. What does all of that mean to us?

Well, notice in verse 54: he begins it with the word "So"—"so" (1 Corinthians 15:54). Now, he's building to a point. He is not trying to make better theologians out of us; he's trying to make better Christians out of us. "So"—listen to it, now—"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through*

our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore—underscore that—*“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:54–58).

Now, what’s he talking about? He’s talking about the victory. And, you and I are to be living every day, every moment, serving Christ in the light of that victory. What he is saying is that Jesus Christ has conquered death; Jesus has been the death of death. So, He takes the pain out of parting, the gloom out of the grave. He takes the strength out of sin and the sting out of death, and He gives us a hope that is steadfast and sure so that we can literally mock death, we can ridicule death, we can laugh at death. Notice what he says: *“O death, where is thy sting?”* (1 Corinthians 15:55). Well, he says, *“The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law”* (1 Corinthians 15:56). The laws make sin *sin*; and so, therefore, sin becomes a sting to us. But, Jesus Christ pulled the sting from death. Jesus took that sting in His own body and removed it from death. He fulfilled the law for us; and therefore, death holds no terrors for us.

If I can illustrate this way: a woman had her two children in a garden, and they were enjoying a beautiful day, like we have today. And, a big bee lit on the little boy and stung him, and the little boy began to cry. And, there came that swollen place, where that bee had stung the little boy. And then, the bee began to buzz around the little girl. The little girl was frightened to death, and she was terrified. By this time, the little boy had quieted down, and the mother said, “Darling,” to the little girl, “don’t be afraid. Come over here and let me show you something. Look real closely at brother’s arm. Do you see the stinger that’s there? When that bee stung little brother, he left his stinger. Did you know that a bee does that? He can’t sting but one time. Do you know that? And, the bee left his stinger in little brother. Do you see it there?” She said, “Now sweetheart, that bee can’t hurt you because he left his stinger in little brother. He may buzz, he may frighten you, but he cannot hurt you.” Now friend, I want to tell you something: the sting of death was taken by Jesus, and death cannot hurt you. Death may frighten you, but I want to say that Jesus has taken the sting out of death, and Jesus has taken the gloom out of the grave. And, you have...

Remember we said—the Rapture was *what*? The living saints will be translated, and the dead saints will be raised. Now, notice the two-fold anthem of the redeemed, where the Apostle Paul here is illustrating it. When Jesus comes at the Rapture, you and I are going to look back at the grave and at death and we’re going to mock them. And, those of us who have been raptured—and we never die—we’re going to say, “O death, where is your sting?” And, those who have come out of the grave are going to say, “O grave, where is your victory?” And then, together we’re going to say, “Thanks be unto God that giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen?

Conclusion

Now, now listen—come to the bottom line of all of this. There is the sovereign majesty of the Redeemer. There is the sacred mystery of the Rapture; and then, there's the steadfast ministry of the saints.

Now, I'm saying it all to bring you to this point. Look again where he says in verse 58: "I believe, therefore." Look at it—look at it: *"Therefore"—"therefore"—"my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). You are to have stability. Be steadfast. Don't get blown around. Stay in there. We're living in a day where everything that's not nailed down is coming loose. *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast"*—have stability; be—*"unmoveable"*—and then, have fervency—*"always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). Now, if you believe that Jesus Christ is coming again—and you do—what should you do? Go to work for Jesus. Occupy 'till He comes. *Get your heads out of the clouds of prophecy, and get your feet on the pavement of soul winning.* And, you know, the great proof that you believe these things to be true is what are you doing to warn men and women, boys and girls, to flee from the wrath to come. There needs to be stability. There needs to be fervency—*"always abounding in the work of the Lord"*—and then, there needs to be expectancy—*"[for you] know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). "It pays to serve Jesus. It pays every day" (Frank C. Huston).

We are beginning in our church these coming days a program called *One Step Higher*. "Why, Pastor, why are you preaching on prophecy while we're having a program called *One Step Higher*?" Well, it's very simple—it's very simple. As Jesus's coming gets nearer, I want to move one step higher. I want to love the Lord more. I want to go one step higher in my faith. I want to go one step higher in my faithfulness. I want to go one step higher in my stewardship. I want to go on step higher in my soul winning. I want to be *"stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58). I don't want to just get some facts about prophecy down on some paper in a notebook. I want my heart to be burning with a zeal for the Lord Jesus Christ. I want to go out gloriously, don't you? I mean, the Bible says, *"Abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we shall not be ashamed before him at his coming"* (1 John 2:28). I want to be *"stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord"* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

It's going to be too late, folks, one of these days, to be a soul winner, because the Rapture will have come. It's going to be too late, one of these days, to be faithful to God's Church, because the Rapture will have come. It's going to be too late, one of these days, to be a tither, because the Rapture will have come. What you're going to do for Jesus you need to do now.

Jesus walked out of that grave. He is there in His sovereign majesty. Jesus is coming soon—that is the sacred mystery—*“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye”* (1 Corinthians 15:52). Therefore, what is our steadfast ministry? *“Therefore...be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Now, members of Bellevue, look up at me—look up at me. We’re going to ask our membership, and I’m asking you, to say before God, in the light of what Jesus did at Calvary and in that empty tomb, and in the light of His soon coming, that by God’s grace, at the end of these coming four weeks, we will have all—I don’t care where we are in our spiritual life—all of us will have moved up one step higher. I hope four weeks from now I’ll be able to say I am different, you’ve got a better pastor, a better man, that I have moved up one step higher. *“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Every head bowed—every eye closed. Now, we know that Jesus lives. Here’s the question: Do you live? I didn’t say, “Do you exist?” Do you live? Are you saved? Do you know that you’re saved? Well, you can be saved right now on this glorious Easter morning. God will save you, if you trust Him. And, I want you to pray this prayer after me, out of your heart, right now:

“Dear God, I know that You love me, and I know, Lord Jesus, that You want to save me. You died to save me. Lord Jesus, I need to be saved. I want to be saved. I want my sins forgiven. I want to be ready when I die or when You come to meet You. Forgive my sin. Cleanse my life. Take control of my life. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. And, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You, because you died for me. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

In the Twinkling of an Eye

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: September 10, 1995

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 15:51–57

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Sacred Mystery of the Rapture
- II. The Splendid Miracle of the Rapture
 - A. The Resurrection of the Dead Saints
 1. From Corruption to Incorruption
 2. From Dishonor to Glory
 3. From Weakness to Power
 4. From a Natural Body to a Spiritual Body
 - B. The Transformation of the Living Saints
- III. The Sudden Moment of the Rapture

Conclusion

Introduction

Find 1 Corinthians chapter 15. In a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 51. The title of the message—the same as the title of the song that we heard earlier: “In the Twinkling of an Eye.” Now, they tell us that the blinking of the eye is the fastest—the quickest—movement of the human body. The Apostle Paul used that to illustrate the most exciting thing that's going to happen; and when it happens, it will happen so quickly, so suddenly, it'll happen in the twinkling of an eye—just that quickly. Jesus Christ will burst through the blue and come back for His own. Now, if you don't realize that, folks—if all you're living for is this world—you're like a man who wants to be a cruise director on the Titanic. I am telling you that this is not all there is, and we are looking forward to the greatest event of the ages.

Begin reading with me in verse 51: the Apostle Paul says, *“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep”*—that's Paul's definition of death for the Christian—sleep—because when we lie down to sleep, we expect to awaken. And, that's the way it is with those of us who are saved—*“We shall not all sleep”*—that is, “We're not all going to die physically”—*“We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought*

to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:51–57). That's one of the reasons, Brother Joe, that one of my favorite songs is "Victory in Jesus."

Now, there are three things in this text. There are many things in this text that we could see, but there are three I want you to learn this morning.

I. The Sacred Mystery of the Rapture

First of all, I want you to see what I'm going to call *the sacred mystery of the Rapture*—*the sacred mystery of the Rapture*. Now, notice how this begins in verse 51: "*Behold, I shew you a mystery*" (1 Corinthians 15:51). And, when he says, "Behold," that means, "Pay attention; this is important." Paul is going to let us in on a sacred secret.

Did you know that the Rapture of the Church was a mystery to all of the Old Testament saints? Daniel didn't know about it. Isaiah didn't know about it. Abraham didn't know about it. Jacob didn't know about it. Moses didn't know about it. Ezekiel didn't know about it. The angels didn't know about it. It was a mystery. The word *mystery* comes from the Greek word *musterion*; it means, "something kept secret." Now, the Old Testament saints knew there was going to be a resurrection of the dead, but they didn't know there was going to be a Rapture when the Church is caught up. You see, what is this sacred mystery that was revealed to the Apostle Paul? And, he revealed it to us: one of these days, there is going to be a sudden exodus. One of these days, quickly—so quick it's like the twinkling of an eye—millions of people are going to be instantaneously and simultaneously caught up to meet the Lord in the air.

Now, you say, "Pastor Rogers, I don't read the word *rapture* there." Well, the word *rapture* is not there. I'm talking about the sacred mystery of the Rapture. The word *rapture* is not there. It comes from a Latin word or verb *rapio*, which means, "to transport or to take away." There are a lot of words that we use in the Bible to describe theology that are not necessarily found in the Bible, like the word *Trinity*. The Trinity is taught in the Bible; the word *Trinity* is not found in the Bible. The word *rapture* is not found in the Bible. In Hebrews 11, it's called a *translation*, when Enoch was translated (Hebrews 11:5). Or, it's called in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, *being caught up*, when the Apostle Paul says that we'll be caught up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17). So, if you want to call it a *translation*, or if you want to call it a *catching up*, if you want to call it a *snatching away*, whatever it is, in the moment—in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye, we're going to be leaving here, folks. There, and it's a sacred mystery.

You see, God revealed things about the Church later on in Scripture—this sacred secret. Put in your margin "Ephesians chapter 3, verses 3 through 5": and, Paul there

speaks that “*by revelation he*”—that is, “God”—“*made known unto me the mystery*” (Ephesians 3:3). And then, he says in verse 5: “*Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit*” (Ephesians 3:5). He says, “Other folks didn’t know about that.” The Old Testament prophets looked forward to the kingdom age, but they did not know from the time that Jesus ascended ’til the time that Jesus comes back. There is a mysterious time—the age of the Church: it begins with the Ascension; it will end with the coming of Christ again for His own.

Now, it’s a mystery. It was a mystery to the Old Testament prophets. But, you know, the sad thing is, folks, it’s a mystery to many people living today. I mean, it’s a sad thing, today, that this sacred secret has been revealed. And, the Apostle Paul says, “Behold, I shew you a mystery” (1 Corinthians 15:51). And yet, *how sad it is, today, that so many stumble in darkness, when they ought to be leaping in the light*. And, if you think it’s mystery now to those who are not saved, what a mystery it’ll be when we leave here. I mean, how do you think they are going to explain it? Have you ever thought about that—I mean, when Christ comes and millions of people are gone?

Hal Lindsey imagines it something like this—here’s one scenario: “There I was driving down the freeway, and all of the sudden the place went crazy. Cars were going in all directions, and not one of them had a driver. I mean, it was wild. I think, ‘We’ve got an invasion from outer space.’” By the way, you know all this outer space, flying saucers—that’ll be used by a lot of people to explain what happened.

And then, here’s another scenario: “It was the last quarter of the championship game, and the other side was ahead. Our boys had the ball. We made a touchdown and tied it up. The crowd went crazy. Only one minute to go, and they fumbled. Our quarterback recovered. He was about a yard from the goal when *zap*—no more quarterback, completely gone, just like that.”

Or, here’s another scenario: “It was puzzling—very puzzling. I was teaching my course in the philosophy of religion, when all of the sudden three of my students vanished. They simply vanished. They were quite argumentative, always trying to prove their point from the Bible—no great loss to the class. However, I do find this disappearance very difficult to explain.”

Or, here’s another scenario: “As an official spokesman for the United Nations, I wish to inform all the peace-loving people of the world that we’re making every human effort to assist those nations whose leaders have disappeared. We have issued a general declaration of condemnation in the general assembly concerning these heads of states. Their irresponsibility is shocking.”

Or, here’s another scenario, and this will be the last one I’ll use—this one takes place in a church after the Rapture: “My dear friends in the congregation, bless you for

coming to church today. I know that many of you have lost loved ones in this unusual disappearance of so many people. However, I believe that God's judgment has come upon them for their continued dissension and quarreling with the great advances of the Church in our century. Now that the reactionaries are removed, we can make progress toward our great and glorious goal of uniting all mankind into a brotherhood of reconciliation and understanding." And so, the unsaved meet to explain away and to even celebrate the fact that you and I will be gone.

II. The Splendid Miracle of the Rapture

There is the sacred mystery of the Rapture; but now, here's the second thing: not only the sacred mystery of the Rapture, but I want you to see the splendid miracle of the Rapture, because when He comes in the twinkling of an eye, a miracle is going to take place. Go back again to the scripture and look at it—verse 51: "*Behold, I shew you a mystery*"—now, here's the miracle—"*We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound*"—here's the first miracle—"*and the dead shall be raised incorruptible*"—and here's the second miracle—"*and we shall be changed*" (1 Corinthians 15:51–52). Now, what's going to happen when Jesus comes suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye?

A. The Resurrection of the Dead Saints

The first miracle is the resurrection of the dead saints—not the resurrection of all people. There's not a general resurrection for the saved and lost. It'll be a resurrection of those saints who have died. Now, let me say this: that when you die, and if your spirit goes to Heaven, God is not finished with your body. There is going to be the redemption of your body. *When a man has a department store, and he's going remodel it, he moves out and the workman move in. They alter the department store—remodel it; then he moves back in. When you die, your body is just closed for alterations. That's all. You move out. You go to Heaven, but you're coming back to move back in.*

Now, let me tell you that God is going to redeem you—has redeemed you by His blood—body, soul, and spirit. Now, when Adam died originally—I mean, when Adam died in the Garden of Eden—how did he die? He died immediately in his spirit. He spiritually died. His body went on to live for hundreds and hundreds of years. He died immediately in his spirit; he died progressively in his soul. That is, he got more and more corrupt, as all mankind has. And then, he died ultimately in his body. His body wound down to the grave—immediately in his spirit, progressively in his soul, ultimately in his body. Now, when you are redeemed—are you listening?—God puts that into reverse. You are justified immediately in your spirit, sanctified progressively in your soul, and glorified ultimately in your body. Isn't that wonderful? You see, that's exactly what...

God just puts into reverse what sin did. And, the glorification of the body is yet to come. The dead are going to be raised from the grave.

Now, back up to verse 35—here's a good question; look at it: *“But some men will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?”* (1 Corinthians 15:35). Now, it's hard for men to think about the resurrection of the human body. And, by the way, resurrection only applies to the body. It does not apply to the spirit; it applies to the body. I'm not saying that the spirit ceases to be, but resurrection does not apply to the soul or the spirit. They're in the resurrection, but it is the body that is going to be raised.

Somebody says, “How can this be? How can this be?” Hey, wait a minute. Have you ever read Genesis 1:1? I mean, if you can get past Genesis 1:1, don't have any difficulty with any miracle. *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). If He can make universes out of nothing, He can raise your body up out of something, okay? I mean, you won't have any difficulty with this miracle if you believe in Almighty God. And, that's the reason the Apostle Paul said, in Acts chapter 26, verse 8, to King Agrippa, *“Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?”* (Acts 26:8). I don't think he said it this way—“that God should raise the dead.” He said, *“Why should it be thought a thing incredible to you, that God should raise the dead?”* (Acts 26:8). I mean, what kind of God do you believe in?” *“With God nothing [is] impossible”* (Luke 1:37).

Now, Paul goes on the give an illustration that we see in nature every day. Look in verse 36: *“Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die”*—what's he saying? When you put seed in the ground, what happens to it? That seed dies. It rots; it decays in the ground. But now, look in verse 37—*“And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain”* (1 Corinthians 15:36–37). Now, he said, “Every day you see the resurrection illustrated. Every gardener sees the resurrection illustrated. Every farmer sees the resurrection. It's like putting a seed in the ground.” Now, what seems to be disintegration and decay is only paving the way for more life.

Now, it's amazing how some people try to say, “This can't be.” They say, “Well, well, wait a minute. Now, suppose there was a man. He's over there in Vietnam; and during the war, he has his hand blown off. And then, he comes back; and because he doesn't have one hand, he's working in his tool shop trying to do some woodwork and he cuts off a finger in New York City. And then, after a while, he gets called as a missionary, and he goes over to Kenya. And, while he's in Kenya he dies, and they bury him in Kenya. And, they bury him at the foot of an apple tree. I don't know whether they have apples in Kenya or not, but don't call me and tell me if they do or don't. I don't want to know. And so, they bury him under an apple tree. And, the roots of that apple tree go

out there and suck up the particles of his body and turn them into apples. And then, a hog comes along and eats those apples. Now, where is he?” I mean, somebody says, “How is God gonna raise him up? He’s got a hand in Vietnam. He’s got a finger in New York. He’s part pig in Kenya. How is God going to do that?”

Now friend, what you need to understand is I’m already made up of particles from all over the world. I’m made up of apples from Oregon, and beef from Kansas, and swamp cabbage from Florida. I mean, we already...our bodies are made up of particles from all over. Learn this: that it is not, however, this hide, this hair, that is necessarily going to be raised up. It is this body. You say, “What is the difference?” Well, the particles in my body are changing all of the time. Your body is in a constant state of transition. Every few years, you get a different body, but it’s the same body.

Now, think with me for a moment. Every particle in your body is constantly being changed. You have white cells in your body. They last about twelve hours, yet you’ve got 25 billion of them. You’ve got red blood cells. They live 124—120 days. You’ve got 25 trillion red blood cells. They’re constantly being changed; but yet, it’s the same you. I have the same body that I had when I was a baby. It looks a lot different. Now, is my body the same, or is it different? And, the answer to that is yes—it is the same, but it’s different. You see, I have taken in things. I read somewhere that the average person will eat 50 tons of food in his lifetime. Now, that nutriment becomes elements that make up this body. It is the same, but it is different.

The first time I crossed the Mississippi River was 1962, to my knowledge. Now, I can go cross the Mississippi River today. Question: Am I crossing the same Mississippi River? Yes, but most likely there’s not a drop of water in that river today that was in there when I first crossed it. You see, the river is constantly changing; it is the same river. The body is constantly changing; it is the same body.

What is the answer to this? How is God going to raise us up? Somebody says, “Well, Pastor Rogers, when a seed dies, it’s not really dead. There’s still life there; but when you die, you’re gone.” That’s where you’re wrong. There’s a part of me that will never die. Jesus said, “[*He that*] *liveth and believeth in me shall never die*” (John 11:26). He’s talking about the life that we have from God. That never ceases. And so, there’s a life that comes from God; and then, there is a body that supersedes these particular particles that are in me right now.

Let me give you a great, great verse. Put this in your margin—Psalm 139, verse 16: the psalmist is talking about the miracle of the human body, and this is what he says; he’s talking about a little baby being formed in it’s mother’s womb. Would to God these baby butchers today could understand this verse! Psalm 139, verse 16: “*Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect*”—that is, “not completed yet.” Now, listen to this next phrase—“*and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were*

fashioned, when as yet there was none of them" (Psalm 139:16).

Now, God had a plan for you. God has a book on you. God's got a page. It's got your DNA in it. All of your members are in God's book, even before there were any of them. God has a specific plan for you, like nobody else. Even while you were being formed in your mother's womb, God had you in mind. And, all of the particles that come and go are built around you. And, it's you that's going to be raised up in that last day. When the resurrection comes, God's going to say, "I'm going to get that page out of my records," put it in, and up you'll come. Oh, it's a miracle! But, God has given us the illustration: it's like a seed.

You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, will we all be alike?" Of course not. Look in verse 38: "*But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body*" (1 Corinthians 15:38). Every one of us is going to be an individual. We're not going to be copies. God doesn't make copies. He makes all originals, whether it be blades of grass, snowflakes, drops from Heaven. God makes everything fresh, and every person will maintain his own identity throughout all eternity. On the Mount of Transfiguration, when Moses, and Elijah, and Jesus were there, Moses was Moses, Elijah was Elijah, and Jesus was Jesus, and that prefigures the resurrection. Now you might say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, I'm not really encouraged that I'm going to get my body back. I was hoping for something better." It will be better. Well, you see, it'll be the same, but it'll be changed. You'll like it.

1. From Corruption to Incorruption

Look, if you will, in verse 42—look at it: "*So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption*" (1 Corinthians 15:42). Now, the corruption means that's the pain that you feel. Just about everybody sitting here, if you'll concentrate, has got a pain somewhere right now. I mean, that's the problem—that's the corruption—that's in our bodies. We're winding down to the grave. No wonder—no wonder—these people who don't know the Lord Jesus Christ—no wonder they drink.

You know that Milwaukee bass boat? Those guys just caught a big one, and they pop the top on. Those old guys say, "Man. It doesn't get any better than this." Friend, for us it's going to get better. I tell you, when you start that stuff, it always gets worse, if you don't know the Lord. And that... But for us it always gets better. The best is yet to come—from corruption to incorruption.

2. From Dishonor to Glory

And then, look in verse 43 (1 Corinthians 15:43). It's going to be changed from dishonor to glory. I mean, people say today, "Well, Pastor Rogers, we're in the image of God." No, we are not. Adam was in the image of God. We're in the image of Adam. I mean, don't say, "Well, man's in the image of God." Look around, folks—you think God's in this shape? No. "Adam brought forth a son after his likeness" (Genesis 5:3). And, it's his

image; that image of God has been marred. There's a faint hint of it, but it's been marred and scarred. But, it will be raised from dishonor to glory.

3. From Weakness to Power

Verse 43: from weakness to power—and I'm not just talking about physical power; I'm talking about the limitless power that God has built into humanity that He intended for man, when He told man to subdue the earth (1 Corinthians 15:43). Have you ever wanted to serve God and just felt unable?

I was so blessed by the music today, Steve, so blessed by the choir, thought of the gift of music. One of these days, I'm going to be able to sing like that. You know, Jim Whitmire heard me sing the other day, and he said, "Oh Pastor, you've never sung better." And then, he said, "You know, come to think of it, that's kind of sad, isn't it?" He didn't really say that, but I thought it was a good line. He loves me. But folks, I'm going to be leading the choir in the resurrection, because the last are going to be first. Isn't that wonderful? The last... You see, listen—listen: you'll be way down there somewhere. It's going to be changed from weakness to power.

4. From a Natural Body to a Spiritual Body

It's going to be changed from a natural body to a spiritual body. Careful, He didn't say "a spirit body." There's no such thing as a spirit body. That's like saying "a round square" or "a filled vacuum." That's a contradiction of terms. Either it's a spirit or a body. It is a spiritual body, not a soulish body. We are motivated—animated—by the power of the Spirit. We're going to have a spiritual body, but it'll be a body.

Heaven is a real place for real people—not some gaseous; amorphous; will of the wisp; "now you see it, now you don't" place of never never. It's a real place. Jesus is there in a resurrected body; and one of these days, we will be too. There's a resurrected Heaven. There's going to be a resurrected foot to walk around on it with. This, folks, is the splendid miracle.

B. The Transformation of the Living Saints

But, not only is there the resurrection of the dead saints—there's going to be the transformation of the living saints. We're going to be changed just like that. We're going to be like Him. Is He a Son of God? Then we'll be sons and daughters of God. Is He perfect? Then we'll be perfect. Is He exalted? We'll be exalted. Listen to it—Philippians 3, verse 21: "*Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself*" (Philippians 3:21).

Look in verses 45 and following: "*And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening*"—or "life-giving"—"*spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural*"—or "soulish"—"*[but]*

afterward that which is spiritual" (1 Corinthians 15:45–46). He's talking about the spiritual body now. The first man is of the earth—that's Adam. The second man is the Lord from Heaven—that's Jesus.

Now, listen to... Here's your promise in verse 48: *"As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy"*—that is, "If you're in Adam, you're like Adam"—*"and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly"*—if you know Jesus, then you're going to be like Jesus—*"And as we have borne the image of the earthy"*—that is, "the image of Adam"—*"we shall also bear the image of the heavenly"* (1 Corinthians 15:48–49). We are going to be like Jesus, and He had a resurrected body. First John 3:2: *"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).

All right, there's the sacred mystery of the Rapture. There are the sensational, sublime miracles of the Rapture.

III. The Sudden Moment of the Rapture

Now, here's the third and final thing: there is the sudden moment of the Rapture—the sudden moment of the Rapture. Look again at our verse—51 and 52: *"Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed"*—that's the mystery and the miracle; but now, notice verse 52—*"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye"* (1 Corinthians 15:51–52).

I was reading just a little while ago about the ads for the Super Bowl. Do you know how much these people are paying—and most of them are brewers—do you know how much they're paying for 30 seconds to advertise in the Super Bowl? You, well, you won't believe this unless you already knew it: 675,000 dollars for 30 seconds. That's 22,500 dollars a second. Now, when they were asked, "Why do you pay that much money?" One of them said, "Why it's the event of the year." Friend, the coming of Jesus is the event of the ages, and you won't be able to buy 30 seconds—I don't care how much money you got. I mean, when He comes, no matter how much money, you can't say, "I want 30 more seconds." He's coming in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

Now, what time is it on God's clock? You know, we're coming to the end of an age, the beginning of a new millennium, and so we're counting down to the year 2000. But, did you know something? Do you know what scholars tell us? That our calendar is off. Did you know that the calendar was revised in the sixth century? And, the man who did it started counting from what he thought was the birth of Christ, but historians tell us he missed that. Jesus was born four B.C., according to the scholars. So, that means that we enter another millennium next year. I'm not saying that Christ is coming next year. I'm saying He's coming this afternoon, perhaps. I'm saying you don't know, I don't know,

the angels don't know. Learn this about the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. There is no sign that has to come, no prophecy that has to be fulfilled, before Jesus comes. Jesus could have come in Paul's time, when he wrote 1 Corinthians chapter 15 (1 Corinthians 15).

I want to give you some scriptures that prove that, and jot these down very quickly, because somebody says, "Well, aren't we living in the last time?" Well, the Apostle John said in 1 John 2:18: "*Little children, it is the last time.*" That's 2,000 years ago. The last time began after the ascension of Jesus, while we're waiting for Him to come back. Why, every day—every age—is the last time, because He could come at any moment.

Paul said in Philippians 3, verse 20: "*For our conversation is in heaven; from whence we also look for the Saviour*" (Philippians 3:20). Paul said, "I'm looking for Him." Paul talks of those in Thessalonica in 1 Thessalonians 1, verses 9 and 10: He says there that you're "[waiting] for his Son from heaven" (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Those folks lived 2,000 years ago.

James said in James 5, verse 8: "*the coming of the Lord draweth nigh*" (James 5:8). Paul told young Titus that we're to be "*looking for...the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*" (Titus 2:13). Jesus said, "*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father [only]*" (Mark 13:32). That's the reason the Apostle John, when he closed the Book of the Revelation, just closed it with this exhortation in Revelation chapter 22 and verse 20: "*He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly*"—that is, "in the twinkling of an eye." Then, he says—"*Even so, come, Lord Jesus*" (Revelation 22:20).

I mean, we are living on the brink of His coming. You say, "Well, I don't think He's coming today." Well, "*in such an hour as [you] think not, the Son of man cometh*" (Matthew 24:44). That's a good sign that He might. That's what Paul is saying: don't be looking for signs; be listening for the shout. He's coming in a moment—in the twinkling of an eye. "Well Pastor, aren't there signs of His coming?" Of course there are. The world abounds with signs, but all of these are just a further intensification to say if He could come at any moment without these signs, how near His coming must be when we see these signs. But, there is no scripture that needs to be fulfilled before Jesus comes again.

Some little girls were in school, and they were talking. One of them had a notoriously messy desk. She'd shove things under her desk, and the other little girls said, "You know, if I were you, I'd clean up my desk. I understand the school board's gonna visit our classroom today." And, she said, "Well, I'll clean it up next week." And, the other little girl said, "Well, but what if they come today?" The little girl said, "Well, I'll clean it up this afternoon." And, the other little girl said, "What if they come this morning?" She said, "You know, I think I'll clean it up now and keep it clean." Now folks, that's the way we

ought to be living. We ought to be living as if Jesus Christ died yesterday, rose this morning, and were coming back this afternoon. Amen? You see, there is the sacred mystery. There is the sublime miracle, and there is the sudden moment of His coming. I can hardly wait. I mean, I am 100% totally honest when I tell you I anticipate the coming of Jesus Christ.

A mother died when she was very young. The father took the little boy who'd not yet started school to the funeral parlor to see the remains of his precious mother. And, they'd done such a beautiful job on her. She was there just like she was asleep. This little boy didn't understand death. He looked at her, and then he began to talk to her. He began to say to his mother, who was there, dead in the coffin—he began to say to her, “Mommy, wake up. Wake up, Mommy. Mommy, wake up.” The dad's chin started to tremble. Tears came out of his eyes. He said, “Son, you can't wake Mommy up. She's not taking a nap. Mommy has died.” But then, he said this: “When Jesus comes, He'll wake her up.” And, He will.

I've got a little boy whose body sleeps in a grave. When Jesus comes, Phillip will awaken. And, whether I'm dead or alive, whether I come out of that grave or whether I'm changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, I'm leaving here. And, I hope you are. Oh, how wonderful to know Jesus!

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. If you're not saved today, you ought to give your heart to Jesus. You ought to be saved now. Let me help you to be saved right now. Right where you are, would you pray a prayer like this?

“God, I know that You love me. I know that You want to save me. I confess that I'm a sinner, and my sins deserve judgment. I'm sorry for my sin. I want to be forgiven. I want to be saved. Jesus, I believe You paid my sin debt with Your blood on the cross. Thank You for doing that, Jesus. I believe, Jesus, that God raised You from the dead. I believe that. And, Lord Jesus, You said if I would trust You, You would save me. I do trust You, Lord Jesus”—would you tell Him that?—“I do trust You, Jesus. Right now, this moment, come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus”—pray it. Pray it. Pray it now—“Save me, Lord Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Then, pray this way: “Thank You for saving me. And, Lord Jesus, by Your power and for Your glory I will make this public. You died for me. I will not be ashamed of You. I'll make it public for Your glory. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

How to Make the Rest Day the Best Day

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: October 13, 2002

Main Scripture Text: 1 Corinthians 16:1–2

“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”

1 CORINTHIANS 16:1–2

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Creation Rest
- II. The Covenant Rest
- III. The Calvary Rest
 - A. Jesus Rose from the Dead the First Day of the Week
 - B. Jesus First Met with His Disciples After His Resurrection on the First Day of the Week
 - C. The Disciples Were Commissioned to Preach the Gospel on the First Day of the Week
 - D. The Holy Spirit Came on the Day of Pentecost on the First Day of the Week
 - E. The Book of the Revelation Was Given by God to the Apostle John upon the First Day of the Week
 - F. The Early Church Met Together to Worship on the First Day of the Week
 - G. They Came Together to Break Bread on the First Day of the Week
 - H. They Received Their Offerings on the First Day of the Week
 - I. The Difference Between the Rests

Conclusion

- A. Take Time to Be Holy and Worship on the Lord's Day
- B. Take Time to Be Healthy and Rest on the Lord's Day
- C. Take Time to Be Happy and Rejoice on the Lord's Day

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 16? And, we are going to read a couple of verses that will be representative of many verses we are going to read tonight, because tonight, we are going to preach a missionary sermon. What I mean by that is we are going to take a text and then go everywhere, preaching the gospel. I want

to talk to you about how to make the rest day the best day—how to make the Lord’s Day a very, very special day.

From time to time, when I preach, I will get letters from Sabbatarians—people who will tell me that we are worshipping on the wrong day, that we ought to be keeping the Sabbath Day, which is Saturday, and here we are worshipping on the first day of the week. And, they scold me about it and say, “Why do you worship on Sunday rather than on Saturday?” Now, you know the Seventh Day Adventists worship on Saturday, and our Jewish friends worship on Saturday; but we worship on the first day of the week.

Here is a representative verse. Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 1: *“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come”* (1 Corinthians 16:1–2). Now, God gave the Old Testament Jewish Christians a wonderful gift: He gave to them the seventh-day Sabbath, and He taught them to worship on the seventh day. Now, God has given to us a very wonderful commandment, also. And, He has taught us to worship Him, but He has taught us, in the Word of God, to worship Him on the first day of week. This gift that God gave to His Old Testament people was given out of love; and now, God has given to us the first day of the week.

The proper understanding and the proper enjoyment of the first day of the week is one of God’s richest family treasures, and I am afraid that we are losing it. Sunday is becoming in the heart and mind of many people no longer the Lord’s Day; it has become the weekend. Now, the Old Testament Sabbath word means “rest”; it actually means “cessation from labor.”

Let me guide you now to what God gave in the Old Testament—Genesis chapter 2, verses 1 through 3. *“God created the heaven and the earth”* (Genesis 1:1). And then, we read this, and you might turn to these scriptures tonight and mark them—Genesis 2, 1 through 3: *“Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them”—* God made the heavens. God made the earth. God made the stars. And, it’s finished. And then, the Bible says in Genesis 2:2—*“And on the seventh day”—*which would be corresponding to Saturday—*“God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from...his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which”—*He—*“which God created and made”* (Genesis 2:1–3).

I. The Creation Rest

Now, God made the world in six days. “Pastor, do you believe there were six literal days?” I do, and I believe He rested on the seventh day. Now, we call that—I call that—*creation rest*. It was the rest after God created everything, and God rested. Now, what

did God rest? Was God tired? No, God doesn't get tired. Isaiah 40, verse 28 teaches that the Lord never gets weary (Isaiah 40:28). The rest here in creation is a rest like in a musical score. When there is a rest, it is for emphasis. Now, God rested. God created. God made His masterpiece. And, God ceased from His work. And, that is literally what the word *rest* means—"to cease from labor." Again, I want to say—not because God was tired, but God created it all and God rested.

Now, God has gone back to work. God's rest was interrupted. Why? Because sin came into this world. And, God, who made the first creation and rested, has begun now a new creation; and God went back to work. Put in your margin "John chapter 5 and verse 17": "*Jesus answered them*"—by the way, Jesus had just healed a man on the seventh-day Sabbath, and they scolded Jesus for working on the Sabbath. And, here is what Jesus said in John chapter 5, verse 17—"*[And] Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work*" (John 5:17). Jesus was working on a new creation. So, there is what I want to call the *creation rest*. We will come back to that.

II. The Covenant Rest

Then, here is a second rest, and I call that the *covenant rest*. Now, God, who rested, was all by Himself when He made everything. And then, He spoke man into existence. But, mankind did not know anything about the Sabbath rest until He created His nation. And, the Bible says that He made known His sabbaths to Israel (Nehemiah 9:14). Now, God made a covenant with the Nation Israel. And, God gave to Israel the Old Testament Sabbath.

The Old Testament Sabbath was a gift given to Israel. Let me give you the Scripture for that. Put it down: Exodus chapter 31. Begin in verse 13: "*Speak thou also unto the children of Israel*"—now, notice He is speaking to the Jews—"Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily my sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between me and you"—God and Israel—"throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the LORD that doth sanctify you. Ye shall keep the sabbath therefore; for it is holy unto you: every one that defileth it shall surely be put to death: for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among [the] people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Wherefore"—now, listen—"Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant"—it is a covenant rest, now—"It is a sign"—listen—"it is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed" (Exodus 31:13–17).

Now, sometimes people call the Lord's Day—the day we are worshipping on, on

Sunday—people call that the *Christian Sabbath*. It is not the Christian Sabbath; it is the Lord's Day. The Sabbath is Saturday. On Sunday, we do not keep the Sabbath; we keep the Lord's Day. Now, don't pretend to keep the Sabbath. If you want to keep the Sabbath, go back to Saturday. And, be very, very careful, because if you do any work on the Sabbath day, if you put yourself under the Sabbath and you do any work whatsoever, you will be put to death, according to Sabbath law.

Look again in Exodus chapter 31, verse 15: "*Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD: whosoever doeth any work in the sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death*" (Exodus 31:15). Now, you want to live under that? "Well," you say, "Well, no. But, I am just not... I am going to keep the Sabbath, and I am not going to work; so it will be all right." Well, let me read to you Exodus 35, verse 3: "*Ye shall kindle no fire throughout your habitations upon the sabbath day*" (Exodus 35:3). Now, you couldn't make a fire on the Sabbath day if you were going to keep the Sabbath. "Well," you say, "I don't build fires." Every time you start the engine in your car, you build a fire in the engine. Every time you turn on the stove, you build a fire. Every time you set the thermostat in your house, you build a fire. Every time you turn on an electric light, you build a fire. Friend, you wouldn't last long if you were to put yourself under the Old Testament Sabbath law.

Now, God gave the Old Testament Sabbath to Israel for them in that day and in that age. And, this Sabbath law was given in 39 words; and so, the Jews took these 39 words, and they made 39 ways that the Sabbath could be broken, but that wasn't enough. And so, they, wanting to honor the Sabbath, took each of those 39 ways and subdivided them into 39 more ways until they came up with 1,521 ways that you could break the Sabbath. They were afraid to move on the Sabbath. They took what had been meant to be a blessing, and they turned it into a burden according to their tradition. Now, they accused Jesus of breaking their Sabbath, but much of it was their own tradition.

Let me tell you what they had figured out: they could... They said if an ox fell in the ditch on the Sabbath, you could take the ox out of the ditch; but if a man fell in on the Sabbath, you had to leave him there. If you were being bitten by a flea on the Sabbath day—I am not kidding about this now; this is written in their regulations—if you were bitten by a flea, you could not harm that flea, because you would be hunting on the Sabbath. You could not eat an egg that was laid on Saturday, because that hen was working during the Sabbath. If you happen to get a tack in your shoe, you better take it out before the Sabbath, because if not, you would be carrying a burden on the Sabbath. If you were eating, you could swallow vinegar but you couldn't hold it in your mouth very long, because if you held it in your mouth very long, it would be like a medicine for a toothache; and you could not work like that to heal on the Sabbath Day.

III. The Calvary Rest

Now, what I am saying is there was the creation rest. God created a world, and God rested. Literally, God ceased from labor. Secondly, there is the covenant rest. God made a covenant with Israel, and God gave the Old Testament Sabbath to Israel. Now, what does that have to do with us? Well, there is a third rest. And that third rest is Calvary rest—creation rest, covenant rest, and Calvary rest. This is rest for the Christian. The Old Testament Sabbath, like many Old Testament ceremonies, pointed to something greater; it pointed to Calvary and the rest that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ that is fulfilled in Christ.

Now remember, Jesus said, *“My Father worketh hitherto, and I work”* (John 5:17). What was Jesus working on? A new creation. Paul says, *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new [creation]”* (2 Corinthians 5:17). So, our Lord is working on a new creation; and when that new creation was finished, then the Lord Jesus rested. Notice John chapter 5, verse 17: *“Jesus answered, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work”* (John 5:17). But, when Jesus bowed His head and died, His work ceased; and He said, *“It is finished”* (John 19:30)—it is done. And then, He rested. Hebrews chapter 10, verse 12: *“But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”* (Hebrews 10:12). Jesus is seated in the heavenlies; He is rested. There is now a new creation, and there is now a new rest. The old Sabbath has been transfigured into the Lord’s Day. The Old Testament Sabbath was but a shadow, a picture, a prophecy of something far better that is to come.

Now, here is a key verse, and I want you to turn to it—Colossians chapter 2, and I begin in verse 13. Paul is talking to the church at Colossae, and this is what he says: *“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him”—quicken means “made alive”—“having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us”—that is, “the handwriting of ordinances,” “the written regulations”—“which [were] contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers”—that is talking about the work of the devil—“he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it”—now, what’s the conclusion? Look in verse 16—“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a [holiday]”—“or in respect of a holyday,” rather—“or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ”* (Colossians 2:13–17).

Now, notice what he says about holy days and Sabbath days: they *“are a shadow of things to come”* (Colossians 2:17). Now, the Old Testament Sabbath was a shadow of something else. *If you have ever seen a dog chasing a shadow on the ground—maybe there is a bird up there in the air, and the bird casts a shadow on the ground; and the*

dog is running around chasing the shadow when the bird is up there. A person who is trying to keep the Old Testament Sabbath has missed what it's all about. They are chasing shadows. In Christ we have gone from a shadow to a substance.

Now, we, as believers, celebrate the new rest in the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not keep the Old Testament Sabbath Day; we keep the first day of the week. It is called in the Bible, in Revelation chapter 1, verse 10: "*the Lord's day*" (Revelation 1:10). (audience amen) The Apostle John says, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day." (noise) So, Sunday is not the weekend; it is the first day of the week, not the last day of the week. And, it is not your day; it is the Lord's Day.

"Now, Pastor Rogers, why do we observe Sunday as our Calvary rest?" I want to give you nine things very quickly; I am just going to tick them off very quickly. Now, I want you to listen to these nine facts:

A. Jesus Rose from the Dead the First Day of the Week

Jesus rose from the dead the first day of the week. Scripture—Mark 16, verse 9: "*Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils*" (Mark 16:9). That is fact number one.

B. Jesus First Met with His Disciples After His Resurrection on the First Day of the Week

Fact number two: Jesus first met with His disciples after His resurrection on the first day of the week. Mark 16:11: "*And they, when they had heard that he was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not.*" And then, it goes on to tell how He met with them on this wonderful day, the first day of the week. Here is the Scripture—John 20, verses 19 through 20: "*Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the LORD*" (John 20:19–20). Jesus is meeting with them on the first day of the week.

C. The Disciples Were Commissioned to Preach the Gospel on the First Day of the Week

They were commissioned to preach the gospel on the first day of the week. The commission came, that is, on the first day of the week. John 20, verse 21: "*Then said Jesus unto them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you*" (John 20:21).

D. The Holy Spirit Came on the Day of Pentecost on the First Day of the Week

The Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost on the first day of the week. The word *Pentecost* means “fiftieth.” Fifty days after this was the Day of Pentecost—in Acts chapter 2, verse 1: “*And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place*” (Acts 2:1). This was the birthday of the Church. The Church was born on Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the Church.

E. The Book of the Revelation Was Given by God to the Apostle John upon the First Day of the Week

The Book of the Revelation that we have been preaching from was given by God to the Apostle John to give to us upon the first day of the week. Revelation 1:10: John says, “*I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day.*” The *Lord’s Day* is a term not used for the Sabbath. It is a day that is special—a very special use of that word, and it speaks of the first day of the week.

F. The Early Church Met Together to Worship on the First Day of the Week

The early Church met together to worship upon the first day of the week. Acts chapter 20, verse 7: “*upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow*” (Acts 20:7).

G. They Came Together to Break Bread on the First Day of the Week

Now, the breaking of bread—they didn’t come together for a picnic; they came together to take the Lord’s Supper upon the first day of the week. “*When the disciples [met] together to break bread, Paul preached unto them*” (Acts 20:7).

H. They Received Their Offerings on the First Day of the Week

They received their offerings upon the first day of the week. 1 Corinthians chapter 16 and verse 2: “*Upon the first day of the week let every one you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come*” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

So, this first day of the week commemorates the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ, who had done His job when He said, “*My Father works hitherto, and I work*” (John 5:17). He bowed his head, and He said, “*It is finished*” (John 19:30). He is now “*sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high*” (Hebrews 1:3). And now, we worship our Lord upon the first day of the week.

I. The Difference Between the Rests

I want you to notice the glorious difference between the covenant rest and the creation rest and the first rest and the last rest. The first rest, when God rested after creation, celebrated the finished work of physical creation. The second rest, the Lord’s Day, celebrates the spiritual work of redemption. The first rest celebrated natural life; the

second rest supernatural life. The first rest was life in Adam; Calvary rest is life in Christ. The first rest we celebrate the work of God's hands; in the Lord's Day, we celebrate the work of God's heart. The first rest celebrates God's power; the second rest displays God's grace. The first rest was given to Israel—the creation rest was given to Israel, or the covenant rest; but the Calvary rest is given to the Church. The first rest made the day a day of law; the second rest makes the day a day of love.

Those who insist on keeping the seventh-day rest are trying to act like Jews in the old covenant, and they are on the wrong side of Calvary. Jesus came to give us rest. Put this scripture down—Matthew 11 and verse 28: Jesus said, *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest”* (Matthew 11:28). He is not talking there about rest from physical toil; He is talking there about spiritual rest: *“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”* (Matthew 11:28–29). He is talking here about soul rest.

Conclusion

Now, what does that mean for us? How are we to keep the Lord's Day? How are we to make the Lord's Day the best day? How are we to make the day of rest the best day? Well, I want to tell you that it's to be a day of gladness, not a day of gloom. It's to be a day of love, not a day of legalism. It's to be a day of service, not a day of selfishness. It's to be a holy day, not a holiday.

What are the standards for keeping the Lord's Day? Now, we know what the Old Testament Sabbatarian rules are, but what are the rules for us today? Well, God doesn't give any that I can find. That brings up some questions. “Pastor, is it all right to go out to eat on Sunday? Can we watch a ball game on Sunday? Could I go out and play golf on Sunday? Could I play tennis? Could we have a picnic? What can I do on the Lord's Day? Could I slip out to the 711 and buy something? What is right? What is wrong? Pastor, will you give me the rules?” No, I'll not give you the rules. That is exactly what the Jews did with the Old Testament Sabbath, when they made all of these rules. The problem in asking is you are asking the wrong person. It is not my day; it is the Lord's Day—it is the Lord's Day. You go to the Lord and ask Him what He would have you to do to honor Him on this day.

Now, I want to hasten to say that when you get saved, every day belongs to the Lord. Now, don't get the idea that you can get by by saying, “All right, I'll give God one day out of seven, and I'll give Him one dime out of every dollar.” I want to tell you, friend, that He owns every day, and He owns all of every dollar. Now, you need to understand that: everything belongs to the Lord.

But, we set aside the Lord's Day as time out for God in a very special way. And so,

how do you make the rest day the best day? I want to mention three things that you can do, and I pray God will write these upon your heart, because I am being more and more grieved as we see the Lord's Day secularized.

A. Take Time to Be Holy and Worship on the Lord's Day

Number one: Take time to be holy and worship on the Lord's Day. Now, what is my scripture for that? Acts 20, verse 7: *"Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them"* (Acts 20:7). I want to add to that Hebrews 10, verse 25: it says, *"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:25). Don't forsake the assembly. Gather together with your brothers and sisters in Christ. Now, every now and then, somebody will say, "Well, I don't go to church 'cause I don't get so much out of it." Well, very frankly, you don't attend the worship for what you can get but for what you can give.

Now, when you attend a worship service, when you are here tonight, do you know what you are saying by your presence here tonight? And, I thank you for being here tonight. You are saying two things—or, when you are here on the Lord's Day morning, you are saying by your presence, among other things, you are saying these two things: you are saying, "God is important to me"; but more than that, you are saying, "My brothers and sisters are important to me." That is very important; don't miss that. You are saying, "God is important to me, but my brothers and sisters are important to me." We are not to forsake *"the assembling of ourselves together,"* but we are to be *"exhorting one another"* (Hebrews 10:25).

And, those of you who are parents, when you skip the worship service, I want to remind you that little eyes are watching and little ears are listening as to what is important to you. Psalm 145, verse 4: *"One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts"* (Psalm 145:4). Isaiah 38, verse 19: *"The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth"* (Isaiah 38:19). When your children see you get up—sometimes at great personal discomfort, sometimes when you are very tired—but when they see you get up and go the House of God, they see that you have made worship highest priority.

Now, you say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, there are times I just don't feel like going to church on Sunday." Well, let me ask you, "Have there ever been times you don't feel like going to work on Monday?" I mean, try this on your boss: say, "We slept in this morning." Or, "We had company to come." Or, "We went to the beach." No, you wouldn't do that with your boss, would you? No. Teach your children the importance. Make—take—time to be holy and worship on the Lord's Day. Teach your children to love the Lord's Day.

And, that begins with anticipation, at least on Saturday night. On Saturday night, the Sunday School lesson ought to be done. On Saturday night, the shoes ought to be shined. On Saturday night, the clothes ought to be laid out, and the children ought to be put to bed relatively early on Saturday night. Now, I am a bona fide grandfather. We raised four children, and I can tell you that we had to start getting ready on Saturday to be there on Sunday. You know what I mean? If you don't understand, you never had children, trying to get them ready for Sunday School. By the time we got to church we needed to get there because we lost our religion. One woman said to her husband, "Look, I'll make a deal with you: if you will come in the house here and help get the children ready, I'll sit out in the car and honk the horn." It's a job. But, teach your children to anticipate Sunday, the Lord's Day.

Let them bring an offering. Teach them how to sing in church. And, don't say anything negative about church in front of your children. You know, a lot of children sit down, sometimes, to a Sunday meal, where they have roast preacher and people gripe and complain. Sit by your children, if you can, and help them to sing in the worship service. Teach them to take notes and to keep their notes. Teach your children to bring the Bible to the House of God. Get to know their Sunday School teachers, and work strategically with them and the youth workers. And, remember that you need to worship on Sunday. You are like a battery, and you will run down—even you diehards. You need to get in and get blessed on the Lord's Day.

And, in the early Church, I am going to tell you this—from the Book of Hebrews I have discerned this: in the early Church, if you stopped coming to the worship service, they assumed that you had never ever been saved. They assumed that. They said, "You have just forsaken the faith." They so identified that corporate worship with a love for the Lord Jesus Christ. So, take time to be holy on the Lord's Day and worship.

B. Take Time to Be Healthy and Rest on the Lord's Day

Here is the second thing: Take time to be healthy on the Lord's Day and rest. Rest on the Lord's Day. Now, when God gave the creation Sabbath and the covenant Sabbath to Israel, among other things, He told them to rest. Now, while we are not under an Old Testament Sabbath, well, certainly there is a principle that we can learn from—that we need to rest. One day set aside for rest.

Children need to learn to rest and quietness. Our kids go sometimes seven days a week with never stopping and never slowing down. It may be hard, but you need to do it. Now—I mean, to teach them to rest—now, if you get my age, you look forward to resting on the Lord's Day. I have already had my nap today, and it was wonderful.

Parents need to set an example. And, you will get more done; you are not wasting time when you rest, any more than you wasting time when you study the map before

you take a trip or sharpen your ax before you start chopping wood. To rush around is wrong without getting rest. And, if you burn the candle at both ends, some say you are not as bright as you think you are. Learn to rest on the Lord's Day. It is a shame when the Lord's Day becomes a day given over to pleasure and profit and you don't learn how to rest. Take time to worship on the Lord's Day, and take time to rest on the Lord's Day; and, take time to be holy—take time to be healthy.

C. Take Time to Be Happy and Rejoice on the Lord's Day

Now, here is the third thing: learn to be happy and rejoice on the Lord's Day. It's not a day of gloom; it's a day of gladness. It's not a day of legalism; it's a day of love, and it is a day of laughter. The Bible says even of the Old Testament Sabbath, "Thou shalt delight thyself in it" (Isaiah 58:13). And so, take this day and make it a happy day.

I can remember my wife singing to our children on Sunday morning a little song, "Happy Sunday morning! Happy Sunday morning!" I don't know whether you know that little song or not. But, she would sing that song as we would get up and get ready for church on Sunday morning. Take time on the Lord's Day for a special meal. Let your family meet together. Take time to laugh. Have togetherness, and love, and fellowship, and music, and books, and conversation. Let's put the Lord's Day back where it belongs.

And, I want to thank you for being here, because I believe that Sunday night, as well as Sunday morning, ought to belong to Jesus. And, thank you for being here. Now, the only way that I would change that is if we started worshipping on Saturday night and Sunday morning. But, some way we need to give the morning and the evening to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, I am finished with the message, but let me say this: *it takes more than a tombstone to give rest to a soul*. Every now and then, we see on a tombstone, "Rest in peace." But, that person has no rest day nor night if they died outside the Lord Jesus Christ. And, just as there is the forgiveness of God and there is the peace of God, there is the rest of God. And, you don't have to wait until you go to Heaven to enter into rest. Now, I see so many restless Christians today. They need to hear what Jesus says: "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*" (Matthew 11:28).

Now, look up here. Pretend I am Jesus. I am certainly not, but I am His ambassador. See Jesus with His arms outstretched. See Him looking at you tonight, and He is saying to you, "Come." He invites you. Is that not wonderful? "Come." And, notice what else He says, "*Come unto me*" (Matthew 11:28)—not to some cause, not to some movement, not to some doctrine. "*Come unto me, [those of you who] labour and are heavy laden*" (Matthew 11:28). You are laden down with your sins; and you are laboring to do

something about it, and you cannot. For the Bible says, “[It is] not by works of righteousness [that] we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Titus 3:5). “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Will you bow your heads? Jesus said, “[You will] find rest unto your souls” (Matthew 11:29).

I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad;

[And] I have found in Him a resting place, and He has made me glad (Horatius Bonar). Augustine said many years ago, “Thou has made us for Thyself, O God, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee.”

If you are not certain that you are saved, let’s get certain tonight. Would you pray a prayer like this? “Lord God, I have been laboring, but I am burdened. I need rest. I need rest for my soul. I need to lay down this burden of sin. And, I need, dear Lord, to let You come and take control of my life. And, I do that right now. Lord Jesus, I come to You. I come in faith thanking You that You died for me, thanking You for Calvary rest. Thank You, Lord, that You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. Thank You, Lord Jesus. I now receive You as my Lord and my Savior. Thank You for making me Your child. You are now my God, my Lord, my friend, my Savior, forever. And, Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your Name I pray. Amen.”