

ADRIAN ROGERS

LEGACY

C O L L E C T I O N



2 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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The God of All Encouragement

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 28, 1986

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 1:1–10

Outline

Introduction

I. The Source of Suffering

II. The Subject of Suffering

III. The Stewardship of Suffering

Conclusion

Introduction

Do you ever get discouraged? Don't answer that question, because I know the answer, before you even answer. Of course you do, because you are human. And I want to tell you what to do with discouragement today. Actually, I want to talk to you on the subject of encouragement, and "The God of All Encouragement" is going to be the title of our message. Second Corinthians chapter 1, and I'm going to read the first 10 verses. And in those first 10 verses, you will see the word *encouragement* used 10 times.

Now in the *King James Version* of the Bible, you'll not even see the word *encouragement*, but it is there. It is translated several times as "comfort." And it is translated several times as "consolation." But I want you to know that the word *comfort*, as it is used here, and the word *consolation*, which is the same word, just translated differently by the *King James* translator, is the word—I suppose that the most common application could be and should be—*encouragement*.

All right, 2 Corinthians chapter 1: "*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia. Grace be to you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort;*"—that is, *encouragement*—"who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God." Already, he's used the word five times. "*For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation*"—it's the same word here—"also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted,"—there's our word

again—“*it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of his sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation. For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life: but we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead: who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver: in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us*” (2 Corinthians 1:1–10). Now there is much in these 10 verses, and we are going to be exceedingly brief, because we are going to have together the wonderful love feast, the Lord’s Supper.

There are three thoughts that I want to lay on your heart, but let me say, by way of introduction, that encouragement is something that we all need, and, thank God, it is something that God has promised to every one of us. When God made us, God made sure that here we could not, and should not, stand alone. And then, God gave us the strength, the encouragement, and the comfort that He wants us to have.

As a matter of fact, this same word that is translated for *comfort* is the word that God has used to describe the Holy Spirit. He is called *the Comforter*—it is the same word. And the word *comfort*, the word *consolation*, and the word *encouragement* do not mean “pity.” It may have some pity in it, and it may be caused by pity, but it is not mere pity—not mere sympathy. That may weaken you, rather than help you, if that’s all you get—sympathy and pity.

Now we all like sympathy, and we all like pity. But the word *comfort*—even our English word *comfort*—entails the composition of two words: *com* and *fort*, which, when adjoined, literally means, “with strength.” And the Greek word *comfort*, that we are saying means “consolation” or “encouragement,” literally means, “something or someone that is called alongside of you to help you, to strengthen you, and to assist you.”

So what real encouragement does is more than sympathy does—it literally strengthens you. It literally gives you power to face whatever you are going through. And that, ladies and gentlemen, is something that we all need, and something, thank God, that God has provided for every one of us. Now there are three simple little thoughts that I want you to notice tonight before we have the Lord’s Supper together.

I. The Source of Suffering

First of all, I want you to notice the source of all suffering. Look in verse 3—the Apostle Paul said, “*Blessed be God,*”—you can just tell that he is so happy in the Lord—“*even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort*” (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Now I want you to know that God has cornered the market on comfort. He has cornered the market on comfort. He's the God of all comfort. He's the God of all consolation. He is the God of all encouragement. So that tells me that all encouragement comes from God, and that all discouragement comes from the devil. Now if you are discouraged tonight about anything, then I want you to know that the devil is on your trail—you have a way that the devil can get to you, and that is the fact that you don't do something about that discouragement.

There's an ancient fable that tells about the devil auctioning off his tools. He had different tools: lust, envy, jealousy, pride, and so forth. But there was one tool that he had put a very high price on—such a high price, that no one could afford it—and the devil said, "I really don't want to sell it, anyway, because that's my favorite tool." It was a well-worn tool, and in this make-believe story, somebody said, "Well, what is that tool?" And he said, "Well, that tool is discouragement." He said, "I have used that tool to pry open a life, and, when I pry open a life with discouragement, I can get inside and do all kinds of other damage with my other tools."

Now that is so true, although, that's only a parable—only a story. But it is so true that the devil uses discouragement, I suppose, perhaps as much—or more—than any other thing to damage our lives and to weaken us.

All comfort, all encouragement, and all consolation come from God. All discouragement, therefore, is from the devil. Now you say, "Wait a minute. All encouragement is not from God. I have a friend that has encouraged me." Yes, but the only way that he has encouraged you is to have taken the encouragement that God has given to him, in order to pass it on to you. Your friend was just the middleman. Notice again in verse 3: "[He's] the God of all comfort" (2 Corinthians 1:3). In verse 4, the Bible says "[He] comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:4). Where do we get it? From God. So we just pass it on. I don't care whether somebody else encourages you or not—all encouragement—all consolation—comes from God.

"No," you say, "well, I get consolation in other things." But it is not real consolation. You see, all other consolation—all other encouragement—is ultimately going to fail you. You turn to philosophy... Dr. Lee said, "Philosophy was a chunk of cloud bank, buttered with the night wind." You turn to philosophy to try, in an attempt to get comfort out of philosophy; but try to get encouragement out of philosophy, and you are going to find out what H. G. Wells said. He said, "Unless there is a more abundant life before mankind, this scheme of date and time is a bad joke, an empty laugh braying across the mysteries." Almost every philosopher without Christ turns into a pessimist. Why? Because, he thinks it through, and he just understands that, really, without God, there's

just no hope.

There's an animal known as a lemming. Have you ever heard of a lemming? Lemmings get this mad idea in their heads that they have to run to the sea. And they do it in packs—in droves. These little animals—about so long—begin to head toward the sea. What drives them to do this nobody seems to know; but they run over mountains, through rivers, and through marshes to reach the sea. And when they reach the sea, they just plunge in headlong and drown. How would you like to be a lemming? I mean, that's their goal in life—to reach the sea and drown themselves. Now every philosopher realizes that mankind is just headed toward the grave in the same way that a lemming is headed toward the sea. And unless there is something else, there's no comfort in philosophy. There's no comfort in unbelief, in not knowing our Lord.

I heard, one time, about a little girl raised in an atheist's family, and the atheist had taught her, all this time, that there was no God. And then, she came to die. And her father and her mother were trying to give encouragement to this little girl who was sick. They were trying to comfort their dying daughter, and they didn't believe in God, and she didn't believe in God. But this father was by her side, saying to her, "Sweetheart, it won't be long. Just hold on. Daddy loves you. It won't be long. Just hold on." She said, "Daddy, you tell me to hold on, but there's nothing to hold on to." That's so true if you don't know the Lord. Where is this encouragement? It's not even in religion—apart from Jesus.

If you don't know Jesus, then you still don't have this consolation—this encouragement. I'll tell you why. I'll tell you why: Jesus Christ is different from all of the other religious leaders. You can take Buddha out of Buddhism, and still have Buddhism. You can take Confucius out of Confucianism, and still have Confucianism. You can take Mohammed out of Islam, and still have the Islamic religion. But you can't take Jesus Christ out of Christianity, and still have Christianity. You see, Christianity is Christ, as He infuses you and gives you this comfort.

Now this comfort—this consolation—is complete, because it comes from God. And it is continuous. Look in verse 4—the Bible says, "*Who comforteth us*" (2 Corinthians 1:4). Now actually, this is in the present tense, and it means that it is continuous. This encouragement just comes—it's like a river; it never stops flowing. It comes from the bosom of God, and God is the source of all true encouragement.

II. The Subject of Suffering

Now who are the subjects? Look again in verse 4—the Bible says, "*Who comforteth us*" (2 Corinthians 1:4). Well, who wrote this? The Apostle Paul. Did Paul need to be comforted? Did Paul need encouragement? Look in verse 8—he says, "*For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were*

pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life” (2 Corinthians 1:8). Now you know I like verse 8. I’ll tell you why I like verse 8. Verse 8 tells me that if I ever get discouraged then I’m in good company. I mean, we don’t have to go around, as we do sometimes, wearing a mask and pretending that we never get discouraged. I think it is human to get discouraged. You can read the history of the church, and you’ll find out that some of God’s greatest leaders really got discouraged.

You know, every now and then, I feel like I could sit on the curb and dangle my feet. I get that low—not very often. Not very often—I don’t get discouraged very often. As a matter of fact, I tried to think—when I was thinking about this message—of the times when I’ve been discouraged. And I thought of several times—three times, in particular, when I have really, truly been discouraged. I’m not going to tell you what they were, but there were three times in my life when I was really discouraged. And in all three times, I went to the Lord. And, all three times, He was the God of all consolation—the God of all comfort. Now that doesn’t mean that I’ve only been discouraged three times in my life. But as I told you, I run in kind of a narrow band: I don’t get too high and I don’t get too low. But if I ever do get discouraged, you can be sure that it is genuine discouragement. But I’m in good company. Here’s the Apostle Paul—Paul said, *“We were pressed out of measure”* (2 Corinthians 1:8). He said, “I despaired even of life. It was beyond measure. It was beyond my strength.”

I read the biography of Spurgeon—or read parts of his biography. Spurgeon—you know, the greatest Baptist preacher that has ever lived, I believe—got up and said, “I pray to God,” he said to his congregation, “that not one of you ever knows the depth of discouragement that I go through.” He said, “I pray God that none of you…” and he’s talking to his congregation. He was a man that got so low.

I’ll tell you of somebody else that got discouraged: Martin Luther. Martin Luther, one time, got so discouraged that he got in his study—he got in his house—and he began to mope around. He lost his zest for life. He became so disconsolate. His wife tried to speak to him and didn’t seem to be able to help him. And so she decided that she would shock him. She put on a black dress and a veil—a black veil—and gloves that one would wear to a funeral and came into the room where he was. Her name was Catherine, but he called her Catrinka. And he said, “Why, Catrinka, who has died?” “Oh,” she said, “Martin, haven’t you heard? God has died.” He said, “Catrinka, that is blasphemy.” She said, “Aye, husband, and it is blasphemy for you to be living as if God is dead.” Amen? And it snapped him out of it. He realized that God is the God of all consolation, and that He is not dead. But Martin Luther did get discouraged.

The Apostle Paul got discouraged. And if you would be honest, then you’d have to admit that, from time to time, we all get discouraged. Because, the Apostle Paul says that God is the God *“who comforteth us…”* Now he mentions *“in all our tribulation”* (2

Corinthians 1:4)—and what is this tribulation that he’s talking about? Well, this word *tribulation* means, “under pressure.” Well, why does God allow that? Obviously, God can keep us from being under pressure, if He wanted to. But God doesn’t take the pressure off. As a matter of fact, God engineers the pressure. God brings the pressure around. Why? To make God more real to you—to make God real to you.

Now listen. You may think, “I wish that Jesus Christ were real to me. “Well, look in verse 5 then: *“For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ”* (2 Corinthians 1:5). Abounding suffering, abounding consolation. Now Andraé Crouch wrote a song, and he said this in that song—and the title of the song you’ve heard many times: “Through It All”—he said:

So I thank God for the mountains.
And I thank Him for the valleys
I thank Him for every storm He’s brought me through
’cause if I never had a problem
I wouldn’t know that He could solve them
I wouldn’t know what faith in His Word could do.

You see, Jesus said: *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted”* (Matthew 5:4). No mourning—no comforting. No tribulation—no consolation. If you want Jesus to be real to you, then I don’t know any way that Jesus can be more real to you than in this way: when you find the rod and the staff sufficient, when you are in the dark valley.

David said, *“The LORD is my shepherd”* (Psalm 23:1). He spoke of the Lord being with him. In the still waters and in the green valleys, he spoke about the Lord. But later on in the 23rd Psalm, when he got into the valley of the shadow of death, he did not say, *“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.”* There, he said: *“Thy rod and thy staff they comfort me”* (Psalm 23:4). He’s not talking *about* the Lord; now he’s talking *to* the Lord. I’ll tell you something: You can get in a service like this and take notes in your Bible that talk *about* the Lord, but you get into difficulty, and you’ll start talking *to* the Lord. And He will become real to you. You get in that dark valley, and when you do, God’s rod and His staff begin to comfort you—God will be real to you.

Robert Browning, in “Along the Road,” wrote these words:

I walked a mile with Pleasure.
She chattered all the way,
But left me none the wiser
For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with Sorrow,
And ne'er a word said she;
But oh, the things I learned from her
When Sorrow walked with me.

Now we're the subjects of this consolation. God allows us—He allowed the Apostle Paul—to be so pressed down that there was no way, except to turn to God and say, “God, if You don't help me, then I won't be helped.”

III. The Stewardship of Suffering

But the third and final thing I want to say tonight is about, not only the source of suffering, not only the subject of it, but think of the stewardship of it. Go back to verse 4, and look again. The Bible says that God does this: “[God] *comforteth us in all our tribulation, that*”—and this is a purpose clause: “in order that”—“*we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God*” (2 Corinthians 1:4). We are blessed, that we might be a blessing. We receive consolation, that we might give consolation. We are encouraged, that we might encourage others. We are to be a point of transfer.

Now listen. To some people, tribulation is a prison. Other people rise above that, and for them, tribulation is a hospital, and they hope to get well. But tribulation is supposed to be a seminary, where you learn, and where you become a steward of your sufferings, so that you can pass them on to others.

Now look in verse 5: “*For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ*” (2 Corinthians 1:5). Now the word *aboundeth* here means “to overflow.” Your life is to be overflowing with the life of Jesus Christ—it is to abound in you. You're to be, everywhere you go, a source of comfort and a source of strength.

Now if you live a sheltered life, then you will never be a lesson to those 'round about you. Jesus is touched with the feelings of our infirmity. Why? Because, He also suffered. Now I can go to Jesus when I suffer, and I know that Jesus understands, because He suffered, or He was touched in all points just as I am (Hebrews 4:15).

Now look, folks—Jesus did not have to suffer in order to know how I feel, because He's omniscient. He knew everything before He came. He didn't have to come to earth in order to know how I feel. But He came to earth, that I might know that He knows. Do you understand what I'm talking about? I mean, he went through it. And I can say that,

when I suffer, Jesus was there. And that's the reason why I come to Him, and He blesses me.

Now the same thing is true in your life. Your life is going to overflow with encouragement to other people, if you've learned how to suffer—if you've learned to overcome. A broken heart—listen to me—provides the ability to help other people. A broken heart is more needed than the ability give great sums of money. You can teach, as some of you are able to teach. There is a commodity known as a broken heart: a person who has received comfort from the Lord. That kind of a person is such a need—this commodity in this church. Maybe God cannot trust some people with suffering, but God trusts other people. And the Bible says that God does it, that we might be recipients of that comfort, and then we might be a point of transfer.

Let me tell you something: It is not a compliment to you, if other people do not come to you with problems. Men don't go to an empty well to draw water. But if you have been touched and broken, if you have been comforted of the Lord, then God is going to use that to bless other people.

Now you may have heard me say that verses 3 and 4 have a significant place in my life. Joyce and I, when we graduated from seminary, took a little church down in the east coast of Florida—Park View Baptist Church—and preached at that church. We'd been there only a few months, when I preached a message on Mother's Day about the glories of a Christian home. On that same day, right after I preached, we went across the street to the little pastorium—that was just about as close as from here to that next wall over there from that little church building—hat little pastorium, a white wood painted pastorium.

And Joyce went in the kitchen to prepare the meal, and she took our little baby boy, Philip, and gave him his pacifier, and put him there in that little crib. And after a while, Joyce came to me with that baby in her arms and said, "Adrian, something is wrong with Philip. Hurry!" And already, that little body had begun to turn blue. He was asphyxiated. Somehow, he had choked, or maybe it was one of those sudden death things that infants sometimes have. We never have been able to know exactly why our little Philip died. It probably was what they call the Infant Sudden Death Syndrome. But that little boy was there, and I suppose that by the time she brought him to me, he had already gone home to be with Jesus. I wrapped him up in my coat and drove through blinding tears down to the hospital with that little boy. I begged the doctor to come out and do something, if he could. I knelt in that hospital corridor and prayed. After a while, the doctor came out, laid his hand on my shoulder, shook his head, and said, "Son, your little baby is gone." I drove back to our little home. Joyce was waiting with the other two children—with Gayle and Steve. I walked into that house, and I didn't have to tell Joyce, because she could see that it was written on my face that our precious little son, Philip,

had gone to be with the Lord.

We were just kids, fresh out of seminary, but we did what everybody ought to do in a time of trouble. We went to the Word of God. And these two verses were verses that I didn't even know were in the Bible, but by the providence of God, they fell right into our hands. I believe that Almighty God guided us to these two verses. I read them, and I read them again. And I looked at it—this is what it said: *“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God”* (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). I read that again and again. The Lord said to me, “Adrian, you may not be able to understand all of this, but I'm going to show myself real to you. I'm going to show myself real to Joyce. I'm going to do a work in your heart and in your life. And then, I'm going to let you pass it on.”

You know, we throw broken things away, but God never really uses anything until He breaks it. He took a little lad's lunch, broke it, and fed five thousand. He took the bread, broke it, and said, *“This is my body, which is broken for you”* (1 Corinthians 11:24). David said, *“A broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”* (Psalm 51:17). But God comforts us, so that we may be able to comfort others.

I cannot tell you the number of times I've seen my precious wife comfort people with counsel that is so real. And I've seen mothers who have lost their babies. They've come to Joyce, and I want to tell you, she's been able to do something that no textbooks, no psychologists, no psychiatrists, or no preacher without a broken heart has been able to do—she's been able to give comfort, because she's been there. She knows, and she understands. And I've seen the life of God flow through her life so many times.

Conclusion

Thank God that He is the God of all encouragement.

God hath not promised skies always blue,
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;
God hath not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

But God hath promised strength for the day,
Rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love. (Annie J. Flint)

The source is God; the subject is us; and the stewardship—He comforts us that we might be able to comfort others. Let's bow together in prayer.

The God of All Comfort

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 14, 1998

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 1:3–8

Outline

Introduction

I. The Source of That Comfort: God Himself

II. The Subjects of That Comfort: Those Who Know Tribulation

III. The Stewardship of That Comfort: We Are Comforted So That We May Comfort Others

Conclusion

Introduction

Turn, please, to 2 Corinthians chapter 1. We're going to spend a few moments in verses 4 through 7. I want to talk to you tonight about something that we all need—every one of us—and something that God has promised to give not only to all of us, but to each of us. And that one thing is comfort. We all need comfort. The title of our little study tonight is, “The God of All Comfort.” And in these verses—verses 4 through 7—you're going to find the word *comfort* is used 10 times. Now I'm reading from *The King James Version* of the Scriptures; it is my habit. And you'll find the word *comfort* is used a number of times; and then, you'll find the word *consolation* that is used. But literally, they're the same word—translated differently, but from the same base word. And I want you, perhaps, to take your Bible, as I read along, and each time you hear the word *comfort* or *consolation*, if you don't mind marking it, just go ahead and mark it.

Beginning in verse 3: *“Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation”—and, that's the same word—“also aboundeth by Christ. And whether we be afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effectual in the enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer: or whether we be comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope of you is steadfast, knowing, that as ye are partakers of the sufferings, so shall ye be also of the consolation”* (2 Corinthians 1:3–7).

Now again, I want to say that God is the God—according to this passage of Scripture—the God of all comfort—in verse 3. Comfort is something we all need, and, thank God—yes, I say, thank God—it is something that God has promised and

something that God has provided. None of us is strong enough to stand alone. We need the Lord to stand with us and to give us comfort.

Now the word *comfort* here is a very interesting word. It goes far beyond sentiment. It means more than a sentimental pat on the head—“There, there.” The Greek word *comfort*, very much like our English word *comfort*, literally means, “with strength”—comfort. And the word *fort*, or *forte*, has the idea of strength. And God is the God who gives us not mere sentiment, but He is the God who comes alongside of us to give us strength in time of need. The dear, blessed, precious Holy Spirit is called, in John 14, *the Comforter* (John 14:16; John 14:26). And He’s the One who comes not merely with sentiment, though He does have sentiment; not merely with sympathy, though He does have sympathy; He is the One who infuses us with strength.

Now I want to be brief tonight, but I want to say three things about the comfort the God of all comfort gives.

I. The Source of That Comfort: God Himself

And the very first thing is the very source of that comfort is God Himself. He is called in verse 3, “*the God of all comfort*” (2 Corinthians 1:3). Now as I look at that, that means, literally, that God has cornered the market on comfort. There is no real lasting, genuine comfort apart from Almighty God.

Now even if we get comfort from other people, it is the comfort that those other people got from God. And they have become the middleman, and they’re passing it on to you. For example, verse 4 says—it speaks of God, who comforted us in all our tribulation, “*that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God*” (2 Corinthians 1:4). So if somebody else comes along and gives you comfort, all he or she is, is the middleman passing on the comfort that they themselves have received of the Lord. So I want to say that God is the God of all comfort. I would say, to turn that around, Satan is the author of all discouragement. If you have discouragement tonight, it did not come from God; it came from Satan. If you need comfort, you’ll not get it from any other source. You’ll have to receive that comfort from God.

I’m amazed at what people do and where people go when they hurt. Where are you going to go? Are you going to go, when your sad heart aches till it nearly breaks, to philosophy? The former pastor of this church, Dr. R. G. Lee, said, “Philosophy is a chunk of cloudbank buttered with the night wind.” H. G. Wells was a philosopher, but he said, “Philosophy proved a washout to me.” And then, H. G. Wells said, “Unless there is a more abundant life before mankind, this scheme of space and time is a bad joke, an empty laugh, braying across the mysteries.”

Where you going to go for comfort? Are you going to go for comfort to the things, the

toys, the baubles—the materialist things of this world? You can have a beautiful house and a broken heart.

When Joyce and I got out of seminary, we lived from hand to mouth. We'd been married for seven years of school. I wanted—we wanted—to start our family, and I wanted Joyce to stay at home. So I had to work to pay for the seminary tuition, the college tuition—work to keep food on the table. And this was before the days of credit cards, thank God. And we lived from hand to mouth, and it was God's hand to our mouth. But we made it! And God took care of us. And we got out of seminary and got out of school without being in debt. And when we got out, we bought a few sticks of furniture. We'd never had any new furniture. I think, one time, we did buy a new couch that was on sale, but that was the only piece of furniture that we had. And we bought an end table, and a coffee table, and a couple of little settees for the living room. They were brand new. We'd not had them in that little parlor after I graduated from seminary, but a few months, literally—less than a few months—when our son Philip died one of the sudden crib deaths.

I can remember, in that living room, looking at that furniture that I was grateful for, but looking at that furniture and thinking to myself, "That is absolute trash—worth less than nothing. Absolutely nothing! It wouldn't amount to anything." You know, sometimes when your heart is broken, you see things more clearly. It's not that it was wrong for us to have that—not that we were unduly attached to it to begin with. But I'm just trying to say, folks, that the toys of this world, the possessions of this world, are not going to fit in your heart or give you comfort. Where are you going to go? Have you ever thought about the comfort that an atheist would have? Where does an atheist get comfort, who doesn't believe even in God—unbelief?

I've always been kind of attracted to, or at least intrigued by, the lemmings. Are you familiar with who the lemmings are—what they are? These little animals that start and run across the continent, or run across the land? And they run through the marsh. They swim over the rivers. They climb the mountains. They go across the plains until they reach the sea. I mean, they, pell-mell, they head toward the sea. And when they get to the sea, they plunge in and drown. That's a lemming for you. But that's like so many folks in this world. I mean, they're in a mad rush; and, when they get to the end of life, they die, and that's it.

Where are you going to go for comfort? Are you going to go to one of the religions of this world? To Buddha? To Confucius? Where are you going to go? To Mohammed? Where are you going to go? Do you think that these can give you comfort? They died, and they're dead. Jesus is alive, and He lives within our heart. Where are you going to go for comfort when your heartaches? Are you going to sit around and have a pity party? If you do, the only one who'll come will be you. And you're not going to get any

comfort from self-pity—not from a bottle, not from a pill, not from a tranquilizer. I’m telling you, folks, God—Almighty God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—is the Father of mercies. He is the God of all comfort.

And you know what this scripture tells us? That He comforts us. I don’t want to get too technical, but that’s in the present tense. It doesn’t mean, “He comforted”; it means, “He comforts.” It means, “He continually, day-by-day, moment-by-moment...” That’s the reason we sing that song—it’s “Peace like a River,” because a river is constantly flowing. And that’s the comfort of our Lord.

II. The Subjects of That Comfort: Those Who Know Tribulation

Now here’s the second thing I want you to see: Not only the source of that comfort—God is the God of all comfort—but I want you to notice the subjects of that comfort. Who is it that God comforts?

Well, look in verse 4—the Apostle Paul is talking about himself: “*Who comforteth us in all our tribulation*” (2 Corinthians 1:4). Look, if you will, in verse 8—Paul is talking about himself: “*For we would not, brethren, have you ignorant of our trouble which came to us in Asia, that we were pressed out of measure, above strength, insomuch that we despaired even of life*” (2 Corinthians 1:8). Do you think that Paul, because he was a Christian, had it easy? Do you think that Adrian is supposed to have it easy? Do you think that you’re supposed to have without toil, and tribulation, and problems? No!

You see, God is going to comfort you, but the only way that God can comfort you is in tribulation. Look again, in verse 4: “*Who comforteth us in all of our tribulation*” (2 Corinthians 1:4). Now folks, if you didn’t have tribulation, you wouldn’t need comfort; there would be no need for comfort. Christians have tribulation. There’s no fine print in the contract. Jesus said clearly, plainly, forcefully, “In this world you will have tribulation” (John 16:33). But with that tribulation you’ll have comfort. As you study the Bible, you’ll find that the saints in the Bible were men who had tribulation. There’s hardly a saint in the Bible that some tribulation has not been mentioned about.

And then, as you get out of the Bible and get into history, you’ll find out that great men of God have come to times when they were discouraged. The great Spurgeon that we quote so many times would have bouts of despondency. Martin Luther, who led in the Protestant Reformation, would have deep bouts of despondency and need to be comforted. The word *tribulation*, here, means, “to be pressed down”; it means, “to be living under pressure.” Many of us want the abundant life; but, folks, you will not have the abundant life without abundant tribulation. Look, if you will, in verse 5: “*For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth*” (2 Corinthians 1:5). The two go together. When you have abounding tribulation, abounding suffering, at the same time, you’re going to know abounding comfort and abounding strength.

You know, sometimes people say, “I wish Jesus were more real to me.” I’m going to give you a testimony, and I think those of you who are out there will say *amen* to the testimony. The times Jesus has been closest to me have not been those times when everything has been going the best. The times that Jesus Christ has been more real to me have been those times of suffering, and heartache, and pain. And as those sufferings abound, I have known His consolation.

You know, Andraé Crouch, Brother Jim, wrote that song—we don’t sing it much anymore, but it’s a great song: “Through It All”—“Through It All.” And he has a line in there that has always been meaningful to me. He said,

I thank God for the mountains,
and I thank Him for the valleys,
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.
For if I’d never had a problem,
I wouldn’t know God could solve them,
I’d never know what faith in God could do. (Andraé Crouch)

And so friend, the, subjects of tribulation: Adrian, Bob, Jamie, Jim, the choir, you. We have tribulation. But thank God, we can know the comfort.

III. The Stewardship of That Comfort: We Are Comforted So That We May Comfort Others

Now let me just go to the third and the final thing, and I’m moving very quickly here. The source of all comfort is God Himself. He is the God of all comfort. The subjects of comfort are those of us, along with the saints of the ages, who know tribulation. Now the final thing is the stewardship of this comfort.

Look, in verse 4, and see what Paul says here: It speaks of God, the God of all comfort, “*who comforteth us in all our tribulation,*”—now, watch—“*that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God*” (2 Corinthians 1:4). Now this is a purpose clause. It literally means that He comforts us, in order that we may be able to comfort others. We are comforted, that we might comfort. We are blessed, that we might be a blessing.

I remember reading in the Bible about Samson, who had a lion attack him. And the Bible says the Spirit of the Lord came upon Samson, and, Samson, with his bare hands, fought and killed that lion. Later on, Samson came back to the carcass of the lion. And in the carcass of the lion the bees had moved in and made a beehive in the carcass, the leather-covered carcass of that lion. Down in the ribcage, somehow, there was a beehive in there. And the Bible declares how Samson reached in and got some honey, and he ate of it. And then, as he was going along, he saw his mother and his father; and, he gave to them honey out of a carcass of the lion (Judges 14:5–9).

When I read that, I thought how much that's been like my own life. I know that the red lion of Hell has roared against me, and he has against you. I know that Satan has attacked. I know that, through the Spirit that God has given, I have been able to have victory that I could never have of myself. And I have found out, as Samson found out, "*Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness*" (Judges 14:14). And those things that have enriched and strengthened my life are the things that Satan tried to use against me, where God energized me and God gave me power. And I found honey in the carcass of the lion. And not only that, I've had honey—not only to eat, but honey to share.

I remember when our baby died. My mom and dad came to Fort Pierce, where Joyce and I were living. And I can see my mother's face. My precious mother—I can see her, as she was coming up the walk. I can see it right now in my mind's eye. And Joyce and I had already found this verse that I'm speaking of. And I remember reaching out to my mother, who had come to comfort me—and she did—but being able to comfort her with the comfort that God Himself was already pouring into us, because I had found in the carcass of the lion there was honey—honey to eat and honey to share. For, the Bible says, "God comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort others with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:4).

Look, if you will, in verse 5: "*For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth*" (2 Corinthians 1:5). And the word here means, "to overflow." A person who is finding victory in life is the person who's going to be a blessing. Do you know what trouble is for some people? For some people, trouble is a prison. For other people, trouble becomes a hospital. But if you will allow the Holy Spirit to walk with you and teach you, trouble will become a seminary where you will learn things that you could not learn any other way, and your life will abound to other people.

Do you know the greatest need in Bellevue Baptist Church? Probably not the need to give money; probably not the need to teach lessons; probably not the need to sing. Perhaps the greatest need that we have in this day are people who have the gift of mercy to be able to comfort. We live in a world that's hurting—I mean, literally hurting. And people who have hurt and have found help and found honey in the carcass of the lion, who have been comforted by God—these are the ones who are able to comfort others.

Who do you go to when your heart is broken? You go to somebody that knows something about comfort and consolation, because they have been there. Did you know it's not a compliment to you if others don't come to you with their problems? People don't go to an empty well to draw water, but they go to people who have been there. The Bible says, concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, that He "was tempted in all points like

as we are” (Hebrews 4:15). And therefore, He says, “We don’t have a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Hebrews 4:15). Do you know why that means so much to us? Jesus has been there. Jesus knows. And therefore, we can come to Jesus.

Now He didn’t have to become a man to know how we feel. He already knows everything. But He became a man so that we could know that He knows—I mean, so that we could understand that He has been there. But He has been there, and He has known, from the Father, the God of all comfort, the comfort that He gives to us.

Conclusion

And so folks, what I’m trying to say tonight—and I’m really finished—I’m really finished. It’s really just an addendum to the message this morning: There’s nothing that can separate us from the love of God. We may have trouble. The poet said,

God has not promised skies always blue
Flower-strewn pathways all our lives through;
God has not promised sun without rain,
Joy without sorrow, peace without pain.

But God has promised strength for today,
Rest for the labor, light for the way,
Grace for the trials, help from above,
Unfailing sympathy, undying love. (Annie J. Flint)

That’s the God of all comfort.

Let’s prepare our hearts for the Lord’s Supper. Jim, lead us, if you will, in a chorus, as we stand and sing together a praise chorus.

The Sweet Smell of Victory

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: January 10, 1988

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 2:14–15

Outline

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- I. The Arena of Victory
 - A. Jesus Spoiled the Principalities and Powers
 - B. Jesus Made a Show of the Principalities and Powers
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- II. The Area of Victory
- III. The Aroma of Victory

Conclusion

Introduction

Beloved friends, would you take your Bibles, and would you turn with me please to 2 Corinthians, the second chapter. And in a moment, we're going to begin reading, in verse 14. The title of our message is "The Sweet Smell of Victory." Now ladies and gentleman, when you were born again, you were born to win. God expects you to be living, day-by-day, in victory.

I found something the other day I want to share with you—it's entitled "The Difference Between Winners and Losers": "A winner says, 'Let's find out.' A loser says, 'Nobody knows.' When a winner makes a mistake, he says, 'I was wrong.' When a loser makes a mistake, he says, 'It wasn't my fault.' A winner isn't nearly as afraid of losing as a loser is secretly afraid of winning. A winner works harder than a loser and has more time. A loser is always too busy to do what's necessary. A winner goes through a problem; a loser goes around it and never gets past it. A winner makes commitments. A loser makes promises. A winner says, 'I'm good, but not as good as I ought to be.' A loser says, 'I'm not as bad as a lot of other people.' A winner listens. A loser just waits until it's his turn to talk. A winner respects those who are superior to him and tries to learn from them. A loser resents those who are superior to him and tries to find chinks in their armor. A winner explains. A loser explains away. A winner feels responsible for more than his job. A loser says, 'I only work here.' A winner says, 'There ought to be a better way to do it.' A loser says, 'That's the way it's always been done here.'"

Well, that's good advice, but I've got some better advice for you. I think I agree with most all that's said there, but I want to talk to you about a greater form of winning—winning that we're going to call absolute spiritual victory. Notice God's Word—2

Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 14: “*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph...*”—underscore that—“*always causeth us to triumph in Christ,*”—to *triumph* means to be victorious—“*and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place.*” Look carefully at the word *savour*. It is not the word *savior*, it is *savour*. It means “perfume; sweet smelling incense; or aroma.” The aroma—“*of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish*” (2 Corinthians 2:14–15). Your life, my beloved brother or sister in Christ, is to be a life of victory—not someday, but a life right now. The Christian is always, always, always to triumph. That, my friend, is the normal Christian life.

You say, “Well, I know a lot of Christians that are not victorious.” So do I. As a matter of fact, most of the Christians that I know are not victorious. They may be saved, but they’re not living the victory life; but they are living. Now the Bible admits the possibility of defeat, but the Bible never assumes it. The Bible assumes that you and I live in victory. And when I’m talking about victory, I’m not just talking about squeaking by with a field goal in the last second. What I am talking about, friend, is what the Apostle Paul said, when he said, “*We are more than conquerors through him that loved us*” (Romans 8:37).

Well, what does our passage of Scripture talk about? You’re going to have to get the passage in its historical context. Paul was a Roman citizen, and he’s talking about a thing that the Romans would do after they had a great victory called the *triumph*: “*Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph*” (2 Corinthians 2:14). Now what the Apostle here is talking about is the great triumphal procession. They had built in Rome, on the main thoroughfare, an ark called *the ark of triumph*. If you go to Rome today, you can see it; it still stands—the ark of triumph. And through that great ark, the victorious armies would march, led by the victorious general who had that particular campaign, that particular episode. You know, Rome had conquered the known world. If there were any rebellion out there, the Roman general would go out and put it down, or any province to be conquered, he would go out and conquer that province. And then, they would get ready for a triumphal procession there in the eternal city of Rome.

By the way, they, first of all, would send a herald back to the city of Rome to let the people there know that victory had been won. Now this man would come by ship, or by horseback, or on foot, by chariot, however he could. They didn’t have Dan Rather and television to announce what had happened, thank God. This man came running with the message, and he would announce the victory. By the way, the word there that he’s used to announce the victory is the same word that is used for preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Do you know, dear friend, what I am? I am a runner who has been sent to announce

the victory that Jesus has won. He's coming! Get ready! That's exactly what preaching is—He has won the victory; He is coming again in power, in glory, in majesty—that's the sum total of our message. So this runner would go into the city, and he would announce that the victory had been won. And then, they would get ready for what they called the *triumph*, which was a triumphal procession.

One of the things that they would do is this: They would declare a holiday, and the people would come and line the streets very much like the Rose Bowl Parade. They would line up on both sides of the streets; and then, the white robed priest would come and begin to burn incense. All over the city, there would be this sweet smelling perfume; the entire city would be pervaded with aroma, the sweet smell of victory. Have you ever lived near a paper mill? Well, put that obnoxious smell in reverse. The closest thing I could think of was when we used to drive down the Florida Coast to Merritt Island, and the orange blossoms were blooming, and the entire island would be filled with the aroma of the blossoms. So in Rome, this incense, this sweet smell of victory, would go up, and the people would come out and jubilate, and get ready to celebrate.

Then, the conquering general would come, and his armies would come marching behind him. He would be in that front chariot, gilded with gold, pulled by white stallions; and, chained to his chariot wheels would be the defeated king or emperor or general, whomever. He was chained to the chariot wheels of this victorious general; he would be chained there. But on top of all of that, he would have been stripped naked; not one strip of clothes would be on him. He would be absolutely humiliated. He could hardly stay up; he would fall, and be dragged through the dust and through the dirt, and then stand again and try to walk, and be dragged naked through the city. He is being mocked, and ridiculed, and jeered, as the triumphing general is cheered, and praised, and adulation given to him. This was called the *triumph*, the triumphal parade.

Now Paul, the Apostle, borrows that figure of speech; he borrows that custom. And he says, "In the same way, our Lord Jesus causes us to triumph." That's what he's talking about when he's talking about the *triumph*. He's talking about this custom of the Romans. It is a picture of the victory that the Lord Jesus Christ has won, and our victory in Him, and our triumph in Him. Now there are three things I want you to learn therefore about the sweet smell of victory.

I. The Arena of Victory

First of all, I want you to notice the arena of that victory—the arena of that victory. Where was that victory? Where was that battle fought? In what arena did that battle take place? It took place at dark Calvary. Jesus, at Calvary, won the battle. Now let me give you some Scripture. Look here, in chapter 2 verse 11. Paul is warning us. I warned you last Sunday about Satan. And Paul says, "*Lest Satan should get an advantage of*

us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2 Corinthians 2:11). Now his devices are these: that he tries to distort, to deny, and to cover up the victory that Jesus Christ has won. And if he can keep you from understanding the victory that is His, and therefore ours, he will get the advantage. Paul doesn't want him to have the advantage, so he reminds us of the defeat of Satan.

Put these scriptures down—1 John 3 and verse 8: *"He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil"* (1 John 3:8). That means that Jesus has destroyed the works of the devil; that's why He came.

Put this scripture down—Hebrews 2 and verse 14: *"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood,"*—that's us; we live in flesh and blood—*"he also himself likewise took part of the same;"*—Jesus became flesh and blood also. Why? —*"that through death"*—that's Calvary—*"he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"* (Hebrews 2:14). At Calvary, Jesus destroyed the devil. Now pay attention. The word *destroy* does not mean "to annihilate"; it does not mean "to obliterate." The Greek word literally means, "to render ineffective"; it literally means "to make of none effect; to make void." I guess, in the vernacular, we would say, "to wipe out." He wiped out the power of the devil; He made his power of none effect; He made it void. It doesn't mean that the devil no longer exists. But he is destroyed; his power is taken from him; he has been overcome by Calvary.

I think there's another verse that even makes it more clear, and I pointed out this verse to you before, because it is a great verse. Oh, how I pray God the Holy Spirit will fill your soul and your consciousness today, and burn this into your heart. Colossians 2 and verse 15 speaks of this arena of victory, and it says, concerning our Lord, *"And having spoiled principalities and powers..."* (Colossians 2:15). Now principalities and powers speak of Satan. Remember, Paul said, *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* (Ephesians 6:12). But notice this: *"And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it"* (Colossians 2:15). There's our word *triumph* again, and again Paul is talking about this Roman custom, triumphing over them in it.

Now there are three phrases I want you to especially pay attention to. Number one is the word *spoiled*. Number two is *made a show of*. Number three is *triumphing over*. Those are the things that Jesus did to Satan.

A. Jesus Spoiled the Principalities and Powers

First of all, He spoiled them. The Greek word *spoiled* literally has the idea of stripping one's clothes off. It literally has the idea of unclothing. Remember, I said that a

conquered general would be dragged naked behind those chariots. What they would do to this general who was dressed in all his regalia, all of his medals, all of his embroidery, all of his fine clothing, all of his medallions, all of his insignia—it would be stripped away. All of that pomp, all of that circumstance, all of that glory is stripped—stripped. Paul calls it here, in Colossians 2:15, he *spoiled* him.

B. **Jesus Made a Show of the Principalities and Powers**

And then, he was made a show of. *Made a show of*: what does that mean? It means that he was ridiculed. He was displayed for what he was; he was unmasked. He's standing there naked, and he was humiliated, ignominiously put down. And can you imagine this general who used to command great armies, this emperor who used to sit upon an ivory throne—he is not being laughed at and mocked, he's being made a show of?

C. **Jesus Triumphed over the Principalities and Powers**

And the third thing he says is "*triumphing over them*"—that is, complete defeat. There's a triumph for us, and a loss for him. Now that's what has happened to Satan. Put these three words in your mind. Number one, he is *stripped*. Number two, he is *shamed*. Number three, he is *subdued*. Colossians 2:15: He's stripped; he's spoiled; he's made a show of; he's shamed; we triumph over him; he's subdued; he's beaten; he's broken.

Now Paul says, "He doesn't want you to know that; he'd just as soon you not know that; he'd just as soon you not have that information about him. He wants you to think of him as high, and mighty, and powerful, and all of this." But Paul says, "Now I want to show you what's happened to him; I want you to understand the arena of the victory that Jesus has won, that victory at Calvary." We need to understand this, ladies and gentleman. That is the arena of victory. When Jesus went to that cross, He said, "*Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out*" (John 12:31). Learn this, ladies and gentleman, victory is not our destination; it is our point of origin. We are not moving to victory; we are moving from victory. It is already passed; it is already passed at the cross. Through death, He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil—rendered him powerless, helpless. Thank God! Hallelujah!

II. **The Area of Victory**

Secondly, not only do I want you to see what I'm going to call the arena of that victory, but I want you to see what I'm going to call the area of that victory. How vast was that victory? To what does it apply? Look, if you will, in verse 14: "Thanks be unto God, which always"—underscore the phrase *always*—"causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place" (2 Corinthians

2:14)—underscore *always* and *every place*. Now I want you to do some thinking. You look intelligent, this morning, on this chilly day—so do some thinking. Tell me what Paul left out, when he said “always” and “every place.” Always, everywhere. Always, everywhere. That, my friend, is the area of that victory. There is nothing left out. Our Lord is total victor. I wonder if you understand that; I wonder if you know that; I wonder if you believe it.

Now friend, listen. His victory is your victory. When that Roman general came back to Rome, when he had that defeated general chained to his chariot wheels—stripped, subdued, and chained—whose victory was that? Was that the Roman general’s victory? Of course it was. Therefore, was it Rome’s victory? Of course it was. He fought the battle for them. His victory was their victory. Friend, Jesus’ victory is our victory, I want you to understand it. He fought the battle for us. When He won, we won. We are in Him, and He is in us. We identify with our Lord Jesus Christ. It’s not a victory, some day, it’s victory, now and always. 1 John chapter 5 verse 4: “*And this is the victory that overcometh the world*” (1 John 5:4). Not *will be*; this *is* the victory.

1 Corinthians chapter 15, verse 57: “*But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 15:57). “Pastor Rogers, I’m glad to hear this. From now on, I’m not going to have any difficulty in my life.” Sorry about that, folks, but that’s not what Paul is talking about when he’s talking about us having victory always and in every place. If you think that I’m talking to you about a life of ease, luxury, perpetual health—free from pain, free from worry, free from conflict, free from difficulty—hey, you’ve missed it by a few thousand light years.

Now you’re in 2 Corinthians. Chapter 2, verses 14 and 15, says we always triumph (2 Corinthians 2:14–15). Okay now, just turn the page; fast forward to chapter 4, verse 8. Now look at it—same Paul: “*We are troubled on every side...*”—can you identify with that? Say *amen*—“*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed;*”—the devil thinks he’s got us pinned, but we can still lift a shoulder—“*we are perplexed,*”—the word *perplexed* means “you can’t find a way out”—“*but not in despair*” (2 Corinthians 4:8)—not without hope.

I don’t care if every door on the horizon seems to be shut—there’s one door that’s open, and it’s straight up. “*Persecuted...*”—do you think everybody is going to love you, if you stand for Jesus? Brother, in these days, if you love the Lord Jesus, and let it be known, you’d better duck or pucker, because they’re either going to kiss you or take a swing at you—“*Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed*” (2 Corinthians 4:9).

What I’m trying to tell you, dear folks, is the Apostle Paul is not offering you a feather bed, he’s not offering you a life of luxury and ease, when he says, “He causes us always to triumph” (2 Corinthians 2:14). By the way, you can’t have victory, unless

there's opposition. You cannot know victory, unless you know problems, unless you know heartaches, unless you know trials, and difficulties, and perplexities. How are you going to know victory? *The Christian life is not the subtraction of problems from life; it is the addition of power to meet those problems.* "Thanks be unto God that causes us always to triumph in the Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Bertha Smith is one of Southern Baptists' premier missionaries. I believe Miss Bertha is going to be 100 years old this year. She's one of the spunkiest ladies I've ever met; and, if you're ashamed of Jesus, don't be around Miss Bertha. I thank God for her. But Miss Bertha told about a missionary from Los Angeles who went to India, but when she got there, things did not work out for her as she thought. In the first place, she had to move into a house with two older missionaries. These missionaries were set in their ways, and there just wasn't that chemistry; she just could not live comfortably with those two older missionaries. Then, on top of that, she didn't seem to be able to learn the Indian language; she studied, but she just couldn't get it. On top of that, she was horribly homesick, lonesome; she thought of her loved ones back at home, and there were just such ties that she didn't seem to be able to overcome it.

And on top of all of that, she began to loathe the Indian people rather than to love them. She saw them somehow as unlovely people, almost as the enemy, and she'd come there to share the gospel of Jesus Christ with them. On top of all of that, she came down with an amoebic dysentery, and was constantly sick, and they told her there was no hope of her getting well, unless she returned to the United States.

She was a defeated woman. She packed, and was ready to come back; but, she began to read God's Word, and she was reading in the tenth chapter of Joshua about God's commander-in-chief, Joshua. And by the way, *Jesus* and *Joshua* are the same name. *Joshua* in the Old Testament, and *Jesus* in the New Testament, mean exactly the same thing: "Jehovah saves." Joshua, in many ways, is a type and a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ, our commander, who wins the battle for us.

In this particular chapter, five malicious, vicious, cruel, powerful kings had been defeated, and humiliated; and they were chained and put in a cage. Joshua wanted to give an object lesson to his people of the victory God gives, and to show his people that the battle was God's, and not theirs. So he brought these five kings out, all chained, and he cast them on the ground. And then, he brought his captains, his leaders, out, and he said, "You see those five kings, do you remember how powerful and how strong you thought they were? I want you to come, one by one, and put your foot on their neck." Now just get a mental picture of this. Here are these five once mighty, invincible kings; now, they're chained, they're lying on the ground, squirming on the ground. And these men are coming, and they're putting their foot, one by one, on the necks of those five kings.

Now why did Joshua do that? Well, Joshua was a spiritual psychologist and a master strategist. He knew it was a great object lesson. And here's what he said in Joshua chapter 10 and verse 25. He said this to his captains—I want you to listen to it: “*Fear not, nor be dismayed, be strong and of good courage: for thus shall the LORD do to all your enemies against whom ye fight*” (Joshua 10:25). What did God show to Joshua, and to those captains, and to that missionary? That the battle is the Lord's, He has won the victory, and He can put His foot where He has put His victory; that His victory is our victory. Jesus said, in Luke chapter 10 and verse 19: “*Behold, I give unto you power...over all the power of the enemy*” (Luke 10:19). Jesus said, in the New Testament, what Joshua had learned in the Old Testament: “Behold, I give you authority over all the power of the enemy.”

When this missionary read that, she realized that she had been trying to do it in her own strength; she realized that Satan had gotten the advantage of her. So this is what she did. She said, “I have had five problems, those same things. Number one, I can't get along in the home where I live. Number two, I can't learn the language. Number three, I'm homesick. Number four, I don't like the Indians. Number five, I have amoebic dysentery, and I can't get well.” She took those five problems, she took five pieces of paper, and she wrote the descriptions of those five problems on those five pieces of paper, and put one, two, three, four, five pieces of paper on the ground. It may sound silly to you, but she went around, one at a time, and put her foot on each of those problems, and announced the victory of Jesus, and just kept putting her foot on those problems, and said, Lord, “You're a victor over this; and Lord, you're a victor over this,” and announced His victory; not knowing how, why or when, but that He was victor.

You know what happened? A young American came along and fell in love with her, proposed to her. She got married, moved out of that house; she called for a teacher, began to study the language. God had freed her mind, and she began to learn the language. Her health problems disappeared; she got well. God gave her a great love for the Indian people, and she became a very effective missionary, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now the answer may not always be as immediate, and it may not always be as dramatic, but it illustrates what I'm trying to say. And what I pray God the Holy Spirit is saying through me is, “Thanks be unto God who causeth us—who causeth us—*always* to triumph *in every place*” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

III. The Aroma of Victory

The arena of that victory is Calvary. The area of that victory is *always* and *in every place*. Now there's one other thing I want you to notice, and that is the aroma of that victory—the aroma of that victory. Go back again, and look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians

chapter 2: “Now thanks be unto God, which causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus—which always causeth us to triumph in Christ Jesus—and maketh manifest the savor...” (2 Corinthians 2:14–15). Remember that word: “the *aroma* of his knowledge by us in every place.”

Now Paul is obviously using figurative language. He is saying that there ought to be a perfume about the Christian’s life; there ought to be a fragrance to our faith. He “*maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 2:14–15). Do you know what I am to God when I live this way? I’m innocent. When God sees me entering into the victory of Jesus, when God sees me living in triumph and in victory, that, my dear friend, is an aroma, a sweet-smelling aroma, to the lost, and it is indeed the sweet smell of victory that this world needs to see.

Most of the people in this world are not that interested in going to Heaven or Hell. They want to know how to hack it on Monday. They want to know, Is there anybody who’s learned to live in victory? Is there anybody who’s learned to live over the difficulties and the problems in this life, in this world? Now when we have victory, dear folks, the world is going to take notice.

I think all of us remember the story of Paul and Silas, who were cast into prison. In Acts, the 16th chapter, there was a demon-possessed girl who was a fortuneteller, following Paul and Silas around, saying, “*These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation*” (Acts 16:17). Whether it was mockery or what, I know not, but Paul did not want the patronage of Hell. He knew that it was confusing to people, and here was the identification of the occult with the gospel of Christ. And he knew it was a devious trick of the devil. And Paul turned around and cast the devil out of that demon-possessed girl, who, by the way, was making a great deal of money for those who owned her and controlled her.

As a result of standing against Satan, as a result of announcing the victories over the powers of darkness, Paul and Silas had charges trumped up against them, and they’re thrown into prison. You think prisons are bad today, you talk about overcrowding today—I want to tell you, the prisons of that day were abominable. People would die because of the unsanitary conditions. They’re down there in the wrath of vermin, the refuse—no sanitary conditions. On top of all of that, they’d just been beaten within an inch of their lives, their backs cut to ribbons. I mean, they were beaten, actually lacerated. It’s midnight; and do you know what they’re doing?

They’re not doing what we would have been doing: “Lord, is this the way you treat your servants? Here we are preaching the gospel, and we end up down here being beaten within an inch of our lives. What’s the matter with You, God? I thought we’re supposed to triumph; I thought we’re supposed to have victory. This doesn’t look like

victory. It looks like defeat.”

Friend, it was victory, and let me tell you why it was victory. Because Paul and Silas kept their eyes upon the Lord, and they began to praise the Lord. The Bible says, “*And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God*” (Acts 16:25). Those prisoners had heard cursing, but they’d not heard singing. They had heard complaints, but they had not heard praise and thanksgiving. And friend, listen. Out of that prison, and in that prison, there started to come a fragrance, an aroma that filled the prison. It went up to Heaven. God smelled it; the prisoners, they smelled it. It was pervasive, and it was persuasive.

When the people in that prison saw and heard, they indeed enjoyed the fragrance of that victory. God sent an earthquake angel, shook that prison; the bonds, the stocks, fell loose. The keeper of the prison, supposing everybody had gone, began to commit suicide, thinking he’d surely be tortured and then be put to death. Paul said, “*Do thyself no harm: for we are all here*” (Acts 16:28). But not just Paul and Silas—not a prisoner left, friend. I take that to mean, everybody in the prison got saved; and then, the jailer got saved; and then, his family got saved.

Conclusion

You know how you make perfume? You just crush the flower. Folks, listen. We’re not taking about ease; we’re not talking about keeping you out of prison; we’re not talking about a life of luxury. We’re talking about victory—real victory—that overcomes this world. The arena: Calvary. The area: every place, all the time. The aroma: a sweet smelling savor to God, and man. And folks, that’s victory—the sweet smell of victory.

Let’s pray. Father, I pray that You, Lord, will teach me the lesson of Your Word, because it’s a hard lesson this morning, and my flesh doesn’t want to learn it; my flesh wants to interpret victory as a life of ease. Father, I pray that You’ll help us all—men, women, boys, and girls—not to be terrified by our adversaries. God, I pray that You will give us, today, a mental image of Satan, chained to Jesus’ chariot wheels, stripped, shamed, subdued. Help us, Lord, to learn that He has given us authority over all the power of the enemy (Luke 10:19), and greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). In His name. Amen.

The Sweet Smell of Victory

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 26, 1994

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 2:14–16

Outline

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Introduction

I want to talk to you today about victory. The title of the message: “The Sweet Smell of Victory.” Let me give you some good news—some good news: *When you were* born again, *you were born to* win. And God’s plan for you is perpetual victory.

Look in chapter 2, verse 14—here are the words of the Apostle Paul: “*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour*”—that means the perfume—“*of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour...*”—a sweet smell—“*For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: to the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things?*” (2 Corinthians 2:14–16). God’s plan for you is victory—perpetual victory—always and in every place.

“Now,” you say, “Pastor Rogers, aren’t you stretching it a little bit? Nobody can have victory always and in every place.” Well, I guess Paul just made a mistake, then. No, friend, if you’re not having victory, it is not because Paul made a mistake; it is because you are not appropriating the victory that is yours in the Lord Jesus Christ. And how my soul burns today to lay that upon your heart! *The Bible admits the possibility of defeat for the child of God, but never the necessity of it.* Did that sink in? The Bible admits the possibility of defeat for the child of God, but never the necessity of it.

Now look at this verse: “Thanks be unto God, which causes us always to triumph in

Christ Jesus” (2 Corinthians 2:14). Look at the word triumph, and let me tell you about the word triumph. If you were to go to Rome—to the Roman forum—there, you would see an arch called the *Arch of Triumph*. And that’s what Paul is writing about—the same thing that that arch was built for.

The Romans had a custom that, when a Roman general would go away to a war and he would win the victory for war, they would celebrate in the streets of Rome. And here’s how they would celebrate: Sometimes they would build a monument like the Arch of Triumph, which actually celebrates Titus’ victory over Jerusalem—the emperor, or the general, Titus, who conquered and subjugated Jerusalem. They built this magnificent arch. You can see it today; it has a picture of the Roman soldiers carrying away the Menorah out of the temple of God. Go today, and you can see that. And a herald would come, and he would tell the people, “Rome has won.” He was called a *herald*. They didn’t have CNN; they didn’t have Dan Rather. Well, that was a blessing. They did not have so many things that we have today—telephones and fax machines. There needed to be a runner, a herald, with the good news. How beautiful were his feet, because he would come, and he would give the good news, “Rome has won!”

Did you know that the same word for *herald* that was used for this man, and for a preacher of the gospel, is the same word in the Greek language? Do you know what a preacher is? He’s someone who stands before you and says, “Jesus has won.” We have the victory; and so, that’s what preaching is—it’s just simply announcing the victory that the Lord Jesus Christ has won. How beautiful are the feet of them that tell the good news of the gospel of Christ! (Romans 10:15). We are on the winning side. Jesus has defeated the enemy.

When that herald would come and tell people that Rome had won the victory, then, they got ready for a celebration. They would hang out garlands and festoon the city with flowers. They would build, as I say, monuments. People would line the streets and get ready for a parade, and the priest would take great bowls of incense and begin to burn that incense. The whole city would be filled with the sweet smell of victory. Have you ever been down to Florida, to *the Promised Land*, when the orange blossoms are in profusion? You just drive along, and the air is filled with orange-blossom perfume. That’s the way it was in Rome. It was incense. It was the sweet smell of victory.

And then, the returning general would come. He would be riding in a chariot; that chariot would be pulled by a magnificent white steed. And the defeated general—they didn’t kill him; they had a better plan. They wanted him alive, because they were going to put him on display. And they would put him in chains; and then, they would chain him to the victorious general’s chariot, and they would drag him along behind, naked—his beautiful uniform stripped from him; his medals, his regalia, gone. And there he is, in humiliation, being dragged through the dust. And the people are shouting the victory,

because Rome has won. The general went to war, and he has come back victorious.

Now for a long time, Rome didn't lose any wars, but she then began to lose. But Paul says, "Thanks be unto God, who causes us always to triumph in Christ Jesus" (2 Corinthians 2:14). And do you know who it is that is chained to Jesus' chariot's wheels, stripped, shamed, and subdued? It is Satan. He doesn't want you to learn that—he does not want you to learn that you are to have the victory always and in every place.

I. The Dynamic Author of This Victory

Three things I want you to learn. First of all, I want you to see the dynamic author of this victory. Look again, if you will, in verse 14—look at it: "*Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph*"—now, look at this next phrase; look at it—"*in Christ*" (2 Corinthians 2:14). Your victory is in Christ.

Someone said to a man who had been saved, "Oh, I understand you've got victory over the devil." He said, "No, I have the victor of the devil. It is in Christ." That is where your victory is. Jesus has subdued the devil.

Now take your Bibles, and turn to Colossians, for a moment. Keep the mark there, in 2 Corinthians; but turn to Colossians. It's just a couple of books to the right. And when you come to Colossians, I want you to look, if you will, in chapter 2 and verse 13. Now we're speaking, here, of the same thing that Paul was talking about in 2 Corinthians chapter 2. Listen to it. Here's the victory that Jesus, the conquering general, won for you.

Now put this in your mind: When the Roman general had won, Rome had won. When Jesus conquered, you have won. Now here is the way Paul describes it, in Colossians chapter 2, verse 13: "*And you...*"—hey, that's talking about me; that's talking about you. So let's pay attention—"*And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened*"—that means, "made alive"—"*together with him*" (Colossians 2:13).

A. The Lord Delivered You from Death

The first thing that the Lord delivered you from was death; you're delivered from death. You see, the Bible says Jesus was manifested, that He might destroy him that had the power of death, and that is the devil: And "through death He destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). Don't get the idea that, when you were unsaved, you were just sick and needed to get well. When you were unsaved, you were dead. You needed a miracle. You needed a resurrection. You didn't just need a makeover; you needed a new life. You were dead. And Jesus destroyed the devil that had the power of death, and He gave you life.

I have a friend, Byron Richardson—he's now in Heaven; but Byron was driving

through the Smokey Mountains with his wife on a beautiful summer eve. It was a wonderful time. They were having great fellowship in those mountains. But she looked over and saw that the gas gauge was getting over toward the left-hand side. She said, "Byron, here's a service station. Let's stop and get some gas." He said, "Well, plenty of time—plenty of time." And he didn't stop. Have you ever done that, mister? Well, he kept on driving, thinking he would find a place. He got on those narrow, winding mountain roads. They were on a back road. She went to sleep. That gas gauge kept moving to the left. He said, "There are no service stations out here. There are no stores." He got a little panicky. He kept driving. It got darker. He said, "If she wakes up and finds out we're on empty, she'll kill me. And if we run out of gas, I'm a goner. What am I going to do?"

He began to sweat, and to pray, "God, give me a service station." That needle got all the way over on the left-hand side. It seemed like it was just running on vapors. He was... Fellows, you know how he felt. He was panicky, right now. And so he said, "Lord, You've got to do something." And he went around a curve, and he saw that little mountain grocery store. You know the kind; you've seen them so often—just there, old-fashioned. And there were some old gasoline pumps out front—not the modern kind, the old-timey kind. He said, "Boy, I hope those things still work." He got out, knocked on the door. The old mountaineer came to the door. He said, "Can I buy some gasoline?" He said, "Yep"—about all he said, and came out. "Thank You, Lord—thank You." The old mountaineer had his head down. He was putting the gas in the tank. Byron was feeling so good now. He just stretched and breathed the mountain air, and he said to the old mountaineer, "Man, it's great to be alive." The old mountaineer never lifted his head. He just said, "Don't know. Never been no other way."

Well, friend, if you're saved, you have been another way. You were dead in trespasses and sin; and, when Jesus Christ died, He delivered you from death.

B. The Lord Delivered You from Debt

But not only did He deliver you from death; He delivered you from debt. Look again in this passage of Scripture here, in Colossians, and see what our Lord delivered you from. The Bible says here that He did something very wonderful. In verse 13, he says He has "*forgiven you all trespasses;*"—that means, "debts"—"*blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*" (Colossians 2:13–14). Now are you ready for a blessing? Not only did Jesus, your conquering general, deliver you from death, but He delivered you from debt.

What was "the handwriting of ordinances" that was "contrary to us"? Well, let's suppose you had done a crime. You're indicted for that crime. There is a *handwriting of*

ordinances. That is, there's the written law. The law says that, if you have committed a crime, here is the penalty. There it is; it is written out. It is the handwriting of ordinances; it is the written law. And this verse says it is against us, because we are the criminals.

Now in Bible times, in Rome, if you committed a crime, you would be hailed into court. The indictment would be read; the trial would be adjudicated; and then, your sentence would be written. This is the handwriting of ordinances that is against you: what you have done; what the law says, and what the penalty says. That's all on the handwriting of ordinances that's against you. Then, they would take you and put you in prison, if you were to be put in prison. They would take this handwriting of ordinances, and they would nail it to your prison door. And there it is. If you want to know what this man is guilty of, just read it. You want to know how long he has to serve, what his punishment is—it's right there. If you want to know what law he transgressed, it's right there. It's the handwriting of ordinances. That man would stay in prison until he had paid in full; and, when he had paid in full, the jailer would come and release him, take that bill from off the door, that handwriting of ordinances, and carry the man to the court. The handwriting of ordinances would be given to the clerk. The judge would say to the clerk, "Is this the man?" "Yes." "Has he paid the penalty?" "Yes, he has." The judge would say to the clerk, "Then stamp it, 'Paid in full,' and give it to him." And he would write on that handwriting of ordinances, "Paid in full," and give it to him. In the Greek language, he would write, "*Tetelestai*"—"It is finished; it is paid in full"—and give it to him.

Then, should he be walking the streets, and somebody would say, "Aren't you the one who did that crime?" "Yes, I am." "Arrest him." "You can't arrest me. I've already paid. You cannot pull me into double jeopardy. There it is. It is marked, 'Paid in full.'" That's "the handwriting of ordinances" that was against us.

Now notice what the Bible says that Jesus did on the cross: He took the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and He nailed it to his cross—against us, but to His cross (Colossians 2:14). All of those things—all of the debt—that we have done were nailed to the cross of Jesus Christ; and, Jesus suffered, bled, and died, in our place. And when He had finished with our atonement, Jesus bowed His head. And what did He say? "*It is finished*" (John 19:30). "It is paid in full."

Now the Bible calls the devil, "*the accuser of our brethren*" (Revelation 12:10)—"of the brethren." He's like the prosecuting attorney. You and I have sinned. We have failed. And so Satan has access to Heaven to accuse us, as he accused Job, before God the Father. And he says to God the Father, "You call Yourself a holy God? There's that man down there named Adrian. He claims to be Your follower. But You are holy. You can't let sin go unpunished. He's a sinner. And I demand, if You're a holy God, that You fling him into Hell." But then, my defense attorney, my advocate, stands up—"*If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*" (1 John

2:1)—and, He says, “Yes, Father, he’s sinned. But Father, look at this certificate of debt. It is paid in full. It is written, ‘Paid in full. It is finished.’” *“Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect?”* (Romans 8:33). Hallelujah! “He ever lives to make intercession for us” (Hebrews 7:25).

And so the devil says, “I’m not going to get anywhere up here. I’m going to go down there and torment Adrian.” So he’ll wake me up in the middle of the night, or just before I get ready to preach, or some other time, and he’ll say, “Look at you, you miserable wretch! What right do you have, with all of your failures and all of your faults, to stand before those people and preach? You are condemned. You know what you’ve done.” I can just pull out my certificate of debt, stamped, “paid in full,” written in the crimson blood of Jesus Christ, and just wave it in his face and say, “Read that, and be gone!”

See? What did Jesus do? He took the handwriting of ordinances that was against us and nailed it to the cross. He went through the prison house of humanity—said, “I’ll take his list. I’ll take his list. I’ll take his, and hers, and hers, and hers, and hers, and hers, and his, and hers, and hers, and hers, and hers, and his, and his. I’ll take them all”—every filthy, dirty, wicked thing we’ve done. He took that handwriting of ordinances that was against us, and nailed it to His cross. And when He died, He said, “Paid in full.” And folks, that’s good news—that’s good news. Now we’re not finished yet.

C. The Lord Delivered You from the Devil

Not only did He overcome, friend, our death, verse 13—I’m in Colossians 2—and our debt, verse 14; but He also overcame the devil, verse 15—look at it: *“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it”* (Colossians 2:15).

1. Satan Has Been Stripped

Now look at it. Look at the word *spoiled*. Do you see it? This is Colossians 2, verse 15. Do you know what the word *spoiled* is? It’s *ekduo*; it means, “to strip.” Satan has been stripped—all of his pomp, all of his circumstance, all of the majesty, all of the glory that he had as the chief angel. And he was the chief angel. He was Lucifer, the son of the morning, before he fell and became Satan, the father of the night. But Jesus, at Calvary, ripped from him all of that pomp, and all of that glory, and all of that circumstance: *“And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly”* (Colossians 2:15).

2. Satan Has Been Shamed

Now the word *to make a show of* means, “to be put to shame.” He has ridiculed Satan. Satan has ignominiously been dragged before and paraded before the peoples of this world. And Satan still wants you to see him as some sort of a maniacal monster in control. But his back has been broken. He is chained to the chariot of Jesus, and

Jesus has made a show of him openly. He doesn't want you to understand that, my dear friend. He has been stripped; he has been shamed.

3. Satan Has Been Subdued

And then, look: *"Triumphing over them in it"*—*them* referring to principalities and powers; Hell and all of its hosts (Colossians 2:15). There's a triumph. Satan has been stripped. He has been shamed. He has been subdued.

And at the cross, when Jesus died, He took care of your three great things, your enemies, that bring you into bondage—your death, your debt, and the devil have all been taken care of by the death of our Lord Jesus Christ. That, my friend—that is the author of our victory, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is victory in Christ.

II. The Dynamic Arena of This Victory

Now here's a second thing I want you to notice: Not only the author of this victory, but I want you to notice the arena of this victory. Go back, if you will now, to this scripture—go back to 2 Corinthians chapter 2, and look in verse 14 again: *"Now thanks be unto God, which..."*—now, look at the next word—*"which always..."*—put a circle around it—*"which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place"* (2 Corinthians 2:14). Put a circle around "always," and put a circle around "every place." And then, look up here, and tell me, when He said, "always," and, "every place," what He left out. Nothing.

I mean, when you've said time and space, you've said it all—"always" and "in every place." It is not that you triumph sometimes. You triumph always, and in every place. There is no time that the child of God is not to be victorious. He is always giving us the victory in the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul tells us, in 1 Corinthians 15—not *will* give; not in the sweet by-and-by, but in the nasty now-and-now; not over there, but right now, where you are (1 Corinthians 15:57). In your circumstances, in your family, in your job, in your health, in your finances—where you are, right now—you are to be always triumphant in every place.

"Well," you say "Pastor, that means that it will be just smooth sailing for me all the way—all honey and no bees, sunlight and roses, and, health and happiness, and joy." Nope—nope. If you didn't have any problems, you wouldn't need to be triumphant. Friend, listen to me. Paul wrote this text right here in trouble. Look, in chapter 2, verse 12—he says, *"Furthermore, when I came to Troas to preach Christ's gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit, because I found not Titus my brother: but taking my leave of them, I went from thence into Macedonia"* (2 Corinthians 2:12–13). He said, "I came to Troas to preach. Titus wasn't there. Everything got messed up. I had to go over to Macedonia. My plan fell to the ground. I lost an opportunity, but I'm still triumphant—I'm still triumphant."

Just fast-forward to chapter 4; look in verses 8 and 9. If you think that Paul didn't have any troubles, or if you think that I'm being ridiculous by telling you that you're to be in victory all the time, look in chapter 4, verses 8 and 9—Paul said, "*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed*" (2 Corinthians 4:8–9). Paul saw himself as an athlete who always won. He knew trouble; he knew difficulty. Look at it: "We're troubled on every side, but not distressed"—that is, "not without hope" (2 Corinthians 4:8).

I'm speaking to some people today—you've got trouble; I mean, big trouble. You've been to the doctor, and the doctor tells you that you have a malignancy; without a miracle, you won't live. Some of you are getting old, and you're lonely, and your children have been ungrateful. You go to a mailbox—there's no letter. You wait for the telephone to ring, and it doesn't ring. Some of you need a job; you don't have a job. Some of you are preacher boys here at Mid-America Seminary. You're trying to hold two jobs and go to school, getting further and further behind. And you can't learn that Greek. It's hard. Some of you have kids that are breaking your heart. You've got a boy on drugs. You've got a precious daughter who's sleeping around. Some of you have a husband who's abusive and mean. You say, "Pastor, you call that victory?" Friend, that's where the victory comes. The devil says, "I have got you; and, I have got you pinned to the mat, and you will not get up." You say, "Jesus, help me to lift that shoulder," and he can't pin you.

That's what he's talking about—"troubled, but not distressed; perplexed, but not in despair" (2 Corinthians 4:8). The word *perplexed* means, "I don't know; I can't understand it." "There is no way out, but I'm not in despair."

Have you any rivers that seem to be uncrossable?

Have you any mountains you cannot tunnel through?

God specializes in things that seem impossible.

He knows a thousand ways to make a way for you. (Oscar C. Eliason, adapted)

"*Persecuted, but not forsaken*" (2 Corinthians 4:9). You have some enemies? Of course you will.

Have you been reading the paper now that it's open season on Christians? I have been telling you for several years it's coming. It has arrived. We are in a cultural war, and get ready to be persecuted. That's what the word *persecuted* means. Don't let it upset you. It just simply means you're doing right: "*Persecuted, but not forsaken*" (2 Corinthians 4:9). Jesus is especially true, especially near, especially powerful, for those who stand up and refuse to bow the knee.

He says here, "*Cast down, but not destroyed*" (2 Corinthians 4:9). Do you know what that means? It means, "Knocked down, but not knocked out." Satan is counting

over you, “One, two, three, four, five—uh oh, he’s getting up again. I’ve thought I’m done with him.” Friend, he’ll never be done with us, because Jesus has finished him, and we have the victory in our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul knew trouble. He knew heartache; he knew pain; he knew anguish; he knew temptations and trials. But he said, “Thanks be unto God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ Jesus” (2 Corinthians 2:14). Do you get it? Friend, if there’s no opposition, what do you need to triumph for? If there’s not difficulty, no trial, no heartache, no tears, no fears, no problems, then why do you have to be triumphant? The divine author of our victory. The dynamic arena of our victory is “always” and “in every place.”

III. The Delightful Aroma of This Victory

Last of all, I want you to notice the delightful aroma, the distinctive aroma, of our victory. Go back to our text now—2 Corinthians chapter 2—and look. Look, here’s what it’s all about. Now as the priest in Rome would burn incense, what is the incense that is burned because of the victory of Christ? It is my life and your life. Look, if you will, in verse 15: *“For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 2:15).

And why do we do this? Well, look in verse 14: “We make manifest the savor”—the perfume—“of his knowledge by us in every place” (2 Corinthians 2:14). When we, in adversity, in trial, in heartache, in persecution, in distress, in necessities, when we then praise God, and then stand in the victory that we have in the Lord Jesus Christ, it is then, dear friend, that our lives become perfume, and we give a testimony to the fact that Christ has won the victory.

Let me give you the best illustration that I know of. It’s found in Acts the 16th chapter. Paul and Silas were God’s evangelists and missionaries. They had gone to the city of Philippi to preach and to build a church, and the devil had opposed them. And there was a demon-possessed girl who’d followed after them, and said, *“These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew unto us the way of salvation”* (Acts 16:17). Well, wasn’t that right? It was right, but it was a trick of the devil to associate the gospel with the occult. The devil is very clever. And Paul did not want the patronage of Hell. And he turned around, and he rebuked that girl in the name of Jesus and ran the devil out of her. Her owners, who were making money through this fortunetelling, were incensed. They trumped up some false charges on Paul and Silas. Paul and Silas were thrown into prison.

Now friend, if you think that prison conditions are bad in America, you should have known prison conditions in Bible times. The conditions were intolerable. There were no sanitary facilities. They were no toilets, no running water. People would sleep and walk in their own feces and refuse. There was no air conditioning—unbearably cold, unbearably hot; no light, except maybe a small ray of light seeping in through a little

hole; scraps of maggot-filled food to eat. They would be beaten and whipped, kept in stone-cold steel chains. And here's Paul and Silas now, preaching—men of God. It was Paul who said, "God causes us always to triumph" (2 Corinthians 2:14). What are they doing now? Are they complaining? Are they saying, "God, is this the way You treat Your servants? Here we were preaching, here we were in a revival, and You threw us into prison. You allowed this God. Why?" No, they didn't do that.

You read Acts chapter 16—the Bible says, at midnight, Paul and Silas were doing what? Singing songs in the night and praising (Acts 16:25). Now you didn't hear singing in jail—moaning, but not singing; cursing, but not praising. The angels come to look over the bottom of Heaven. There's a smell that begins to arise. A sweet perfume is coming out of that jail. It's going up to Heaven. God the Father smells it. God calls His earthquake angel, and He says, "Go down there, and shake that place"—the first *jailhouse rock*—"shake that place." The Bible says the prison doors began to swing idly on their hinges (Acts 16:26). The bonds fell off these men's hands. The jailer woke up out of his sleep. He sees the doors open. He says, "Oh, they've all escaped; they'll torture me and kill me." He draws out his sword; he's going to kill himself. Paul and Silas say, "Do yourself no harm. We are all here"—not just Paul and Silas; every prisoner was there (Acts 16:28). That's interesting—not a one of them left. They've been so awed by the power of God in these men's lives, and the miracle-working power of God. They wanted to stay to hear the gospel. This man comes in. He sees that God has been at work. He smells that incense, that savor of life unto life, and he asks the question that you and I need to get everybody to ask, "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30).

Learn this, friend: Not only are we witnesses for Jesus; we're part of the evidence. They need to smell that perfume—that incense, that sweet smell of victory. "*Sirs, what must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30). And you know the answer—in Acts 16, verse 31: "*And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house*" (Acts 16:31). That is, "If the people at home believe, they'll be saved too." And they did. Think about it. The prisoners were saved. I believe they were. They stayed right there in that prison. The jailer was saved. The jailer's wife was saved. The jailer's household was saved. The devil said, "I am going to stop this revival." He didn't stop it. All he did was change the location. Amen? And as a matter of fact, when he crushed them—when that rose was crushed—that's when the perfume came out. And they became a savor of life unto life. That is the sweet smell of victory, and your neighbors need to see it.

Conclusion

Friend, when you have heartache, and fears, and tears, and distress, and perplexity, I

want you to open your Bible, and I want you to say, “Hallelujah! Thanks be unto God, who causes us always to triumph in Christ Jesus.” Satan has been defeated—he has been stripped; he has been shamed; he has been subdued. He sails a sinking ship; he rules a doomed domain. Jesus has won, and never forget it! We are triumphant in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have victory in Christ. But this verse—verse 16—says, “We are a savor of life unto life, and death unto death” (2 Corinthians 2:16). If Jesus’ victory does not save you, it will condemn you. You’re on one side of the cross or the other.

There was a man who once was a citizen of France, and that man became a citizen of Great Britain. You will remember that the English defeated the French at Waterloo. While that man was a citizen of France, Waterloo, for him, was a defeat. But when that man became a citizen of Great Britain, Waterloo, for him, was a victory. Now friend, it all depends on what side of the cross you’re on—“a savor of life unto life, or death unto death” (2 Corinthians 2:16). You need to get on the victory side.

How Do You Measure Ministry?

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 3, 1998

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

Outline

Introduction

- I. We Measure a Ministry by the Purpose of That Ministry
- II. We Measure a Ministry by the Power of That Ministry
 - A. In Ministry, There Is a Living Message Recorded
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 - C. In Ministry, There Is a Mirror That Is Reflecting
 1. The Mirror Reflects Us
 2. The Mirror Reflects Jesus

Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word and find 2 Corinthians chapter 3. And we're going to ordain a man tonight to the gospel ministry. And how do you measure ministry? What is church service all about? I mean, what are we doing here? What are the people up in the sound booth doing? What was this choir doing? What are the ushers about, the people in the offices around here? What is our business? Well, our business is ministry. And if what all of these people are doing is not ministry then they ought not to do it.

When a singer sings, we thank God for that. We say, "Well, the singer is ministering." But what about the person on the keyboard? They're ministering, too. But what about the ushers who help you to have a seat? Well, they are ministering, too. What about the people who are running the light system and the sound system tonight? They are ministering, too. What about the people who have done these grounds so beautiful, our premise keepers? They are ministering, also. Well, how do you measure ministry? Well, if you understand how to measure ministry, it may keep you from getting discouraged.

We're ordaining a man tonight to the gospel ministry. Let's begin reading chapter 3, verse 17. And I think we're going to find something about how to measure a ministry, to find out whether we're on track or not, as we ordain this man to the ministry. I'm going to break in, in a middle of a thought, in verse 17: *"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even*

as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:17–18). Now let’s just go right on down, beginning in chapter 4, verse 1, because chapter 4 is linked inseparably from chapter 3; and, it begins with a *therefore*—that is, it’s referring back to chapter 3: *“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not”* (2 Corinthians 4:1). That is, “we’re not going to get discouraged.” When you understand what real ministry is—what it’s all about—it’s not nickels and noses; it’s not budgets and baptisms. When we understand what real ministry is, when we have this ministry, we’re not going to faint.

Our Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Brother Keith, is keeping records. And one of the most tragic things about the record is the number of people who are dropouts in the ministry. A great number of the boys that I matriculated with in college and seminary are no longer in the ministry. And they’re out of the ministry—not because of illness or catastrophe; they just threw in the towel. They fainted. They quit. They couldn’t take it. And I think, perhaps, it is because they had wrong goals and false expectations. They did not know how to measure a ministry.

So we’re going to look, tonight, at this ministry that we have; and, when we see it, we’re going to learn not to faint. And again, I want to tell you that the ministry is not only the kind of a ministry that Adrian has, or that Bob or Jim has, but the ministry that all of us have. Whether we’re in the sound booth, whether we’re cutting the grass, whether we’re typing a letter. everything we do here is ministry. And if it’s not ministry, we ought not to do it—if it’s not ministry, we ought not to do it. So how do we measure a ministry?

I. We Measure a Ministry by the Purpose of That Ministry

Well, first of all, we measure a ministry by the purpose of that ministry. Now what is the purpose of that ministry? Look, in verse 18: *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18). Now what is all of this about? He is saying that we behold the glory of the Lord, and, as we behold the glory of the Lord—His image—as we look at Him, we’re becoming more and more like Him.

I have often said that the measure of our ministry here is not the number of members that we have. It’s not the size of our buildings, the size of our budget, the beauty of the music, the eloquence of the preaching, the friendliness of the people. It is none of these things. It is not the multiplicity of our ministries. The measure—the measure, the bottom line—is this: Are the people of this church becoming more like Jesus? That’s it! I mean, are people becoming like the Lord Jesus? I mean, why is God working all things together? For His good. What is the good? Remember, we preached it last Sunday—Romans chapter 8 and verse 28: *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his*

purpose.” What? How is God, by the chemistry of the cross, taking even bad things and making bad things good things? What is His purpose in all of that? Well, listen: *“For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son”* (Romans 8:28–29). God doesn’t predestinate unsaved people to anything. Predestination is for saved people. *“Those whom he foreknew, them He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son”* (Romans 8:29). God’s purpose is to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Put in your margin, 1 Corinthians 15, verse 49: *“And as we have borne the image of the earthy,”*—what’s the image of the earthy? Adam. That’s the old man—*“we shall also bear the image of the heavenly”* (1 Corinthians 15:49). What’s the image of the heavenly? Jesus. Folks, let me tell you something: We have a lot of *feel-good Christianity* in the world today. And people are starting churches today by going out and taking surveys, and finding out what people want, and then saying, *“If you’ll just come to our church, we’ll give you what you want.”* And they’re letting the people determine the ministry.

Well, friend, Christianity is not here to solve your problems. Now Jesus can do that; God can do that. But that’s not His purpose. God’s purpose is not to make you happy, but to make you holy. God’s purpose is to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ. God loves His Son so much He wants a whole lot more just like Him. Now the problem is, we’re always looking forward to being like Jesus out there in the future, someday, after the Rapture. But we, according to this verse, day-by-day, by beholding Jesus, are being changed from glory to glory more and more every day—more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now not only is that the test of my ministry—and, are you becoming more like the Lord Jesus?—but it is the test of your growth. Now don’t just wait to way out yonder.

I read, going past a nursery a while back, about planting trees. And the nursery sign said, *“What are the two best days to plant a tree?”* And one said, *“Fifteen years ago,”* and the other, *“Today.”* So when’s the best time to become like Jesus? Well, beginning right now. No matter where you are, you need to begin, right now, to become more like the Lord Jesus.

Now what does it mean to be like the Lord Jesus? It means to talk as He talked. You know, if somebody were to carry a tape recorder around, and secretly tape everything that you’ve said in a day, and play it back before this congregation, would you be embarrassed, or would your speech reflect the Lord Jesus Christ? You ought to talk as Jesus talks. You ought to be patient as Jesus was patient. Was Jesus patient? Indeed. He said to His disciples, *“How long shall I suffer you? How long shall I be with you?”* (Matthew 17:17; Mark 9:19). *“The LORD is longsuffering”* (Numbers 14:18). We ought to be humble as Jesus was humble. Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. I have to ask myself

in a very practical way, “Adrian, do you talk like Jesus? Adrian, are you patient like Jesus? Adrian, are you humble like Jesus?” And I have to say, I’ve got a long way to go. One day, I will be like Him. But day by day, I am to be becoming more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so the purpose, Keith Cochran—the purpose of why God put you in the ministry is to make people more like Jesus. That is the ministry. Look at it again—verse 18: *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18). Therefore, seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we don’t get discouraged. That’s our ministry. That’s the purpose. That’s why God put me here, and that’s why we’ve associated ourselves together: to become more like Jesus. Do you want to be like Jesus? My wife sang a song that deeply moved my heart when I was teaching last week at The Cove in Asheville, North Carolina—the Billy Graham Retreat Center: “O, To Be Like Thee, Blessed Redeemer.” That’s the purpose of the ministry.

II. We Measure a Ministry by the Power of That Ministry

Now here, secondly, I want you to notice the power for your ministry. Look at this verse again, in verse 18: *“But we all, with an open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18). Now what is the power of your ministry? The two things that God gives to make people like Jesus are right in this verse—and that is, the Word of God, and the Spirit of God.

“Well,” you say, “Pastor, I see where it says something about the Spirit of God in the last part of verse 18, but where does it say anything about the Word of God?” Well, look, in verse 18—the first part: *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass”*—and the word *glass* is “mirror”—*“beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory”* (2 Corinthians 3:18). And so the two things that the man of God has in his ministry to make people like Jesus are the Word of God and the Spirit of God. There is no true ministry—no man is ever going to be able to motivate people and lead people to being more like Jesus who does not know and love the Word of God, and who is not filled with the Spirit of God.

One is not a substitute, however, for the other. Now I know some ministries put a great emphasis upon the Word of God, and I put a great emphasis upon the Word of God. But friend, if you have the Word of God without the Spirit of God, you’re going to have a very sterile ministry.

I know preachers who use the Bible like a club, rather than like a sword. And they, you know, they have scholasticism, and they have an argument; but, they don’t seem to have much of a testimony. They sound to me more like lawyers than witnesses. That’s

scholasticism. That's the Word without the Spirit.

But I know others who have the Spirit without the Word. That's fanaticism.

I had a lady here speak to me a few days ago, and we were talking about spiritual gifts. And she said, "Well, let me tell you about my experience." I said, "Well, let's measure your experience by the Word of God." She said, "No, no. Let me tell you about my experience." I said, "Well, we need to measure your experience." "No," she said, "I know what I know. I know what happened to me." I said, "Lady, you'd better measure everything you do by the Word of God."

The Bible says, "*Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God*" (1 John 4:1). And how are you going to measure it, unless you have the Word of God to measure? Friend, I'm telling you that the devil doesn't care which side of the road he wrecks us on—whether it's fanaticism or scholasticism. But if you put on the Word of God and the Spirit of God, you have a powerful tool to make people like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now how is the Word of God going to make you like the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, the Word of God and Jesus are so much the same. As a matter of fact, God calls Jesus *the Word of God*; God calls the Bible *the Word of God*. And they're both so similar. For example, both are eternal. The Bible says, concerning the Bible, "*For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven*" (Psalm 119:89). Both are born of the Spirit. How was Jesus conceived in the womb of Mary? By the Holy Spirit. How was the Word of God conceived in the hearts of the authors? By the Holy Spirit. "*Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*" (2 Peter 1:21). Jesus is called *the bread of life*. The Bible is called *bread*. Jesus Himself said, in Matthew 4:4, that, "*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.*" The Bible and Jesus both are called *light*. "*Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*" (Psalm 119:105). Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world*" (John 8:12).

And so you take this Word of God, and this Spirit of God, and, Keith, that's going to be your ministry. And it's the ministry of every deacon, every Sunday School teacher, every worker, in this church, to take those two elements. And with the Word of God and the Spirit of God we're going to make people like the Lord Jesus, because the Spirit of God is really the Spirit of Christ and the Word of God is really the testimony of Christ. And those two working together are going to make people like the Lord Jesus.

Now when we do this, Paul gives us three pictures of how that's going to make us like the Lord Jesus.

A. In Ministry, There Is a Living Message Recorded

First of all, there's going to be a living message recorded. Go back up to the beginning of chapter 3, and let's read the first six verses. Paul says—this is 2

Corinthians chapter 3: *“Do we begin again to commend ourselves?”* (2 Corinthians 3:1). You know, the people didn’t want to accept the Apostle Paul. There were people saying, “Well, you don’t need to pay attention to Paul. Paul is a ne’er-do-well.” There were some false teachers there in the church.

And Paul said, *“Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some others, epistles of commendation to you,”*—Paul said, “Do I have to come with some letter of recommendation?”—*“or letters of commendation from you? Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men: forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone,”*—“not words chiseled in stone”—*“but in fleshy tables”*—or “tablets”—*“of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God;”*—now, watch this—*“who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life”* (2 Corinthians 3:1–6).

Now what’s he saying? Well, there were certain Judaizers who had come to the church at Corinth, and they were saying, “You don’t need to listen to Paul and his message of grace. You’ve got to keep the Jewish laws. You’re going to have to be circumcised. You’re going to have to do all of the things that are required of a Jew in the temple in order to be saved.” And they came to put people into bondage. But Paul said, “No, no, wait a minute—wait a minute. I don’t have to have some letter of recommendation from headquarters. You are my letter of recommendation. You are an epistle not chiseled in stone. The gospel is written out in your life. The Word of God has been written in your heart.”

Now I’ve been to college. I’ve been to seminary. They say that a college education is the way that the material in the professor’s notebook gets into the student’s notebook without going through the head of either one of them, and I think that that may be true. But I’ll tell you, ministry is not what is in the pastor’s notes on the pulpit that gets into your notes in the pew. Real ministry is what comes from my heart to be written on your heart. That’s what Paul is saying—Paul is saying, “Listen. My credentials are you.” Do you know what Adrian’s credentials are? Sitting right here—sitting right here. What is in my heart is to be written upon your heart. You are a living testimony of my ministry, for good or bad.

Keith, you are to be writing the Word of God, the character of Jesus, upon people’s hearts. There ought to be a lot of young people there, in Merritt Island, because of your presence there. And if somebody says, “What do you think of Keith Cochran?” They’ll say, “Look at Billy. Look at Susie. Look at Mary. Look at John. They’re young people like Jesus—young people like Jesus.” That’s what I want to leave behind for me. I want

to say, “There are some people in this world who are living epistles. The Word of God has been written upon their hearts.” I don’t have some recommendation from Nashville to say that I’ve had a ministry. That’s what he’s saying here.

B. In Ministry, There Is a Mask Removed

Now he’s saying there’s a message recorded; and then, he’s saying, also, in ministry, there is a mask removed. Begin, now, in verse 7—look at it: *“But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones”—he’s talking about the Old Testament law that was written on tablets of stones—“was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?”* (2 Corinthians 3:7–8)—that is, “even more glorious.” When Moses went up on Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments, he came down. After his encounter with God, his face was shining. And what Paul says: “If that was a ministry, where there were old tablets written in stone, how much more the New Testament ministry?”

Notice verse 9: *“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory,”*—that is, “when the law that condemns that was glorious”—*“much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory. For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth.”* He’s saying there’s no comparison. *“For if that which is done away was glorious,”*—that is, “the Old Testament laws”—*“much more that which remaineth is glorious.”* I mean, if this was passing away, and we have something that will never pass away, how much more glorious it is. *“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:”—now, underscore that—“plainness of speech”—“and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away”* (2 Corinthians 3:9–16).

Now folks, I don’t want to belabor this point, because I know you just checked out on me when I read that passage of Scripture. I know it’s very convoluted in *The King James* thing. But here’s... Let me tell you what happened. Let’s see if I can simplify it. Moses went up on Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments, and he communed with God. When Moses came down from getting the Ten Commandments, his face—he had absorbed the Shekinah glory of God so much that his face—not figuratively, but literally, shone. He had a shining radiance. The glory of God was upon his face, that his face just shone. As, as a matter of fact, people couldn’t bear to look him in the face; and so, Moses had to wear a veil over his face, as he went in and out among the people. But

then, after a while, the glory faded. As Moses went about his round of life, the glory faded. Now Moses is still wearing the veil. He's not wearing the veil, now, to hide the glory from blinding people; he is now wearing the veil to keep people from seeing that his face is no longer shining.

Now let me tell you something: That happens in the ministry. There are people, Jim, who start out in the ministry. They're on fire for the Lord Jesus Christ. And they have a countenance that glows—not literally, like Moses; but, they have a testimony, and it's real. And they're not phonies. They're not professionals. But Dr. McKinley, you know as well as I know that there are people who get in the ministry—after a while, they're still wearing the veil—this time, not to hide the glory, but to conceal the fact that the glory's no longer there. They become professionals. I don't want to ever become a professional—never. I want to say something: To the glory of God, I am not one—I am not one. I'm as excited today about Jesus as I've ever been in my life. I don't say that boastfully, but I say it thankfully. I don't want to profess something that I don't have. I don't want to be up here just simply going through the motions. I want to have a ministry recorded—I want you to love Jesus. And I want to have a mask removed—I don't want to be hiding behind some mask pretending.

God, deliver us from professionals and phonies in the ministry. And I hope you'll never be one. I hope, brother, that you will have a glowing testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. In Ministry, There Is a Mirror That Is Reflecting

And there's a third thing that... We're just talking about the power of this ministry. When you take the Word of God and the Spirit of God, what happens? Well, there's a message recorded in the hearts and lives of people. There's a mask that is removed, and we're open. And then, friend, last of all, there is a mirror that is reflecting. Look, if you will, in verse 18: *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory"* (2 Corinthians 3:18).

You see, how does the Spirit of God take the Word of God—how does the Spirit of God take the Word of God and write a message on people's hearts? How does the Spirit of God take the Word of God and keep us from being phonies hiding behind masks? Well, as we look into the Word of God, it's like we're looking in a mirror. Now *The King James* calls it a *glass*. And as you look into this book, you're going to see two things: As you look in a mirror, you're going to see you in the mirror; and then, you're going to see Jesus in the mirror.

"Well," you say, "now, wait a minute. The mirror reflects me?" That's right. It reflects your strength and your weakness. Your strength is Jesus, and Jesus is in you. And you look in here—and deep answereth to deep—and you'll see Jesus in there. And you'll

see the Jesus in you, that's in there, looking back at you. But you'll see the dirt that's in you, and the defilement that's in you. And you'll see you both ways. The mirror is going to reveal both you and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. The Mirror Reflects Us

Now let me show you how it will reveal you. Just put in your margin, James chapter 1, beginning in verse 22. James is a straight shooter. James says, *“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:”—*the same image that Paul is using, James is using. If a man comes to church, or reads the Bible, and he doesn't obey what he reads, he's like a man that beholds his natural mug in a glass—*“for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.”* He just takes a glance into the Word, like some of you say, “Well, I had my Bible-reading this morning.” You couldn't tell me, if you got a Ferrari, what you read. But you know, you look in there for a minute, and you just glance; and, you forget what it's all about. But now, notice in verse 25: *“But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed”* (James 1:22–25).

You see, in the Word of God—in the Word of God—I see myself reflected. That's the reason, friend, that, not only do I read the Bible; the Bible reads me. You'll see yourself. And if your shirt is dirty, if your hair is musty, if you need to shave, if your face is smudged—if you're a lady, if your lipstick is smeared—the mirror says, “Hey, straighten up. There's something there that needs to be fixed.” What's the difference between looking in a mirror and going to the photographer? Well, the photographers have tricks. They can make you look a lot better than you look. Isn't that right? “Where there's beauty, we take it; where there's none, we make it.” I want to tell you something, folks: Mirrors don't lie. And so in the Word of God, every one of us—every preacher—we need to spend time daily in the Word of God looking in that Word, beholding as in a glass.

2. The Mirror Reflects Jesus

Now I see myself reflected, but I also see the Savior reflected. Go back again to verse 18. We're in chapter 3—2 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 18: *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory”* (2 Corinthians 3:18). His glory in me is there. I look in the mirror. I see Him in me, because He is in me. And as I look into the Word of God, I see Jesus reflected back. And the more I look at Jesus in the Word of God, the more I become like the Lord Jesus Christ by beholding the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now the word *changed* here is the word that is used in the Bible when Jesus was transfigured. We are transfigured. What does the word *transfigured* mean? It means

there's a metamorphosis. Well, what is a metamorphosis? *Metamorphosis* means, "a change of form." "Metamorphosis," or, "transformation": It's the same word that's used here for *changed*. What that literally means is what is on the inside comes to the surface.

For example, a worm goes into a cocoon, and it goes through a metamorphosis and comes out as a butterfly, or a moth. And so what has happened? What is the inner nature? What is the inner nature of that worm, that larva? That inner nature is that butterfly—that Monarch butterfly, or that glorious moth, or whatever it is. That is the inner nature that goes into that cocoon, and it comes out another creature. But the creature that comes out was on the inside, or it could not have come out. It has gone through a metamorphosis.

When Jesus was transfigured, the Bible uses the same word that's used here for *changed*. He was there on the Mountain of Transfiguration, and the Bible says that, "*He was transfigured*" (Mark 9:2). He was metamorphosed. What does that mean? Well, His face shown like the sun. His garments became dazzling white. He was shrouded in glory. What was the inner nature of Jesus? Glory! But Jesus laid aside that glory in order to walk among us as man. But on the Mount of Transfiguration, that inner glory came to the surface, and He was transfigured. That's the same word that is used here.

What is your inner nature? Friend, listen to me. *When you got saved, you didn't get the Christian religion; you got Jesus.* Jesus came into you. Now as you look in the Word of God with the Spirit of God, not only do you see yourself, but you see your Savior. How can you see your Savior? Because He's in you. And you're looking there, in the mirror, and you recognize, "Hey, this is what I have in Jesus." And you see the Jesus in you, and the Jesus in the Word, and it goes back and forth. And as you look into the Word of God, there's a change that takes place in you. There is a metamorphosis. That inner nature, which is Jesus, comes to the surface. And the nature of a Christian is Jesus. But many of us are not like Jesus. We need to be changed from glory to glory, as we see the Savior in the Word of God.

So what is your job, young man? Well, the purpose of your ministry is to make people like Jesus. The power of your ministry is the Spirit of God and the Word of God. And when the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God and opens up the Bible, people are going to see themselves, and they're going to see the Savior.

Conclusion

You remember the story of the ugly duckling? The ugly duckling was with the other ducklings, the little ducks, and somehow he was just bigger. He was more clumsy. He didn't seem to fit in. The other ducklings laughed at him. And he tried to paddle like the other little ducklings, and quack like the other little ducklings, but he just didn't fit in. He

felt so lonely, and he felt so forlorn. He just left the ducklings. You remember the story? And he went and tried to take up in somebody's house. And they had a pet. They had a dog and a cat. But he couldn't bark like a dog, and he couldn't purr like a cat. And they tried to teach him to do it, but he couldn't do it. Then, he said, "You just don't understand me—you just don't understand me."

One day, the ugly duckling saw some swans. He thought they were the most beautiful things he had ever seen. He watched those swans as they went across, glided across the lake. He watched their graceful movements. He watched them as they lifted their wings and began to fly in the sky. And he just—he couldn't take his eyes off of them. He was enraptured by the swans. But he was an ugly duckling. He just didn't fit in anywhere.

And the winter came, and the pond froze. And the poor misfit, all winter long, couldn't even swim. Then, when the spring came, and the thaw came, and the ice melted, he looked out there, and there they were—those creatures that he had admired, those creatures that he'd looked at. And he just admired them so much, and here they came. While the other ducklings seemed to spread from him, these swans were coming right at him. "Oh," he said, "I'm so ugly. I don't want those beautiful creatures to see me." And he took his wings, and put them over his head, and bowed his head. And when he did, he looked down in the water; and, in the water, in his reflection—the water had become a mirror—and he saw himself. And he said, "That's what I am—that is what I am! I am a swan—I am a swan! That's what I am!" And he realized what he was, and removed his wings from his head, and lifted up his head—not in pride, slightly bent, as a swan would. The ugly duckling was really a swan.

So many of us spend lives as ugly ducklings. We fail to understand what we are in Jesus. We fail to understand that Jesus has come into us. He is our inner nature. And as we behold Him, we find something in us that says, "Yes, that's who I am, and that's what I am!" Oh, to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer!

Your ministry—I'm telling you—and the ministry of every person in this church, and the ministry of this choir, and your ministry, young man—you'll appreciate the *young man*—is to be taking the Spirit of God and the Word of God and making people like the Lord Jesus Christ. Now listen. When we do that, do you know what we do? Let me tell you what we do, and I'm going to be finished. Look right here again. We are giving people liberty. Notice in verse 17: "*Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty*" (2 Corinthians 3:17).

You know, the devil wants to keep us in bondage. Do you know what real ministry does? It liberates people. Do you know what you have to be liberated from? You have to be liberated from public opinion. You have to be liberated from legalism. Real ministry doesn't put people under bondage; real ministry sets people free, when I say, "See who

I am, and what I am, in the Lord Jesus Christ.” You know, there are liberty, and license, and legalism. In legalism, the law is my master. In license, the law is my enemy. But in liberty, the law is my friend. *“Thy statutes have been my songs”* (Psalm 119:54). I want to set people free. That’s the real ministry that God has given us. That’s the ministry for this man.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. Father, I just pray that men, women, boys, and girls will come to know Jesus tonight as their Lord and Savior.

If you’re here tonight without Christ, and you could not say, “I know that I know, if I died tonight, I’d go to Heaven,” I have some wonderful news for you: You can be saved tonight, where you are. Right there in that seat, you can be saved—I mean, right now, tonight. And you can not only be saved tonight; you can be saved for all eternity, tonight. Right now, you can do business with God.

Now if you don’t understand that you’re a sinner, and you’re not convicted of your sin, you’re not ready to be saved. But if you see that you’re a poor lost sinner; if you realize that, even in your self-righteousness, you deserve the judgment of Almighty God, and you need and want mercy, then God will extend it to you tonight. Jesus has paid for your sin with His blood on the cross. And if you’ll come to Him as a poor lost, undone sinner, cry out to Him for mercy, and grace, and forgiveness, He will save you. If you trust Him to save you, He will save you.

Why don’t you pray this way, tonight? “O God, I am a poor lost, undone sinner. I deserve judgment, but I need mercy. Jesus, I believe You’re the Son of God. I believe You paid for my sin with Your blood on the cross. I believe that God raised You from the dead. I need You, Jesus. Thank You for paying for my sin with Your blood. I now, by faith—right now, as a child—receive You into my heart, right now, as my Lord and Savior. Save me, Jesus.” Friend, say that, and mean it: “Save me, Jesus.”

Did you ask Him? Then, by faith, thank Him: “Thank You for saving me, Jesus. I don’t deserve it, but I receive it as a gift. Thank You for saving me. You’re now my Lord, my Savior, my God, and my Friend. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

How to Be Like Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 14, 2004

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 3:18

Outline

Introduction

- I. Ways You're Not Going to Become Like Jesus
 - A. By Elimination
 - B. By Imitation
 - C. By Determination
- II. How You Can Become Like Jesus
 - A. A Mirror Must Receive the Image
 - B. A Mirror Can Retain the Image
 - C. A Mirror Should Reflect the Image

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, that's a great song to begin the Thanksgiving season with. God is good and, as Brother Carter has taught us to say, "all the time." In the high times, the low times, the bad times, the good times, the sweet times, the sorrowful times, God is good. And never, ever forget that. I want you to take your Bibles and turn tonight, if you will, to the Book of 2 Corinthians. Find the third chapter and the 18th verse. And as you are finding it, I want to tell you a story that I heard a long time ago:

A little lad, a little boy, was at the train station in the big city. He was trying to make some extra money, so he had some fruit there that his mother had helped to get, I suppose, and he had some pencils. He had some notions—just little things that he wanted to sell to people as they were getting on the train—had all of his things set out there, and he had his change in his little can there, that he would make change out of. And in the midst of all of this, when the train doors opened and the people rushed forward, they just knocked over everything. His basket was knocked over. His fruit and apples went rolling across the floor there. And his change went everywhere. And everybody was just stepping on it, and nobody was even aware that the little guy was there. It was terrible.

One kind man saw what happened, and he stopped and got down on his knees and helped pick up the pennies, the nickels, and dimes, and quarters. And he gathered as much of the fruit and things as he could, and he said, "Son, I'm so sorry. This was terrible that this happened to you. I don't know how much you may have lost." But then,

the man reached into his pocket, and took out a good-sized bill, and gave it to him—said, “Son, I hope this will make up for what you have lost.” And the little boy just sat there and looked at him for a while. The man went to get on the train, and the boy said, “Mister, are you Jesus?” He said, “No, son, I’m not Jesus, but I love Jesus; and, I’m doing what I think Jesus would want me to do, and what Jesus Himself would do, if He were here.”

I want to talk to you tonight about how to be like Jesus. I want you to look, now, in chapter 3, verse 18: *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed”*—just underscore that, “are changed”—*“into the same image...”*—what? The image of Jesus—*“are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Now in that verse, our Lord is telling us how to be like Jesus. And I told you a couple of weeks ago the mark of my ministry is not the size of the Love Offering, the beauty of these buildings, the number of people in the choir—that’s not the measure. The measure is, “Are you becoming more like Jesus?” That’s it! That’s the bottom line. That is the whole thing. The likeness of Jesus is His glory. Look again in verse 18—He is full of grace and glory, and the Bible says, *“We...are changed into the same image from glory to glory.”*

Do you know what sin is? Sin is the difference between the glory of God and where we are now. *“For all have sinned, and”*—done what?—*“come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). What is the glory of God? The glory of God is Jesus Christ revealed in us.

Now question: How are we going to become like Jesus—more like Jesus? That’s the goal, the ambition, of every true believer. How are you going to become more like Jesus?

I. Ways You’re Not Going to Become Like Jesus

Well, let me tell you, first of all, some ways you’re not going to become like Jesus.

A. By Elimination

Number one: You’re not going to become like Jesus by elimination—that is, by taking things out of your life. So many people want to be like Jesus, so they get a list of sins and try to eliminate them—you know, sort of a dirty dozen. And they’re going to stop this, and stop this, and stop this. And if that’s all you do—elimination—you’ve just become a bitter Pharisee. That’s all. You’re proud that you don’t do this thing, and you don’t do that thing, and you’re not one whit more like Jesus. A telephone pole doesn’t smoke, or drink, or tell lies. It’s not like Jesus. It’s not by elimination. And remember, if you had a list of sins, I’ll guarantee you your list would be far too short, and you would

have many things that you had not yet eliminated. And so by elimination, you don't deal with the root. You know, pruning a tree is not going to change the nature of the tree—not by elimination. Say *amen*.

B. By Imitation

Now I want to tell you, it's not by imitation. It's not trying to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ. That man in the story said, "No, son, I'm not Jesus, but I'm doing what I think Jesus would want me to do, if He were here"—"what I think Jesus would do." And so there's a certain sense in which Jesus is our leader. But friend, without what I'm going to preach to you tonight about, and share with you tonight, you don't just imitate the Lord Jesus Christ. If you imitate the Lord Jesus and that's all, you have become a little tin imitation of Jesus.

Have you ever seen artificial flowers—plastic flowers? That's what they are—plastic! There are a lot of plastic Christians around who are trying to imitate the Lord Jesus Christ, but they never, ever, ever will make it.

C. By Determination

You're not going to do it by elimination. You're not going to do it by imitation. You're not going to do it by determination. You might say, "I'm going to be like Jesus, if it kills me." No, I don't care how determined you are—you don't have in you what it takes.

Imagine yourself in a sailboat. That sounds good to me. Imagine—imagine—yourself in a sailboat, and the wind dies. Now how are you going to get the boat going? Well, one way you could do it is just get up and push on the mast. You're supposed to laugh. Not that much. I can tell a fake laugh, when I hear it. You know, you can't make the sailboat go faster by pushing on the mast. If you were in the water drowning, I'll tell you one thing you couldn't do to save yourself—is reach up, and take the top of your hair, and lift yourself out of the water. You can't do it. Thank you. There's a good laugh. All right.

You just can't do it. I don't care how determined you are—you will never, by determination, be more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. How You Can Become Like Jesus

Now having said how we don't do it, let me tell you how you do do it: by becoming a spiritual mirror—by becoming a spiritual mirror. That's what he's talking about. Look in verse 18: "*But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Now look at that phrase in *The King James*, "*as in a glass.*" The old timers used to call a *mirror* a "looking glass." And you probably have a translation that has, "as a

mirror.” Now it is understanding that we are a mirror. And when we understand that we are a mirror, we are going to understand how to be transformed into the likeness of the Lord Jesus Christ—by beholding the Lord Jesus Christ, now; by reflecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now let me give you the three laws of transformation that deal with a mirror. And every one of us knows what a mirror is. We look in one every morning—and some, many times throughout the day.

A. A Mirror Must Receive the Image

As a mirror—that’s what you are now, a spiritual mirror—you must receive—say, “receive”—you must receive the image of Jesus Christ. Now a mirror does not create an image; a mirror only receives an image. Now suppose I had a mirror here, and Mark looks over at this mirror; and, he sees himself in the mirror. Now the mirror didn’t create that image; the mirror only receives an image. By the way, have you ever wondered how the picture gets from here to here? Think about it. Something happens. Something is out here in between us that is sending message. That’s amazing, isn’t it—that the image goes from there to here? You can’t see it going, but it’s going. It—the mirror, the mirror—must receive image. Now Jesus Christ is the image; you are the mirror. And you must receive the Lord Jesus Christ. You must receive the image.

Now I want you to imagine I have the mirror here, but I have a veil over the mirror, and the mirror is covered and shrouded. Well, the mirror may be there; but, if I don’t take away the veil, I’m not going to receive the message. Now a mirror draped, or a mirror greatly soiled, cannot receive the image. And that’s what he’s talking about here—that we are to take away that veil so that we might receive the Lord Jesus Christ. Look: *“But we all, with open face beholding...the glory of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18)—that is, “without a veil.” Notice in verse 14: *“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament”* (2 Corinthians 3:14).

There are a lot of people with a blinded mind, which just puts a shroud over their heart; and, therefore, they cannot receive the image of the Lord Jesus Christ. So first of all, as a mirror, you must receive the Lord Jesus Christ. The mirror is going to receive whatever it is pointed at. And that’s the secret of becoming like Jesus—is to receive the image of Jesus by constantly beholding Jesus. Now you’re going to see Jesus. You can behold Jesus everywhere. You behold Him in the Scriptures. You see Jesus in the Old Testament. If you’re reading and you don’t see Jesus, you missed the message. You’re going to see Jesus in nature, because it is His handiwork.

Heav'n above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green!
Something lives in every hue
Christ-less eyes have never seen. (George W. Robinson)

You'll see Jesus in the face of these children tonight; you will see Jesus in the acts of providence; you will see Jesus in history, if you will look for Him. "This is My Father's World." And you can see the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now you must keep the mirror unveiled. You must keep the mirror clean. I'll tell you something else: You can have an unveiled mirror perfectly clean; but, in the darkness, it won't reflect anything. You must stay in the light. Do you know what you need to see the Lord Jesus Christ? Two things: You need sight and light—sight and light. Now if you have sight and you don't have light, what good is it? If you have light and you don't have sight, what good is it? Look down, if you will, to 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 6: "*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God*"—here it is, one more time—"in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). So Paul says, "Take the veil off. Stay in the light. Keep focusing on the Lord Jesus Christ." Learn to see Jesus, and you can see Him in so many places. And what you're going to do, you, as a mirror, will be receiving His image.

B. A Mirror Can Retain the Image

Now not only must we receive the image of Jesus; we must retain the image of Jesus. Say, "retain." Now let me tell you something about a mirror: A mirror not only receives, but it retains. Whatever is before the mirror is always within the mirror. You will retain whatever you are occupied by. If you keep your heart fixed on Jesus, the image will not disappear. As you are looking unto Jesus, that image will be constant, and you will retain it. And our verse says you'll be changed from glory to glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). You will be becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

That word *changed* is the word *metamorphosis*. Do you know what a metamorphosis is? When a creature is metamorphosed—like a caterpillar goes into the cocoon and comes out a butterfly—that is a metamorphosis. The word actually means, "a change of form." Now what is a metamorphosis? It is when the inner nature comes to the surface. The inner nature of that caterpillar is a butterfly. Jesus went up on the mountaintop, and the Bible says He was transformed. But he uses the same word. He was metamorphosed. His face became bright as the sun. His clothing was pure white. And the disciples beholding Him saw a glimpse of His inner glory, because there was a metamorphosis that took place.

What is the metamorphosis Christian? Well, let me ask you this question: What is

the inner nature of a Christian? If you're saved, your inner nature is Jesus Christ. And when you are transformed, that inner nature comes to the surface, and you're changed from glory to glory to glory. And you just keep on getting more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ, because you are a mirror that receives the image. And then, by continuing to behold the Lord Jesus, you are a mirror that retains the Lord Jesus. As long as you stay focused on the Lord Jesus and keep that mirror pointed to Him, you're going to retain the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. A Mirror Should Reflect the Image

Now here's the third thing. We're talking about how to be more like the Lord Jesus Christ. The mirror must receive. The mirror can retain, if you keep it pointed toward the image that you want in the mirror. And number three: We will reflect the image of Jesus Christ—we must reflect the image of Jesus Christ. Now if Jesus is there—and I see Jesus everywhere—and I take the veil off, I stand in the light, I polish the mirror so it is bright, I turn the mirror to Jesus—I am receiving His image in me. And as I continue to do that, without turning the mirror to this side or that side, as I keep the mirror of my heart on the Lord Jesus Christ, I am retaining that image, and I'm being changed day after day, more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ.

But now, here's the third thing: I will reflect. Say, "reflect." I will reflect His image. You see, I told you in the introduction, being like Jesus is not by imitation, but by reflection. Imitation is mechanical, and it is occasional. Do you find other people seeing Jesus in you? Do you?

I love that story over there in the Book of Acts, the fourth chapter. The apostles were witnessing, and they told them, "You can't witness anymore. We'll throw you in jail." And they said, "Look, we cannot help but tell what we know of Jesus. We can't stop it anymore than you could stop a mirror from reflecting. We can't stop it" (Acts 4:20). You might as well have told the sun not to shine as to tell these early disciples not to witness in the name of Jesus. And the Bible says, "When they saw them, they marveled and took knowledge of them"—now listen to this—"that they'd been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). They marveled, took knowledge of them. "We can't intimidate them. We can't stop them. We can't shut them up." Why? Because even the pagans saw Jesus Christ in them.

I wonder, tomorrow, is somebody going to see Jesus in you? I wonder, does anybody see Jesus in me? That's a thought, isn't it—to let others see Jesus in you, to reflect the glory of Jesus? As I've told you, the bottom line is to be like Jesus Christ. It's not going to Heaven. That's just a by-product. We're to be becoming more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ. Maybe someday, somewhere, like the little boy at the train station, somebody might say, "Are you Jesus?" and you'll say, "No, I am not, but I'm glad that you could see Jesus in me." Does somebody see Jesus in you? Are you

reminding people of the Lord Jesus Christ, or are you reminding people of Bellevue? Are you reminding people of your good life? Are you reminding people of how much you gave, or whatever? That's not it. You're to be reminding people of Jesus. And by the way, most of the time we're doing that, we're not even conscious that we're doing it.

You know, a mirror—it doesn't have to work to reflect—not at all! This whole passage here is in the passive voice. It's not something we do; it is something we receive. It's not because of our good deeds. Good deeds are only the fruit of it. And many times, we're not even aware that we're reflecting Jesus, because it's such a second nature. Our Lord's going to come to judge His Church and to reward us, and He's going to say, "I was hungry, and you fed Me; I was naked, and you clothed Me; I was in prison, and you visited Me." And we'll say, "Lord, when were You hungry and we fed You? Lord, when were You naked and we clothed You? Lord, when were You in prison and we visited You? I don't remember that." But God remembers. It's second nature—little deeds, things that you've done. And Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you've done it unto the least of one of these, you've done it unto Me" (Matthew 25:45).

I want you, dear Church, to fix your heart, the mirror of your heart, to Jesus. And if you do, would you receive that image? Then, I want you to keep it fixed on Jesus. And if you do, you will retain that image. And if you receive it and retain it, I can guarantee you, as night follows day, you will reflect it, and you will be becoming like Jesus, being changed from glory to glory.

Conclusion

Bow your heads. Eyes are closed. Would you pray, "Lord Jesus, help me to be like a mirror; Lord, help my heart to be clean and the mirror not smudged; Lord, if there's a veil over my heart, remove it; better than that, Lord, I will remove it by obedience to You; and Lord, now, begin to make me more and more like the Lord Jesus Christ, that I might be conformed to the image of Your Son."

Now while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, friend, you cannot make your heart a mirror to reflect the Lord Jesus, if you're not saved. The Bible says, in 2 Corinthians 4:4: "The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that are not believers." Satan wants to blind you and also keep you in the dark. But I'm here to tell you that God loves you. Jesus wants to save you. He wants to give you a purpose for living, and a hope in dying, if you will trust Him. If you'd like to trust Him, may I guide you in that decision right now?

Would you pray a prayer like this: "Dear God..."—just speak to Him personally and privately—"Dear God, I'm so grateful that You love me; Lord, I don't deserve Your love; but Lord, You love me in spite of my sin; and, because You have loved me, You sent Your Son, the Lord Jesus, who laid down His life for me, who died in agony and blood

upon that wicked, cruel cross; and, Lord Jesus, when You were dying that way, You were paying my sin debt; oh thank You, Lord; thank You, that You took my sins, and carried them to the cross, and paid in full; and Lord, You told me, if I would believe on You, if I would trust You, You would save me; and Lord, I do trust You, right now; I believe that You died for me; I believe You're the Son of God; I believe that You were raised from the dead; and now, by an act of childlike faith, I believe on You; I trust You; I receive You into my heart as my Lord and Savior, and I give my life back to You to live for You; begin now, Lord Jesus, as I behold You, as in a mirror, begin now to change me from glory to glory. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

To Be Like Jesus

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 14, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 3:18

Outline

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Introduction

Would you be finding 2 Corinthians—2 Corinthians chapter 3. And read with me verse 18—2 Corinthians 3, verse 18: *“But we all, with open face”—*that is, “with an unveiled face”—*“beholding as in a glass”—*put the word *mirror* there—*“we, without a veil, looking in a mirror”—“beholding as in a [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Now God has one over-mastering purpose for you. Now He may have many incidental things that He wants you to do, be, and have, but He has one over-mastering purpose. As a matter of fact, He has predestined you for that purpose. And it is to be like Jesus. Put down in your margin, Romans 8, verse 29—the Bible says, *“For whom he did foreknow, them he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son”* (Romans 8:29). Now the Bible doesn’t teach that God predestined some for Heaven and some for Hell, but He does predestinate those whom He foreknew to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. Predestination deals with what God does in the hearts and lives of His children. And when you get saved, He predestines you for glory.

And the mark of my ministry, the ministry that God has given me, is not our buildings, not our budgets, not our baptisms. I’ve said this before: Are you becoming more like Jesus? That’s the test of my preaching. Am I bringing you more and more to

be like the Lord Jesus? That's the mark of any ministry.

Put this in your margin, Ephesians chapter 4, beginning in verse 11—it tells us here why God has given pastors and others to the church: *“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints,”*—the word *perfecting* means “the maturing” of the saints. Well, why are the saints to be mature?—*“for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:”*—you're to be mature so you can do the work of the ministry, so you can build up the Body of Christ. And here's the goal that we're working toward—*“till we all come to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man,”*—that is, again, “a mature man”—*“unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Ephesians 4:11–13). Now what's the bottom line? Well, we're to be like Jesus. “O, to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer.”

Now if you're saved—and I trust that most of you are saved tonight, on this wintry night, that are here—your over-mastering ambition ought to be the same as the ambition that God has for you—or the purpose, rather, that God has for you—and that is to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. What Is the Character of Jesus?

Now what is the character of Jesus? What is the likeness of Jesus? Well, it is His glory. Look again, in verse 18: *“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass”*—now, watch this—*“the glory of the Lord”* (2 Corinthians 3:18). The character of Jesus is the glory of the Lord.

Now let's just pause here, and I don't want you to miss this point. But everything that God does is tied up in His glory, and Jesus is the epitome of His glory.

Why the stars? I went over Friday afternoon to preach Friday night and Saturday morning in North Carolina at the Billy Graham Conference Center called *The Cove*. And they have a cabin for speakers to stay in, up on a mountaintop. And I was so glad to be there by myself, though it's not to say I don't enjoy the company of other people—but I just had a big time up there by myself Friday night. And there's a banister around that cabin up on a mountaintop, and it was absolutely crystal clear. And I stepped out on that balcony, and I looked up at the candelabra of the stars. And I could not help it—I lifted my hands like this, and I just began to praise God and to give Him glory.

And you see, the Bible says, in Psalm 19:1: *“The heavens declare the glory of God.”* Why did God create the vast stellar universes? For His glory. Why did God create the earth and the firmament here? Psalm 104, verse 31: *“The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works”* (Psalm 104:31). Now He's talking about His works. He's talking about the trees, the hills, the valleys, the mountains, the flowers, the beasts, the birds—all that God does. If you look at nature, and you don't

see the glory of the Lord, you missed it. Jesus said, “Behold the lilies, how they grow...” (Matthew 6:28; Luke 12:27).

Why did God raise up Pharaoh, and why did God rescue Israel from the hand of Pharaoh? Well, He says, in Exodus 14, verse 4: “*And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them; and I will be honoured upon Pharaoh,*”—and the word here means I will be *glorified* upon Pharaoh—“*and upon all his host; that the Egyptians may know that I am the LORD. And they did so*” (Exodus 14:4).

Sometimes we wonder why we have the debacle that we have in American government right now. Well, I’ll tell you one thing: I don’t know what’s going to happen in Washington. But I’ll guarantee you the bottom line is God will get glory out of it—God will get glory out of it. Here was old Pharaoh riding high, wide, and handsome. But God said, “Look, I brought him up, that I might bring him down. I will be glorified.”

God does everything with this motto—Isaiah 48 and verse 11: “*For mine own sake, even for mine own sake, will I do it: for how should my name be polluted? and I will not give my glory unto another*” (Isaiah 48:11). Friend, you’d better be careful that you don’t put your hand on God’s glory and try to take it. God says, “*I will not give my glory unto another*” (Isaiah 48:11). This is His motto. God says, “I do everything for My own sake.” You say, “Well, is He an egotist? Is He selfish, that He does everything for His own sake?” Well, it would be egotistical and selfish for me to do everything for my own sake, because I’m not God. But it’s absolutely consistent with the nature of the God that we sang about this morning and sang about tonight that He is glorified in all that He did and all that He does.

Why did Jesus come to this earth? Why the Incarnation? We don’t have to guess. There was an angel chorus that told us, in Luke chapter 2 and verse 14, the night that Jesus came: “*Glory to God in the highest*” (Luke 2:14). That’s why He came. Why did Jesus perform His miracles? Well, when He did His first miracle, the Bible says, “*This beginning...*”—John 2, verse 11—“*This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory*” (John 2:11). Why did Jesus die on the cross? John 13, verse 31—he says, “*Now is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in him*” (John 13:31), talking about bloody Calvary. God was glorified in that.

Listen. God created you for this purpose—Isaiah 43 and verse 7: “*Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory*” (Isaiah 43:7). God made Bryson for His glory. God made Jim for His glory. God made Bob for His glory. God made me for His glory. What is my purpose in life? Everything I do, whether I eat or drink... Listen—1 Corinthians 10, verse 31: “*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*” (1 Corinthians 10:31). Now friend, that’ll eliminate a lot of things you do. The next time you fire up one of those cigarettes, you say, “Lord, this for Your glory.” No, you just... There are certain things you just can’t do.

The next time you go to rent one of those raunchy films, just say, “Now Lord, come on in here. I’m going to rent this film for His glory.” No. You see, whatever you do, you do all—*all*—for the glory of God.

Now glory is the same as character. I mean, the Bible says, when Jesus came, “*we beheld his glory...as of the only begotten of the Father*” (John 1:14). Now Jesus said, in John chapter 17 and verse 22—by the way, all of this, now, I’m referring right back to verse 18—2 Corinthians 3, verse 18—the Bible says we “*are changed into the same image from glory to glory*” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Here’s glory. We’re changed to glory. We’re still talking about glory. Jesus said, you see, in John chapter 17 and verse 22: “*And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them*” (John 17:22). Now that’s what it’s all about. The glory is the nature—the character—of Jesus Christ; and, it came to His humanity from God the Father. He said, “Father, that which You’ve given Me now I’ve just given to them.”

You know what sin is? We could get many, many definitions for sin, and we could name many sins. Well, I want you to think about a verse that you’ve quoted many, many times—perhaps haven’t thought about it: “*For all have sinned, and*”—what?—“*come short of*”—what?—“*the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). That’s it! “*All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). Do you know what sin is? Sin is just that distance between what we are and glory. That’s all it is! I mean, sin—that’s all sin is—is that which distinguishes us from the glory of God. Sin *is the gap between what I am by nature and what I could and should be by grace*. “*All have sinned, and come short of the glory...*”

Now when you think of God’s glory, think of the Lord Jesus. Think of His sweetness. Think of His character. Think of what Joyce was singing about—“O to be like Thee, blessed Redeemer.” To be like Him is to have that glory. And Jesus said to the Father, “Now Father, the glory that You’ve given Me I have given to them.”

So if the word *glory* is a little difficult for you—if it’s a little churchy for you, if it’s a little theological for you, if it’s a little otherworldly for you—just think of the nature of Jesus. That’s what glory is—it is the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. And God’s purpose for you is to be like Jesus.

II. How Can I Be Changed?

Now this verse talks about being changed. Notice what it says—it says, “*But we all, with open face beholding as in a [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed*” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Question: How can I be changed? If I want to be like the Lord Jesus Christ, how am I going to be changed? Now I could be changed; I should be changed. How am I going to be changed?

A. How Most of Us Have Tried and Failed

Well, let me tell you how most of us have tried and failed:

1. By Elimination

Most of us start out to be changed—we do it by elimination. We have a list of things that we think are not exactly Christlike; and so, we say, “Well, I’m going to work on those things.” Now generally, we have about a dirty dozen—about 12 things—we think are wrong. We’re not going, you know—we’re not going to steal; and we’re not going to lie; and we’re not going to lust; and we’re not going to *da da da da da*. And we’ve got these things, and we think, “Now if I can just quit doing these things, then I’ll be like the Lord Jesus Christ.” No, you won’t. You’ll just be like a hard, bitter Pharisee. That’s all you’d be like if you quit doing those things. As a matter of fact, one of the problems is you probably won’t be able to quit doing them. Number two: Your list is far too short—your list is far too short. And besides that, when you stop doing all of those things, *you’re not dealing with the root; you’re only dealing with the fruit*. And when you’re pruning the limbs, you’re strengthening the root. But so many of us think, “Well, I can be like the Lord Jesus by elimination.”

2. By Imitation

Then, we say, “Well, that doesn’t work. Well then, I’ll be like the Lord Jesus by imitation.” So rather, we get rid of our list of the things that are wrong, and we get all of these virtues. We fail with the vices, so we’ll start working on the virtues. And so we get all of these virtues, and we say, “Well, I’ll start working on these. I’ll try to bring these into my life.” Well, what do we have then? We don’t have character. We’ve just become a cheap, phony imitation of the Lord Jesus Christ. And when we’re working on character, we’re generally doing one thing at a time. But character is a seamless unit—character is seamless.

You know what everybody brags about President Bill Clinton about? They say, “Isn’t it wonderful how he can compartmentalize?” No, it’s terrible—it’s terrible. That is the absolute epitome of corruption! The Bible says, “Can one fountain bring forth bitter and sweet water at the same time?” (James 3:11). The Bible says, “*A double minded man is unstable in all his ways*” (James 1:8). No! There’s no way that you can segment character. There’s no way you can say, “Well, I’m not doing good over here, but I’m doing good over here.” And so we have this list of virtues that we begin to work on, maybe one at a time. And we think if we can’t do it by elimination, we can do it by imitation. But again, our list of virtues is far too short, and we fail to understand that character is a seamless unit.

3. By Determination

So then, “Well,” we say, “well, I haven’t done it by elimination, and I haven’t done it

by imitation; I'll do it by determination." And so we just kind of grit our teeth and say, "Well, I'm going to be more like the Lord Jesus with willpower and sincerity." And we've all been there.

It used to be that in churches they would give invitations for rededications. Now I believe there needs to come a time when you need to make a fresh start with the Lord. But I've been in, when back... Brother Bob, when I first started preaching, we had youth revivals. And we would give invitations. An invitation would be to those who want to be saved, those who want to join the church, and those who want to rededicate their lives. Ever been in those kinds of revival meetings? Those are the ones... And everybody would come down, and they'd rededicate their life, and say, "Pastor, I'm so sorry. I failed God—I failed God." And we say, "Well, you promise not to do that anymore?" "Yes sir, I promise—I promise. O God, I rededicate my life." And we go right out and fall flat on our face. That's determination. And we've tried it—I mean, just by willpower.

I'm a sailor of sorts, and I've got an old sailboat. But I'll tell you one thing: If you get out in your sailboat, and the wind stops blowing, the one thing that won't do you any good at all is to put your hand on the mast and begin to shove. You're just not going to do that. And friend, I want to tell you, that's exactly what you're trying to do, when you try to make yourself more like the Lord Jesus Christ by determination. Or, if you fall overboard and are drowning, try to reach up, and grab yourself by the hair, and lift yourself out of the water—no! I mean, that is the self-effort that so many people have.

And I'll tell you that most people are trying to be changed either by elimination, or imitation, or determination. But that's not the way you're going to be changed.

B. How to Be Changed: By Looking at Jesus

Now our verse tells us how to be changed, and it says we "*are changed from glory to glory*" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Our verse tells us how we are to be like the Lord Jesus Christ: We're changed by looking at Jesus—again, verse 18: "*But we all, with open*"—that is, an unveiled—"face beholding as in a glass"—"a mirror"—"*the glory of the Lord,*"—and remember, the glory of the Lord is His character. That's what God is all about. Whatever we do is for His glory—"are changed into the same image from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Now let me give you a paraphrase of this. I looked it up in the paraphrased Bible, and I wrote it down—2 Corinthians 3, verse 18: "*But we Christians have no veil over our faces. We can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like Him*" (2 Corinthians 3:18). That makes it a little bit clearer.

Now try to think this out—and there are three things that a mirror must do. Now He doesn't say we are a mirror; He says we're *like* a mirror. You don't push the analogy all

the way to the hilt, but you take the truths that He has here for this analogy. Don't try to make it walk on all fours, but just get what He is saying to us, right now. And what is the analogy? All right.

1. The Mirror Must Receive the Image

As a mirror, we must receive the image. Now we are a mirror. Say to yourself, "I am a mirror—I am a mirror." Say, "I am a mirror." Don't say, "Adrian is a mirror." Say—put your name in there. Just say, "I am a mirror." That's the analogy that God is speaking of—the human nature. Your soul is like a mirror. Now remember this: that a mirror must receive the image. See, a mirror reflects what it is exposed to. Now it's very important that you understand this: The mirror does not create the image—the mirror does not create the image. The mirror reflects what it is exposed to. We are changed by being exposed to Jesus; and, therefore, we reflect what we are exposed to.

Now this verse—"we...are changed"—I don't want to get too technical, but it's passive (2 Corinthians 3:18). It means, "We are acted on by an outside source." The wind has to blow. It's not that we're pushing against the sail or pushing against the mast. It's passive. We are being changed as we turn our being toward Jesus.

Now when you go to shave in the morning or to put your face in order, and you're sitting in front of the mirror—and I think every one of us takes a look in a mirror in the morning—you are over here, the mirror is over here; and, somehow you get from over here to the mirror. Have you ever thought about that—how you do that? I mean, you're over here, but you get from over here into that mirror. You're traveling on particles of light coming from over here to over here. You just come right on over there to where that mirror is. See, a mirror receives. You are sending yourself to the mirror. Now when you become the mirror, Jesus is sending Himself to you. He is just coming to you. The mirror does not create the image; it simply receives the image.

Now what image does a mirror receive? Well, it receives the image of the thing toward which it is oriented—the thing to which it is turned to. That's the only image a mirror can ever receive. A mirror cannot receive any other image except that to which it is exposed to. Now here's the point: As a mirror, you have to receive the image. And what is your soul going to receive? Whatever it's focused on—whatever it is focused on. You're like a mirror; therefore, you will become whatever you focus on. I think I've told you before that they say, you know, we become what we think about. When I was in high school, it's a wonder I didn't turn into a girl. Whatever you focus on, that is what you become.

Now suppose we have a mirror here, or suppose you go into your bathroom tomorrow to shave and somebody has come and put a black drape over your mirror. Then, your mirror can't see you. And if your mirror can't see you, you can't give yourself to that mirror. Your image cannot go to that mirror, because that mirror has a veil over it.

Now if you'll read what Paul is talking about, in this whole chapter, he says, when Moses went up on Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments, the glory of the Lord was so great that, as Moses saw the glory of the Lord, the glory of the Lord was reflected in the face of Moses to such a degree that the face of Moses shone. And the image was so bright on the face of Moses—that he'd been there in the presence of the Lord—that people couldn't stand to look at his face, because he was reflecting the glory of God. He had to put a veil over his face. And then, after a while, the glory faded. But he didn't take the veil off, because now he didn't want people to know the glory was no longer there. So he kept wearing the veil (2 Corinthians 3).

But what Paul is saying here is that, when we behold Jesus, we are seeing a greater glory than the glory of the law and the giving of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai. We've seen Mount Calvary. We've seen the glory of the Lord. And what he is saying now is this: that, when we come...that the Jews in the Old Testament still seem to have a veil over their face, and they can't see. I mean, the Jews can't see Christ in the Old Testament, but we now have taken the veil off.

Look, if you will, here again, and see if it doesn't make sense to you. Verses 14 through 16—kook at it here: *"But their minds were blinded..."*—talking about Israel—*"their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ"* (2 Corinthians 3:14).

Have you ever tried to share Jesus with a Jew? Now some Jews are saved, and I love the Jewish people. And don't you think, friend, this is anti-Semitic; it's the most pro-Semitic thing I could say. I want every Jew to know the Messiah of Israel, the Lord Jesus Christ. And they are God's chosen people. But you take the Old Testament, and you try to show them Jesus in the Old Testament—they just have a veil; they just have a veil over their mind. And Paul says, "Look, this veil is there." And he says, *"Their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament;"*—but now, notice this—*"which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read..."*—when he says "Moses," he's talking about Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy—*"But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it"*—that is, "the heart"—*"shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away"* (2 Corinthians 3:14–16).

Now folks, here's the thing—here's the thing. You listen to me. The mirror must receive the image. But the mirror cannot receive the image if it's got a veil over it.

Again, if you go into your bathroom in the morning and there is a blanket over your mirror, you're not going to see yourself, because the mirror won't be able to see you. So you have to get the veil off. Well, you'll never see Jesus in the Bible—really see Him—especially in the Old Testament, until that veil is taken away. Will you see?

Now the devil doesn't want that veil taken away. The devil is going to do everything that he can do to keep that veil over you. Maybe you're not a Christian here, and you say, "I just don't understand how these Baptists get all charged up—or these believers—about Jesus." Do you know why you don't understand it? You've got a veil over your face; you're blind. Look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians 4. Now we're in chapter 3, but just move on down to chapter 4, verses 3 and 4—chapter 4, verses 3 and 4: "*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*" (2 Corinthians 4:3–4).

You see, what is this that should shine to us? The glorious gospel—that is, the glory of God; the image of Christ. What does Satan do? He says, "I want to blind you. I want to put a veil over you. I don't want you see this." Paul says, "When the veil is removed, then you can receive the image."

I hope this is not confusing to you. I hope you understand. What I'm saying is that the mirror must receive the image, and you are the mirror. But if your mirror is veiled, you're not going to receive the image. But once the veil is removed, then you can begin to turn your mirror toward Jesus and begin to receive that image.

Look, if you will again, in chapter 3, verse 18: "*But we all, with open face now*"—that is, "an unveiled mirror"—"*beholding as in a [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed*" (2 Corinthians 3:18). Now you must look to Jesus. Now when you do this—when you give your heart to Christ, and you get saved, and the veil is taken away—you're going to see things that you've never seen before in the Bible. The Bible is going to come alive to you.

For example, you're going to discover Christ in the Old Testament. Look again, in verse 14: "*But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the old testament; which veil is done away in Christ*" (2 Corinthians 3:14). One of the greatest things I've learned is Christ is in all of the Bible. You know, I used to think that the Old Testament was about the nation Israel, and the New Testament was about Jesus. So I said, "Well, why read the Old Testament? I just want to read the New Testament." And I had some of my sweetest devotional times in the Old Testament. Friend, all the Bible is about Jesus. Don't get the idea that the New Testament is about Jesus and the Old Testament is about something else.

On the road to Emmaus, in Luke chapter 24, the Bible said that Jesus, after His resurrection, was walking with two forlorn disciples. And He began to expound to them, the Bible says, and "He showed them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27). Now what Scriptures did they have then? The New Testament had not yet been compiled. He had the Old Testament. And He's walking along on the road to Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem—a seven-mile Bible conference.

Boy, I'd have loved to have had a tape recorder. Can you imagine the Son of God taking the Old Testament—said, "There I am! There I am!"? He's prophet, priest, and king. And every prophet you read about—there's Jesus! Every priest you read about—there's Jesus! Every king you read about typifies the Lord Jesus. Jesus said to those unbelieving Pharisees, "*Search the scriptures; for...they are they which testify of me*" (John 5:39).

But isn't it a shame that people have a veil over their face? They can't see that—they can't see that. A mirror can't reflect anything that the mirror itself can't see. And if the mirror is veiled, it can't see it.

I'll tell you something else, friend: If the mirror is dirty, it'll give a distorted and a dull image. I'll tell you something else: You can take the veil off the mirror and turn out the lights, and you still can't see. I mean, the mirror can be there and the veil can be gone; but, you see, in order to see Jesus in the Bible, you need light, and you need sight. And that's the reason that you need to pray when you open the Bible, "Lord, open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things in Thy law. Lord Jesus, help me to see You" (Psalm 119:18).

And by the way, you'll not only see Jesus in the Bible—you'll see Him in the New Testament; you'll see Him in the Old Testament—you'll see Him in nature: "*The heavens declare the glory of God*" (Psalm 19:1). You'll see Him in history. History is *His story*. You will see Him in the faces of brothers and sisters in Christ. You'll see Jesus in the smile of a child. You will see Jesus and meet Jesus in songs, and music, and fellowship. And everywhere, you'll see Jesus.

Heav'n above is softer blue,
Earth around is sweeter green!
Something lives in every hue
Christless eyes have never seen;
Birds with gladder songs oe'rflow,
flowers with deeper beauties shine,
Since I know, as now I know,

I am His, and He is mine. (George W. Robinson)

He's everywhere—He's everywhere. Sermons, and stones, and books, and brooks, and God everywhere, when the veil is taken away. "*The heavens declare the glory of God*" (Psalm 19:1). But you can't see Him if you've never been saved; the veil is there. You won't see Him as well, if the mirror is dirty. And you're certainly not going to see—no matter how clean the mirror is—if you're standing in the dark. You need to say, "O Lord, let the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus shine into my heart!"

You see, the devil doesn't want that to happen. Notice why the devil is working so much. Go again to chapter 4, verse 6: "*For God, who commanded the light to shine out*

of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). When you want to see in the mirror, ask God to turn on the light. And friend, this is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit of God. It is mysterious.

Notice, again, verse 17—chapter 3, verse 17: *"Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."* That means, "freedom to be what we ought to be." *"But we all, with open"—"unveiled"—"face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory,"*—who does this?—"even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17–18). The Holy Spirit of God superintends the whole thing. He's the One who wrote the Old Testament. He's the One who's going to disclose Jesus in all of the Bible. So point number one: As a mirror, we must receive this image—the image of Christ. The mirror receives.

2. The Mirror May Retain the Image

Number two: As a mirror, not only must we receive the image, but as a mirror, we must retain the image. Now a mirror not only receives, but it retains. Well, how long will it retain? Just as long as it's turned to any object. When it turns away, the image goes. But the image is forever there, as long as the mirror is forever focused. You will retain what you're continually occupied by. You take a glimpse at Jesus—you don't retain the image. But if you focus upon Jesus, you will retain Him.

Now the Bible says here that, when we retain Him—that is, when we stay focused on Him—that's when the change takes place. The word *changed* here is the same word that was used when Jesus was transfigured. That is, the inner glory comes to the surface. It's the word we get our English word *metamorphosis* from. You know what a metamorphosis is? A caterpillar turns into a butterfly. We call that what? A *metamorphosis*. *Meta* means, "change"; *morphis* means, "form." It's a change of form. But not just any kind of a change of form—it's a technical word, when it means that the inner glory comes to the surface.

What is the inner glory of a caterpillar? A butterfly. What was the inner glory of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, or what was the inner nature of Jesus? Glory. What is the inner nature of a Christian? Jesus. And by beholding Jesus, you're changed. That which is on the inside comes to the surface. You are changed. You go through a metamorphosis to the degree that you stay focused on Him.

Now many of us don't stay focused. We get a flicker. We see Him. He shows up in us; and then, we turn to something else—we turn to something else. Your mirror is going to reflect whatever it's focused on, and it's going to retain whatever it's focused on. Now that makes perfect sense. And so what we need to do is to stay focused, because when we stay focused, that's when the change, the metamorphosis, begins to take place in us. And the Bible says, "We're changed from glory to glory" (2 Corinthians

3:18).

Now none of us stays as focused as we ought; and so, therefore, we're changed progressively from glory to glory. It takes time. There is no instant maturity. When the Bible says we're changed from glory to glory, remember what we said the glory of the Lord is—it's His character. So therefore, you're changed from character to character, and this takes time. Character lasts forever, so it's not going to be developed in a day. Philippians 1:6: *"He which hath begun a god work in you will perform it."*

And so I want to be being changed. How am I going to be changed? Again, not by elimination, not by imitation, not by determination—but saying, "Lord, take away the veil. Lord, I want to receive Your image; and, Lord, I want to retain Your image. I want to keep my focus there." You stay focused on Jesus, and I will guarantee you a transformation will take place in you. You will be changed. You can't help but be changed, if you stay focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. The Mirror Should Reflect the Image

Now look. We are like mirrors. The mirror must receive the image. Then, the mirror may retain the image. But now, the mirror should reflect the image. This is the wonderful thing. Not only should my character be changed when I behold the Lord Jesus Christ, but, you know, if I'm a mirror and I'm turned to Jesus, when you look at me, who should you see? Jesus—Jesus. You say, "That's not Adrian; that's Jesus. That's not Jim Whitmire; that's Jesus." That's what you ought to see, when you look at a mirror. And if that mirror is focused on anything, what you ought to see, if that mirror stays focused, is what the mirror is focused on.

Now others ought to see Jesus in me. And I'm sure there are some times when people don't see Jesus in me. Last night, Brother Bob, I was in the Asheville Airport. And "Delta flight," up on the thing, it said, "it leaves at this time, Gate A2." I went to Gate A2. There was the marquee. It said, "Atlanta flight *da da da da*, Gate A2." I sit there. I'm waiting. After a while, I see an airplane take off, and I look around. And there's just myself and one other guy sitting in that gate. I said, "That airplane left the same time our airplane's supposed to leave." And I went downstairs, and I said, "Look, I'm waiting on this airplane." He said, "Mister, it just took off." He said, "We changed gates." I said, "You what?" He said, "Yes, we changed gates." I said, "Well, why didn't you let us know?" He said, "Well, we made a mistake—and a big one." And he said, "I'm sorry—I'm sorry." And he said, "It was our fault." He said, "I'm sorry." He said, "We should have sent somebody up there to the gate, but," he said, "I'm just sorry." Well, I had a briefcase full of work, and it wasn't all that bad. And I sat down there to do some work while I was doing that.

But then, I got sitting there, and I felt something rising up in me. And I kept saying, "Down—down." No, it's just coming up like that. And the old Adrian was knocking at the

door trying to get out. So finally, I walked over to that gal who changed my ticket, and I said, “I want to ask you a question.” I said, “Tell me again how this happened. Tell me whose fault all this was, and so forth.” She said, “Now Mr. Rogers, if you want to write to the people, you know, who are over this, here’s the address and so forth.” And she came, and sat down by me, and gave me this material. And she looked in my briefcase. In my briefcase was a book; it said, “*The Incredible Power of Kingdom Authority: Getting an Upper Hand on the Under World*, written by Adrian Rogers.” She said, “Is that you?” I said, “Yes.” She said, “Are you important?” I said, “No.”

Boy, I’m so glad that old Adrian didn’t get out of the box, because I’m telling you, he was screaming to get out—he was screaming to get out. I felt I was justified in just telling somebody what they’d done wrong. And the Holy Spirit said, “Now Adrian, it’s not their fault—at least, not that girl’s fault.” And I said, “Look, lady, if you want this book, you can have it,” put a tract in it, and gave it to her. But you know, I’m afraid that, many times, when people look at me, they don’t see Jesus. They see somebody who’s just mad about something, somebody whose feelings have been hurt, somebody whose rights have been trampled, somebody who’s upset about something. And I know, so many times, that I do things, and I react in the wrong way. And I’ll tell you, every time I react in the wrong way, the reason I react in the wrong way is my mirror is not focused. I’m looking at something else, rather than looking at Jesus. There is no way possible that a mirror could be focused on Jesus and Jesus not be reflected in that mirror.

You see, we’re mirrors. And as mirrors, we must receive the image. As mirrors, we will retain the image, if we stay focused. And if we receive and retain, as night follows day, we will reflect that image. Is that not true? And if my mirror is faced toward the Lord Jesus, this book begins—Jesus steps out of the page, and He’s reflected in me. I see Jesus all around, and all around people will see Jesus in me.

The apostles were preaching Jesus. These were just fishermen, really. Acts chapter 4, verse 13, says, “And when they beheld the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled and took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). Isn’t that great? Fishermen! They said, “Look at them. They’re like Jesus.” They marveled, because they were ignorant and unlearned men—never been to seminary, no Ph.D.—but, they just kept reflecting the glory of God. And you know what I believe? I believe, when we keep our faces toward the Lord Jesus, when the veil is taken away, when we receive the image, retain the image, and reflect the image, we’ll probably not even be aware of it. People will see Christ in us, and we won’t even be aware that they’re doing it. The Bible seems to indicate that.

He’s talking about the judgment, and the Lord is blessing and rewarding His own. And then, He said, “I was in prison; you visited Me. I was hungry, and you fed Me. I was

naked, and you clothed Me.” And they said, “Lord, when did we see You hungry? When was that, Lord? I don’t remember that—when were You thirsty and I gave You a drink, when You were naked and I clothed You.” He said, “Look. Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of one of these, my brethren, you’ve done it unto Me” (Matthew 25:40).

Years ago, I heard a story about a man who was rushing to get a train. Have you ever been in one of these subways where the train stops and everybody runs to get on? And it’s a madhouse, sometimes, especially in the rush hours. And this was down in the subway. And there was a little boy down there. And he had gotten some candy; he had some pencils; he had shoelaces; he had apples. He had a little store down there, and he was selling his stuff. And he had his little change in his little box and everything. And somebody running past that little kid—not meaning to, but kicked all of that. And his candy, and his pencils, and his apples, and his money just went everywhere—and people just running. A man saw what happened—a businessman. He put his briefcase down, and he got down on his hands and knees and started picking all that stuff up and helping the boy get it all back together. And then, he saw the little guy, and realized he’d probably lost a lot of stuff, and stuff had been stepped on, and some he’d never get back. The man reached in his billfold, and pulled out a fairly big-sized bill, and gave it to the boy, and said, “I’ll see you later, son.” The boy said, “Hey mister, come back here.” He said, “Are you Jesus?—Are you Jesus?” He said, “No son, I’m not Jesus, but,” he said, “I love Him. I am a follower of Jesus.”

Friend, you know, it would be good if people might, just a little bit, get us confused with the One whose image we bear—the Lord Jesus.

Conclusion

Let’s pray. Joyce, you didn’t expect to do this, and Steve, you didn’t expect to do this, but I want you to come back and just sing that song one more time, Joyce and Steve—“Oh, To Be Like Thee, Blessed Redeemer.” You just keep your head bowed; keep your eyes closed. And let this song be your prayer, right now.

How to Stay in the Ministry

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 29, 2001

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 4

Outline

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Introduction

This morning, I prepared a full message, and Brother Mark said, "Now Pastor, put a little elasticity in your message this morning." And so I'm going to give you the basic outline, and let you fill in the points, if you will. But I want you to take your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. And what I want to talk to you about today is why we never give up—why we stay, why we don't quit serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heard about a dog—and, you know, they wanted to cut his tail off. Some dogs look better without a long tail. And they cut this dog's tail off, didn't know what to do with it, buried it in the backyard. And after a while, they found a scratching—heard a scratching—at the door. And there was that dog with—horror of horrors—he had his tail in his mouth! Oh, this is terrible! They took the tail from him, took it out, and buried it deeper. Second time—the same thing happened. Third time—they buried it so deep; they put rocks and brick on top of it, buried it again. Third time—there he was with the tail in his mouth. What's the meaning of this? It is, just simply this, he was faithful to the end.

Now what I want to talk to you about is how to be faithful to the end, as Junior Hill was preaching last Sunday morning. He read this text—at least, read from this text. And my eye went to verse 1, and I thought, "What a great text!" Look at it—2 Corinthians

chapter 4, verse 1: *“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not”* (2 Corinthians 4:1). We’ve received the mercy; we’ve received the ministry. It is a ministry of mercy. And we’re not going to quit; we’re not going to faint; we’re not going to give up, because it is a ministry of God.

I. Seven Marks of Ministry

I want to give you seven marks, and all you have time to do is jot them down. But let me tell you things I have discovered in 50 years of preaching the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and why we never give up in this ministry.

A. It Is a God-Called Ministry

Number one: It is a God-called ministry—a God-called ministry. Second Corinthians chapter 4, verse 1: *“Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not”* (2 Corinthians 4:1). It’s a ministry of mercy. I was saved by His mercy; I was called by His mercy; I have been kept by His mercy. And by His mercy, He gave me a godly wife, who, very frankly, also felt called—not only to be my wife, but to be a pastor’s wife. And it has been mercy all the way. It is a God-called ministry.

B. It Is a Bible-Based Ministry

Number two—and I’m going to hurry; had a lot I wanted to say about that—but, it is a Bible-based ministry. Look, if you will, in verse 2: *“But we have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God”* (2 Corinthians 4:2). “We have not handled the Word of God deceitfully.” I have tried, by God’s grace—not that I’ve not always done a good job, but I’ve tried—to study the Word of God, understand the Word of God, analyze the Word of God, illustrate the Word of God, and apply it to hearts. I have learned there is power in the Word of God. I’ve not resorted to gimmicks; I’ve not resorted to trickery or shameful methods. But the ministry has been, indeed, a Bible-based ministry.

1. Two Reasons Why I’ve Preached the Bible

I’ve preached the Bible for two reasons.

a. I’m Not Smart Enough to Preach Anything Else

Number one: I’m not smart enough to preach anything else. I’ve been in this church almost 30 years. People would get tired of hearing me draw from my own well. I’m not smart enough to preach anything else.

b. I’m Too Smart to Preach Anything Else

Number two: I’m too smart to preach anything else, because I know that the power is in the Word of God. Now I believe we ought to be kind to everybody, but I’ve never believed that we ought to trim the message to attract a crowd. *It’s not my job to fill the*

pew; *it's my job to fill the* pulpit. And I have tried to have a Bible-based ministry.

C. It Is a Satan-Opposed Ministry

And next—number three: It is a Satan-opposed ministry. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4: *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world”—that’s the devil, “the god of this world”—“hath blinded the minds of them which believed not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”* (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). When I’ve been working to bring people to Jesus, Satan has been working to steal away the seed. And he has opposed me all the way. And I’m not surprised by that; that’s the way it ought to be. If he opposed our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, I know he would oppose me.

There were those who discouraged me from going into the ministry—said, “You can do something.” They said, “You can do something better with your life.” When I went to a university—it was a Baptist university, but it was very liberal—they tried to plant doubts in my mind concerning the Word of God. Brother Jeff Stiles, you and I were there together at that university, and I was in a denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, that was drifting more and more to the left. And some of us decided we would do something about it, but we did not do that without opposition. And you might think today that, by looking at this video, that everybody loves a man named Adrian. But friend, I want to tell you today, that’s not true. And you mention my name—you’d better duck or pucker. They’ll want to kiss you or take a swing at you. It is a Satan-opposed ministry. But that’s what Paul said. He said, “The god of this world, when we’re out there sowing the seed, he’s trying to blind the minds of people.”

D. It Is a Christ-Centered Ministry

Number four—and thank God for this: It is a Christ-centered ministry. Look, in verses 5 and following: *“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure”—listen to this—“in earthen vessels,”—“jars of clay,” that’s what he’s talking about—“that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us”* (2 Corinthians 4:5–7).

You’re looking at a clay jar right now—that’s all I am. But I have a treasure, which is the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And God shined into my heart; God saved me as a teen. And I’m just the clay jar. I can tell you this—and I mean this with all of my heart. And I told you this, Mark, sitting up there, just a few moments ago—if God were to take His hand off of me, that’s it—just a clay jar, just a clay jar. Thank God for Jesus, who shined into my heart. And I’m not ashamed to tell you, today, I love Jesus Christ. I have a treasure; His name is Jesus. And *“we preach not ourselves, but*

Christ Jesus” (2 Corinthians 4:5). Joyce said she suggested the theme of this morning, which is “Come to Jesus.” And that’s been the theme of my life. It’s been a Christ-centered ministry. And I know that I know that, apart from Jesus, I would be absolutely nothing, and I would have a pathetic message.

E. It Is a God-Sustained Ministry

Next, number five: It has been a God-sustained ministry. Thank you, Joyce, for singing “We’ve Come Thus Far By Faith.” Look, in verses 8 and following: *“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh”* (2 Corinthians 4:8–11). Well, what’s he saying? He’s saying it’s a God-sustained ministry.

We’ve been knocked down, but not knocked out. Yes, it’s not been all roses, and sunshine, and praise. There have been heartaches. We’ve been to the graveside of a little boy, precious baby. We’ve seen heartache in a marriage in our family by an unfaithful person—not a member of our family. And I can tell you we went through great darkness and despair, but Jesus was there. And Joyce, you and I have never ever known a time but we could not turn to Jesus, and He has always, always been there. It has been a God-sustained ministry. Knocked down, but not knocked out. We’ve been pinned—we’ve been thrown, but never pinned.

F. It Is a Conviction-Confirmed Ministry

Number six: It has been a conviction-confirmed ministry. Look, if you will, in verse 13—Paul said, *“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak”* (2 Corinthians 4:13). I never tried to preach my doubts, but my convictions. You can find some fault in me—and you won’t have to look far—but I’ll tell you one thing: I preach what I believe, and I believe what I preach. That’s what Paul says. Paul said, *“We also believe, and therefore speak”* (2 Corinthians 4:13). Before I preach, I kneel before God; I open my heart to God; I tell God what I’m going to preach. If it doesn’t sound good telling Him, I certainly wouldn’t want to tell you. I’m not dependent upon you to believe what I say; I’m dependent upon God to bless what I say, and convict you. Anything I can talk you into somebody else can talk you out of. It is a conviction-confirmed ministry.

G. It Is an Eternally Lasting Ministry

And number seven: It is an eternally lasting ministry. Look, in verse 16—again, he mentions this cause: *“For which cause we faint not;”—“we don’t quit,”* Paul says—*“but*

though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16). And that’s certainly true. I feel as young in my spirit today as I did when I was called as a boy to preach the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The outward man is not what it used to be, but I thank God that the inward man is renewed day by day. And every day with Jesus, beyond a shadow of a doubt, is truly sweeter than the day before.

And then, Paul says, *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory...”*—I think, “Paul, are you mad? You’ve been put in prison. You’ve been beaten. You’ve been shipwrecked. You’ve been stoned. You’ve been left for dead. You’ve been pickled in the Mediterranean, and you say light affliction?” When I read this, I thought back, “Adrian, you’ve never really ever really suffered for the Lord Jesus Christ”—*“our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal;”—*that means, “they’re temporary”—*“but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Corinthians 4:17–18).

You know the mark of my ministry? This ministry is not these buildings, budgets, the crowds, the Sunday School attendance. We’re grateful for all of these things; but, friend, there’s another day coming—there’s another day coming when, one day, we will stand before the throne, stand before our Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ. And the Bible says that, then, things are going to come into focus, and the things that are not seen are going to become far more important to us than the things which are seen. Yes, Joyce, we have come this far by faith. Our affliction has been light; our blessings have been many. And I thank God for this ministry that God has given. We have received mercy, and I would be the first one to say, “To God be the glory.”

Conclusion

Now the question is in your mind, “Pastor, how long are you going to stay pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church before you hang up your spurs, or whatever you’re going to do?” Everybody’s talking about that, right now, and you’re thinking about that. Well, let me tell you two things:

Number one: I’ve never felt better, honest. Number two: Now you may not agree with it, but I think I’ve never thought more clearly than I think in these days. Number three: I’m not tired; I’m not bored; and Joyce keeps pouring that health food into me. And if I’m taking a summer off, it’s not because I need to. I’ve never taken any time off. I’ve... even in vacation—the church gives me liberal vacation time—but generally, I find I’m preaching a conference somewhere, leading a crusade somewhere, leading a trip somewhere overseas, to the Holy Land or whatever, which I enjoy. But it’s kind of a

working thing. And so we're going to kick back a little bit—not because we're sick, not because we're tired, not because we're going to have a parade of preachers here so you can see who your next pastor's going to be—none of that. Just get that out of your mind.

Now I want to say this: I want to stay as long as I am effective, and I'm ready to leave when God wants me to leave. Two things you'll find: I am wanting to stay as long as God wants me to stay, and ready to go when He wants me to go. I don't have to pastor this church to stay busy. I have plenty of things I can do—plenty of things I want to do. But I'm as happy as a dead pig on ice right now, pastoring this church. And so we will know God's time, but don't you get any rumors out that the old guy's had his swan song this morning. No, I haven't.

And so I just thank God. I thank God for His goodness. And I know you've got to politely clap when I say that. God is blessing the church. Every Sunday is a record-breaking Sunday. Souls are being saved, God's people are happy. And so I don't want to stay one moment too long. I don't want to stop one instant too quickly. But I want to thank God for the ministry that God has given us for 50 glorious years. And these years here at Bellevue—God has piled victory upon victory upon victory. God has been so good. And to Him be all the glory, all of the praise, forever, and ever, and ever. Thank you, precious people, for who you are, and what you mean to me.

Let's pray together. Father, I thank You for the ministry that You've given that has been a God-called ministry, and a Satan-opposed ministry, and a Bible-based ministry, and a Christ-centered ministry, and a God-sustained ministry—an eternally significant ministry. It is from You, dear God; and, we give You the praise and the glory, as pastor and people. In the name of Jesus we pray. Amen.

Living Above See Level

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: May 26, 1996

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 4:1–18

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Introduction

Would you take God's Word, please, and find 2 Corinthians chapter 4? And when you've found it, look up here, if you would. I want to talk to you tonight about "Living Above See Level"—s-e-e—that is, learning to live by faith, or learning to see the invisible. Now we've often heard this little motto: that, "What you see is what you get." That's just the world's way of saying, "The things that are real are the things we can touch, the things we can taste, the things we can hear, the things that we can smell—handle with our five senses." But there's another very real world out there; it is the unseen world.

The Apostle Paul had been going through affliction. You and I would call it deep affliction, but he called it light affliction. I want you to look, in verses 17 and 18—he says, "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*"—so he's contrasting the lightness of his present affliction with the weighty glory that shall be ours. He's contrasting, here, pain and glory; and, he's going to contrast that which can be seen and that which cannot be seen. Look, in verse 18: "*While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal;*"—that means they're

temporary, transitional—*“but the things which are not seen are eternal”* (2 Corinthians 4:17–18). So he says, “We are looking at things which are not seen.” Sounds like doubletalk; but, if you’ll stay tuned, you’ll understand it’s not doubletalk.

When I was a little boy, I heard a little poem that says something like this:

Last night I saw upon the stair

A little man who was not there.

He was not there again today.

Oh, how I wish he’d go away (William H. Mearns).

Now that’s the kind of doubletalk some think that we find right here in this passage of Scripture, but this is not doubletalk.

Paul is not playing with words. He’s talking to us about some great eternal truths that we must learn to live by, if we would live the life of faith.

I. The Reality of the Unseen World

I want you to think with me tonight about, first of all, what I’m going to call the reality of an unseen world—the reality of an unseen world. The Bible teaches that there is a visible material world, and there is an invisible spiritual world, and these two co-exist side by side. Now we would be very foolish to deny that there is an unseen spiritual world just because we cannot see it with our physical eyes. A blind man would be foolish to deny the radiant splendor of a sunset simply because he cannot see it.

If you were to take my great-grandfather, and bring him back to this world, and tell him that this room, right now, is full of music, and sports, and drama, and action, and automobiles crashing, and news from all over the world, he’d say, “No, that’s not true. You’re telling a lie.” But we know that it is true. If we put the television receiver up here, and plugged it in, and tuned it right, it would draw all of these images out of the air. They’re here; they’re in the air. Now because we cannot see them right now just simply means that we’re not tuned in to them, but we know that they’re here. Isn’t that true? Surely you know that’s true. These things are in the air. We have a wonderful illustration of another world in this age in which we live that our great-great-grandfathers did not have.

And Jesus is here tonight, but unless you have your antennae up and tuned into station J-e-s-u-s, you may not know it.

You may say, “Well, these people—they’re just conjuring up things; they’re talking about things that are reality that are not reality.” There is more to life than what you can touch, what you can taste, what you can smell, what you can hear. Now here’s the point: What is not seen is even more real than that which is seen.

A. The Invisible World Was Here First

Now go back. Take your Bibles, and just fast-forward a little bit to Hebrews chapter 11. Let me show you what I'm talking about. I'm saying that what is not seen is more real than what is seen. Hebrews chapter 11—and turn to it; this is worth turning to—and look with me in verse 3. Here's what the Apostle Paul says—well, let's start with verse 1: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”* Just underscore that—that is, “faith is the evidence that there is an unseen world out there.” *“For by it”*—that is, “by faith”—*“the elders obtained a good report.”* Would you like to get an “A” on your report card? Well, pay attention: *“Through faith we understand that the worlds”*—that is, “the universes”—*“were framed”*—that is, “brought into being”—*“by the word of God,”*—that is, “God spoke, and God made something out of nothing”—*“so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear”* (Hebrews 11:1–3).

Now Moffatt translates that this way: “The visible is made out of the invisible. Things that are seen were first made of things that can't be seen.” That is, “the invisible was here before the visible.” Before there was anything that you could touch, or taste, or hear, or smell, there was the invisible Spirit of God and the Word of God that brought all of these things here. The invisible was here before the visible.

Now sometimes people try to deny the idea of God, because they say it all just happened, and they even try to explain how life happened. As a matter of fact, about 15 years ago, a scientist went into a laboratory, and he said he'd created life in that laboratory. Now what he had—he had not created life; that was absurd—but what he had done was to synthesize some amino acids that had lifelike qualities. And so he said, “You see, I have created life.” Of course, after a while, other scientists began to laugh him to scorn.

That would be like a man whose father was a master builder and had built an incredibly beautiful and stately mansion; and, while his father was away, this man would take his father's tools and his father's building materials; take his father's plans and study them very carefully; take his father's model and look at it over and over again; and then, with his father's tools, his father's materials, his father's plan and the model before him, were to build a little chicken coop. And then, he steps back, and looks at that chicken coop, and says, “You see, that proves my father doesn't exist.” That's what this man was doing in the laboratory—he was taking God's materials, God's tools, God's model—all of it—and synthesizing something that wasn't even life, and stuck out his chest and boasted, as if there is no God.

But the truth of the matter is that all he could use were materials that were already in existence. But God made everything out of nothing. Do you believe that? I believe that. God made everything out of nothing. So the invisible world was here first. Again, let me read that scripture to you: *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by*

the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear" (Hebrews 11:3). That is, "the visible is made out of the invisible."

B. The Invisible World Will Be Here Last

Now not only was the invisible world here first, but the invisible world will be here last. It's going to outlast the visible world. As a matter of fact, the scripture that we just read to you, 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 18—let me read it to you again—Paul says, "*While we look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are*"—what?—"temporal" (2 Corinthians 4:18). This pulpit is temporary. This platform that I'm standing on is temporary. The seat that you're sitting in is temporary. It is temporal; it deals with time. It is passing away. Everything around you is changing, winding down, and decaying. It is temporary. What is more real, therefore: that which is passing away, or that which can never pass away?

What I'm trying to say: The things that are not seen are eternal. Now the unseen world is more real than the seen world, because the unseen world was here first, and the unseen world is here last. And if you're living for the things that are seen, you're in for a big disappointment—I want to tell you that.

Now we've talked to you about the reality of this unseen world. How do we know it is there? Because God Himself says that it is there. We would be foolish to deny it.

II. The Resources of the Unseen World

But now, let me talk to you not only about the reality of it, but the resources of it.

A. What Good Does It Do for Us to Know the Reality of an Unseen World?

What good does it do for us to know that there's an unseen world? Well, there are great vital resources that are wrapped up in the unseen world that can be ours. And I'm going to tell you how to tap into those resources, right out of the Word of God, in a moment; but, let's just see what kind of a resource knowing that there is an unseen world can be to me and to you.

1. It's Good to Know When You're Going Through Trouble

In the first place, knowing that there's an unseen world is a great, great resource, when you're going through trouble. And we're all going to go through troubles. If you've not had any troubles lately, just settle down and hang on—there are some out there waiting just for you that have your name on them. And being a Christian does not make you immune.

As a matter of fact, let's go back—and we're in 2 Corinthians chapter 4—let's just back up all the way to verse 4, and look at it for a moment. I'm going to read an extended passage, so I want you to listen carefully. Let's go back to verse 3: "*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:*"—now, lost people cannot understand

spiritual things, because they don't have the spiritual antenna and receiver to receive station J-e-s-u-s—"in whom the god of this world..."—and notice this *god* is spelled with a little *g*, that is, Satan, who is the god of this world, not Almighty God; the god of this world, spelled with a little *g*—"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). Now these people are blind. How are they blind? Not blind physically, but they are blind spiritually. Who is the blinder? Satan, the god of this world. He has "*blinded the minds of them which believe not.*" Why? Because he doesn't want the light of the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ, who is the image of God, to shine unto them.

Then, the Apostle Paul says, "*For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.*" Well, Paul, if you preach Jesus, God's going to bless you; the world's going to be good to you; and you won't have any problems. Well, just hold on, and see if that is true. He says, "*For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure*"—that is, "the glory of God"—"*in earthen vessels,*"—"in clay pots"—"*that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us*" (2 Corinthians 4:5–7). We are like an old clay pot, and the only thing that makes us worthwhile—or, anything good about me, you, or any other person on the face of this earth—is Jesus Christ, the treasure that is in the clay pot.

And then, Paul describes the difficulty that he got in. He said, "*We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed;*"—what he's saying is, "I've been knocked down, but I haven't been knocked out. I keep getting up"—"*always bearing about in the body*"—that is, "my body, this clay pot"—"*the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body*" (2 Corinthians 4:8–10).

Now what Paul is saying is, "Listen. It's not me they're after; it's Jesus. I simply have Jesus on the inside of this clay pot. And the reason they keep striking the pot, the reason they keep after this earthen vessel, is because there is a treasure in this earthen vessel. And rather than treasuring the treasure, they detest the treasure. And so they're after me." But he says, "When I endure these blows, I only endure the blows for Jesus, who took the blows for me. I bear about in my body the dying of the Lord Jesus, because He died for me. And when I react with love, when I react with wisdom, when I react with courage and gentleness, what do they see? When the clay pot is broken, they see Jesus Christ shining out. They see the treasure, when that vessel is broken." So he says, "*Always bearing about in the body*"—that is, "my body"—"*the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.*" People will see

Jesus in you when you react to trouble, heartache, sorrow, and pain like a Christian ought to.

And notice what he says, in verse 11: *“For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.”* That is, he’s saying, “The more I die to myself, the more I’m willing to bear suffering for the Lord Jesus, the more His life radiates out of me.” And he goes on to say: *“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and present us with you”* (2 Corinthians 4:11–14). He says, “Listen. I believe what I believe; and, therefore, I say what I say. I may die; they may kill me. But I know that I know that the God who raised up Jesus is going to raise me up also, and He’s going to raise you up also; and, together we’re going to meet the Lord.”

So he goes on to say why he suffers. He says, *“For all things are for your sakes, that the abundant grace might through the thanksgiving of many redound to the glory of God.”* And then, he says, *“For which cause we faint not;”*—he’s just saying, “I don’t quit”—*“but though our outward man perish...”*—“though they beat on this clay pot”—*“though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.”* “Well, Paul, how do you do that? What keeps you ticking? What keeps you going? How do you suffer like this? Why, how were you pickled in the Mediterranean? How were you beat with the lictor’s lash? How were you stoned and left for dead? How were you fasting and starving in prison? How, Paul, did you do this?” Well, he tells you, in verse 17: *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen”* (2 Corinthians 4:15–18).

Now when you get into trouble—and especially when you get into trouble for standing up for the Lord Jesus Christ—you had better look into another world. You had better fix your eyes upon the things that cannot be seen, because when you do this, God is going to give you supernatural strength. You will be marching to the tune of a different drummer. Now Paul was perplexed; he didn’t understand it all. He said, “We’re perplexed; we’re distressed.” Just because it didn’t make sense to Paul didn’t mean that it didn’t make sense. And just because it doesn’t make sense now doesn’t mean it won’t make sense later on. The Apostle Paul says, “I don’t understand it, but I look at the things which are not seen.” And the Greek word there, *to look*, literally means, “he fixed his gaze, he looked steadfastly,” at things which other people cannot see.

I quoted Corrie ten Boom this morning. She said, “Look around, and you’ll be distressed. Look within, and you’ll be depressed. Look at Jesus, and you’ll be at rest.” Now that’s what the Apostle Paul was doing here. In times of trouble, you need to see

an unseen world.

2. It's Good to Know When You're Afraid

Now not only in time of trouble, but when you're afraid, you need to see an unseen world. Go back, if you will, to 2 Kings with me, for just a moment, and chapter 6. Open your Bibles to it—2 Kings chapter 6—and I'm going to begin reading here, in verse 8, in just a moment. Now what happened is this: that Elisha is a man of God, and he is a prophet of God. He is a servant. But like any man of God—like the Apostle Paul, and like any man, woman, boy, or girl who tries to live for Jesus—he got into trouble. I've told you before that Jesus *didn't come to get us out of trouble but to get into trouble with us.*

And so here's this man of God; he's in trouble. And verse 8: *"Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel?"* That is, "There's a spy in the camp somewhere." He didn't know that the prophet, the man of God, had been warning the king of Israel. *"And one of his servants said, None, my Lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber"* (2 Kings 6:8–12). You talk about a leak! There was one here, because Elisha was tuned into Heaven—in an unseen world.

"And"—so—*"he said, Go and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him."* That is, "I'm going to put him under arrest." *"And it was told him, saying, Behold, he is in Dothan. Therefore sent he thither horses, and chariots, and a great host:"*—now, here's one little preacher out there, and he's sending a whole army after him—*"and they came by night, and compassed the city about."* Now they want this man of God, so they have cornered around the city with horses, and chariots, and soldiers. *"And when the servant of the man of God was risen early, and gone forth, behold, an host compassed the city both with horses and chariots. And his servant said unto him, Alas, my master! how shall we do?"*—Plain English: "We're in a mess. What are we going to do?"—*"And he answered,"*—and, underscore this—*"Fear not..."*—now, by the way, somebody has said—I've not checked it out—but, 365 times in the Bible—one time for every day in the year—God has said, "Fear not," or, "Don't be afraid," or the equivalent of that—one for every day in the year—*"Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them. And Elisha prayed, and said, LORD, I pray thee, open his eyes, that he may see"* (2 Kings 6:13–17).

Now this is a young man. He probably was not even wearing glasses yet. I began to have to wear them at the age of 42. I can see just out there, where those flowers are real fine. That's why I keep taking mine on and off. But the reason I have to put them on is because the lenses will not adjust in my natural eyes like they used to, so I have to wear these glasses to amplify my reading. But here was a man who was a young man; he was a servant. And the older man says, "Lord, open his eyes, that he may see." *"And the LORD opened the eyes of the young man;"*—not his physical eyes, but his spiritual eyes—*"and he saw: and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha"* (2 Kings 6:17). Now the enemy had his soldiers. God had His soldiers. And the point that I want to make is this: that when you're afraid, and when the devil intimidates you and blusters against you, you need to understand that the angel of the Lord encamps round about those that fear Him. And we need to understand there's an unseen army out there. There's an unseen army about me right now, and around you. The angel of the Lord encamps round about those who fear Him (Psalm 34:7).

Put this verse down—in Psalms chapter 68 and verse 17: *"The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them"* (Psalm 68:17). And what we need to do when we're afraid is to say, "Lord, open my eyes. Help me to see, Lord, that You are with me." So many times, we're in danger and may not even know it. So many times, God may send an angel escort to pick us up, to take us, and to take care of us.

One time, I was in a serious danger—I mean, very serious danger. And that danger passed. I was in danger of—just physical danger—and I went to the Word of God, and it said that, "You will not die, but live," and, "You will bear testimony of Me." (Acts 27:24–25). And God just took that word right off a page and gave it to me. But the strange thing was that, several days after that, I received three letters—one from down in Mississippi, one from in Georgia, and one from another place right here. It said, "Adrian, were you in difficulty? Were you in trouble? God laid it on my heart that I should pray for you." And what a blessing it was to get these letters—they said, "I don't understand it, but God told me to pray especially for you." Such a blessing to know that the angel of the Lord encamps round about those that fear Him! (Psalm 34:7).

God is a good God. He protects His own. And if we could only see, in time of trouble; if we could do as the Apostle Paul did and just say, "Lord, show me the things that are eternal"; if we, in times of fear and persecution, can say, "Lord, open my eyes to see the angels that are encamped round about me that are protecting me"... And nobody can get to you; nothing can get to you except to come through God's angels first. If God allows it, He will allow it for your good and for His glory.

3. It's Good to Know During Times of Temptation

And I'm telling you, folks, in times of temptation—if you ever get tempted, and you

will get tempted—you need to see the unseen world. Turn to Hebrews chapter 11 with me, if you will again. We were there for just a moment; just go back to it again. This is a great chapter on faith. Now look, if you will, in Hebrews chapter 11 and verse 1: *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”* (Hebrews 11:1). Do you see that?

Now with that in mind, go down to verse 24, and look at it: *“By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season...”*—now, Moses could have had fathomless wealth; he could have had a luxurious lifestyle; he could have dabbled in every sinful worldly pleasure that this world offers; he could have been the king of the most powerful nation on earth. But—*“he refused”*—the Bible says—*“to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.”* That is, “He looked to the bottom line; he looked to the conclusion of the whole matter.” Now verse 27: *“By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king:”*—now, here’s the verse I wanted—*“for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible”* (Hebrews 11:24–27).

One more time—one more time—we see that, in time of trouble, you have to see the invisible. In time of fear, you have to see the invisible. In time of temptation, you have to see the invisible. That’s what’s going to keep you going; that’s what’s going to keep you straight.

III. The Reception of the Power of the Unseen World

Now how are you going to bring this into your life? How is this going to be made known to you and real to you? We’ve talked about the reality of this unseen world. We’ve talked to you about the wonderful resources of this unseen world. Now how do you receive this—how do you release the power of the unseen world—in your own life? Go back again to Hebrews chapter 11. And if you’re—I think you’re already there—but just stay tuned with me in Hebrews chapter 11, because we’re going to tell you how to bring the unseen world into this physical, material world in which we’re living.

A. Three Great Enemies of Our Faith

First of all, you need to understand that there are three great enemies of our faith: One is appearance; second—emotion; and third is reason. Those are three big enemies of faith—nothing wrong with any of them, except they war against our faith.

1. Appearance: What We See

For example, appearances can be a great enemy of faith. Hebrews 11, verse 1:

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Now what is hope? Let me give you a definition of hope. We’re here, in Hebrews 11:1: *“Faith is the substance of things hoped for.”* Hope means, “anticipation that is joined with assurance.” That’s what *hope* is—anticipation that is joined with assurance. Faith is the evidence of anticipation that is joined with assurance. Hope means there’s something that we anticipate happening. And it actually has the anticipation of joy. Now sometimes I anticipated a spanking when I was a little boy, but there was no joy. I didn’t hope for it, although I knew it was coming. But *hope* means, “anticipation joined with assurance that is based—and that assurance is based—on divine promise.” So faith comes by hearing the Word of God. When we hear the Word of God, we have this hope. And faith is the substance—or, that’s what makes it real—it’s the substantiation of it.

Now many times we want to see something; we want something we can touch, something we can feel. Remember Thomas doubted the resurrection, and he failed in his faith because he refused to live above “see level.” As a matter of fact, just put this down—John chapter 20, verse 25: *“The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the LORD. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe”* (John 20:25). Now here was a man whose faith was hindered by the desire to see.

Appearances are often the—or, the desire to see—is such a hindrance to faith. Simon Peter learned that we are not to live this way. First Peter 1, verse 8: It speaks of Jesus, *“whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”* (1 Peter 1:8). “Adrian, have you seen Jesus?” No, but I love Him. I’ve not seen Him; but, I love Him, and I believe on Him. Sometimes we just believe what our senses tell us, rather than letting our faith be the evidence of things not seen, things hoped for.

I think I told you a story years ago about an experience that I had. I had been preaching in a revival crusade out near the Everglades, in Florida. And on Saturday night, we had a great glorious crusade. God blessed that little church, and people we’d been fasting for and praying for came to Christ. And I was driving back to Fort Pierce, where I was a pastor, and I was driving a little Volkswagen Beetle—a little Volkswagen automobile. And it ran out of gas on a dark back road out near the Florida Everglades. It was swampy; it was dark; and it was raining. And I thought to myself, “How anti-climactic can this be? I’ve just been to a great revival meeting; and now, I’m sitting out on a lonely road, miles from nowhere, and it’s raining. And nobody knows I’m out here. It’s late at night. What shall I do?”

Well, I was so full of the Spirit of God—I mean, I was in a state of revival. I had been

fasting, and praying, and seeking God; and, God was so real to me. I just said, “Well Lord, I’m going to pray.” And I prayed to God, and I asked God what to pray, because I believe with all of my heart that *the prayer that gets to Heaven is the prayer that starts in Heaven*. What we do is close the circle. And so I wanted God to lay on my heart what to pray for. And I felt a distinct impression that I would pray this: that the first automobile that came along would stop and pick me up. And I checked it out. I prayed out loud. I said, “Lord, is this what You want me to pray?” And I felt the faith in my heart.

Have you ever felt faith in your heart? Now if you’ve felt faith, you know what faith is. There are times when we pray, and we say, “Lord, I believe,” and we know we don’t believe; we just say we believe. We think if we say it, it’ll make it true. Have you ever been there? You know, we just say, “Lord, I’m really believing You for this,” but we know we’re not believing, and God knows we’re not believing it. But we say it anyway. But this time, I knew I was believing. I knew that God had put this faith in my heart. And if you’ve ever lived by faith long enough and had experiences with faith, you know—at least you think you know—you’ve got real faith there in your heart. And you know, without faith, it’s impossible to please Him. And you don’t get anything from God if you don’t pray in faith. Pray *and* believe—you’ll receive; *pray and* doubt—you’ll do without. And so you’ve got to pray in faith.

And so I said, “Lord, is this what You want me to pray?” This impression, I believe, was from the Holy Spirit. He said, “Yes.” So I said, “Well, thank You, Lord.” I said, “Lord, I’m going to lock You in on this.” And I wasn’t being arrogant, but I said, “Lord, I’m going to ask that the first car that stops will pick me up.” But I said, “Lord, if the second or third car stops, I’ll not count it as an answer to prayer. But if that first car stops and picks me up, nobody will ever convince me it was not an answer to prayer.” And so I prayed, and I thanked God for what was about to transpire.

And then, I saw the car coming on that lonely South Florida road in a rainstorm, and I saw him. And he began to slow down, and slow down, and almost stop. And I thought, “Well, this is wonderful.” “How God answers prayer,” I’m thinking to myself. I rolled the window down and smiled a little to help the Lord. And he came right alongside of me. He stopped his car, and I’m over here. I look at him, and he looks at me. Our faces meet, I think, “This is wonderful.” And then, at that time, he puts the pedal to the metal, and his car just disappeared in the inky darkness. I felt the exhaust fumes come up my nostrils, and I just heard the roar of his car, as he left me sitting there in the rain. I’ve never been so—well, maybe I have—but few times been so downcast, as I was right then. I thought, “God, I can’t understand it. I just knew—I just knew—that You heard my prayer.”

And I said something that may sound sacrilegious—I said, “Well, I’ll get the next one myself, Lord.” I stuck out my thumb for the next one, and that car went by. And another

went by, and another went by. And they weren't going to stop for a guy like me on a night like that in the rain. So I made up my mind I'd just have to get out and walk. I only had one fresh-pressed suit. It was Saturday night. I was going to wear the suit I was wearing that night to preach the next Sunday morning in my church in Fort Pierce, Florida. I got out of the car, and I walked about as far from here to that flag over there, when an automobile came from the direction toward which I was walking. He slowed up, shined his headlights on me, rolled down the window, and said, "You need a ride, don't you?" I said, "Well, yes sir. I do." He said, "I came to get you." I thought, "Well, who knows I'm out here?" And then, I looked at that car. You know which car it was, don't you? It was number one; it was the first car.

I got in the car, wiped the rain off my brow, and I said, "Before we go anywhere, I've got a very important question I need to ask you: What made you come for me? Didn't you pass by here before?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Did you almost stop?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Well, why didn't you stop?" He said, "I was afraid." I said, "I can understand that, but what made you come back to get me?" He said, "Mister, it beats me." That's what he said—"it beats me." He said, "I got down here to the crossroads, and something told me I must come back and pick you up." Now can you imagine a man going all the way down there, turning around, and coming back to get me? I almost shouted, but the only thing that kept me from shouting praise to God is I wanted to kick myself in the seat of the pants for getting out and getting my head wet.

Now the point is—here's the point: Sometimes every one of our physical senses tells us that God is not... That night, my eyes, my ears, my nose, the gas fumes, the rain on my head, everything physical said God had not heard my prayer. But He had—He had. And so we have to learn, sometimes, to battle with those sensory perceptions that we have.

2. Emotion: What We Feel

Now another thing that keeps us from living in the realm of the invisible is our emotions—our emotions. Sometimes, it's what we see that battles against our faith, and sometimes it is our emotions. And that's very much akin to, "If we can't see it, then we want to feel it." Have you ever tried to pray sometimes, and your prayers just didn't feel juicy? You know what I'm talking about? Your prayers are dry, and it just seems like you're going through some sort of a meaningless exercise. Well, folks, listen. Don't let your emotions keep you from believing God. Your emotions really don't have a lot to do with it—the work of God. God does His deepest work in your spirit, not in your emotions. *Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. God doesn't do His deepest work in the shallowest part.*

And there are times when your emotions just are not hitting on all eight. You can wake up some mornings, and have a dull headache, and try to have your quiet time,

and you say, “Well, I’m just a hypocrite. I don’t feel like praying, and God doesn’t hear my prayer. God’s a billion light years away.” And you’ve just got an upset stomach, and a headache, and whatever; you can’t concentrate. And what you... If you’re not careful, you’ll get to feeling unspiritual. And then, sometimes you maybe take an Alka-Seltzer or something. You get to feeling a little better. Your mind clears up. The sun comes out. Your headache goes away. And you go back; you have a wonderful quiet time. You say, “Boy, I just had a... I’m so close to God.” You’re the same person you were when you had a headache. You think God’s in those two Alka-Seltzer tablets? No. Listen, folks. You’re just as close to God. When you come to God in prayer, don’t offer God the brass of your emotions; come with both hands filled with the incense of Jesus’ Word. Pray in the name of Jesus. And how you feel really doesn’t have a lot to do with it. It’s not what you see; it’s not what you feel.

I’ve found that, so many times in preaching. Now folks, I’ve been preaching for a long time, and I’ve preached a lot of sermons. I’m going to let you in on a secret, if you won’t tell anybody else. Now promise you just won’t tell. Here’s the secret: There are some times I don’t feel like preaching. You say, “Oh, Adrian, surely you... Oh, you’re always—you’re so full of God, you can hardly wait to preach.” I wish that were true. Sometimes, folks, I come out here—and maybe I’ve been sick, or tired, or whatever; and, I love God—but I come out here. And frankly, there are times, Brother Jim, when, you know, the congregation doesn’t want to sing, and the ushers won’t *ush*. Sometimes the choir sounds like a couple of calves dying in a hailstorm. And I try and preach, and I get my food in a lard bucket, and can’t get it out. And my thoughts won’t come, and my mind gets confused and fogged. And my tongue gets tangled up, or *tang* gets *tungled* up. And I don’t know what to do. And I say, “Oh, Lord, this is awful. I mean, it’s grueling. You ought to try it sometime.” But then, I give the invitation, and all Heaven will break loose—all Heaven will break loose. And God’s saying to me, “Adrian, it’s not your glibness; it’s not your smiles; it’s not your emotions. It’s the power of God that counts.” We need to learn that, over and over again.

3. Reason: What We Think

Sometimes we need to just tap into that invisible world, and in times of trouble, and times of fear, and times of temptation, understand that there is an invisible world out there; there is a real world, and God is working—sometimes, when appearances tell us He’s not; sometimes, when emotions tell us He’s not. And here’s the last thing that’s an enemy of this invisible world: Sometimes reason tells us that God is not working. Remember this morning, when we talked about Philip? And Jesus said, “How are we going to feed all these people?” Philip said, “It would take a year’s labor—the wages of a laboring man for a year. Send them away.” But Jesus said, “They don’t have to go away.” Don’t let your heart, your mind, be limited by logic.

Now I'm not saying that it's wrong to be logical. I like to be logical. I like people who are logical. Faith is not contrary to reason. However, it goes beyond reason. And we have to ask ourselves, so many times, "Are we just simply calculating and figuring, rather than trusting the Lord?"

Conclusion

And let me tell you, folks—and I'm finished—when a man lives above "see level," he's going to see the invisible; and, therefore, he's going to tap into the Unknowable, who is truly knowable, the Lord. And then, he's going to do the impossible, "*for with God all things are possible*" (Mark 10:27).

Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. Now the Bible says of the Lord Jesus, that, while we've not seen Him, we're to love Him (1 Peter 1:8). And you can love Him tonight with having never seen Him. He's very real, and He's closer to you tonight than the person sitting next to you.

If you'd like to be saved, I want to help you to be saved, right now. Would you pray a prayer like this? "Dear God, I'm a sinner, and I'm lost. My sins deserve judgment, but I want mercy. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me. You paid for my sin with Your blood. You said, if I would trust You, You would save me. I do trust You. Thank You for dying for me. Come into my heart now. Forgive my sin; cleanse me; and save me. Now Lord Jesus, I'm weak, but You're strong. So take my life now, and begin to make me what You want me to be. And Lord Jesus, because You died for me, now, I'll live for You. In Your name I pray. Amen."

How to Control Your Thought Life

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 30, 1988

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 4:3–6

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Salvation Factor
 - II. The Sincerity Factor
 - III. The Stronghold Factor
 - IV. The Surrender Factor
- Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's Word, the Kingdom book, and open it, if you would, please, to 2 Corinthians chapter 4. In a moment, we're going to begin reading in verse 3—2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 3.

Now ladies and gentlemen, we live in a world that has gone wild. I want to tell you exactly where the problem is. The problem is in the minds of people. The problem is in the thought life of the people of this world. In Genesis chapter 6, you find out where God destroyed an entire world, because the imagination of their thoughts, of their hearts, was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5). God had to eradicate a generation simply because of their thought life.

Now let's see what the Word of God has to say about the mind, today. I'm going to be talking to you, today, about how to control your thought life—"How to Control Your Thought Life." That is, how to have mastery over your mind. If there were ever a significant message, this would be it.

Second Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 3, and following: *"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world"*—now, notice that's a little *g*, and it refers to Satan as *"the god of this world,"*—that is, the god of this age—*"hath blinded the minds..."*—underscore that phrase—*"hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Corinthians 4:3–6).

Now this deals with the problem of the mind, and a blinded mind. I thought of the

way that Satan is battling to control the thought life of America's teenagers. I was reading recently that teenagers, the American teenager, from the age from the 7th to the 12th grade—are you listening to this? Listen—on an average—this is the average teenager—listen to 10,500 hours of rock music.” “Well,” you say, “How long is that?” That is only 500 hours shy of all of the time he spent in school, from 1st to 12th grade—10,500 hours.

Now we say, “It’s eleven o’clock.” Do you know where your kids are?” Do you know what your kids are listening to? Do you have any idea of the promiscuity, the perversion, and the fatalism, that’s being pumped into their heads over and over and over again? Not only the lyrics, but drummed in, drummed in, drummed in to the minds of kids. Many parents have no idea. Yet, even the National Education Association predicts that some of the 5,000 teenage suicides that we have in America every year—what a tragedy!—that some of these suicides, many of them, are caused by the fatalism and the depression that comes from listening to this kind of music.

Suffice it to say that the devil is controlling the minds, through the media, of many of our young people. Somebody has said, “You let me write the songs that a nation sings, and I don’t care who makes its laws.” You see, the devil is controlling the thought life of so many. But thank God, he doesn’t have to! I mean, there is a way to gain control of your mind. I want to speak to you, today, in a very significant message on how to control your thought life—“How to Control Your Thought Life.”

I. The Salvation Factor

Now I want to give you four principles. The very first principle, or the very first factor, that I want to give you is what I call the salvation factor—the salvation factor. You must get saved. You must get saved.

You see, the devil doesn’t want you to know the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look in verse 4: *“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not”* (2 Corinthians 4:4). Do you know what the devil wants to do to you, right now? The devil, right now, wants to pull the veil of darkness over your mind. He doesn’t want you to hear what I’m about to say. He doesn’t want a shaft of gospel sunlight to penetrate the dark, murky recesses of your soul. The devil wants you to stay in the dark. He doesn’t want God to turn the light on in your soul. He wants to blind your mind.

Now let me say something very significant here. You need to understand there’s a difference between your mind and your brain. I didn’t used to know that. I never had really thought about it. But it’s a fundamental thought. You need to understand that there is a difference between the mind and the brain. The brain is what the mind thinks with.

The relationship of mind and brain would be very similar to the relationship of a

pianist and a piano. You see, the piano is the brain. The pianist is the mind that uses the brain. Some people have a better piano than others, you know. Some people have a better brain, because they have more gray matter. Their brain is of a higher quality than other people's brains. Let me tell you, there's a difference between the mind and the brain.

For example, who plays that piano makes a lot of difference as to what comes out of it. Do you want for me to tell you the most dangerous thing in the world? The most dangerous thing in the world is a man with a bad mind and a good brain. Hmm? A bad mind, and a good brain. He is a clever devil. Now it is the mind that the Bible speaks of, that I'm talking about, not the gray matter. When you get saved, you don't get a new brain. You get a new mind. And the god of this world has blinded the minds of them that believe not.

The devil doesn't hurt your intelligence. What he does is distort your mind. He blinds your mind. Why? The Bible says, *"For as he thinketh...so is he"* (Proverbs 23:7). Proverbs 4, verse 23 says: *"Keep thy heart with all diligence..."*—now, the Bible word *heart* here does not mean, "the organ that pumps the blood," but it means, "the center of your thought life"—*"Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life"* (Proverbs 4:23). Then, Proverbs chapter 23, verse 7: *"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he"* (Proverbs 23:7).

The great Ralph W. Emerson said this: "A man is what he thinks about all day long." Whatever you think, that's what you are. As a man thinks, so is he. Solomon also said that. You see, the thing has to be in the mind before it can be in the life.

That airplane that flew at Kitty Hawk was in the mind of the Wright Brothers before it ever got into the air. That great song that Debby just sang, "The Unshakable Kingdom," had to be in the heart and mind of the one who wrote it before it could ever be sung in this place. It is your mind that controls you.

Recently I heard about the legendary Bear Bryant. The great coach at Alabama had his team on the field, and they were playing an archrival. There were only two minutes left in the game, and Alabama was ahead by five points. It was kind of a strange football score, but five points—evidently, a field goal and a safety—they were ahead by five points, with two minutes left.

Alabama has the ball, and they're on the opponent's 20-yard line. They call a play, and the number one quarterback for Alabama is hurt on that play. So Bear Bryant pulls him out, and he takes the second quarterback—the second-string quarterback—and he gives him these instructions. He says to him, "Now listen. I want you to go in there, and run three more plays. Regardless, don't throw the ball; do not put the ball in the air. Just try to keep from losing yardage, if we don't score. If you don't score by then, the clock will be down so far that we'll depend upon our defense to win the game for us. Okay?"

“Yes sir, coach.”

The boy went in, and on the second down there was no yardage gain at all. On the third down, they gained a yard. On the fourth down—the clock winding down—this rookie quarterback takes the ball, he turns to hand it off to this man coming through, there’s a bobble, the man doesn’t catch the ball, and the quarterback still has the ball in his hands. And so he begins to move out, and to try to get away from the defense. He looks over there in the end zone where there is one of his players. There’s a split end standing right over there, just waiting like this with his arms wide open.

This boy knew he could throw the ball that far. He knew he could put it right in there. He knew this would tie up the game. So he just put the ball right over there to that boy right over there with his waiting hands. But what he did not know was the All-American safety on that other end had been watching the entire thing. This boy who had lightning-like speed had been watching. And when the ball was put in the air, he zipped over there, plucked the ball out of the air, started down the field with only one person between him and a touchdown, and it was that boy who had thrown that ball. He ran with this quarterback behind him the entire length of the field, and finally, on the two-yard line, the rookie quarterback caught up with him, and brought him down, as the whistle blew, and the game ended. Bama had won by five points.

After the game, Bear Bryant went over, and was shaking hands with the other coach. And the other coach said, “Well, I just don’t understand it. According to our scouting reports, your second quarterback is slow. And our man is the fastest man on the field. How did he catch him?” Bear Bryant, in his southern drawl, said, “Well, you have to understand. Yo’ boy was runnin’ for six points. My boy was runnin’ for his life.” There’s the difference. It’s the mind. Not the legs—the mind.

As a man thinks—as a man thinks—so is he. Now the very first principle is the salvation principle. The Bible says that we have a mind that is at war with God, if we’re an unsaved person. Just jot these scriptures down.

Romans chapter 8 and verse 6, and following: *“For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind”—*that means the fleshly mind—*“is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”* (Romans 8:6–7). You will never make a godly mind out of an ungodly mind just simply by trying to train that ungodly mind. It can’t be done.

Colossians chapter 1, verse 21: *“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled”* (Colossians 1:21). You see, salvation gives you a new mind. The Bible says that we have the mind of Christ—those of us who’ve been saved.

First Corinthians chapter 2 and verse 16: *“the mind of Christ”* (1 Corinthians 2:16). We literally get a new mind.

If you would control your thought life, the very first thing that I'm going to say is the salvation factor: the carnal mind must be converted. Okay? The carnal mind, which is at war with God, must be converted. If you don't start there, then you're never going to go any further.

II. The Sincerity Factor

Now there's a second factor. Not only the salvation factor, but there is the sincerity factor. Just fast-forward, if you will, to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and read with me, in verse 2, and I want you to get the picture. The Apostle Paul thinks of himself as a father. He thinks of the church as the bride of Christ. He thinks of Christ as the bridegroom. What Paul is saying is, "As a father, I am bringing you, and I am presenting you to Jesus Christ."

Now catch the figure of speech. Paul says, "*For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*" Now the word *chaste* here means, "pure"—"I want to present you as a pure virgin to the Lord Jesus Christ." Notice, in verse 3, this fear that Paul has—this apprehension that Paul has—this danger that Paul sees: "*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ*" (2 Corinthians 11:2–3).

Now look at the word *simplicity*. The word *simplicity* means, "single-minded devotion." It may be translated—it is, in some places, translated—"the sincerity that's in Christ." It doesn't mean that a Christian is just in the ecclesiological kindergarten, when it says, "*the simplicity that's in Christ.*" No, he's not talking about that at all.

But the word *simplicity* here in the *King James* means, "single-mindedness; a heartfelt devotion." That is, I am to love Joyce, my wife, with single-mindedness, and with sincerity. There's to be no other girlfriend, and no other thought. She is to be number one in my life. I can tell you, frankly and gladly, she is. She's to be number one in my life. She has been since we courted, and she will be till death do us part.

But now listen. That's what the word *simplicity* means. It actually means, "single-minded sincere devotion to Jesus." Because, you see, a divided mind means a perverted mind; and then, it means a broken relationship. I am to have, not a defiled and divided heart, and then a defiled life, and then a destroyed relationship with Jesus. I am to keep my relationship to Christ sincere. That is, I'm to be single-minded.

Why? Because the carnal mind must be converted. But oh, my dear friend, we need to understand that a converted mind may be corrupted. Just because you're saved, that doesn't mean that you're not going to have to battle about your thought life. Paul, here, is talking to Christians. He said, "*That I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.*" But he said, "*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his*

subtly, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

III. **The Stronghold Factor**

Now the first principle is the salvation principle. The second principle is the sincerity principle, or the single-minded principle. That is, you must say, with a single mind, “I am going to give everything to Jesus Christ.” Because now, there’s a third factor that Paul talks about: the salvation factor; the sincerity factor; and then, there’s the stronghold factor.

Now go back to chapter 10, if you will—2 Corinthians chapter 10—and look in verse 3, and following: “*For though we walk in the flesh,*”—that is, we’re in these human bodies—“*we do not war after the flesh.*”—now, he tells us there’s a war, but it’s not a war of the flesh—“*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal...*”—the word *carnal* means, “fleshly.” A carnivorous animal is what? A flesh-eating animal. And so *carnus* is the Latin word from which we get our English word. *Carnus*, the Latin word for flesh, is the word from which we get our English word *carnal*—“*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,*”—that is, they’re not fleshly—“*but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;*”)”—now, underscore the word *stronghold*—“*casting down imaginations,*”—underscore that—“*and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,*”—underscore the word *knowledge*—“*and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5). Do you see *imaginations, knowledge, and thought*? It’s very obvious here he’s talking about the thought life. He’s talking about the mind. He’s talking about the mind.

Now what have I said? I’ve said there’s the salvation factor. The salvation factor tells us the carnal mind must be converted. But there’s also the sincerity factor, which warns us that a converted mind may be corrupted. Then, there is the stronghold factor that tells us that a corrupted mind must be conquered.

You see, here’s what the devil does. The devil will seduce a believer. He will get into a believer’s mind very subtly, and he will put into that believer’s mind what the Bible calls a *stronghold*. It may be translated, “a fortress.” The Greek word means, “to make firm.” That is, the devil gets firmly entrenched in the hearts and minds of people with certain ideas, certain thoughts, and certain obsessions, that the Bible calls a *stronghold*.

Now let me just illustrate what some of these strongholds might be. It is a system of thought that brings you, as a believer, into bondage. The devil uses that system of thought to establish in your mind imaginations. Now the *King James* calls it their *imaginations*. The word *imagination* is the word that we get our word *logic* from, in the Greek, or *logistics*. That is, the devil is warring a logistical war against God, and he’s very clever. He has seduced a believer. He has subtly come into the mind of a believer. He has implanted into the mind of that believer a stronghold, a fortress. He gets inside

that fortress, and with logistics he now wars at God. Logically, with philosophies and thoughts, he wars against the idea of God. He always wants to war against God, and he wants to use your mind as a battlefield to war against God. Because the devil knows, if he can control your mind, he can control you. Because as a man thinketh, so is he (Proverbs 23:7).

Now we're talking here, now, about Christians. What are some of these strongholds? I don't have time to just talk about them, so let me just list them, and see if we're talking about you.

Compulsiveness: Do you find yourself just compelled to do certain things? Acting compulsively. You say, "I don't know why I do that. I just do it."

Obsessions: Are you just obsessed with certain things that you think about all of the time?

Fixations, fears: Do you have fears that lurk in the subconscious of your mind, and they're always there? It's a stronghold. "*God hath not given us [a] spirit of fear*" (2 Timothy 1:7).

Bitterness and resentment: There you are, sitting in church this morning, well dressed, with an open Bible, but down in your heart is a seething cauldron of hate and bitterness. It is a stronghold. You wish it were not there. But you don't know how to get rid of it.

Uncontrollable lust: I'm speaking to some men who would be embarrassed, if their fellow Christians, their wives, and their children knew the hold that lust and pornography have in their lives. They're not able to shake it. It is there. It is a stronghold.

Phobias and criticisms.

Distrust: the inability to trust anybody or anything.

It's not just a passing thing that comes through your mind. There is a fortress. Satan, who has seduced you, has taken control. He has moved in. He is logistically warring against God with these imaginations, and he's there. A carnal mind must be converted. A converted mind can be corrupted. A corrupted mind must be conquered.

Now listen to what he says. He says that we can take back the fortress. This is what he is saying, in verse 4: "*For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds*" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

What are the weapons of our warfare? The Word of God, prayer, repentance, the blood of Christ, the authority of the Holy Spirit, so many of them. I don't even have time to talk about the weapons of our warfare. But let me tell you what they are not. They are not carnal. You listen to me.

The weapons of our warfare are not education. You'll never control your mind by education. I'm not against education, but you educate a man without Christ, you make a clever devil.

The weapons of our warfare are not psychiatry and psychology. They are good, as far as they go, but they do not dispossess Satan, and take him out of his stronghold. It cannot be done with psychiatry and psychology. They have their place, but the weapons of our warfare are not carnal. Carnal people can use psychology and psychiatry. Carnal people can use education.

I'll tell you, the weapon of our warfare is not positive thinking. Many Christians get hooked on positive thinking. Did you know that many Christians don't know the difference between positive thinking and faith? Did you know that? They think that faith and positive thinking are the same thing. They are 2 billion light years away from each other. Not positive thinking—positive thinking is fine, but it doesn't always work.

A little boy came home and he said, "Dad, I think I'm going to fail my math test." He said, "Son, don't say that. Think positively." He said, "I'm positive I'm going to fail it."

Now positive thinking is not going to release you from the stronghold of Satan. They all have their place. They're all fine. But "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal; they are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

Now what you need to understand is this: that, when you use your spiritual weapons—the blood of Christ, the Word of God, and the authority that's in the Lord Jesus Christ—you can take back that conquered ground that you gave to Satan, and conquer it yourself, and dispossess Satan. But the only way you're going to do it is with the authority of Jesus Christ, and the Word of God.

I was reading recently about a woman in St. Louis who was living with a man who was not her husband. She had allowed this man to come into the apartment, and he was living there in the apartment with her. She got under conviction. She knew the thing she was doing was wrong. She wanted to break up the relationship, and she told this man that he had to move out.

Do you know what he said? He said, "I'm not moving out." He said, "You invited me in here." He said, "We've been living like this, and legally you can't put me out." She didn't know whether legally she could or not. She got a lawyer. And the lawyer said, "Legally, you can make him move." And she got a judgment from the court—a court order—that said he had to go. And she read it to him, and said, "Now you're going to move out, or I'm going to call the law on you." And grudgingly, he moved out, and she changed the key.

And my dear friend, I want to tell you that, when you get right with God, and you bring the weapons of our warfare against Satan, legally, you can move him out. That's the only way you're going to move him out is legally—with the authority of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "*I give unto you power...over all the power of the enemy*" (Luke 10:19). What you can say to Satan—if you have that stronghold that is there—you can say to Satan, "Satan, I'm not asking you, I'm not pleading with you, and I'm not reasoning with

you—I am telling you, in the name of Jesus Christ, and by the authority of the Word of God, my heart belongs to Jesus Christ. I've confessed those sins, I've repudiated that stronghold, and I've put it under the blood. God has forgiven me; you have no right, and no authority. You are trespassing on my Father's property, and, in the name of Jesus, be gone."

Now you're going to have to take back a stronghold—I mean the weapons of our warfare, there's a battle—and you're going to have to go in there with the Word of God, and the authority of God, and take back that stronghold that you've let Satan have. There's a war and "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds."

IV. The Surrender Factor

The salvation factor: the carnal man must be converted—the carnal mind must be converted; the sincerity factor: the converted mind can be corrupted; the stronghold factor: a corrupted mind must be conquered; then, my dear friend, the surrender factor. Listen. It's not just enough that you take back your mind. If that's all you do, before long, you're going to be back in the same difficulty.

Now look here, if you will again—2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 5: "*Casting down imaginations,*"—that's what we're to do: say, "Devil out"—"*and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,*"—now, watch this. It doesn't end there. But notice what else it says. It says—"*and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:5). That's the surrender factor. You cannot be neutral. Not only must Satan be dethroned—Christ must be enthroned in the thought life. This is what Romans 12, verses 1 and 2, calls, "*the renewing of your mind*" (Romans 12:2). The renewing of your mind. You bring that mind back to Jesus Christ, and you enthrone Jesus Christ. You cannot be neutral in your thought life.

I've told you this before, but I want to give you a glorious thought—a glorious thought. No man can think two things at one time. Isn't that wonderful? If you're thinking what is right, you cannot be thinking what is wrong. Let me give you another thought. You can choose your thoughts like you can choose your friends. Did you know that? You can refuse to let things into your mind.

You go to the airport, and you walk through that little door, you know, that has got that sensor that tells whether you have any metal. You know, where you pack. In the gap, you walk through there, and if you've got too many keys in your pocket, or too much change in your pocket, that sensor says, "aaaaaaa." You back out, and she hands you that little dish, and you take everything out of your pocket, and put it in that dish. I told her the other day, "I gave at the office." Huh, she didn't buy that. I put that stuff in that dish, and then you go through. And it checks to see whether you're clean or

not.

I've often thought I'd like to have one of those built on every door of this sanctuary that would detect sin, and, you know, unconfessed sin. If you tried to get out of here without getting right, it'd say, "aaaaaaaa—go back in, and let him preach some more." You know, wouldn't that be wonderful? To just have one at every door. You couldn't get out, unless your heart was clean, pure, and right with God.

Now my dear friend, you ought to have something like that on your mind that just screens out the thoughts that keep you from thinking these things. You can choose your thoughts like you choose your friends, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience. Let the Lord Jesus Christ screen your thought life.

Conclusion

Now you may think that what I'm saying is just sanctified psychology. But that's where you're wrong, mister. It's the Word of God—it's the Word of God. The carnal mind must be converted, but that's not enough. You must beware, lest the converted mind be corrupted. But if the converted mind is corrupted, then the corrupted mind can be conquered. The conquered mind can be controlled by bringing every thought to Jesus Christ. You can choose your thoughts just like you choose your friends. You can say with the Apostle Paul that, "*We have the mind of Christ*" (2 Corinthians 2:16). "As a man thinketh, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7). So if you think like Christ, whom are you going to be like? Jesus. Isn't that wonderful? Praise God.

Your New House

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: April 19, 1992

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:8

“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:1

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Introduction

Now would you be finding in God’s Word 2 Corinthians chapter 5? I want to talk to you about “Your New House.” I don’t know whether you’ve ever had the privilege of moving into a brand-new house or not, but one day you will. And we have a wonderful, wonderful promise here, in the Word of God. I want you to see what it says—2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 1: *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”* (2 Corinthians 5:1) Now when God says, *“Our earthly house,”* what’s He talking about? When He says, *“This tabernacle,”* what is He talking about? He’s talking about your body that the Bible calls “an earthly house.”

I remember reading somewhere about John Quincy Adams when he was eighty years of age. And someone asked John Quincy Adams, “How is John Quincy Adams today?” “Well,” he said, “John Quincy Adams is very well, thank you. But the house that he’s living in is not doing so well. As a matter of fact, it is quite dilapidated. As a matter of fact, I think I shall be moving out of it very soon. But,” he said, “John Quincy Adams is doing very well, thank you.” He had a good insight. You see, the body is just the house

that John Quincy Adams lived in. And he said, “It’s getting run down; it’s getting dilapidated. But,” he said, “I’m going to be moving into a new house, and I’m looking forward to that.” And so am I, and so are you.

The Bible calls these bodies in which we live “*our earthly house.*” (2 Corinthians 5:1) You live in a body, and that is your earthly house. But this earthly house that you live in is going to die. And the Scripture that we look at today and the resurrection that we celebrate today tell us that death *is a fact to be faced, but it is not a force to be feared* And I thank God for that.

Now I want us to think about your new house, today, and I want us to think about your desire for a new house. Then I want us to think about the design of that new house. And then I want us to think about the deed for that house that you have that, one day, because Jesus rose, you are going to move into.

I. We Have the Desire for a New House

Now, first of all, let’s talk about the God-given desire that you have for a new house. Did you know that God is working to make you dissatisfied with the house that you live in right now, and that a part of the problems that we have are engineered by God to make us dissatisfied with our old house?

For example, if you’ll go back—we started reading in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 1—but, if you’ll go back just a little bit, you’ll pick up the thought. I want to remind you that the chapter division that we have there is only put there by the translators; it was not put there by the apostle Paul. Somebody has said that the chapter divisions were put there to keep preachers from preaching too long. So you just back up a little bit, and you’ll get a running start on what Paul is talking about in chapter 4, that leads up to chapter 5.

A. Our Earthly House Is in a Perishing Condition

For example, look, if you will, in chapter 4 and verse 16—he’s talking about our earthly house, and he says, “*For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.*” (2 Corinthians 4:16) So there is the outer man: that’s the body. There’s the inward man: that’s the spirit. The outer man is perishing; it is dying. My friend, you, right now, are in a perishing condition. I don’t want to be gruesome about it, but I want to tell you what you are doing this morning: You are dying; you are just sitting there, dying. All of us are dying a step at a time.

Think of life as a race, and you are being pursued by death. When you were a youngster, you started out, and you looked behind you, and there was a runner way back there. And you’re just running along; you’re not worried about him. He is so far behind; you don’t worry about him at all. You’re just running along fine in life’s race. But,

you know, when you get to be what some call middle age—and, by the way, that's always a strange term. You ask a 55-year-old man, "How old are you?" and he says, "Well, I'm middle-aged." How many 110-year-old men do you know?—but, anyway, when you get to be whatever we call middle age, and you're running along, and you look back, and that runner that was so far behind you, he's a lot closer now than he used to be. But that's all right; you're going along. And then, suddenly, your legs begin to get weak, and you're not running as you used to. And it seems like he is gaining strength. And you look behind you, and he's getting closer and closer and closer. And it seems like now, for every step you take, he takes two. And some can feel his breath on the back of your neck. Friend, I want to tell you, there's a runner behind you, and he's gaining on you every day. You may be young; you may be old—but he's going to catch you. He's behind you.

And your body is in, my dear friend, a perishing condition. Look at it, in verse 16: "*Though our outward man perish.*" (2 Corinthians 4:16)

B. Our Earthly House Is in a Passing Condition

Not only is it in a perishing condition—that is very obvious—it's in a passing condition. Look, in verse 17: "*For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,*"—are you being afflicted? It's temporary, my dear friend—"worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;"—the suffering that you have now, my dear friend, is just the black velvet upon which the diamond of God's glory is going to be revealed—"while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen..."—have you ever begun to look at the things that can't be seen? When you begin to see the invisible, my dear friend, then you're looking through the eyes of God—"while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal;"—you know what that means? "Temporary; of time." They are temporal; they are passing away—"but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:17–18)

Now friend, everything that you can see, that's just temporary. This rug I'm on, it's temporary. This pulpit is temporary; these clothes are temporary. These flowers—they are temporary. It's all temporary. But oh, my dear friend, there's an unseen world out there that is eternal.

I want to say this about this old house that you're living in: It's perishing and it's passing. It's perishing; it's passing. It's just passing away. And sometimes, we don't think it will.

I was thinking about your heart. You know, we think a lot about our heart and cardiovascular strength. When does your heart begin to beat—when you are born? Oh no. When you were a beginning baby, there, in your mother, in her womb, that heart

began to beat—that little baby. Friend, when you abort a baby, you are not just getting rid of tissue. There's a little baby in there. Then you get to be a little child; you get out there on the playground, running and playing—that heart is just beating along, just going so good. Then, you get to be a young man, playing football, pumping iron—that heart gets strong, keeps on beating. Then you get to be a little older; you meet that girl that you are going to marry—it just begins to beat all the more. And then you get into your life's work, and your heart just keeps on beating, beating—forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty, ninety, stop. You're gone—you're gone. So far as this world is concerned, you're gone.

Did you know, my dear friend, that there are some who are sitting in this building this morning—all there is between you and hell is a heartbeat. That's all—that's all. Thank God, between me and hell, there's a cross, and Jesus Christ is on it. Hallelujah! He is risen! He is risen, indeed! You're good. Thank you. That's good.

C. **Our Earthly House Is in a Painful Condition**

Listen, my dear friend. Thank God for the resurrected Christ. These bodies of ours—these bodies of ours—they are in a perishing condition, and they are in a passing condition. And my dear friend, they are in a painful condition.

Chapter 5 and verse 2—look at it: *“For in this we groan.”* (2 Corinthians 5:2) Look, if you will, in verse 4: *“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened”—“being burdened.”* (2 Corinthians 5:4) Oh, friend—friend, listen. When you live in this old tabernacle, you're going to know your pains, your heartaches, your woes, your moans, your groans, your tears, your fears. And God has engineered it that way to make you a little homesick for heaven. We groan.

If you'll think about it, there's not a person in this building—hardly any, if there are any—who do not have two things: sorrow and pain. If you think about it, you're probably hurting somewhere, right now. If you'll just stop and think about it, somewhere in your body there is a pain. It may be a toothache; it may be a headache. It may be the arches that your shoes are not fitting. Those Easter shoes you bought, lady—they match your outfit, but they sure don't fit your feet. And you are feeling a pain right now. And what I'm trying to say is this, that somewhere, somehow, we feel pain. And what that pain is, what that groaning is—it's a messenger that God has given us to make us sick and tired of this old house, make us just a little homesick for heaven.

And so what you find, first of all, is the desire for a new house God is just putting into our hearts and minds. The longer we live, the more we feel it—a desire to go to heaven. I used to think, when I was a young man, I never wanted to cease living here and go on to heaven. But I'll tell you the truth: It would not bother me a skinny minute to go to heaven right now. As a matter of fact, I am looking forward it. I just hate to leave my

ministry; I just hate to leave my loved ones. But so far as going to heaven, friend, I want to cut out and go. I really mean that with all of my heart. It's just something that God puts in our hearts the longer we live, and that is a desire for our new house.

II. We Have the Design for a New House

I'll tell you something else, dear friend: Not only do we have the desire for a new house, but we have the design of a new house. God is the architect, and God is the builder. Look, in chapter 5 and verse 1: *"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens"* (2 Corinthians 5:1)

Now Paul was a tentmaker—Paul was a tentmaker. And so when he says, *"This tabernacle,"* he's saying that our bodies are like a tent. And I'm sure that he'd seen a lot of the tents that he'd built torn down, and blown away, and so forth. Tents just have a way of getting tattered, and frayed, and decaying, and dissolving. So he calls our bodies a *"tabernacle,"* or a "tent," and he calls it an "old house."

Now Stuart Hamblen was a songwriter. He was led to Christ by Billy Graham. He wrote an old song we used to sing called "This Old House." How many of you remember that song "This Old House"? Yeah. Let me tell you the background for that song. Stuart Hamblin was with a friend, and they were out hunting. And they came upon an old house out in the backwoods. And it was a dilapidated, old house, and the shingles had been blown off the roof, and the windowpanes were broken. And there was an old gate hanging crazily, there, on the fence. And a bony, old hound dog was in the yard, and the door was ajar. And they knew that something was wrong because it looked like the old dog had not been fed for a long time. And they walked up those splintery, old steps and pushed the door open. And when they pushed the door open, went inside, they found the man who used to live in that old house. And he'd died—perhaps in the storm that blew the shingles off the roof, the storm that blew the windowpanes in. And Stu Hamblin got the insight and got the idea for writing that song "This Old House."

But the idea of your body being an old house didn't begin with Stu Hamblin; it didn't even begin with the apostle Paul. Where it really began is back in the book of Ecclesiastes. And just keep your bookmark there, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and go backward to Ecclesiastes chapter 12 here, for a moment, if you want to search it out. Let me show you how these old houses of ours are dissolving. Look, if you will—the writer of Ecclesiastes, Solomon, is describing death. Ecclesiastes chapter 12, verses 3 and following, and he says, *"In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders shall cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the*

voice of a bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets.” (Ecclesiastes 12:3–5)

Now what’s he talking about? Well, that’s such poetic language. He speaks of *“the keepers of the house.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3) What are the keepers of the house? *These* are the keepers of the house: You come at somebody to hurt them, and they put up their keepers—either to show them away, or whatever. These are the keepers of the house. And he says here, *“The keepers of the house are going to begin to tremble.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3) That’s what happens when we get old. And then he says, *“The strong men shall bow themselves.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3) What are the strong men? Your legs—these are the strong men. But after a while, your legs give out on you. Remember how you used to run up the stairs? Then you started walking up the stairs; and now, you take the elevator. And listen, my dear friend. Before long, somebody may have to help you on the elevator. That’s what he’s talking about.

And then he says, *“The grinders [shall] cease because they are few.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3) What are the grinders in the old house? Your teeth. I read a slogan the other day—said, *“You don’t have to floss all of you teeth—just the ones you want to keep.”* *“The grinders cease because they are few.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3) And then he says, *“And those that look out of the windows [shall] be darkened.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3) What are the windows of the old house? Your eyes. But after a while, you can’t see as you used to see. And then, in verse 4: *“The doors shall be shut in the streets.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:4) What are the doors? Your ears. You can’t hear as you used to.

And then it goes on to say, in verse 4: *“And he shall rise up at the voice of a bird.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:4) Just when you get old enough to sleep in—retired—you can’t sleep. It’s when you wake up—when the rooster crows, *“at the voice of a bird,”* and you get a *trembling keeper*, and go get the coffee pot, and read the morning paper. That’s what he’s talking about. And he goes on to say, *“And the daughters of musick shall be brought low.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:4) The vocal cords are not as strong as they used to be. There’ll come a time when you, Steve, can’t sing like you used to sing, because *“the daughters of music are brought low.”*

And then he says, *“He shall be afraid of that which is high.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:5) Something about old folks—they are just afraid of high places. Did you ever get your grandma up to look over a cliff? No, and you won’t either, brother—I want to tell you what. And he says, *“And the grasshopper shall be a burden”*—*“the grasshopper shall be a burden.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:5) What does he mean by that? Even small things, insignificant things, take on immense proportions. And then he says, *“Because man goeth to his long home.”* (Ecclesiastes 12:5) You see, God knows that these bodies of

ours are decaying. They are falling apart; they are winding down to the grave. But God has engineered a new home for us.

And what's our new home going to be like? Go back to 2 Corinthians 5. The Bible says, "We have a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Corinthians 5:1) Our house: supernatural and eternal. That's the body that we are going to live in because Jesus Christ, as we're going to see, has been raised from the dead. We have a house designed by God.

You say, "What's my house going to be like, Pastor? If I'm getting a new house, and I'm going to move out of this old house, and I'm going to move into a new house, what is my new house going to be like? I can't tell you, but I can tell you some things. Some things we can't be dogmatic about, and some things we can be *bulldogmatic* about. Now, the pattern for your new house is Jesus Christ. Put these verses, please, in the margin right there.

First of all, put down Philippians chapter 3, verses 20 and 21: "*For our conversation is in heaven...*"—that is, our behavior, our attitude—"*is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:*"—now listen to this—"*who shall change our vile body*"—that's what we live in now. He calls it a 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 3:20–21) Now one day, the body of Adrian is going to be like the body of Jesus.

Or let me give you another one: 1 John 3, verse 2. Put this one down: "*Beloved, now are we the sons of God,*"—that is, if you are saved, you are a son or daughter 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) Halleluah! Friend, listen: You are going to be like Jesus! One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Psalm 17 and verse 15. Do you know what it says? "*As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" (Psalms 17:15) Isn't that great? I'm going to see your face, Jesus. I'm going to be satisfied because I'm going to be like you. "*I will behold thy face in righteousness*"—I will be made perfectly righteous, and I will be satisfied.

You say, "What's my new house going to be like?" You will be satisfied. You are to be like Jesus! You are to be a house "*not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*" (2 Corinthians 5:1) That's the design of your new house.

III. We Have the Deed for a New House

Now let's go on, finally, and let me talk to you just a little bit about the deed for your new house. I mean, how do we know that this is not some form of maudlin sentimentality? I mean, how do we know when we are talking about a resurrection body and all of this,

how do we know that it's not just some way of trying to make us feel better in the face of death—some story that we've conjured up—how do we know that we have a new house?

I'll give you three reasons very quickly right out of this passage of Scripture and we'll be finished:

A. **God's Eternal Plan**

First of all, there is the eternal plan of God. Do you have it? The eternal plan of God: Look in verse 5. Chapter 5 and verse 5: "*Now he that hath wrought us*"—that is, who has created, made us, redeemed us—"*he that hath wrought us*"—worked on us—"*for the selfsame thing is God.*" (2 Corinthians 5:5) Now he talks about the resurrection and the new house, and he said, "This is what God made you for." That's what God created me for, redeemed me for. That's what God will resurrect me for. And, friend, if it does not happen, it will be a repudiation of the sovereign plan of Almighty God. This is the reason for God's supernatural, eternal plan. God has a plan in mind. God has predestined that I will be like Jesus: Romans 8:29. "He who wrought us for this is God." (2 Corinthians 5:5)

B. **God's Internal Pledge**

And the first reason that I know that I have a title deed to my new house is God's eternal plan. The second reason: God's internal pledge. Now not only did God have the plan, but God gave a pledge. Look, if you will, in verse 5 again. What a wonderful promise it is! Look at it: "*Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God,*"—that's His purpose, but now—"*who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.*" (2 Corinthians 5:5) You see, you have the eternal plan and the internal pledge.

What does this word *earnest* mean? It means "down payment." It means "deposit." It means "guarantee." Friend, Jesus has paid in full for my new house and has put the down payment, the guarantee, and the pledge in my heart: the Holy Spirit—the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in me. The Bible says, "He that hath the Son hath the witness in himself." (1 John 5:10) The Bible says that "God's Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." (Romans 8:16) Friend, there is in me the pledge of God that tells me that I have a new house.

You say, "Adrian, what is that? Is that a feeling?" No, and thank God, it's not a feeling. It may result in a feeling, but it is not a feeling. If you depend upon your feeling for the assurance of salvation, the assurance of your salvation will go up and down according to the condition of your liver or your digestion. Feelings are fickle! What is the witness of the Spirit? What is "*the earnest of the Spirit*"? (2 Corinthians 5:5) What is the guarantee of the Spirit? My dear friend, it is the assurance that God puts in your heart through the Holy Spirit that is beyond feeling and emotion. *There's nothing wrong with*

emotion, but emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God, and God doesn't do the deepest work in the shallowest part.

My friend, you listen to me: The witness of the Spirit is the way that you know that you know that Christ dwells in you. You say, "Well, explain it to me." You know, I really can't. *"What man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?"* (1 Corinthians 2:11) There are certain things that are nontransferable. I just want to tell you: There is someone in me that tells me that I belong to Jesus. I don't know whether you feel that way or not. But sometimes, you know, the devil wants to make me doubt. Sometimes the devil wants to make me doubt, and he wants to make you doubt. And sometimes the devil may say, "Adrian, there's nothing to it. It's all a lie. It's all a bundle of blunders. It's all make-believe. It's all superstition. And if it is real, you don't have it!" And I say, "God, is what the devil saying true?" He is saying, "You know better than that; you belong to me." Alleluia. He is risen! Amen! Alleluia! "And He has sent forth His Spirit into our hearts!" (Galatians 4:6)

C. God's Supernal Promise

You see, I have, my dear friends, God's eternal plan. Then I have God's internal pledge, and then I have God's supernal promise. Look at it—look at it. He says here in verse 6: *"Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say."* (2 Corinthians 5:6–8) Well now, he says, *"We walk by faith."* Where does that faith come from? Well, go back to Chapter 4, verse 13: *"We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written."* (2 Corinthians 4:13) Oh, I love it; I love it! *"The same spirit of faith, according as it is written."* *"Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."* (Romans 10:17) *"I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak; knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you."* (2 Corinthians 4:13–14)

You see, friend, I've got a deed to my house. It's a wonderful house. God has built it. He's patterned it after the Lord Jesus Christ, and that deed is so real because of God's eternal plan, God's internal pledge, and God's supernal promise. You see, God has promised. Paul says, "We're confident. I have believed because it is written, and therefore I have spoken." (2 Corinthians 4:13) God cannot lie! My dear friend, it is all based in the fact that because God raised Jesus from the dead and we are united with Him, the God who raised Him is the God who is going to raise us.

"Adrian, how do you know these things are true? Does science tell us they are true?" Mr. Scientist, can you tell us whether we are going to have a resurrection body?

"I'm sorry, Mr. Rogers. I cannot tell you that. Science deals with that which can be measured and tested. We don't have the tools to measure that and test it. All I can tell you is that science cannot say one way or the other. Science must bow out." Thank you,

Mr. Scientist.

I want to ask a philosopher. Mr. Philosopher, can I know that I have a deed to my new house? The philosopher says, “Well, Mr. Rogers, philosophy deals with thought and reason and ideas. Philosophy can tell us that perhaps man ought to have life after death. Perhaps he ought to have a resurrection body. Perhaps it would fit in the scheme of things, or perhaps it wouldn’t. But you have to understand, Mr. Rogers: When I’m talking about philosophy, I’m talking about my ideas. They may be right, or indeed, they may be wrong.”

I go to the historian. I say, “Mr. Historian, am I going to have a new home?” “Well,” he says, “I really can’t tell you.” He says, “You know, as we study history down through the ages, we find out that men have always desired a new home and life after death, whether it is the Indians’ happy hunting ground, or the Elysian Fields of happiness, or whatever it is. Men have always desired that. But to be honest, all history can tell you is what men have fought for, and dreamed for, but cannot tell for certain.”

Well, I go to the ethicist, a student of ethics. I say, “Tell me, am I going to have a new home? Is there going to be a resurrection?” He says, “I can’t tell you. All I can tell you is that if this life is all there is, it is a bad joke. It’s a mystery because so many times in this life—right is on the scaffold and wrong is on the throne! And if it just ends like that, there is something wrong. There’s something that seems unethical about it! All I can tell you is that man ought to live again; I can’t tell you that he will.”

Well, friend, I have a book that has the answer. Paul says, “*We are confident.*” (2 Corinthians 5:8) We are confident. The historical fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the witness of the Word of God and the pledge of this Spirit of God—they tell us that we have a deed, a title deed, to a new house. Before long, we’re going to be moving in.

Conclusion

Let me just tell you this and I’ll be finished:

Perry Sanders, who is a pastor down in Lafayette, Louisiana, told me a story that I have never forgotten. He said, “Back in World War II, there was a man who lived in Big Spring, Texas. He ran a little repair shop behind the East Fourth Street Baptist Church in Big Spring, Texas. His name was Mr. Clements, and he had a son named Frank Clements. That’s a familiar name for us here in Tennessee: Frank Clement. Lieutenant Frank Clements was a navy pilot. And he was doing runs across the English Channel back during the war. And the Clements were good members of the East Fourth Street Baptist Church.

“One day, Mr. Clements got a telegram from the War Department: ‘Mr. Clements, we must inform you that your son is missing in action. We will try to get you full information

as soon as we can.’ He took that telegram to his pastor. The little repair shop was right behind the church, and he went out and spread it before the pastor. And the two of them wept and prayed before God. After a while, that other dreaded telegram came, and it said, ‘Mr. Clements, we have confirmed your son’s death.’ And then it went on to say, ‘We have not been able to retrieve his body. And it looks like the final resting place of his body will be at the bottom of the English Channel. And we want you to know that the navy regrets this and appreciates what your son did for his country.’

“You can imagine how the Clements family felt. They wept; they prayed. They had no body, but they said, ‘We’ll have a memorial service in Big Spring, Texas’—not a big city. So almost the whole town came out to honor the war dead. And they had a memorial service without a body.

“But what they did not know is this, that Lieutenant Frank Clements was not dead. Frank Clements had been shot down and was dead but not Frank Clements of Big Spring, Texas. Another Frank Clements in the same squadron—he was the one who was shot down. And one of those incredible snafus—they had confused the name. The navy didn’t know what it had done; the Frank Clements of Big Spring, Texas—he did not know that he had been reported dead. He, too, had been shot down. He was taken by some French peasants in France. They protected him, got him back to his own people, and the navy decided he needed a furlough. And they said, ‘We will send him home.’ He, not knowing that his parents thought he was dead, was flown to Dallas, Texas, got off the plane at the airport, and caught a Greyhound bus. He thought he’d surprise his parents and rode the Greyhound bus to the bus station. He said, ‘I’ll just walk two or three blocks from the bus station to Dad’s shop.’ His dad was there working over his bench. Frank Clements steps in the doorway and says, ‘Dad?’ The old man just froze. ‘Dad!’ He turned around and saw his son—‘dead son’—that they had already had the funeral service for. His tools went everywhere! He ran and grabbed his son and embraced him! And in a few moments, he realized there had been a colossal mistake. He took his son by the hand, and they ran out into the street. And he shouted, ‘He’s alive! He’s alive! He is alive!’ And the next day the headlines in Big Spring, Texas—little newspaper had headlines eight inches tall: ‘Lieutenant Frank Clements Has Returned and Is Alive.’ ”

I want to tell you, one day, that’s what heaven’s headlines are going to say when Jesus comes again: “Jesus Christ Has Returned to This Earth and He Is Alive!” May I tell you that, my dear friend—listen to me—what the headlines will say to that day and many who have been confused—too many who have been confused—we already know. He does not have to return for us to know that He is alive. He is risen! He is risen! Yes, He is! And because He lives, I shall live! And I thank God for His eternal plan! I thank God for His internal pledge! I thank God for his supernal promise! Because He

lives, I'm going to have a brand-new house. I'm going to live with Him.

Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. No one looking around. Are you saved? Would you like to be saved? You may be saved by trusting Christ today. You are not saved by joining a church or getting baptized. These are all well and good, but none of these or all of these can save you. Giving your money can't save you. Keeping the Ten Commandments can't save you. Obeying the Golden Rule can't save you. Being a Baptist won't save you. It is trusting Christ that saves. If you would pray a prayer like this—O God, I'm a sinner and I'm lost. And I need to be saved. Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God. I believe that you died to save me. I believe that God raised you from the dead. I trust you and you only to save me—God will save you today. You will be forgiven, and heaven will be your home.

Father, I pray in the name of Jesus that many, today, will trust in Christ and be saved. In His dear name, amen.

The Old House

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 21, 1988

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 4:16–5:09

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Open your Bibles to 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and when you've found it, look up here—again, 2 Corinthians chapter 5. Did you know that in the world today more than 100,000 people will die? As a matter of fact, every time your watch ticks, a soul will die. A ticking of that watch is for you and for me. Sooner or later, unless the Lord intervenes by His second coming, we shall die. I want to be morbid with you, today. I want to tell you that, while death is a fact to be faced, it is not a fact to be feared. As a matter of fact, I'm going to show you that you're not ready to live until you're no longer afraid to die.

Hebrews chapter 2 and verse 15 speaks of the Lord Jesus. Don't turn to that right now—we have another text. But it says that Jesus has come to deliver us who, for all of our lifetime, have been in bondage, because of fear of death. Fear of death keeps us in bondage. But it is not until a man is no longer afraid to die that he's ready to live. When for the first time strangely he is no longer afraid to die, then, and then only, is he ready to live.

Now I had the experience, one time, of moving into a brand new house; only once in my life have I ever done that. Down in Florida, we built a new house to live in, and we looked over and supervised the building of that house. And then, we moved into a brand new house. It was the house that we moved out of when we came up here. That was a thrill, and that was exciting, but you've got something far more exciting ahead. Every

one of us—every one of us—is going to move into a custom-designed house.

Listen to God’s Word right here. The Bible says, *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle”—the word tabernacle means “tent” or “dwelling place”—“were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality”—that is, that which can die—“might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him”* (2 Corinthians 5:1–9).

Now folks, you are not your body—you live in your body; your body is but the house that you live in. A dog lives in a doghouse, and a man lives in a man house. The doghouse that the dog lives in is his body, and the man house that you live in is your body. Your body is merely a house. You can move into it, and you can move out of it, and you might be doing a lot better today than you think you are.

Somebody asked John Quincy Adams one time when he was quite sick, “How is John Quincy Adams today? How are you, sir?” He said, “Well, John Quincy Adams is doing quite well, thank you. As a matter of fact,” he said, “I’m getting along splendidly.” But he said, “The house that I live in is not doing well at all. As a matter of fact,” he said, “It’s quite run down.” He said, “It’s becoming rather dilapidated, and I fear that, in just a little while, I will be moving out of it.” “But,” he said, “John Quincy Adams is doing quite well, thank you.”

Now that’s something very good to think about, dear friend, because that’s exactly what the Apostle Paul is talking about here, in chapter 4 and verse 16. Look at it here, when he says here, in chapter 4 and verse 16: *“For which cause we faint not;”—that is, we keep our chin up—“but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day”* (2 Corinthians 4:16). What is the *outward man*? That is this body. Your body is perishing, but your inward man is being renewed day by day. That’s the soul’s fountain of youth, the inner man. The soul, the spirit, never grows old, but your body decays, and your body wears out. Your body is a house, and it’s getting run down. It’s true of all of us.

I. The God-Given Desire for a New House

As we think about your brand-new house, there are several things I want you to think

about. First of all, I want you to think about the God-given desire for a new house—the God-given desire for a new house. Look in verse 1: *“For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan,”*—underscore the word *groan*—*“earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven”* (2 Corinthians 5:1–2). God has made you, dear friend, where you groan. God created you to groan. God doesn’t want you to have perfect health all of your days. God doesn’t want you to have a body that will not wear out. As a matter of fact, God designed this body with obsolescence in it. God designed your body to wear out, to run down, to decay, to be dissolved. Why? That you might have a desire to move into another house. You see, if you had perfect health, if you never had any problems, then you’d never have a desire for that new house.

A. We Are in Perishing Condition

Back up to chapter 4, and I want you to notice several things about this particular house you live in right now. In the first place, I want you to notice that the house that you live in right now is in a perishing condition—chapter 4, verse 16: It says here the outward man perishes; that is, your body right now is perishing, it’s passing away, it’s just simply dying. Do you know what we’re doing right here? We’re sitting here perishing. There’s not a one of us who is not perishing right now. We are in a state of dying. You say, “Pastor, that’s morbid.” Hold on, and you’ll find out it’s glorious. Listen, folks. I’m not trying to make you feel bad; I’m trying, today, to give you a thrilling excitement about the future that every Christian ought to have. Our bodies are in a perishing condition.

B. We Are in a Painful Condition

Our house is not only in a perishing condition, but it’s also in a painful condition. Look in verse 17: *“For our light affliction,”*—do you see that—*“which is but for a moment…”* (2 Corinthians 4:17). Look down, if you will, also, in chapter 5, verse 2: *“For in this we groan”* (2 Corinthians 5:2). Look down, in chapter 5, verse 4: *“For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened”* (2 Corinthians 5:4). We have a painful condition.

Let’s have a little introspection, right now. I want you to stop and think about it. Is there anybody here today who is not feeling a pain somewhere? There may be a few, but, if you’ll just stop and think, I think everybody sitting here probably has a pain. It may be down here in the lower back, some vertebrae that are too tight. Some of you have a dull toothache, others have a little headache, somebody feels a little neuralgia, somebody else feels a little arthritis, and somebody else feels a little swimmy-headed right now. Everybody is feeling something, except a few of these kids. How many of

you, if you think about it, can locate a pain somewhere? Let me see your hand. All right, look around now. *“We that are in this tabernacle do groan”* (2 Corinthians 5:4). Did the iron man lift his hand over there? All right, *“We that are in this tabernacle do groan.”* You just feel a pain somewhere.

Somebody said, “There are certain ways that you can tell that you’re getting old. You know you’re getting old when everything hurts, and what doesn’t hurt doesn’t work.” Or, “when the gleam in your eyes is from your bifocals.” Or, “when you feel in the morning like the night after, and you haven’t been anywhere last night.” This is one that fits me: “You join a health club, and don’t go.” “Your mind makes contracts that your body can’t meet.” “Your knees buckle, but your belt won’t.” “Dialing long distance wears you out.” “Your back goes out more than you do.” Here’s another one that fits me: “You look forward to a dull evening.” You can tell, folks; it’s just creeping up on us.

C. **We Are in a Passing Condition**

We are in a perishing condition. We’re in a painful condition. And then, look—we are in a passing condition. Now look, in chapter 4, verse 18: *“While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal”* (2 Corinthians 4:18). That is, they’re passing away; they are temporary. That’s what that means. This house that you live in is a temporary house; it’s a tent. You were never meant to put the tent pegs down too deep. Folks, the things that are seen are temporal; they are passing, passing away.

We used to hear that we get a new body every seven years. That is, the cells in our old body are constantly dying and being renewed. They used to say that that cycle is completed in seven years, so every seven years you have a brand new body. But now, they’ve changed that. They say now, it’s every three years. There’s not a cell in your body, the scientist tells us, that was alive three years ago. I got to figuring that out. I’ve worn out 17 plus bodies, just using them up, and, every time I get a new one, it’s not as good as the old one. The things that are seen are temporal; they’re passing away. Our bodies are like an old house, and that old house is decaying.

Stuart Hamblin was saved in the Billy Graham crusade in Los Angeles. He was a cowboy songwriter and erstwhile actor. And Stu Hamblin one time was out on a hunting trip in the mountains with a buddy, and they came up on an old house, a dilapidated old house. The shingles had been blown off the roof; some of the windowpanes had been broken; there was a rickety old fence, and a gate hanging on one hinge. In the yard was a boney old hound. And they decided they would investigate. Stu and his buddy went up to this old house, and went up the splintery old steps, and the door was unlatched, a little ajar; and, they pushed it aside, and went in. That’s when they found him, the old man who had lived in that house. He was dead. They surmised he probably died in the

midst of that storm, and they wrote that old song that we used to sing back in the fifties and sixties. Some of you remember “This Old House.” Any of you remember that old song? Yeah, some of you old-timers who got those pains I was telling about, you remember that old house. I think it’s a good old song, but, you see, Stu didn’t come upon that idea of our bodies being an old house; that’s right here in the Word of God.

It’s also over in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Ecclesiastes chapter 12, verses 3 through 5, speak of the old house. Listen to it: *“In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low; also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3–5).

Do you know what the Book of Ecclesiastes is talking about there? He’s talking poetically about what happens to us when these old houses that we live in wear out. He says, *“The keepers of the house shall tremble”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3). What are *“the keepers of the house”*? Your hands, to protect yourself with. There’s coming a time when the keepers of the house get palsied, and they tremble. And then, he says, *“And the strong men shall bow themselves”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3). What are *“the strong men”*? The knees that become bowed. You see, there used to be a time when we would run up the stairs; and then, we started walking up the stairs; now, we take the elevator. That’s what he’s talking about: These strong men are not as strong as they used to be. The first thing that goes in an athlete is legs.

Then, he goes on to say, *“And the grinders cease because they are few”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3). In an earthly house of that day, there would be a mill to grind grain, but the grinder that he’s talking about now are the teeth. And he says, *“The grinders cease because they are few”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3). That was before the day of modern dentistry, and we didn’t have those artificial teeth that some have. And so this old house is just decaying, and it’s falling apart. And he says, *“And those that look out of the windows be darkened”* (Ecclesiastes 12:3). What are the windows of the old house? The eyes. But sometimes our eyes are darkened, and we cannot see as we used to. I heard a fellow say, “I only wear glasses when I want to see.” And some of us can identify with that.

Then, he goes on to say, *“And the doors shall be shut in the streets”* (Ecclesiastes 12:4). That is, you cannot hear what’s going on because your hearing fails and that happens as age comes. *“And he shall rise up at the voice of the bird”* (Ecclesiastes 12:4). What’s he talking about there? He’s talking about when the rooster crows. People

are old enough to stay in bed, and they don't want to any longer; and they get up, and they get a trembling feeling, and go in, and get a cup of coffee, and read a morning newspaper. And he goes on to say, *"They shall be afraid of that which is high"* (Ecclesiastes 12:5). Did you ever get your grandmother to look over a steep cliff? No. You won't either. *"And the grasshopper shall be a burden"* (Ecclesiastes 12:5). Little things take on immense proportions. *"The almond tree shall flourish"* (Ecclesiastes 12:5). The white blossom of an almond tree speaks of the white blossom of the white hair on the head.

And then, he says, *"Man goeth to his long home"* (Ecclesiastes 12:5). Now why does God allow this? Why didn't God make us where we would never get sick? Why didn't God make us where our house would never decay? Because, friend, this is not our final home. It's just a tabernacle; it's just tent. And God doesn't want us to be at home here. Everyday we live, we pitch our tent one journey closer to our new home, to our heavenly home.

So the very first thing is a God-given desire, a God-given desire for our new house. That's what Paul is talking about, in chapter 5, verse 1: *"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven"* (2 Corinthians 5:1–2). The older people get, the more they desire to go to Heaven. That's the way God designed us; that's the way God made us. And that's not a form of escapism. That is the nature of things as God made it: a God-given desire for the new house.

II. The God-Ordained Design of Your New House

But now I want you to see not only the God-given desire for the new house, but I want you to see the God-ordained design of your new house. What's your new house going to be like? Chapter 5, verse 1: *"For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."* (2 Corinthians 5:1). That's what God tells us our house is going to be like.

First of all, we know that this house is going to be a supernatural house. It's *"not made with hands"*; it is the work, the handicraft of God Himself. Now we live in natural bodies, but, in Heaven, we're going to live in a supernatural body, a *"house not made with hands."*

And then, it's not only going to be supernatural, but it's going to be *"eternal in the heavens."* It will never get old; never get sick. There will be no pain; there'll be no groan; there'll be no moan; there'll be no sighing; there'll be no crying, there'll be no dying, there'll be no sorrow; there'll be no sin. *"The former things are passed away"* (Revelation 21:4). This house is *"eternal in the heavens."*

Now this is what he's talking about here, in verse 4: *"For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life"* (2 Corinthians 5:4). Perpetually young, in that place called Heaven, so our new body is a supernatural body, it is an eternal body, and it is a heavenly body.

The Bible says here, in verse 1, *"eternal in the heavens"* (2 Corinthians 5:1). Now what does that mean? It means that our new body is going to be subject to spiritual laws and not earthly laws; we're going to be like the Lord Jesus Christ.

Sometimes people want to ask all kinds of questions about the new house we're going to live in. I'm talking not about our heavenly home; I'm talking about our heavenly body now. The house that we live in is our body, in this analogy. People say, "Pastor, will we eat or will we have to eat? Will we sleep? Will we be able to travel? How far? How fast? How old will we be? What about little babies that are born and die as little babies? Will they be little babies in Heaven? Will we live in families in Heaven?" A lot of good questions, aren't they? Do you know the answers to all those questions, Jim? Say, "No," please. Will Rogers said, "A man doesn't know his ignorance by not knowing so much as he does by knowing so much that isn't so." Isn't that right?

Now listen, folks. A three-year-old child can answer questions that nobody can answer. Let me tell you, friend, there are a lot of things we don't know. First John chapter 3 and verse 2 says: *"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). There are some things we can't be dogmatic about. *"It doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him."* There are some things we can be *bull-dogmatic* about, but we know that, when He appears, we will be like Him. That's the reason the Psalmist said, *"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness"* (Psalm 17:15). I don't know exactly what my new house is going to be like, but I know I'll be satisfied with it. I know I will be satisfied, when I awaken in His likeness.

The Bible says very clearly and very plainly, in Philippians chapter 3, verses 20 and 21: *"For our conversation"—that means, our citizenship—"is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:"—now listen to this—"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 3:20–21).

Now listen. There's nothing that our Lord Jesus cannot subdue to Himself. And that means that, when we're made like Him, everything is going to be subject to us. Time and space will be subject to us. Time and space will never be a barrier to us. Anywhere we want to go we can go, anything we want to do that is within the realm of God's

perfect holiness we will be able to do. We'll be able to serve the Lord with a marvelous abandon, with absolute holiness, with wonderful spiritual abilities. This is the design of the new house that we're going to have.

But let me tell you this, folks: There is a time when you're going to move out of this present house, and you will not yet have moved into your new house. A lot of people don't understand that, but there is a period of time when you die, and you move out of this present house, this present body. You will go to Heaven, but your body will stay here on Earth. Suppose I were to suddenly give a gasp, and fall down on this platform, and get very still, and some doctor would come up here, and take my vital signs, and then, they might turn around and say, "Folks, the pastor is dead." But he'd be telling a lie. I wouldn't be dead; I'd just move down, just move down. You see, the Bible says, "*To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 5:8).

I want to ask you something: How could I die? Jesus said, "*And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die*" (John 11:26). I'm alive. I believe in Him. I can't die. This old tent will collapse; it's going to collapse one of these days sooner or later. So will yours. But I can't die; I'll just simply move out.

That's what the Apostle Paul is talking about here when he says, "*To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 5:8). Look, if you will, in verse 6: "*Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body,*"—that's where we are right now—"we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:)"—that is, none of us sees the Lord; we only trust Him by faith—"we are confident, I say..."—that is, Paul says, no stammer, no stutter about it—"confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (2 Corinthians 5:6–8). Paul says, "It's not just that I have an escape—that I know that if I die and go straight to be with the Lord, and I want it to happen; I have a desire to depart and be with Christ."

He said the same thing, in Philippians chapter 1, verses 21 through 23: "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21). And he says: "*For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better*" (Philippians 1:23). And the Greek language means, "very, very, very much better to depart and be with Christ."

Our bodies are like an old house; they're wearing out. But that's okay, we'll move out of these bodies to move into a new body. But wait a minute. What happens in the period of time after we move out and before we get our new body? There is an intermediate state where we exist as pure spirits with the Lord. Jesus, when His body went to the tomb, said to the Father, "*Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit*" (Luke 23:46). Jesus said to a man that was dying next to him on the cross, "*Today shalt thou be with me in paradise*" (Luke 23:43). That man's body went to the grave, but Jesus said, "This

very day you'll be with Me." The Bible does not teach any such teaching as purgatory and no such teaching as soul sleep. The Bible teaches that the moment you close your eyes in death in this life you open your spiritual eyes upon the Lord Jesus; you are with Christ immediately. I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better (Philippians 1:23). That's what the Apostle Paul is saying: "*To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*" (2 Corinthians 5:8). But we wait for our resurrection body, and that resurrection body is going to come; it's going to be made like unto His glorious body. That is the design of our new house.

III. The God-Given Deed to Your New House

We talked about the desire for it's a God-given desire. God engineered us with obsolescence; God engineered us so we'd have pains and troubles to make us long for Heaven. For he says, "*For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us*" (Romans 8:18). But think not only of the desire, and the design, but now I want you to think about the deed to your new house. How do you know all of this is going to take place? How do you know this is not just a Baptist preacher up here on Sunday morning conjuring some things up? How do we know that this is not some form of sentimentality that people have made up to make themselves feel better because of the inevitability of death? Well, I want to tell you, dear friend, God has already given you a title deed to your new house that you're going to be moving into.

A. God's Sovereign Work

There are three major paragraphs in that deed; it's based upon three things. First of all, God's sovereign work. Notice, if you will, in chapter 5 and verse 5: "*Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God*" (2 Corinthians 5:5). Now Paul says we're going to get a new body. And then, he says the one who created us and redeemed us for this is God; this is God's work. I mean, this is what God had in mind when He created the first house. God had in mind that this first house would wear out, deteriorate, decay. God had in mind that we would move out of this first house and we would move into that house "*eternal in the heavens*" (2 Corinthians 5:1). God wrought us for this; for this cause Jesus suffered, and bled, and died. Now folks, that's a pretty good guarantee. You see, you have the sovereign work of God, which is the first paragraph in your deed.

B. God's Spiritual Witness

But not only God's sovereign work—God's spiritual witness. "*Now*"—watch it, verse 5—"*he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God,*"—now, watch this—"*who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit*" (2 Corinthians 5:5). Do you know what

the word *earnest* means? I looked it up in a number of translations last night. One of them said, “the down payment of the Spirit.” Another one said, “the guarantee of the Spirit.” You see, dear friend, not only do I have the sovereign work of God—that’s what God did when He created us and made us; but I have that inner witness of the Spirit called the earnest of the Spirit. What is the earnest of the Spirit? What is the spiritual witness that I’m moving into my new house? What does that mean?

You say, “I know what it means, Pastor. It means you just feel saved.” No, that’s not what it means, and, friend, if you ever get into the vicious trap of living by feelings, you’re a gone goose spiritually. *Don’t ever become a slave to your emotions. Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature. Salvation is the deepest work of God. And God doesn’t do His deepest work in the shallowest part.* Now I’m not against emotions—emotions are fine; but the witness of the Spirit, the earnest of the Spirit, is not near emotion. I’ll tell you why, dear friend: because feelings are fickle, and feelings change, but the witness of the Spirit is eternal, and it is not dependent upon feelings.

Now I’m not against feelings, but you see, friend, the witness of the Spirit is an inner awareness that you belong to Jesus Christ, independent of your emotions. Now it may show in your emotions. I know that I’m saved. I know that I’m saved, because of God’s sovereign work, and God’s spiritual witness. But wait a minute. I don’t know that I’m saved because I’m happy; I am happy because I know I’m saved. Pay attention now. My emotions grow out of what I know; but my emotions are not the proof.

For example, I might be saved and not happy. I could be saved and be miserable. As a matter of fact, any Christian who has unconfessed, unrepented-of sin in his life ought to be miserable; it’s one of the signs that he’s saved. *The most miserable man on earth is not a lost man; the most miserable man on Earth is a saved man out of fellowship with God.* As a matter of fact, if it tears me up, that’s one of the ways I know that I’m saved. But if I depended upon my joy, my happiness, or any other feeling, those emotions change; they go up and down.

But what is the witness of the Spirit? What is the earnest of the Spirit? Your Spirit is the organ of knowledge, spiritual knowledge. We know God in the Spirit. Spiritual knowledge and intellectual knowledge are different kinds of knowledge. For example, does God know something? Yes, He knows everything. Well, how does God know what God knows? Does God learn what He knows? Does somebody teach it to Him? God can’t learn anything. If God learned anything, He’d change, and He says, “*I am the LORD, I change not*” (Malachi 3:6). How does God know? Does God just have a hunch? Does God have a feeling? How does God know what He knows? He just knows—He just knows. How do you know that you’re saved? You just know. Now I can’t tell you exactly how I know that I know, but I can tell you that I know that I know that I know. So how do I know that I know that I know? I know, because God’s Spirit agrees

with my spirit that I'm a child of God.

The devil sometimes will say, "Adrian, you're not saved." I say, "Lord, is the devil telling the truth?" He says, "No, he's a liar. He's a liar; you belong to Me—you belong to Me." It's not a matter of emotion. Thank God, it goes beyond emotion. It is the witness of the Spirit. It is God's Holy Spirit that witnesses with my spirit that I am a child of God, even in disobedience, even in times of joy. Whenever it is, God's Holy Spirit is there.

C. God's Sure Word

Now listen, folks. The deed to my new house is God's sovereign work, God's spiritual witness, and then, last of all, God's sure Word. Continue to read here, in chapter 5, and look at what he says here. as we read chapter 5, verse 6: *"Therefore we are always confident,"—watch—"knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord"* (2 Corinthians 5:6–8).

Where does this confidence come from? Where does this faith come from? "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God" (Romans 10:17). Now listen, folks. When you put those three things together, you can read your title clear. You can say, "Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine. Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!" Because there is God's sovereign work, God's spiritual witness, and God's sure Word. That tells us that what He says is true. And when I can read this Bible, and find it true in every other instance, why can't I find it true in this instance? Thank God that I know, dear friends, that I've got a new house, and I'm going to be moving in very, very soon.

Conclusion

Let me just tell you this, and I'll be finished. Years ago, I read a story about the chieftain who lived in the southern borders of Persia, and he gave to Cyrus the king a great deal of difficulty. This young chieftain would take raids and forays into the border cities of Cyrus's empire. Cyrus tried to capture him, to kill him, to do what he could do; but he couldn't do it. He was a very wily and sly warrior. His name was Cagular. Then one day, Cyrus had had enough. He sent out nearly his entire army out there to capture this man Cagular, and he did capture him. He took Cagular, his wife, and his children, and brought him to the capital city to try him, and to execute him, and put him to death.

Cyrus was there upon the throne and they brought in Cagular and his wife, who was a noble and a beautiful woman, and his two little children. Cagular was over six feet tall; he had piercing blue eyes, brown skin, noble features. His wife was beautiful, and his two little children looked like they had been chiseled into perfection, golden ringlets hanging down either side of their faces. When Cyrus saw them, he was so moved by

that picture, he thought it a shame, a crime to put them to death.

And Cyrus said to Cagular, “If I were to spare your life, what would you do?” He said, “If you were to spare my life, I would be your servant and live the rest of my life for you.” Cyrus said, “If I were to spare the life of your children, what would you do?” He said, “Sire, if you were to spare the life of these my children, I would go back, I would gather my men again, I would put your banner and your flag over our group, and we’d fight your battles, and win victory to you.” He said, “If I were to spare the life of your wife, what would you do?” Cagular said, “Sire, if you would spare the life of my wife, I would instantaneously die for you at your command.” Cyrus was so moved that he dismissed them, and let them go home.

They were sitting by that little fireside they’d never expected to see again, and Cagular said to his wife, “That was some experience, when we went there into that palace.” He said, “Did you notice the marble—the veins, the colors of the marble? Wasn’t it magnificent?” She said, “Husband, I didn’t notice it.” He said, “Well, when we walked down through that long hallway, the tapestries on either side, didn’t you see the colors? They were blended like the sunlight.” She said, “I didn’t see them.” He said, “Did you see the golden throne on which the king sat? It was sculptured from one piece of solid gold.” She said, “I didn’t see the throne.” He said, “What did you see?” She said, “I only had eyes for the man who said he would die for me.”

Now folks, when we get to Heaven, there’ll be a street of gold, gates of pearl, but we’ll see the One who did die for us. That’s what’s going to make Heaven Heaven: not the new house we’re going to move into, not the gates of pearl and the streets of gold, but, as the Apostle Paul said, “*To be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 5:8).

I love the Lord Jesus. I’ve never seen Him physically, but one of these days, and perhaps sooner than I realize, or any of us may think, many of us are going to step on to the other side. But we’re confident, knowing that “*to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 5:8). What a day that will be!

I want every head bowed and every eye closed; no one stirring, no one looking around. I want to ask this question, and I want you to answer. Don’t lift your hand, but just answer. How many in this building can say, “Pastor, I know that I know that I know that I’m saved; I know if I died right now I’d go to Heaven; I have the earnest of the Spirit in my heart; I have repented of my sin; I have received Christ as my personal Savior; and, I know that I’m saved; and, I know, if I died right now, ‘*to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*’ (2 Corinthians 5:8)? How many could say that? Don’t lift your hand. But if you can say it, and mean it, thank God for it.

Now if you do not know for certain that you’re saved, I want to help you to be saved, right now. And if you want to be saved, you can pray a prayer like this, and I want you to

pray it: “Dear God...”—just pray it out of your heart—“Dear God, I know You love me, and I know You want to save me. Jesus, You died to save me; You promised to save me if I would only trust You. I do trust You, Lord Jesus, right now, this very moment, with all of my heart. I receive You as my Lord and Savior. Come into my heart, forgive my sin, and save me.” Then I want you to pray this prayer: “Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Taking Inventory

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 27, 1981

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:8–10

Outline

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- I. A Place of Review
- II. A Place of Reward
 - A. Quality Rather Than Quantity
 - B. Motivation Rather Than Achievement
 - C. Attempted Rather Than Achieved
 - D. Work Done in the Name of Jesus
- III. A Place of Reevaluation
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Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles, please, and turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 5—2 Corinthians chapter 5. We're going to be speaking today on this subject: "Taking Inventory." It's the end of the year, and many businessmen are taking inventory. And, those of us who are Christians ought to be taking inventory of our lives as we look back to this past year to see what was done in and through the name of the Lord Jesus. And, I want us to look at a significant passage of Scripture that deals with the time when we're going to come to the end of our lives, when we're going to stand before the Lord, as we surely will—perhaps much sooner than we realize—and we're going to give an account for the life that we've lived and we are going to take an inventory. Now, the Bible calls that time the Judgment Seat of Christ.

And, I want you to begin reading with me in verse 8: Paul says, "*We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord*"—when I die, I'm absent from my body; my spirit just moves out. And, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Jesus Christ told a dying thief, "*[This day] shalt thou be with me in paradise.*" (Luke 23:43) And then, Paul says—"*Wherefore we labour*"—now, Paul said, "You want to know what drives me, what motivates me, what turns me on, what causes me to be a soul winner, what causes me to be a prayer warrior, what causes me to give sacrificially, what causes me to be a missionary, what causes me to be a preacher?"—"*Wherefore we labour*"—"Here's the reason we labor," he says—"*that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him*"—this literally

means “acceptable to Him,” “approved of Him.” Do you want to be approved of the Lord? Then, he goes on to say in verse 10, and here’s the key verse. I want you to look at. I want you put a star by it. I want you to memorize it—*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”*—look at that word all, A-L-L. Does that include you? Just nod your head. It does—*“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ”*—every one of us—*“we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one”*—underscore “that every one”—*“that every one may receive the things done in [the] body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”* (2 Corinthians 5:8–10) Now, this verse teaches that one of these days, every man, woman, boy, and girl in this building who is a Christian, who is a child of God, is going to come to what the Bible calls “the Judgment Seat of Christ.”

Now, just by way of introduction, I want to make something, I hope, abundantly clear—that when you become a Christian, your sins are put under the blood of Jesus Christ. They are gone. They are buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness, and they will never—no, never; no, never, never, never—be brought up against you any more. And, the Bible teaches that there’s no one that can *“lay any...charge [to] God’s elect.”* (Romans 8:33) And, *“blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”* (Romans 4:8) So I, as a Christian, can never be judged for my sin in the sense of being cast into hell. The Bible says, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to [those who] are in Christ Jesus.”* (Romans 8:1) Amen. Our sins are gone. They’re buried beneath His blood, and the deepest sea... And, as Bertha Smith said, “When He buried them there, He posted a ‘No Fishing’ sign.” And, I say, “Amen, that’s true.”

But, but, the Bible says, *“We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body...whether [they be] good or bad.”* (2 Corinthians 5:10) Now, there’s a difference, therefore, in the Great White Throne Judgment—that is, that great tribunal where God judges the sins of the lost and casts them into hell as He adjudicates them guilty and this judgment that the Bible calls the Judgment Seat of Christ. The Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation chapter 20, 11 through 15, is for the unsaved. (Revelation 20:11–15) The Judgment Seat of Christ is for the saved, and a different word is used here. There, in the book of Revelation, the word for the tribunal is the word *thronos*, the word we get our word *throne* from. But, here the word is *bema*. And, the bema was a raised platform in the middle of the athletic field, that, when they would have the Olympic Games and the runners would run, and the javelin throwers would throw the javelins, and the discus throwers would throw the discus—and you heard about the one-eyed discus thrower: he didn’t set any records, but he kept everybody awake. Now when the discus thrower would throw the discus, and the people would jump and do all of those things that they would do, then they would come to the bema. And there, they would receive their laurel, they would receive

their crown, they would receive their commendation, they would receive their cup or whatever they received—they would receive their reward. Now, if a fellow ran in a race and he lost the race, they didn't cut off his head; they didn't put him in prison. No, no, no, no, it was not a place for that kind of judgment, but it was a place of reward. And, that's the term that God uses here: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ"* (2 Corinthians 5:10)—the place of reward. And, God is going to test us, God is going to try us, God is going to measure us; and then, God is going to reward us according to the way that we have run life's race.

Now, there are several things, therefore, I want you to see as we think about taking inventory not, primarily, at the end of the year, but at the end of our lives. There are about five things that I want you to notice about this Judgment Seat of Christ. Now, pay attention, because you're going to be there—you really are—if you're saved, *"for we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ."* (2 Corinthians 5:10)

I. A Place of Review

The very first thing that I want you to see about it is this: that it is going to be a place of review. Look, if you will, in verse 10: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body"*—that is, while you're alive right now. There's a time when we're going to move out of our body; it'll be too late then to receive any reward. It must be while you're in the body—*"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 5:10) God's candid camera has been working all of the years of your life. God's tape recorder has been playing. God's stenographer has been writing, and God has your life on record. And, one of these days, in heaven, when we come to the Judgment Seat of Christ, God is going to play it back, and God will say, "This was your life." And, your life will pass by in dress parade. Now, I want to say that your sins are not going to be imputed against you—of course not! But, God is going to look at your life, and God is going to see the way that you have lived. And, your life is going to pass in review. Now, whether you believe that or not or even understand it or not, the Bible says we're going to give an account, *"whether it be good or [whether it be] bad"*—*"things done in [the] body."* (2 Corinthians 5:10)

II. A Place of Reward

Now, the second thing I want you to notice: not only is this Judgment Seat of Christ going to be a time of review, but after it has been a time of review, it will be a time of reward. Look again in verse 10: *"For"*—the Bible says—*"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body."* (2 Corinthians 5:10) Now, that word *receive* speaks of the reward that we're going to

receive if we have served the Lord Jesus.

Now, we are not saved by works; we're saved by grace. But, we are rewarded according to our works. So, don't get the idea that good works are not important. The Bible teaches that *"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) You're certainly not saved by works, but then the Bible says, *"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them"*—Ephesians 2, verse 10. (Ephesians 2:10) And so, the Bible speaks of *"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) Your works never lead you to heaven, but your works follow you to heaven. And, one of these days, your good works are going to pass by in dress parade before the Lord. And, if your works are good, you're going to be rewarded. If your works are not good, you're going to suffer loss.

Now, I want to say right here that when—and it's almost universally true—that when you talk about rewards in heaven, there are some people that get their hackles raised. Somehow it seems un-American to them that we're not all going to be exactly the same in heaven and that there are going to be degrees of reward in heaven. But, I'm going to show you beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure that there will be degrees of reward in heaven.

I want you to lick your fingers, and I want you to go with me in the Word of God and I want you to see what the Bible teaches about rewards. Now, you're in 1 Corinthians...2 Corinthians. I want you to turn to 1 Corinthians chapter 3—would you do that?—1 Corinthians chapter 3. Now, look here, if you will please, beginning in verse 11: *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid."* (1 Corinthians 3:11) Do you know what that means? It means that if you're going to be saved, if you're going to be a Christian, you're going to have to start with Jesus Christ. Amen. *"Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid."* (1 Corinthians 3:11) "On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." (Edward Mote) In order to be a Christian, in order to build a spiritual house, you must lay the foundation, which is faith in Christ. If you're building on anything or anyone else, your house is going to fall. *"Other foundation can no man lay."* (1 Corinthians 3:11) And incidentally, when you build, you don't build from the roof down; you build from the foundation up. Before you can build your spiritual life, you must lay that foundation. That foundation is Jesus Christ. But, once you get saved, once you're born again, once you become a child of God, then you begin your spiritual life.

Now, he mentions six kinds of building materials—three of them very precious, very valuable; three of them very cheap and very combustible. I want you to look at the building materials now that are built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. Verse 12: *"if any*

man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble..." (1 Corinthians 3:12) Sounds like the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, doesn't it? Gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and stubble—what is the difference between these kinds of materials? Well, gold, silver, and precious stones are valuable. Wood, hay, and stubble are cheap. Gold, silver, and precious stones are fireproof. Wood, hay, and stubble—combustible. The reason that gold, silver, and precious stones are so fireproof—they've already been through the fire. That's the way they're formed—by coming out of the fire. The stones are formed in that intense heat and pressure, and the gold and the silver come through the furnace, and so forth. All the dross and the impurity has already been burned out. Wood, hay, and stubble—very cheap, very easily gathered, very, very combustible. Now, what he's doing is he's contrasting the two kinds of lives: the gold, the silver, and the precious stones represent a Spirit-filled Christian; wood, hay, and stubble represent the carnal Christian, the person who's saved but that's about all that you can say about him.

Now, continue to read. The Bible teaches that there's going to come a day when those works are going to be made manifest—those building materials that correspond to man's works are going to be made manifest. Verse 13: "*[For] every man's work shall be made manifest*"—that's what I was talking about before. It's going to be a time of review—"*for the day shall declare it*"—what day? The day of the Judgment Seat of Christ—"*because it shall be revealed by fire*"—you see, when your life is over and you come to stand before the Lord, the Lord is going to look at that spiritual building that you've built and He's going to put His torch to it. And, there will be a torch test; it'll be revealed by fire. And, this verse says—"*and the fire shall try*"—or, "test"—"*every man's work of what sort it is*"—now, the next verse is the key verse; look—"*If any man's work [shall] abide which he hath build thereupon*"—that is, if any man's good works that he's built upon Jesus Christ stand the torch test—"*he shall receive a reward.*" (1 Corinthians 3:13–14) Now, I'm just talking to you now about rewards, and I'm telling you that the Bible teaches spiritual rewards.

I want you to turn to the last book of the Bible, Revelation—chapter 22. Would you turn to that? Just go ahead and use your Bible; it'll help you today. Revelation chapter 22—and look with me in verse 12. Jesus Christ is talking about His Second Coming, and He says in Revelation chapter 22, verse 12: "*behold, I come quickly*"—and that word *quickly* means "suddenly." And now, look at it—"*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, rewarded by work—"*to give [to] every man according as his work shall be.*" (Revelation 22:12)

Then, I want you to turn with me, please, to Matthew chapter 16—a great, marvelous chapter—Matthew chapter 16. All right, let's look in verse 27—Matthew chapter 16: "*For*

the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then...shall [he] reward every man according to his works." (Matthew 16:27) Now, let me just give you one last verse. Look here in Matthew chapter 6, verse 20—Matthew chapter 6 and verse 20: *"But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven"—"treasure in heaven."* (Matthew 6:20) Now, that verse does not make sense unless some are going to have more treasure in heaven than others. Why on earth—you tell me—would Jesus Christ tell anybody to lay up for themselves treasure in heaven if we're all going to be exactly the same in heaven? Heaven will not—I want to say it again: heaven will not—be the same for everybody. Jesus is coming with His reward, and He's going to reward us according to our work. (Revelation 22:12; Matthew 16:27) And, some are going to have more treasure in heaven than others or Matthew chapter 6, verse 20 is nonsense. No, Jesus said, *"Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven."* (Matthew 6:20) It's going to be a place of reward.

Now, when the Lord comes to reward us, when the Lord decides who shall have a reward and who shall not, and when the Lord decides what is wood, hay, and stubble and what is gold and silver and precious stones, what does He use to measure with? All right, let me give you some standards now, and let's see if what you're doing is going to receive a reward when the Lord comes.

A. Quality Rather Than Quantity

First of all, when the Lord rewards you, the emphasis is going to be upon quality, not upon quantity—quality, not on quantity. Look again, if you will please, in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Let's turn to it again—1 Corinthians chapter 3. We'll just search the Scriptures this morning and have a good time doing it. It'll keep your Bible warm right there in your hand. All right, now look—1 Corinthians chapter 3, verse 11: *"For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ"*—all right, we start with the foundation—*"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 every man's work"*—now, watch it—*"of what sort it is"* (1 Corinthians 3:11–13) It doesn't say what size it is—*"of what sort it is."* (1 Corinthians 3:11–13) **You might have an apartment house built out of wood, hay, and stubble. Somebody else has a bungalow made of gold, silver, and precious stones. I mean, you see, the emphasis here is not upon size, but sort. Which would you rather have—a wagonload of hay or a bucketful of diamonds?** You see, what God is interested in is quality, quality—not, primarily, quantity.

Now, some people just work themselves to death in the energy of the flesh, and they're going to find out that—though they were in the church four or five times every week and though they served on this committee, they did that thing, they sang in the

choir, they were an usher, they preached, they taught, they did it all, but it was done in the energy of the flesh rather than in the power of the Spirit; it was natural rather than supernatural—and when God looks at it, God’s going to say, “Well, it looks good, but it’s wood, hay, and stubble.” You see, the works of the flesh will receive no reward—only that which is done in the power of the Spirit. Jesus said, *“Without me ye can do nothing.”* (John 15:5)

B. Motivation Rather Than Achievement

Number two: Not only is the emphasis going to be upon quality rather than quantity, but the emphasis is going to be upon motivation rather than achievement—motivation rather than achievement; not primarily what you did, but why you did it. Look, if you will, in 1 Corinthians 9 for a moment—1 Corinthians 9—and let’s look in verse 16: now, Paul says, *“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!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16) Paul says, “I don’t even have a chance. God called me to preach. He put me in the ministry. I couldn’t get out of it if I wanted to. I’d be afraid not to preach.” That’s what Paul said.

I feel the same way. Sometimes I’ve considered what I might do if I didn’t preach, and I thought, “Well, I probably wouldn’t be fit for anything,” but it’s only been a fleeting moment, because I say, “Well, that’s foolish thinking anyway. I can’t get out of it; I’m trapped.” But oh, it’s...it’s a wonderful trap. I enjoy it. I love to preach the gospel. But friend, even if I didn’t love to preach it, I’d have to preach—I really would. I’m like the Apostle Paul. Paul said, *“Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is...me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Corinthians 9:16) I’m just sure that God’s called me to preach.

But now, I want you to notice what Paul says in verse 17: *“For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward”—“if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward.”* (1 Corinthians 9:17) You see, it’s not just what we do but why we do it. You know, if I’m here this morning preaching just because I have to—because I’m being paid by this church, somebody has to be up here—and I’m just up here and I’m not doing it out of my love for the Lord Jesus Christ, and if I am doing it in a professional way, if I’m doing it because it’s a perfunctory thing, if I’m doing it because I have to—I’m expected to—God may even bless the sermon, but I won’t get anything out of it at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It’ll be wood, hay, and stubble, you see. If I do this willingly, I have a reward.

Now, if these people sing the choir—aren’t they pretty?—but if they sing in the choir and they’re not up here willingly this morning, no reward. If Brother Tommy said, “You be there or I’ll bash your head in,” all right, now that’s one thing. They’re here, fine. He says, “Now look, we’ve got to have a choir. You know, it’s the holiday season, so forth. Don’t fail to be here.” Some of you kids are here because mamma made you come to church today. You’re sitting there with a grudge and a fidget. Some of you men are

here, you know, just because it looks good and so forth. All right, you're not going to receive any reward—no—'cause you're not doing it willingly. Some of you give your money. You know, "we put a nickel in the plate and sing with might and main. When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain." You don't give willingly; you give of necessity. "*God [loves] a cheerful giver.*" (2 Corinthians 9:7) Give liberally. Give gladly. Give cheerfully. Attend willingly. Preach willingly. Teach willingly. Serve willingly out of the heart, and then you'll have a reward—not just what you do, but why you do it.

You know, you can do some things that look good but you won't get a reward. Remember what Jesus said about those people, those Pharisees? He said, "Before they made their offering they'd blow a trumpet." (Matthew 6:2) Can you imagine that? A guy getting ready to put his offering in the plate—*ta-ta-ta-ta-ta*, and then he puts his offering in the plate and, "Wow, look at that!" Or, here's a guy—he's getting out there getting ready to do his devotions. He goes out and stands on the corner of Bellevue and Poplar. And, he prays, you know, and everybody passing by—and they see him. They say, "Look how holy he is." Jesus said, "They pray to be seen of men. They give to be seen of men." (Matthew 6:1) He said, "*Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.*" (Matthew 6:2) That is, they already have it. What is it? They've been seen of men. That's it—that's it. I mean, that's it—no reward in heaven. You see, they... It's all right to give. It's all right to pray. But, if you give for the wrong reason, if you pray for the wrong reason, if you preach for the wrong reason, if you sing for the wrong reason, and if you attend for the wrong reason, no reward.

C. **Attempted Rather Than Achieved**

All right, let me give you another thing. Not only is the emphasis going to be upon quality, not only is the emphasis going to be upon motivation, but let me give you another thing: the Lord is going to look at, when He...when He judges you, not only what you achieve, but you attempted—what you attempted.

Let me show you an interesting passage. Turn to 1 Kings chapter 8, all right, over here in the Old Testament. Let's get it—1 Kings chapter 8. Are you ready? Now, David wanted to build a temple—a beautiful, glorious house that he could praise God in; a house for God to dwell in. And, David had been saving his money and building up the treasury to build this temple. And, he talked to the Lord about it, and the Lord said, "David, you can't build my temple" and, "You've been a man of war. Your hands are bloody. Your son is going to build my temple." (1 Chronicles 22:8–10) And then, later on, David's son, Solomon, is talking about it, and he says here in 1 Kings chapter 8, verse 17: "*And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel*"—it was in David's heart. It never got to David's hands. He never got to build it, but he had it in his heart. Now, watch the next verse—"*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) Isn't that beautiful?

Did you know, some of you say, "Oh, I wish I could, but you just can't..." God knows what you would do; God knows what it... You see, it's not just, primarily, what we achieve; it's what we would like to achieve, what we would attempt to achieve. Do you know the worst thing wrong with some of the members of our church? It is not that they don't win souls. It is that they don't try and they don't even care; it's not even in their heart. You see, God did not call you to be successful, but He did call you to be faithful. I'm not asking you, primarily, this morning, are you a soul winner? I want to know, do you have a soul winner's heart? I'm not asking you this morning how much money you give to this church. I want to know, do you have a generous heart? What would you do with a million dollars if you had it? Do you want me to tell you what you'd do with it? You'd do with it proportionately what you do with that ten dollars that you do have, 'cause the Bible says, *"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in [that which is] much."* (Luke 16:10) And, if you wouldn't be faithful with ten dollars, you wouldn't be faithful with one million dollars. And, God knows what's in your heart, and God knows if you have a generous heart. God looks at the heart.

Do you think He said to those five missionaries who tried to take the gospel to the Auca Indians and were speared there on that beach in South America—do you think God said to them, "Shame on you. You attempted to take the gospel to those Aucas and you failed"? Do you think so? Of course not! God knew what was in their heart, and God rewarded them. And, the gospel has been taken later, and these men who opened the door will share in that reward. And, though David did not build the temple, God knew that it was in David's heart to build a temple. And so, God looks at you this morning, and God sees your ambitions. Are your ambitions good today? Oh, is it in your heart to be a soul winner? Is it in your heart to be a church builder? Is it in your heart to be a great Christian? There are some things that God, in His infinite wisdom, may not allow you to do, but God looks at the heart.

D. Work Done in the Name of Jesus

I want to tell you something else, dear friend—that when God measures you and He gets ready to reward you, He's going to reward you for anything that you did rightly in the name of Jesus. Let me give you a sweet passage. Turn to Matthew chapter 10. Just turn to it with me. Now, let's look at it—Matthew chapter 10. Let me show you something. You ready for it? Matthew 10, verse 41: *"He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward"*—now, that tells me that a prophet is going to be rewarded, but it also tells me that, if you help the man of God to preach

the Word of God, that when the man of God is rewarded, you will be rewarded, too. Now, let's continue to read—*“and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man”*—not in his own name, not because of who he is but because of what he is and what he does. Then, you're—*“[going to] receive a righteous man's reward”*—well, that's good. We all understand that, but now let's look at the next verse. Here's the sweet part—*“And whosoever shall give to drink...one of these little ones [that believe in me] a cup of cold water...in the name of a disciple”*—just because he's a follower of Jesus—*“verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.”* (Matthew 10:41–42) Now, do you know what that verse tells me? That when you give what the world calls “a little nobody”—what the world calls “a little nothing”—a cup of water, Jesus just writes it down. He knows it—He knows it. A cup of cold water! You can't get anything much less expensive than a cup of water. But, you see, what this tells me is that anything and everything rightly done in the name of Jesus is recorded.

You know, we're sitting here in this beautiful auditorium this morning enjoying these services. You know one of the reasons why we're enjoying these services? We've got a nursery building over there filled with hundreds of babies. Every church ought to have a bawl room. We have one. They're over there bawling; they are over there crying. And, and, and, they're being rocked. And, little runny noses are being wiped, and little dirty diapers are being changed. And, and, those people are over there giving a little cup of water. I just imagine if you'd walk over there right now, there'd be some nursery worker with some little child giving that precious child a cup of water. And, I want to tell you that the God who sees Adrian Rogers preaching is the God that sees that nursery worker over there right now giving that cup of water. Isn't that neat? Isn't that wonderful? These dear men up here in the sound room, God bless you. These dear men up here in the television room, God bless you. These dear ushers, God bless them. These people who made these buildings clean and beautiful for us, God bless them. These secretaries who type those letters that you get, God bless them. Those men who stood at the door and greeted you when you came this morning, God bless them. Those people who helped this parking lot to be clean this morning, God bless them. All of those people doing those things, God knows—God knows. And, I want to tell you, ladies and gentlemen—you mark it down: there is nothing done—nothing done, nothing done, nothing done—in the name of Jesus that will lose its reward if it is rightly done, even a cup of cold water.

III. A Place of Reevaluation

And so, what I'm trying to say to you is this: that the Judgment Seat of Christ, number one, is going to be a place of review; number two, it is going to be a place of reward; number three, it is going to be a place of reevaluation—a place of reevaluation. We're

going to see things differently at the Judgment Seat of Christ than we see them now. A lot of things that we think are very, very important now will not seem nearly so important when we come to the Judgment Seat of Christ. And, a lot of things that we thought were not important are going to seem very, very important when we get to the Judgment Seat of Christ and see things in the clear, white light of eternity.

Samuel was called of the Lord to anoint the King of Israel, and God said to Samuel, “I want you to go to Jesse’s house. Jesse is...has some boys. And, you call his boys to come out, and you look them over; and I’ll tell you which one I want to anoint as the King of Israel.” (1 Samuel 16:1) And, Jesse’s fine son, Eliab—or, “Eliab”; however you want...what accent you want to put the syllable on, or syllable you want to put the accent on, I meant to say—came out. And, old Eliab is there, and he was so tall, so handsome, raven-haired, square-shouldered, ruddy-complexioned young man—a handsome fellow. And, Samuel thought, “Well, boy, if I ever saw a king, this is a king, and Samuel started to anoint him king over Israel. (1 Samuel 16:6) And, the Lord said, “Don’t do it, for I have rejected him.” And then, God says, “I don’t see as man sees.” He said, “*Man [looks] on the outward appearance, but [I look] on the heart.*” (1 Samuel 16:7) And, He sent out and got that little old boy, David, who was out there tending the sheep. Why, old David didn’t even get to come in and pass by! He didn’t even get to be one of the candidates. And, and, Samuel had to say, “Don’t you have someone else?” “Well, I’ve got that little old kid out there—that twerp out in the woods.” “Bring him in”—“bring him in.” (1 Samuel 16:11) And, do you know why God chose him? Because, the Bible says, he was a man with a heart after God’s own heart. (Acts 13:22) He had a heart for God—“*a man after [God’s] own heart.*” (Acts 13:22) You see, “*man [looks] on the outward appearance, but [God looks] on the heart.*” (1 Samuel 16:7) And, a lot of things that we think are important God doesn’t think are so important. Wit, charm, culture, money—all of these things—they’re not going to count much at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

I want you to turn, if you will for just a moment, to Luke chapter 16. Let me show you something here. I think all of us ought to take this verse and hide it in our heart. Luke chapter 16—look, if you will, in verse 15: “*And he said unto them, Ye are they which justify yourselves before men*”—that is, “You’re so interested in what other people think”—“*Ye are they [that] justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination [to] God.*” (Luke 16:15) Can you see what a change there’s going to be at the Judgment Seat of Christ? All of these things that people think are so important—all of these things that we’ve put such an emphasis on—at the Judgment Seat of Christ may, indeed, be wood, hay, and stubble.

Let me give you an illustration perhaps you can understand. I was preaching a few

weeks ago—a few days ago, really—about that widow’s mite. You remember that? The widow came to church that day, and she put her mite in the offering plate. We say that it was a penny; it was literally a quarter of a cent. That’s what she put in the offering plate—I mean, just that little tidbit, but it was all that she had. And, remember what Jesus said about her? Look. Jesus said that she gave more than they all—not more than any of them; more than all of them. (Mark 12:43; Luke 21:3) Isn’t that great? That little widow. Why? Because she gave her all. She gave everything to Jesus that day. She just gave it all. Now that, I imagine... When the Finance Committee—they count it up: “Well, here’s a check for a hundred dollars. Here’s a check for fifty dollars. Oh, here’s a check for a thousand. Why, look here! Here’s a check for five thousand dollars. Wow! Isn’t that wonderful? Oh, here’s a quarter of a cent. *Ha, ha, ha, ha*—a quarter of a cent? Well, I guess we’ll count it. Put it over there with the pennies. There it is.” The Finance Committee might not have thought much about that that day, but I want to tell you, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, Mr. Five Thousand, Mr. One Hundred, Mr. Twenty Thousand sitting over here...and here’s that little widow at the head of the line. Isn’t that neat? Isn’t that wonderful?

Now listen, Mr. Five Thousand, you ought to give it. Mr. Ten Thousand, you ought to give it. For the Bible says, *“Unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same] shall much be required.”* (Luke 12:48) I’m not saying you ought not to give it, but I’m just simply saying, dear friends, that many things that we do not esteem to be so great here God esteems to be very, very great. And so, a lot of little earth’s nobodies are going to be somebodies up there. I mean, dear friend, there’s going to be a great reversal. There’s going to be a great reevaluation. We’re going to see things in the pure white light of eternity, and they’re going to look so different than they look now.

You remember that Mary who broke that little alabaster box of perfume and washed Jesus’ feet, and wiped His feet with her hair, and anointed His feet, and so forth? Jesus said, “Wherever the gospel is preached, what she’s done will be spoken of as a memorial for her.” (Matthew 26:13; Mark 14:9) You see, the Lord remembers those things that we do not think are so important. It’ll take another world to show who the big preachers are. The big preachers may be out in some little crossroads country town church that nobody’s ever heard of. It’ll take another world to show who the great teachers are, who the great givers are. God knows things that you don’t know, dear friend, and God doesn’t see as man sees. *“Man [looks] on the outward appearance...[God looks] on the heart.”* (1 Samuel 16:7)

I started preaching as a youngster. I was preaching in my teens. And, I held a revival meeting when I was nineteen years old at the Trinity Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, and God just blessed the first revival meeting I ever preached. I preached some of the worst sermons. I looked at those notes here a while back—tore them up. I was so

embarrassed that I'd even preached it. But, there was truth—there was truth there. I preached hell hot, heaven sweet, sin black, judgment sure, and Jesus saves anyway, and God blessed that. And, and, and souls got saved, and it was...it was a wonderful, wonderful revival. I've been in a lot of revival meetings since that time, and I don't know if I've ever been in one that was more marked with the presence of God than that revival crusade in the Trinity Baptist Church.

I was with a friend there whose name was Ernie, and Ernie said to me, "Adrian, I'd like for you to meet my mother." And so, I went to one of the poorer sections of Jacksonville to meet Ernie's mother. He took me to an upstairs apartment, a little tenement apartment—clean, but very threadbare. I was surprised when I met his mother. I did not know she was crippled. But, she was bent over with arthritis. Her knees were swollen. Her wrists, her elbows—every joint in her body—was swollen and puffy with arthritis. She had one of those hands that you don't grab like that but you just hold it like that, gently, when you shake hands. And, every step that she took was painful. She asked us, "Boys, how did the revival meeting go last night?" I said, "Wonderful, Mrs. Harvey, wonderful. It was just so great. God blessed." I told her about the testimonies. I told her about the tears. I told her about the invitation and those who came forward. As I told her about all of that, the tears just popped out of her eyes. She was so happy. She said, "I knew God would bless. I knew God would bless." I said, "Well, Mrs. Harvey, 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 emaciated body, and I thought of my strong, healthy body (at that time). And, I thought, "Oh, Adrian, what a fool you are—you standing in that line, and people shaking your hands and telling you this is a good sermon, and that thing." Nobody knew about that little lady, but God knew about her. Oh, she's one of God's little nobodies—really, one of God's somebodies. Oh, friend, if we could only understand that "many who are last will be first and many who are first are going to be last." (Matthew 19:30; Mark 10:31)

The Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be a place of reevaluation. You see, some people may achieve far more than you and not have the reward that you receive. Do you know why? Because they have more ability, more talent, and so, therefore, the Bible says in Luke chapter 12, verse 48: "*For unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same] shall...much [be] required.*" (Luke 12:48) God, perhaps, expects more of the Moodys and the Sundays and the Billy Grahams and others than He might of you. You see, God is more impressed with a pint jar that is ninety percent filled than with a fifty-five-gallon drum that's fifty percent filled. You understand what I'm talking about? "*Unto whomsoever much is given, of [the same is] much required.*" (Luke 12:48) And so, when the Lord comes to judge you, there may be a place of reevaluation, and things that we think are very important God may not think are as important at all as we think that they

are.

IV. A Place of Regret

Now, let me just close this message this morning by saying one other thing about the Judgment Seat of Christ: not only is it going to be a place of review, and not only is it going to be a place of reward, and not only is it going to be a place of reevaluation, when many things that we think are important are not so important and many things that we thought were not so important become very important, but it is also going to be a place of regret—it is going to be a place of regret.

Now, I want you to go back to that passage of Scripture in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Just turn back to that with me—1 Corinthians chapter 3. All right, now remember the story: *“other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is [Christ] Jesus”*—that’s verse 11. You’re going to be... If you’re going build a Christian life, you’ve got to start with the foundation. You got that? All right, we understand that. But now, let’s continue to read—*“[For] if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, [and] stubble”*—two divisions: the spiritual and the carnal—*“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”*—or, “test”—*“every man’s work of what sort it is”*—thus far we understand it. Now, the next verse says—*“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward”*—we’ve already talked about that. But now, notice the next verse—*“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 3:11–15)

Now friend, you have before you black print on white paper, so look at it: *“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer...”* (1 Corinthians 3:15) Just underscore the word *suffer* and underscore the word *loss*. Now, I want to emphasize this, because I know human nature enough to know what the average carnal Christian is thinking right now. The average carnal Christian is saying, “Okay, so there’s a time when I’m going to face the wreck. So, there’s a time when my life is going to come by in dress parade, but, after all, I’m saved. And, even though I might suffer loss, the verse says I’m going to be saved anyway. So, really, what difference does it make, Brother Rogers? Any place in heaven is going to be fine. I mean, it’s all good up there. And so, if I just get in, it doesn’t...”—you know, we’ve even made a little song about it: “Just build me a cabin in the corner of gloryland”—“That’ll satisfy me. If I just have a little cabin in the corner of gloryland, I’ll be satisfied.” Friend, it won’t satisfy God. And, in some strange way, it won’t satisfy you. Now, don’t ask me to explain it because I can’t explain it, but I can read it. And, I can tell you plainly and clearly that if your works are burned, you will suffer loss, and the loss will be severe. And, you would say, “O God, O God, that I could go back and live my life again! O God, how I wasted my Christian life! O God, how my

life has gone up in smoke! O God, if I could only do it again!” But, you can’t, because the Bible says, “*Every one [is going to] receive the things done in his body*” (2 Corinthians 5:10)—that is, while we’re alive, while we’re here. Christians can suffer loss.

Conclusion

Let’s bow in prayer.

Reaching Others for Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 14, 1996

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:9

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:9

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God’s Word and be finding Second Corinthians chapter 5 for a moment? I want to talk to you about, ah, reaching others for Christ and being a soul winner. Now, every so often, we need to be reminded that our main task is to win souls. As a matter of fact, a great Christian of yesteryear whose name was Andrew Murray said that there are two categories of Christians, soul winners and backsliders. You’re one or the other. Now, if you’re not winning souls, that is, endeavoring to win souls, if you don’t have the soul winner’s heart, you’re not right with God. (amen) I don’t care how much money you may give to the church. I don’t care how circumspectly you may walk, how eloquently you may speak, how wisely you may teach, how beautifully you may sing, how lovingly you may fellowship, if you are not endeavoring to bring lost men and women to Jesus Christ, you’re not merely of missing a blessing, you are guilty of high treason against Heaven’s King. Our Lord has not requested that you be a soul winner. Our Lord has commanded that you be a soul winner. And, ah, I want us just, one more time, to think about why we ought to be endeavoring to bring our family members, our neighbors, our business associates, people around us, and the people around the world to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because motivation is everything and motivation is built-in vision. Now, so many times when we preach we tell people that they ought to pay the price. But paying the price is not the real issue. Seeing the vision

is the real issue because the price becomes small when the vision is big. Now, what I mean by that is this, if you have a small vision and you're asked to do something and it costs you your time, your labor, your effort, your tears, you say, "Well, that's a big price to pay for such a small thing." But as the vision gets bigger, the price doesn't seem to be so big. And, folks, when the vision is everything, the price is nothing. (amen) When the vision is everything, the price is as if it were nothing.

I want to give you six motivations for being a soul winner. And in this chapter that we're going to be looking at, we're going to look into the heart and the mind of the greatest soul winner, the greatest missionary, I believe, the world has ever known, his name was Paul. And, ah, you're going to see what motivated Paul. You're going to see the vision that was in, ah, Paul's life. You're going to see what drove him, what impelled him, what, ah, what caused him to spend and be spent for the Lord Jesus Christ. And, ah, as a matter of fact, he was living in such a way that some people said he has lost his mind, he lost his stability. They, they literally said he was beside himself. We're going to see that in just a moment.

Look in verse 9, he begins with this phrase, "Wherefore we labour." That is, he was not a drone, he was not a sluggard, he was not slack, he worked. And he said, "Now, you want, you want me to tell you why I work? Why motivates me? What is the wherefore that keeps me going?" "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." When he says "present or absent" he means here on this earth or in heaven. The word accepted means pleasing or pleasing 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? Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, but not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves," that is, whether we're crazy or not. Some said Paul was, ah, jumped the track. He was, ah, he was beside himself. He was mentally unbalanced. "...Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be of sober mind, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." That is, after the flesh, we don't know Him anymore. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...." Literally it means a new creation. "...Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of

God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we beg you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." And I'm going to stop reading there and I want to give you some reasons, impelling reasons, why you ought to pray and ask God to make you a soul winner.

I. The Soul Winner's Compulsion

And, first of all, is what I want to call the **Soul Winner's Compulsion**. What compelled the Apostle Paul? Look in verse 9 and you're going to see the thing that drove him, and, and put this divine compulsion in his heart. He wanted to be pleasing to God. He says, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted [acceptable, pleasing to] him." Don't you want to be acceptable to God? Don't you want to be pleasing to God? There's no higher motive than to have the thing that motivates the heart of Jesus to motivate yours? Why did Jesus leave heaven and come to earth? Why did Jesus leave the ivory palaces and be born in a smelly stable? Why did Jesus walk the dusty shores of Galilee? Why did Jesus suffer abuse in the temple? Why did Jesus allow Himself to be beaten mercilessly? Why was Jesus stretched out on a hellish machine called a cross, with great spikes driven through His hands and His feet? Why did Jesus allow the fires of God's wrath to burn themselves out in Him? Well, why? In order that souls might be saved. (amen) He tells us clearly and plainly in Luke 19:10, "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which is lost." And if you just, ah, go on to verse 21, "For He [God] has made Him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin [Jesus who knew no sin] to be sin for us," that is, to take our sin for us, "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him." Now, if God did all of that that souls might be saved, don't you think that He is pleased when you join Him in sharing the gospel plan? (amen) Ah, if, if my child were lost, or one of my grandchildren were lost, and you were my neighbor and I came to you and said, "Steve is lost. David is lost. Janice is lost. Gayle is lost. Angela, Rachel, Michael, Adrian, Jonathan, one of my children or my grandchildren is lost. Would you please help me to find and bring my child home? Wouldn't you say "yes"? Well, our Lord is saying, "Look, my heart is broken. These are my own and I," there's no higher, there is no higher motivation than wanting to please Him. So that's the first thing. The very, ah, the soul winner's compulsion to give honor to give glory to Him, to be acceptable to Him. And I want to say again, if you're not concerned about winning soul's to Jesus Christ, you are not acceptable to Him, you may be saved, but He is not pleased with you. He, he cannot of you, "This is my son, in whom I am well pleased."

II. The Soul Winner's Compensation

Now, here's the second reason. Not only the soul winner's compulsion, but the **Soul Winner's Compensation**. If you are a soul winner, you are going to be paid for winning souls. Look in Second Corinthians now, chapter 5 and begin in verse 9 and look at it, "Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of 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." Now, Paul says, "I am going to have to give an account for the way that I live. One of these days, I'm going to face the Lord Jesus Christ at the judgment seat of Christ." Now, I'm not coming to the Great White Throne Judgment. The Great White Throne Judgment is not for those of us who are saved. Don't ever pray a prayer like this and say, "Lord, grant that someday I might stand before your great white throne. " Don't pray that for me and don't pray it for you if you have any Bible understanding at all because those who stand before the great white throne are those who are going to be judged and cast into hell. But every Christian is going to appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Now, over in the Olympics, when those runners run in the Olympics, this summer in Atlanta, Georgia, after they have run, if they have won a, an award, whether it be bronze, silver, or gold, they will come to the judgment seat, and they will receive their award. In the Olympic games, in, in ah Greece, there was a raised platform in the middle of the field. And that raised platform was called the bema, B-E-M-A, that's translated here, it's the same Greek word, right here that's translated judgment seat. That you and I are going to have to give an account for the way that we have served the Lord. Now, folks, this is not to determine whether we are going to heaven or hell. That's already settled by what we do with the Lord Jesus. But notice the people that are assembled at this judgment seat. It says, "For we all..." Now, does that include you? Indeed it does. Look at it. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ." The Apostle Paul must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Bob Sorrell must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Jamie Parker must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. I will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and so will you. No one's excluded. While our sins are not going to be brought up and, and, we're going to be judged for our sins, we're certainly going to be reviewed for our service and our lives will pass by and we will have the equivalency of This is Your Life.

Now, the place is the judgment seat of Christ. And the purpose is where going to receive the things done in the body. Now, you're in your body right now. Soon you're going to die and move out of your body and go to heaven. But while you're here in your body you can be a soul winner. (amen) Now, we're going to do many wonderful things in heaven but I don't read anywhere in the Bible where you're going to win souls in heaven. Think about it. All of the soul winning you will ever do for all eternity; you're

going to do while you're in your body now. Now, we're going, listen, ah, it, the whole thing is we're going to receive the things done in our body. There'll be reward for some. You say, "Well, I don't believe in rewards. I don't serve God for rewards." Well, there's, definitely the Bible teaches rewards. Jesus said in Revelation chapter 22 and verse 12, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." First Corinthians chapter 3 verse 8, "...every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." Matthew 6 verse 20, "Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven." Now, folks, I want to soul winner's crown. I want the Lord to say to me, "Well done good a faithful servant." Soon and very soon, I'm going to meet Jesus. Soon and very soon you're going to meet Jesus, whether He comes or whether I go, it only a matter of a few years in this building tonight.

So, what motivated the Apostle Paul? Paul said, "One of these days, I, going to have to account to Him for the way I lived." I told you some months ago about a man who was a member of this church, very fine man, he was a denominational worker. He received his salary from this denomination. I went to his death bed, he was dying, he knew that he was dying. He looked at me and he said something I shall never forget. he said, "Pastor, I am dying. You're my pastor, and I'm going to make a confession to you. I am not afraid to die. I know I'm saved but" he said, "I am ashamed to die because I have not been a soul winner." "I'm not afraid to die, but I am ashamed to die."

III. The Soul Winner's Conviction

Now, here's the third reason that we ought to be soul winners. First of all, we talked about the soul winner's compulsion; he wants to be pleasing to our Lord. I hope you want to please God. I hope you want to be acceptable to Him. The second thing, the soul winner's compensation. He pays you when you win souls. It pays to serve Jesus. It pays everyday. It pays every step of the way. The Bible says, "They that win souls will be wise." And now, here's the third thing, and that is the **soul winner's conviction**. Look, if you will, in verse 11 of this same chapter. He says here, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Do you believe that God is a God of wrath and judgment? I do. Do you believe that your loved ones, your neighbors are going to die and go to hell if they don't get saved? I believe they're going to die and go to hell if they don't get saved. Now, God is a God of love, but as we said last week, ah, we can preach the love of God until we're intoxicated on the love of God and exclude the wrath of God, and we're only preaching part of the Bible. (amen) Paul spoke of the terror of the Lord. The Bible says in Proverbs chapter 9 verse 10 that, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom..." (amen) A person who does not fear God is devoid of wisdom. He doesn't even have a spark of wisdom. He hasn't even begun. And one of the things that made Paul the soul winner he was there was the, the, the conviction that men are

lost and on their way to hell.

Now, we live in a generation today that doesn't like the doctrine of hell and in some churches you can never hear hell mentioned. I believe personally if we had more hell in the pulpit, we'd have less hell in the community. (amen) I believe that people need to understand that God is a God of judgment and God judges sin. Paul said, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." Now, if you don't believe in hell, let me ask you some questions. If there is no hell, is not the Bible a bundle of blunders because the Bible teaches plainly and clearly that there's a place called hell. If there is not hell, is not the Lord Jesus Christ a deceiver? Do you now who had more the say about hell than any other preacher in the Bible? Jesus Christ. It's not unloving to teach about hell. Let me give you the words of Jesus. Mark 9 verse 43 and 44, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched. Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." Now, you don't have to cut off your hand in order to miss hell. But what Jesus is saying is it is better to be a maimed saint, on your way to heaven, than a healthy sinner, on your way to hell. (amen) What Jesus is saying is by whatever the cost, do not go to hell. If there is no hell how can there be a heaven? The only reason that you and I know that there is a heaven because the Bible teaches that there's a heaven. I'm reminded of some sailors on time, who asked their Chaplain aboard the ship, "Chaplain, do you believe in hell?" He said, "Yes I do. Why do you ask?" They said simply for this reason, "If there is a hell and you don't believe in it, we don't want you for a chaplain. And if there is no hell, we don't need any chaplain." Well said.

IV. The Soul Winner's Compassion

Now, here's another reason that Paul was a soul winner. First of all, you, you see, ah, his compulsion. He wanted to please God. You see, ah, ah, Paul's ah, ah, compensation. He wanted to be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. You see Paul's conviction. He knew something of the terror of the Lord. He could imagine his friends and neighbors, ah, dropping down into a Christ-less hell for all eternity. And then I want you to notice the **soul winner's compassion**. Notice in verse 13, "For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be of a sober mind, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead." What is Paul saying? Paul is saying that, that we are so moved, we're so constrained by the love of Christ. Does that mean His love for us or our love for Him? Yes. It means both. Paul was saturated with the love of God and therefore the love of God was oozing out of every pore. He was a compassionate person. The love of God is demonstrated at Calvary. (amen) And every person that you see tomorrow on the street is a recipient, a possible recipient of the love of God. Do not let Jesus die in

vain. Ah, don't let people around you know how greatly they are loved of God. Ah, the soul winner's compassion. Do you care for people? Aren't you glad that somebody told you about Jesus? (amen) Aren't you glad that somebody shared Jesus with you? There're other people just like you. They want, they need life, they need Christ. I would have been saved at an earlier age if somebody witnessed to me. I'm virtually certainly of it. I'm grateful that I was saved as a teenager, but I could have been saved as a child if somebody had come and shared the Lord Jesus Christ with me.

V. The Soul Winner's Confidence

Now, let me give you another reason. Now, we're just talking about things now that motivated the Apostle Paul, things that made him, not only his compassion, the love of Christ. But, you see, the **soul winner's confidence**. What was his confidence? Now, notice in verses 16 and 17, "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh..." That is, we don't just see them according to their age, their rank, and their serial number, their occupation, the color of their sin. "...Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh..." That is, we knew Him when He was here in a human body. "...Yet now henceforth know we him no more after the flesh." That is, He's not with us in His fleshly body, but His spirit is in us. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: (amen) old things are passed away; behold, all things are made new." When you, when you bring a soul to Jesus Christ, you are in the transformation business. You're changing people. Ah, you, you're making twice born people out of once born people. You're putting a new man in the suit without even unbuttoning the coat. What a wonderful thing it is to be a soul winner, to make a person a brand new creature. Christians are not just nice people, they're new creatures. (amen) Somebody beautifully put it this way, when we fish for fish, we take fish out of a beautiful life into death. But when we fish for men, we take men out of death into a beautiful life. When we bring them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I've seen it now in these years that God has allowed me to preach the Gospel. I've seen the glorious, wonderful, amazing, transformational power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And sometimes, sometimes you'll just be amazed at who, ah, God will save and, and, the transformation that takes place in their life. I think of a man, ah, down, in, in Florida. His name was Al Cross. Al Cross was the town drunkard. Al Cross, ah, didn't hurt anybody else but himself. But, Al Cross would get his paycheck, and he worked for the power company, he would get his paycheck, and, and put his paycheck there on the bar, and drink until he fell off the stool. They'd carry Al Cross out and pull him up under one of the fruit packing houses and he'd sleep there with the roaches and the vermin running over him until the morning, covered in his own vomit, in his own stench. A stumbling drunkard. A pathetic alcoholic. One day, by the grace of God, Al Cross came

into my office saying, "I need God." And I took an opened Bible and I shared Jesus Christ with Al Cross. From that moment, that very moment, he became a new creature. He became a saint, a child of God. The next day, we were having a work crew to come down to the church to demolish a building. When I got down there, he had already been out there, early, by himself, before anybody else got there, working. Ah, he was already lathered with sweat, working for the Lord. Al Cross, never, ever slowed down serving the Lord. He got to where he could memorize everything I would preach. He could preach it better than I could. Ah, Al Cross ah, was one of the most Godly, compassionate, soul-winning men I have ever known. Ah, he began a ministry and worked in a ministry for alcoholics after that. I think I've told you, some of you the story of Al Cross and some of the rest of us were meeting for prayer. We used to meet every morning in this church for prayer. And, after I had a radio program called Day Break, which was at 6:45 until 7 in the morning. And I'd do that radio program live most mornings, and then we would meet, ah, shortly after 7 at the church for prayer. And we, ah, thought, "Well, how are we going to have revival in this town?" Somebody said, "Well, I read that if, ah, you get the meanest man in town saved, that's one good way to have revival." So we thought, "Well, that would be a good idea. But who is the meanest man in town?" So we got to discussing that. Who would be the meanest man in town? And many people were nominated but one man won. And, ah, they all said, "He's the meanest man in town." This man was a mean man. He was a moon shiner. He was a gambler. He was a bar room brawler. He was a man that, ah, his, at that particular time had a bullet in his hip that the doctors felt not wise to remove. So he's carrying that bullet around in his hip. That bullet was put in his hip, he was shot by his girlfriend. The reason why his girlfriend shot him is he'd been spending too much time with his own wife. And so his girlfriend shot him because she was jealous of his own wife. He was a brazen man. He was a man who one time stole a hog out of the back of the game warden's truck. That's how, this man was just known in town as a bruiser and a brawler. And we soaked him in prayer. Prayed for him every morning. Prayed that God would save him. "Oh God, save him." And called him by name. Finally after we prayed for a long time, they said, "Preacher, we think he's ready now. Somebody needs to go by and see him and we appoint you." (laughing) And so, I ah, I said, "Well, alright, I'll go." I really kind of wanted one them to go but I said I'll go because you know, being a leader I couldn't act like I didn't want to go. And, ah, so I went by this man's house. And I'd never met him. I knocked on the door and his wife came. She said, "May I help you?" I said, "I'm Adrian Rogers. I'm a Baptist preacher. I'd like to come in a talk to your husband." She said, "Well, they're back there in the back room." Said, "They're drinking and gambling and fighting. I don't think you ought to go back there." And I didn't. (laughing) I just, I just, ah, went on. Later on, I heard the man was sick in the hospital. I

thought, “Well, this is a good time to go by and see him.” So I went by to see the meanest man in town. He was in the hospital, I walked in. I didn’t think I’d beat around the bush. I, I knew his reputation. But I just simply said, “Sir, my name is Adrian Rogers. I’m a Baptist preacher. I wanted to come and talk to you and tell you how to be saved. Would you like that?” Do you know what he said to me? He said to me, “If I thought that God could do for me what He did for Al Cross, I’d want to be saved.” And I said, “Well, Al Cross has been praying for you.” (amen) And I said, “You can be saved.” And I led that man to Jesus. He fell off in my hands like a ripe apple. It’s like taking candy away from a baby. Just to lead, the, the, the meanest man in town to Jesus Christ. And there’re a couple of reason for that. There’re a couple reasons for that. Number one, he’d been soaked in prayer. But number two, he saw the transformation that Jesus Christ did in a man’s life (amen) and Al Cross’ life. If any man be in Christ he is a new creature. And, and if your religion hasn’t changed your life, you better change your religion (amen) because it will make a, a bad man good and a good man better. And really there are no good men. So it will make every bad man into a good man through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

VI. The Soul Winner’s Commission

And so there’s the, the soul winner’s ah, confidence. Now, let me give you the next reason that I believe that Paul was such a soul winner this is the **soul winner’s commission**. You see, we’ve been commissioned. Look, if you will in verse 18, “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ...” Thank God we’re saved. “...And hath committed unto us the ministry of reconciliation.” Now, look up here and let me tell you something. If you’re saved, you’re called into the ministry. (amen) If you are saved, if you are reconciled to God, you have been called into the ministry. Maybe not like to pastor a church, but God has given you a ministry. Your ministry is the ministry of reconciliation. “To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” Just as God was in Christ, Christ is in us. “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we beg you in Christ’s stead...” or “we pray you...” or “we beseech you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.” Now, we had an important person in the eyes of the world in our services this morning, but I want to say something, folks, any child of God, any twice-born child of God is somebody because you are an ambassador to the King. (amen) Now, don’t forget that. You are an ambassador to Heaven’s King. You don’t have to go around like a fifth wheel, like you’re not important; I don’t care if you work in the stock market or the stockyard. It makes no difference. Friend, if you know the Lord Jesus Christ, you are a minister, you are an ambassador, and, ah, when I was a little boy, I was a member of an organization in our church called Royal

Ambassadors. And I learned that an ambassador is the person who represents the person of a king in the court of another. And I am still an ambassador for the Lord Jesus Christ. And, and not to share the message, not to share the message of reconciliation is not only to miss a blessing, it is not merely to be ineffective, it is to be in revolt. (amen) And the same thing is true about a church. Any church that is not engaged in evangelism is guilty of apostasy. (amen) We need to be soul winners and all of us live in a world that's going to hell and its time we told this world to go to heaven. And told them how to go to heaven. And, ah, I know of no greater thrill, I've preached in many places, I've preached around the world. I've had some experiences. I've been in what some people would call some high places, but I'm going to give you a testimony. The greatest thrill of my life still today is to personally lead a soul to Jesus Christ (amen) more than preaching before crowds, more than meeting important people, is to win a soul to Jesus Christ. I'm going to let you in on a secret. I get a bigger thrill out of leading someone to Jesus Christ than the thrill I got when I got saved. (amen) Why? Because I know a whole lot more about what's happening to them than I knew what was happening to me when I got saved. And you can let Congress make the laws and let the President try to run the nation, let Wall Street handle the finances, let the media and Hollywood take care of the entertainment, let the athletes have the Olympics, you let me be a soul winner. I'm telling you, when all the dust is settled, when it's all over, and when God has put the last period upon the last sentence, upon the last paragraph, upon the last page, upon the last chapter, upon the last Book of Life, when it's all said and done, when all the dust is settled, you're going to understand what the Bible means when it says, "He that wins souls is wise."

Conclusion

Now, you make think this is a little sentimental, and maybe it is, maybe it won't happen this way, but you know what I want? I want to get up to heaven and I want somebody to take me by the hand and say, "Come on. Come with me right now. We're going to the throne." And you know, we'll all have access to the throne. "Come, Adrian, let's go to the throne. Jesus, Jesus, this is Adrian. Jesus he's the one who told me about you." (That's right.) Wont that be a thrill? (amen) Must I go in empty handed? Must I meet my Savior so without one soul with which to greet Him? Must I empty handed go? Some of you have never won a soul to Jesus Christ. But that's not the worst thing. The worst thing is some have never tried. You've never tried.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. Father God, I pray tonight that you would, that you would give to us as a church, the soul winner's heart. Though, Lord, the things that melted and motivated the Apostle Paul, may they melt and motivate our heart, for we pray in and through the Lord Jesus, Amen.

The Soul Winner's Six Mighty Motivations

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 10, 2004

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:9–20

Outline

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- II. The Soul Winner's Compensation
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Conclusion

Introduction

“Eye hasn't seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, the things that God has prepared for them that love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). Do you love Him today? If you don't, you need to. And we will be giving you an invitation later on to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, but you don't even need to wait till the invitation. You can pray and ask Him into your heart right now.

Take your Bibles, please, and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. And when you've found it, would you look up here for a moment. Let me tell you something: Your achievement in life will be primarily impelled by your motivations. Now what motivates you—impels you, drives you—will cause you to be whatever you end up being.

I heard of a little boy, one time, who—a young man, really—who was going through the woods. And he heard a growl and looked behind him, and there was a great grizzly bear. And the boy began to run, and the bear began to run. And the boy said, “This bear is going to get me and devour me, unless I find some way of escape.” But there seemed to be no way of escape. And then, he saw a tree, and there was a limb that went out. The limb was 15-feet-high. He said, “Nobody has ever jumped 15-feet-high straight up, but I've got to do it, if I save my life.” And the bear was right there with his warm, moist breath on the nape of that man's neck. And with a prayer, this youngster gave a leap as hard as he could. Now he missed the limb, but he caught it on his way back down. That's motivation.

I want to speak to you about the soul winner's mighty motivation. We've been

praying for revival—a weeping revival, a sweeping revival. And now we’re asking God for a reaping revival. We want to bring souls bound in the golden chains of the gospel and lay them at Jesus’ feet.

The mightiest soul winner that I’ve known anything about, or read about, is the Apostle Paul. And in this, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, we find out what motivated Paul, what drove Paul, what impelled Paul, what made him the greatest missionary the world has ever known; and, we’re going to learn from that. And if you’ve never been a soul winner, I want you to listen today very carefully. If you are a soul winner, you will be blessed and encouraged by this.

I. The Soul Winner’s Compulsion

Now there are several things I want you to learn. The very first thing I want you to learn is the soul winner’s compulsion—the soul winner’s compulsion. Paul had a compelling motive that drove him. What was Paul’s compulsion? They said, “Paul, why do you work so hard?” And here’s his answer—2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 9: *“Wherefore we labour...”*—“here’s the reason, now, we work so hard”—*“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him”* (2 Corinthians 5:9). Now that doesn’t mean that we work to get to Heaven. What he is saying is, “I want to be acceptable to God. I want God to be pleased with me.”

Ladies and gentlemen, look up here. If you’re not endeavoring to bring souls to Christ, you are not acceptable to God. I don’t care how much money you give; I don’t care how faithfully you attend; I don’t care how eloquently you may preach; I don’t care how faithfully you may live; I care not how circumspectly you may walk. Listen. If you are not endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ, you are not acceptable to Him; you’re not pleasing Him. And no matter whom you may please, if you displease God, you’re a failure. And if you please God, it really doesn’t matter how many people you displease. And the way to please God is to bring souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. That is your compulsion.

Andrew Murray, a great Christian of yesteryear, said, “There are two classes of Christians: soul winners and backsliders.” Now you’re one or the other. Paul said, “You want me to tell you why I work so hard? I am compelled—I am compelled—to be acceptable to God.” That’s the first reason—the soul winner’s compulsion.

II. The Soul Winner’s Compensation

Number two: I want you to see the soul winner’s compensation. Look, if you will now, in verse 10: *“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 5:10). There is a day coming when we will be compensated.

The Bible calls that *the Judgment Seat of Christ*. Now this is not the Great White Throne of Judgment, where the unsaved will appear. The words *judgment seat*, here, are the word—Greek word—*bema*, b-e-m-a. And what it was, was a raised platform in the middle of the Olympic field, where runners would come and receive their reward, or else they would be disgraced and received no reward. And there would often be a laurel placed on their head that, sooner or later, would wilt and fade away. But we are going to be—we are going to be—compensated as we win souls for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what is our compensation going to be? Just put in your margin there, 1 Corinthians 9, verses 24 through 26: *“Know ye not that they which run a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things.”* That is, if you’re going to run a race, you’ve got to train yourself. *“Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown;”—*that is, just a wreath around their head—*“but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air”* (1 Corinthians 9:24–26). Paul says, “Look. If you want to get the crown, you’ve got to train yourself. You have got to discipline yourself. You have to run with all of your might. And when you box, it’s not shadow boxing, as one who is beating the air. This is a fight, and it is a real fight.” Have you ever come to the place where you realize that, one of these days, you’re going to face the Lord and receive a crown, if you’re a soul winner?

I’m a *has been* athlete, but I did play some football. I was the captain of a championship team. And our award was a little gold football, which I gave to my sweetheart, Joyce—a little gold football. And then, because we played football, we were called *lettermen*. That is, we got a sweater with a letter on it. Our letter said, “PB”—“Palm Beach High School.” And then, because God blessed me with some success, I got some loving cups, some trophy cups.

Now let me tell you what happened: The thieves came into our house, one night, and got the golden football. It’s gone! Who has it now, I have no idea. What about the sweater? The moths got the sweater. It’s gone! What about the cups? I have no idea where they are. I don’t know. I have no idea. But I’m going to tell you something, friend: When you win souls to Jesus Christ, you don’t receive a corruptible crown. You receive a crown that fadeth not away—a crown of glory.

What is this Judgment Seat of Christ? Well, it’s going to be a reward for some, and it’s going to be a regret to others. First Corinthians chapter 3—this time, put this in your margin—verses 11 through 15: *“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 one category—*“wood, hay, stubble;”—*that’s another category. Now listen to this. If you are a Sunday morning bench warmer, listen to this—*“every man’s work shall be made manifest:”—*“one of these days, the way that you lived is going to be

made manifest”—*“for the day shall declare it,”*—what day? The day of the Judgment Seat of Christ—*“because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is”*—not what size it is, but of what sort it is. God is looking for quality, not quantity. Now listen to this: *“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon,”*—on Jesus Christ—*“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 3:11–15).

Now what is this telling us? It tells us why Paul labored. He said, “There’s a compensation. There’s the Judgment Seat.” Every mother’s child is going to come to the Judgment Seat of Christ—the *bema*, if you’ve been saved. One of these days, you’re going to see a replay of that old television program, “This is Your Life,” and the life that you lived is going to come into review before the Lord. Now if you’re a soul winner, your life will be gold, and silver, and precious stones. If you’re not a soul winner, your life will be wood, hay, and stubble. Gold, and silver, and precious stones can’t burn; they’ve already been through the fire. Wood, hay, and stubble will be consumed by the fire. Your life will be revealed. It shall be tested by fire.

Now what’s it going to be? We heard Eddie sing, “I Can Only Imagine.” I want you to imagine yourself, right now, standing before the Judgment Seat of Christ. Are you going to be satisfied? There’s going to be a reward for some. Some people say, “I don’t believe in rewards.” Well, God does. Jot these scriptures down:

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). What is that? Whether it’s gold, silver, and precious stones; or, wood, hay, and stubble.

Put this down—1 Corinthians 3, 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). Did you see that? *“His own reward according to his own labour.”*

Look, if you will, in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 20—jot this down—Jesus said, *“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”* (Matthew 6:20). There are treasures. Don’t get the idea that everybody is going to be the same in Heaven. They’re not. That verse from the Lord Jesus Christ makes absolutely no sense at all, if we all have the same treasure. There is treasure that we’re going to lay up.

The Judgment Seat of Christ that Paul is talking about here in 2 Corinthians chapter 5 is a time of reward, but it will also be—listen, Christian; listen, brother; listen, those of you in the balcony; listen to me—it’s also going to be a time of regret for some. *“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). What does that mean? You’re going to be singed, but

saved. You'll get into Heaven with your coattails smoking. Everything that you live for will go up in flames.

Our church, this morning, is filled with people whose lives are wood, hay, and stubble. And I'm telling you, as surely as I stand here, one of these days, and much sooner than you may realize, you're going to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and receive the things done in your body, whether it be good or evil. There's not going to be any soul winning in Heaven. You're going to come to the Judgment Seat and receive the things done in your body while you're here, now, living, breathing. All the soul winning you're ever going to do for all eternity you must do now. How sad it will be to go to Heaven and not have won souls and brought souls to Jesus.

'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)

Don't you want to bring somebody to Heaven with you?

I had a denominational worker—a denominational worker, worked for the entire Southern Baptist Convention—call upon me. I went to visit him. He was on his deathbed. I shall never forget what he said to me. He said, "Pastor, I am saved, and I'm going to Heaven." He said, "I am not afraid to die." But now listen to this. He said, "I am ashamed to die, because I've not been a soul winner—I've not been a soul winner. I'm ashamed to die."

Can you imagine facing the Lord Jesus Christ and never, ever even really trying to bring a soul to Christ—to go empty-handed to Heaven? Oh, my friend! You say, "Well, if I just get to Heaven, it'll be fine with me. Just build me a cabin in the corner of Gloryland." Friend, I don't know it—I don't know how. I cannot explain it—but the Bible says clearly, and plainly, and unmistakably, "*If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss*" (1 Corinthians 3:15). One of these days, in the clear light of eternity, you will say, "O God, why was I not a soul winner?" Now you don't win souls in order to get to Heaven. You get to Heaven by the grace of God.

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)

Paul said, "You want to know what motivates me? What is my compulsion? To please Him. What is my compensation? I am going to the Judgment Seat of Christ."

III. The Soul Winner's Conviction

Here is the third thing that motivated Paul: the soul winner's conviction. Look, if you will now, in verse 11: "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men;*"—

“knowing...the terror of the Lord”—“*but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences*” (2 Corinthians 5:11). I want you to underscore that phrase, if you don’t mind writing in your Bible, “*the terror of the Lord.*”

We persuade men. Paul didn’t have a take-it-or-leave-it attitude. This is a motivation. Paul knew there was a death to die, a judgment to face. And he said, “*Knowing...the terror of the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 5:11). Knowing what it means for a soul to die unredeemed and to die and go to Hell—“the terror of the Lord.” And I realize, today, that you don’t hear Hell from many pulpits. But I want to tell you, as surely as I stand here, there is a place of everlasting fire that the Bible calls *Hell*. And when you lead a soul to Jesus Christ, no longer are they facing an eternity in Hell—no longer must they face the terror of the Lord—but they can know the grace of the Lord.

Now you say, “I don’t believe in Hell.” Well, if you don’t believe in Hell, let me ask you some questions. If there is no Hell, is not the Bible a bundle of blunders, because the Bible itself warns us over and over against about Hell? Now if you don’t believe in Hell, just jettison your Bible. Just announce to God that you’re smarter than God; you don’t need the Word of God; the Bible is a blunder. If there is no Hell, is not Jesus Christ a deceiver? Do you know who the greatest hellfire preacher in the Bible was? Not some backwoods preacher, but Jesus Christ Himself. Mark 9, verses 43 and 44: “*And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:43–44).

If there’s no Hell, is not the Bible a bundle of blunders? If there is no Hell, was not Jesus Christ a deceiver? If there is no Hell, was not Calvary a mistake? Why did Jesus die on the cross? To save us—to save us! I want to tell you, by every mouthful of spit they put on the Savior’s face; by every handful of beard that they jerked from His cheeks; by every stripe the lash marked His back with; by every bruise that the rod put upon Him; by the searing nails that were driven into His quivering hands; by the blackness, the utter midnight, of His heart, as He cried, “*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34)—with all of that, do you mean to tell me that Jesus died to save souls from a Hell that doesn’t exist? Was not Calvary a blunder, if there is no Hell?

Now I want to ask you another question: If there is no Hell, how can there be any Heaven? The same Bible that tells us about Heaven tells us about Hell. You can’t say, “Well, I’ll only believe the part that tells us about Heaven.” Paul said, “Let me tell you what motivates me—the terror of the Lord.”

Now this is a generation that has failed to understand the terror of the Lord. The Bible speaks of people living in the last days, and it says there’s no fear of God before their eyes. You say, “Well, isn’t God a God of love?” Yes, He is—and we’ll get to that in

a moment. But if you preach the love of God and the exclusion of the judgment of God, you haven't given a whole picture; you've only given half the truth. *And when half the truth becomes the only truth, then that half the truth is an untruth.*

IV. The Soul Winner's Compassion

Now let me give you another motivation that the Apostle Paul had. The Apostle Paul—his motivation was compassion. Notice the soul winner's compassion.

Look, if you will now, in 2 Corinthians 5, verses 13 and 15: *“For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God:”*—now, what does that mean, “beside ourselves”? “Whether we be schizoid, whether we've lost our mind, whether we be insane.” There were people who were saying the Apostle Paul was not mentally stable. “He is beside himself.” He says, “Well, if so...”—*“it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us...”*—that's another motivation—*“the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead; and that he died for all...”*—and, by the way, if you're a five-point Calvinist, how do you explain this? He died for all, not for just some—*“then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again”* (2 Corinthians 5:13–15). Paul's compassion is driving him. He's speaking of the love of Christ—the love of Christ that was shown to him—and now the love of Christ that is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost.

How can you say you love Jesus and not be concerned for souls that He died for? Well, you say, “Well, I just don't have a love for souls.” I'm going to tell you something: It's not a love of souls or a love for souls that motivates you. Jesus Christ said to Peter, “Do you love me? Do you love me? Then feed my sheep” (John 21:16)—because we love Jesus.

Now what drives me, what motivates me, is not my love for people; it is my love for Jesus. Yes, I love people, but the chief motivation of my life—the chief motivation of my life—is His love for me and, therefore, His love through me.

I asked Bill Gaither, “What are the greatest song lyrics ever written?” Ken, Jim, he said, “Beyond any shadow of a doubt, these are the greatest lyrics ever written”:

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky. (Frederick M. Lehman)

Oh, listen. God loves you, but He loves those all around you. He wants them to be saved, and Paul is moved with compassion.

V. The Soul Winner's Confidence

Now I want you to notice, next, the soul winner's confidence. Second Corinthians 5, verses 16 and 17: "*Wherefore...*"—now, he's still talking about what motivates him—"*Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*" That is, "after the flesh." "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*" (2 Corinthians 5:16–17).

Now here's his confidence: that, "if I lead a soul to Christ, if I bring a man to Christ, he will be a new creature. God will put a new man in that suit without even unbuttoning the coat. He becomes brand new in the Lord Jesus Christ." Now he says, "*Henceforth know we no man after the flesh.*" What does he mean? He says, "I don't look at people as to whether they're big shots or little shots, rich or poor, educated or uneducated, weak or strong, famous or non-famous. That's all of the flesh. I see them as a soul for whom Jesus died."

The other day I went out in my yard. There was a man out there working in the front, and I was going to go out and say hello to him. He was a common laborer. And God the Holy Spirit seemed to say to my heart, "Speak to him about his soul." I very calmly talked to him about how he could know he could go to Heaven when he died and how he could have power and peace in his life right now by receiving Christ as his personal Savior. He bowed, and prayed with me, and gave his heart to Christ. And I thought to myself, "How easy. I could have passed that man by. How easily I could have just given him a, 'Good morning!' and passed him by."

Jerry Parker is sitting out here. Jerry told me a story. Jerry, I may not get all the details correct. But Jerry received a phone call, and this person said, "I have your number on my telephone. Did you call me?" Jerry said, "No, I didn't call you." He said, "Well, this number was there. You must have called." He said, "No, I didn't call you. I don't know...the mistake has been made. But while I have you on the phone, I want to ask you a question: If you died today, would you go to Heaven?" The man said, "Well, I really don't know." Jerry said, "Let me tell you how you can know," and led him to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ right there on the phone. Some days later, the phone rang again. This time it was a woman. She said, "Did you call my house?" He said, "No." She said, "Well, I have a number here that you called my house." Jerry said, "Is your husband so-and-so?" "Yes, he is." "Well, let me ask you a question: Are you sure, if you died today, you'd go to Heaven?" She said, "Well, no, not really." "Would you like to know?" "Yes, I would," and he led her to Christ also.

I want to submit to you, that wasn't a wrong number. That's the providence of God. But the providence of God is all around you. Friend, if you could only see that we have this conviction—that if any man is in Christ Jesus; this confidence—that if any man is in Christ Jesus.

Do you know our trouble? We see people after the flesh. We think, "You know, if I could win somebody important to Christ, that would be great." But friend, all people are important to Christ. And you need to stop seeing them according to the flesh. The up-and-out are just as lost as the down-and-out, but the down-and-out are just as precious as the up-and-out. And don't call any man *common* if Jesus Christ died for him. We need to stop seeing people through the flesh.

Years ago, I heard a story that moved me greatly. Down in Tampa, Florida, a man was driving a high-powered boat, and he was going under a bridge. He hit a bridge pylon, was thrown out of the boat, and nearly drowned. They fished him out of the water, and they had him there on the bridge, giving artificial respiration to him, trying to do what they could do. A man stopped. He thought, "That's interesting. I want to see what is happening. There it is—there's the boat. He hit here. Now look at the people. They're giving artificial respiration. That's interesting. What an epic this is that I get to see." And then, they turned the man's face *this way*, and the man who'd been crossing the bridge said, "My God, that's my brother—that man is my brother." When he saw the face of his brother, he was transformed. He said, "Hey, call the ambulance. Listen. Give him artificial respiration. You people pray. That's my brother." Do you know what he did? He saw him after the flesh. Before then, he was another man.

You need to see every man as your potential brother. You need to see every woman as your potential sister. You need to have this confidence that, if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature. When we fish for fish, we take a fish out of a beautiful life into death; but when we fish for men, we take men out of a horrible life into Heaven—into a beautiful life.

VI. The Soul Winner's Commission

Now listen. The sixth thing of these six things that I want to mention to you is what I want to call the soul winner's commission. Look, if you will now, in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 18 and following: "*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,*"—that is, He saved us—"*and have given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*"—you have been called to the ministry. Say *amen*. You have been called to the ministry. And what is the ministry? It's the ministry of reconciliation—"*to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's*

stead,”—that is, “in Christ’s place”—“*be ye reconciled to God*” (2 Corinthians 5:18–20).

Now we’ve been reconciled, and we’ve been reconciled by Calvary. God has brought us to Himself. But God did not save you simply to sit, to sour—but to serve. We have been reconciled. Therefore, it follows, as night follows day, that we have been given a ministry of reconciliation—that is, to get people reconciled to God. And in this verse, Paul says we are appointed ambassadors—Heaven’s ambassadors.

What is an ambassador? An ambassador is somebody who represents the person of a king in the court of another. I was in Washington. I’d been there for a presidential inauguration. I caught a cab, and I was dressed fairly nicely. The cab driver looked back at me and said, “What do you do?” I said, “I am an ambassador.” He said, “You are? From where?” I said, “A very important place.” I said, “I serve a King.” “A King?” I said, “Yes, I am His ambassador.” I told that cabbie about Jesus Christ.

I want to tell you something, friend: You are an ambassador. You say, “Well, I don’t have much education. I don’t have any money.” You are an ambassador! Can you get any higher than being an ambassador to the King of kings? You are somebody. You’re not a fifth wheel. God has appointed you. God has anointed you. And if you’re not interested in being an ambassador, when you have been appointed an ambassador, you are guilty of treason against Heaven’s King. To refuse is not only to be ineffective; it is to be in revolt. If you’re not interested in evangelism, to some degree, you are in apostasy.

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

Jesus is all this poor world needs today.
Blindly they strive, for sin darkens their way. (Harry D. Loes)

Friend, let me tell you something: These people stumbling in darkness can walk in light, if you will only open the Word of God and share with them how to be saved. “Well, Pastor, I’m not trained.” Well, number one, you don’t have to be trained. You share what Jesus has done for you. You’ll be surprised how your testimony will have effect. And then, you need to get trained. I want to ask you a question: If you received a thousand dollars cash for every soul you led to Christ, would it make a difference in your life? You think about that—if you received a thousand dollars cash for every soul that you led to Christ? It’s really a matter of motivation.

These are six mighty motivations. And I want to start with the first one again—and that is, Paul said, “Look, I do this, that I might be acceptable to Him—to please Him.”

I’ve read of a concert violinist who stood before a vast audience and played his violin

in a masterful way. When he had finished the concert, he turned and left the stage. The people were still standing, and applauding, applauding, applauding. And behind the stage, they said, “Go back out there. They are applauding for you. Go back out there. They’re all standing.” He said, “No, they’re not all standing.” He said, “You see that man on the third row? He’s not standing, and he is my teacher.” Now friend, I don’t care how many people applaud you and applaud you, if you don’t please Jesus, what difference does it make?

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer—every head bowed; every eye closed. Would you pray, “O God, give me compassion for souls. Lord, help me to be a soul winner”? Would you pray that?

When I was a teen, I was in a service in Ridgecrest, North Carolina at our retreat center. A man preached on soul winning. He said, “How many of you will promise this year to win a soul to Jesus Christ?” I lifted my hand and made a solemn promise to God that I would do it, if He would only help me. And I began a life of soul winning. I want to ask you—now, I’m not going to ask for a show of hands—but how many of you in this building will say, “O God, I want to win souls to Jesus Christ”? Now if you can’t win an older person, win a younger person. If you can’t win your own children, win somebody else’s children. But say, “O God, lay some soul upon my heart and win that soul through me.” Pray it right now. Pray it, pray it, pray it—and mean it, because, one day, you’re going to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and your life may go up in smoke, like wood, and hay, and stubble.

Still, while heads are bowed, I want you to begin to pray for those round about you who may not know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. And friend, what’s all this soul winning business about? It’s about getting people like you saved, to know Jesus, to be saved by His power divine. Listen carefully now.

All that is necessary for you to be saved has already been done. Jesus suffered, bled, and died on the cross. He paid your sin debt with His shed blood. He rose again from the dead to show that He is the Son of God. And He wants to save you, and He will save you, if you’ll trust Him. Now that doesn’t mean just intellectual belief. It means put your faith in Him, trust Him, like you trust an airplane when you get on it. You may believe it can fly, but you don’t trust it until you get on it.

Would you pray a prayer like this, if you’d like to be saved: “Dear God, I know You love me, and I know 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; right now, in this seat, this moment, I trust You; I’m not asking for a feeling; I don’t look for a sign; I trust You now to save me; forgive my sin; cleanse me; begin now to make me the person You want me to be;

thank You for doing it, Jesus”? And then, pray this: “Lord Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. Give me the courage and the strength to make this public. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

The Soul Winner's Six Mighty Motivations

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: October 10, 2004

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:9–20

Outline

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- II. The Soul Winner's Compensation
- III. The Soul Winner's Conviction
- IV. The Soul Winner's Compassion
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- VI. The Soul Winner's Commission

Conclusion

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. And in just a moment we're going to look at verse 9. But if you haven't found it yet, let me tell you what verse 9 says, as it begins: "*Wherefore we labour...*" (2 Corinthians 5:9). Now they were asking the Apostle Paul, "What makes you the mighty man that you are? Why do you spend and are spent for the cause of Christ? What motivates you? What has captured your imagination? What is it that impels you? What is it that drives you? What is your motivation?" Your success, ladies and gentlemen, will be determined by your motivation.

A boy was being chased through the woods by a giant grizzly bear. He knew he could not outrun the bear, so he saw a tree and thought, "Well, perhaps I can climb that tree and be safe." But then, there were no lower limbs, and the tree was too big for him to get his arms around. But he saw an overhanging limb, and he thought, "If I could only jump up and catch that limb, I would be safe." But the limb was 15 feet above the ground. And he thought to himself, "No human being has ever jumped that high." But then, he felt the warm moist breath of that grizzly on his neck, and he summoned all of his strength and leaped a mighty leap. Now he missed the limb, but he caught it on his way back down. **Motivation—motivation.**

I want to speak to you about soul winning. That is our emphasis today. And I want to talk to you about "The Soul Winner's Six Mighty Motivations." And I pray God that He will etch these into your consciousness and write them indelibly upon your mind.

I. The Soul Winner's Compulsion

Now let's see what are the six motivations of the Apostle Paul. First of all, I want you to think about the soul winner's compulsion—the soul winner's compulsion. Verse 9 I've already called your attention to: *"Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him"* (2 Corinthians 5:9). And that literally means, "we may be acceptable of Him"—that God wants us acceptable to Him.

This is the compulsion that drove the Apostle Paul: He wanted to hear the Lord Jesus Christ say, "Well done, good and faithful servant." He wanted the smile of God to be on him. He wanted his life to please God. Are you living a life acceptable to God? I'm not asking, "Are you accepted?" I'm not asking, "Are you saved?" I'm asking, "Is the life that you're living now, in the flesh, this morning—does your life please God?" Now *if you please God, it doesn't matter whom you displease. And if you displease God, it doesn't matter whom you please.* And the way to please God is to obey God, and God has commanded us to be His witnesses. "Ye shall be My witnesses" (Luke 24:48)—that's what the Scripture says. Now again, I want to remind you that your great motivation ought to be to please God.

I heard of a concert violinist who gave a mighty concert, and the people stood and applauded. The violinist left the stage while the people were applauding. The people behind the stage said, "Go back out there—they're standing; they are applauding for you. They're all standing." He said, "No, they're not all standing. You see that little man on the third row? He's not standing, and he is my teacher." Again, *it doesn't matter whom you please, if you displease your Master, the Lord Jesus Christ.*

And I want to tell you something—I hope I don't hurt your feelings: But if you're not endeavoring to bring souls to Christ, you're not acceptable; you're not pleasing God, no matter what else you do, no matter how much money you give, no matter how beautiful you sing, no matter how faithful you may usher, no matter how regularly you may attend. If you're not bringing souls to Jesus Christ, at least endeavoring to do that, you're not pleasing to God. Paul said, "You want to know why I labor? Let me tell you what my compulsion is: and that is that I want to please the Lord."

II. The Soul Winner's Compensation

Now he mentions another compulsion, another motivation. I want to call it the soul winner's compensation—the soul winner's compensation. Now skip down to verse 10: *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according that he hath done, whether it be good or bad"* (2 Corinthians 5:10). Now you're in the flesh right now; you're in your body. And one of these days, you're going to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ, and your life is going to pass by, in review.

There used to be an old television program called, “This is Your Life.” Now when you stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, and your life is put on display, how will you feel about that? Will there be a reward for you? Now over in 1 Corinthians, the Bible says, *“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)—not what size, but what sort. God is looking for quality, not quantity. A handful of diamonds is worth more than a truckload of hay. And the fire is going to try every man’s work of what sort it is. *“If any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones”*—then, another category—*“wood, hay, [and] stubble”* (1 Corinthians 3:12).

Now what’s the difference between gold, silver, and precious stones; wood, hay, and stubble? Gold, silver, and precious stones have already been through the fire. Wood, hay, and stubble are vulnerable to the fire. Every one of us here today is building upon Jesus Christ. And either you’re building with gold, and silver, and precious stones, or you are building with wood, hay, and stubble. When you face the Lord Jesus Christ, will your life be characterized by gold, silver, and precious stones, or will it all go up in smoke, because you’re going to be tried by fire—the wood, the hay, the stubble? You see, the Bible says, *“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.”* But now listen: *“If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss”* (1 Corinthians 3:14–15).

Much sooner than you may realize, you’re going to stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Now the Judgment Seat of Christ is not a tribunal where you’ll be condemned and cast into Hell. If you’ve received Jesus Christ as your personal Savior, the Bible says, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1). You can never, never, never be condemned. But now listen. You are going to face the *bema*. That’s what the words *Judgment Seat* mean. It was a raised platform in the middle of the athletic field, where a runner would come and get a crown, a laurel, if he had deserved it. He would have disciplined his body. He would have run according to the rules. The Bible says, *“If any man strive for the masteries, he’s not crowned, except he strive lawfully”* (2 Timothy 3:5). And if he kept the rules, if he did well, they would place on his head a laurel. That’s what Paul called *a corruptible crown*.

Now you see, listen. The Judgment Seat of Christ is going to be a place of reward for some and regret for others—reward for some and regret for others. You say, “Well, Pastor, I don’t believe in rewards.” Well, I believe in them. Let me give you some Scripture:

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). You’re not saved by works; but friend, you are rewarded for your works.

First Corinthians chapter 3, 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). Paul is talking about, “why I labor.” “I want a reward,” he’s saying.

Jesus said, in Matthew chapter 6 and verse 20: *“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal”* (Matthew 6:20). Now everybody thinks that we’re all going to have an equal reward in Heaven. We are not—we are not. Some will have a greater reward than others. If not, that makes absolutely no sense at all for Jesus to say, *“Lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven,”* if everybody’s going to be the same in Heaven. Now you need a crown—a non-corruptible crown.

I used to be an athlete—played the game of football, was captain of my team. We had a championship team. Part of our reward was a gold football—a little gold football, just so big. I gave it to Joyce, so she could wear it around her neck. And then, we received what we call a *letter sweater*, because we were called *lettermen*. And there, on that maroon sweater, in white letters, was, “PB”—“Palm Beach.” For me, it stood for, “Poor Boy.” “Palm Beach”—because I went to Palm Beach High School, down in West Palm Beach, Florida. And then, I was given some cups, some trophies, that should have been polished, and kept, and put in a showcase somewhere.

Do you know what happened to the football? Somebody broke into our house and stole the football and some other things. It’s gone. I have no idea who has it now. Do you know what happened to the sweater? The moths got it. And I have no idea whatsoever where those cups are. I don’t own a’ one of them—I don’t have a’ one of them. Somewhere, somehow, if they’ve not been melted down, they are in existence in some dark corner in somebody’s attic.

You see, the things of this world pass away. They’re gone. They are corruptible. But you and I are striving for a non-corruptible crown. Now Heaven is going to be a place of reward for some; it’s going to be a place of regret for others.

Now he says, *“If any man’s work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward...”*—that’s 1 Corinthians chapter 3; 1 Corinthians, this time—*“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). The fire is going to test your work. If your life goes up in flames—wood, hay, and stubble—you’re going to lose; you will suffer loss. It doesn’t mean you’re going to lose your salvation. Paul makes that very plain: *“But he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”* That is, “You’re going to be singed, but saved. You’re going to get into Heaven with the smell of smoke on you. You’re going to lose.” You say, “Pastor, if I’m in Heaven, just any place in Heaven will be fine for me. Just build me a cabin in the corner of Glory, and...” I can’t explain it, but I believe it—that, if you meet the Lord at the Judgment Seat of Christ and you’re not a

soul winner, endeavoring to bring souls to Jesus Christ, friend, you will regret it. You will regret it—that you failed to obey the Lord.

I spoke to a denominational worker in our Southern Baptist Convention. He was a leader. He was on his deathbed. He said to me, “Adrian, I want you to know that I am not afraid to die. I’ve given my heart to Jesus Christ. I am saved, and I’m going to Heaven. But Adrian, I am ashamed to die, because I’ve never won souls to Jesus Christ. I’ve not been a soul winner.” Think about that, dear friend.

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)

Don’t you want to come and stand before the Lord Jesus Christ with souls bound in the golden chains of the gospel that you can lay at Jesus’ feet? Friend, I’m telling you, there is coming a time of compensation. It will be a time of reward, or it will be time of regret.

III. The Soul Winner’s Conviction

Thirdly, notice the soul winner’s conviction. Second Corinthians 5, verse 11: “*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*” (2 Corinthians 5:11). What made Paul the great persuader of men? What motivated him? This is part of the answer: “*Wherefore we labour...[because of] the terror of the Lord*” (2 Corinthians 5:9–11).

Can you imagine what it would be for a soul to be lost—your friend, your neighbor, your mother, your father, your brother, your sister, your children? Can you imagine the terror of going into a Christ-less eternity to drop into Hell? “Well, Pastor, nobody believes in Hell anymore.” I do—I do! Now I know that’s become not politically correct today. And I have a suspicion, if the Supreme Court of the United States of America could vote on it, they would outlaw Hell as cruel and unusual punishment. The Bible speaks of a Hell.

Abraham Lincoln asked a little boy, one time, “Son, if a dog has four legs and you call his tail a leg, then how many would he have?” The little boy said, “He’d have five.” And Lincoln said, “No, he’d only have four. No matter what you call its tail, it’s still a tail.” No matter what people say about Hell, Hell is still there.

May I ask you some questions? Listen to me. If there is no Hell, is not this book a bundle of blunders, because it teaches us about Heaven and Hell? Now if you don’t believe what it says, why do you read it? Why do you say that you believe it? Now if there is no Hell, secondly, is not Jesus Christ a deceiver? Do you know who the greatest hellfire preacher was in the Bible—the greatest, had more to say about Hell than any other subject? It was Jesus!

People say, “Oh, I wish you were more loving like Jesus.” Let me read what the loving Christ said here, in Mark chapter 9, verses 43 and 44: “*And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*” (Mark 9:43–44). Never ridicule a preacher for being a hellfire preacher, because if you do, you’re speaking evil of the Lord Jesus Christ.

If there is no Hell, is not the Bible a bundle of blunders? If there is no Hell, is not Jesus Christ a deceiver? Friend, if there is no Hell, was not Calvary a mistake? Do you mean to say that Jesus Christ died upon that cross to save us from a nonexistent Hell? By every mouthful of spit they put into His face; by the beard that they jerked from His cheeks when they snatched His beard away; by His thorn-crowned brow; by every mark of the lash that they put upon His back; by every bruise that came from those clubs; by every scar that fell upon Him as they beat Him with their fists; by the agony, the utter midnight, of His death upon the cross, as He hung naked in agony and blood—by all of that, if there is no Hell, it was the world’s most colossal mistake—that Jesus Christ died on the cross to save us from a Hell that doesn’t exist.

If there is no Hell, ladies and gentlemen, how can there be a Heaven? I say, “Do you believe in Heaven?” “Oh yes, I do, for the Bible teaches it. I can only imagine what it’s going to be like.” Well, if you die and go to Hell, you can only imagine what that’s going to be like. It’s beyond anything that you can think of.

Do you want your friends and your neighbors to go to Hell? Friend, do you have a conviction that there is a life to live, a death to die, and a judgment to face? How sad for people to die and rise in the Judgment to face a God they do not know! Paul said, “*Knowing...the terror of the Lord,*”—the terror of the Lord—“*we persuade men*” (2 Corinthians 5:11). You say, “Well, God is a God of love.” Yes, He is—infinite, matchless, fathomless love—but He’s also a God of justice. *If you take half of the truth and try to make half of the truth all of the truth, that half of the truth becomes an untruth.* He is a God of justice.

I read somewhere where some sailors had a chaplain aboard this ship, and they asked him this question: “Chaplain, do you believe in Hell?” He said, “Yes, I do. Why did you ask?” They said, “Simply, if there is no Hell, we don’t need you for a chaplain; and, if there is a Hell and you don’t believe in it, we don’t want you as a chaplain.” Any preacher who is worth his salt is going to preach what the Bible says about Hell.

Paul said, “You want to know what drives me, what impels me, what motivates me? I want to be pleasing to Jesus! That’s what motivates me. I want a reward when I face the Lord Jesus. That’s what motivates me. And I want my friends, my neighbors, not to go to Hell. That is what motivates me; that is my conviction.”

IV. The Soul Winner's Compassion

Now next, I want you to notice the fourth thing: This is the soul winner's compassion. "What motivates me? Compassion," Paul is saying.

Look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians 5, verses 13 and following: "*For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God...*"—now, look at that term, "beside ourselves." They were saying, "Paul, why do you work so hard? Why do you labor? You must be insane; you must be mentally deficient. You're beside yourself; you're schizophrenic. Why do you do this?" Paul is answering—"*whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us;*"—not only the terror of the Lord, but the love of Christ constrains us—"because..."—listen to the rationale—"because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and he that died for all,"—and that he died for all—"that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:13–15).

And by the way, there are some people who believe in a limited atonement—that He didn't die for everybody. I want to tell every mother's child in this building, He died for you; He died for all. That's why He died. What love! What compassion! Paul is talking about the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His love, His great compassion. He says, "The love of Christ constrains us."

Do you love Jesus? Don't tell me that you love Jesus, if His love does not constrain you. Don't boast about loving Jesus. When a man loves Jesus, he will love what Jesus loves. Jesus loves the lost. Luke 19:10: "*The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*" Why did He come? Not as the great lawgiver, not as the teacher, not as the example—He came as a Savior. That's why He came. And He said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Don't boast about your love.

And let me say something else: If you're a soul winner, it is not primarily your love for souls that matters, although I hope you have one; it is a love for Jesus. That's what motivates me. If it weren't for Jesus, I don't think I'd be a nice guy to be around. You see, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Do you love Me? Feed My sheep" (John 21:16). He didn't say, "Do you love sheep?" He didn't say, "Do you love feeding sheep?" He said, "Do you love Me?" Now the soul winner's compassion comes from a love for the Lord Jesus Christ, because of His love for us.

Bill Gaither said this—and I talked to him about this: What are the greatest song lyrics ever written? He didn't hesitate. He said, beyond a shadow of a doubt, they were these words:

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade.
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky. (Frederick M. Lehman)

Compassion! Compassion! Compassion! Do you have compassion, or do you sit in church unmoved during the invitation, wondering when it will be over, standing on one foot and then another, and saying, “O God, I hope he doesn’t sing another verse”? You don’t care; it makes no difference to you. You don’t weep for souls; you don’t plead for souls. There is no compassion in your heart for the lost. You need revival, or you need to be saved, if that’s the way that you are.

V. The Soul Winner’s Confidence

Number five: the soul winner’s confidence. Look, if you will now, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 16—2 Corinthians 5:16: *“Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh...”*—now, he’s still asking, “Why do we labor?” He says, “Therefore,” or—*“henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.”* That is, after the flesh. And then, he goes on to say: *“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new”* (2 Corinthians 5:16–17).

If you’re a child of God, a soul winner, you are in the transformation business. When you introduce a soul to Jesus Christ, you put a new man in the suit without even unbuttoning the coat. *“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”* I don’t care what a man may have done. He may be a murderer; he may be a rapist; he may be an arsonist; he may be blasphemous. But the moment he puts his faith where God has put your sins—on Jesus—that man becomes a new creature. He’s all tomorrows, and he’s no yesterdays. His sin is buried in the grave of God’s forgetfulness. God puts His Spirit in that man’s heart. That man, that woman, that boy and girl, is twice-born. He has become a new creature. You think about it.

Think about the privilege to introduce a soul to Jesus Christ. Now he says, *“Henceforth know we no man after the flesh.”* What does he mean by that? He said, “I don’t look at them according to their stature—whether they’re big or small. I don’t look at them according to their intellect—whether they’re educated or uneducated. I don’t look to them about their status—whether they’re rich or poor, famous or unknown.” He says, *“All of that is of the flesh—‘know we now no man after the flesh.’”* Every soul that you

will meet today and the rest of your life is precious in the sight of the Lord. Do you believe that? Precious in the sight of the Lord. Call no man *common* for whom Jesus died. Sometimes we think a person has a great victory, if they win a football star to Christ, or win a movie star to Christ, or win a business magnate to Christ. Well, the up-and-out need Jesus, but God's not impressed with all of that. "*Henceforth know we no man after the flesh.*"

I heard a story years—and years ago, a true story—about a motorboat: high-powered, speedy. It went under a bridge in Tampa, Florida, and hit the pylon. And the driver of the boat went into unconsciousness and sank down in the water. Finally, they fished him out of the water. They had him stretched out there on the bridge. They were trying to revive him, give him artificial respiration. A passerby stopped, and he looked. He thought, "Look, I'm here at a very opportune time. I'm getting to see a real-life drama." He looked over in the water, and there was the boat, sinking. He looked there at the medics trying to bring that man back to consciousness, perhaps to save his life. And he was observing it all. And then, they turned the man's head this way, and the passerby looked into his face and said, "My God, that's my brother! That man is my brother!" He said, "Listen. Do something! Call an ambulance! People, pray! That's my brother! He's dying! Pray!"

Now what was that man's problem? I don't mind him wanting prayer for his brother, but he's like so many of us today. We see people after the flesh. We don't understand that every man, every woman, every boy, every girl, is a potential brother in Christ.

I'd gone out in the yard a few days ago—several weeks ago, really—to talk to a man working in our yard. As I walked up to him to give him some instruction, God said, "Adrian, why don't you talk to him about Jesus?" So I said to him, after a few friendly words—I said, "Let me ask you a question: Have you come to the place where, if you died right now, you'd know you're going to Heaven?" He said, "No." I said, "Would you like to know?" He said, "Yes." And I told him the old, old story of Jesus and His love. And he bowed his head and received Christ as his personal Savior. And you know, I thought to myself, "Adrian, you started just to go out there, give that man some instruction, and walk back in. And how easy that was to share with that man about our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ!" "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation."

Jerry Parker, one of our deacons, told me a story the other day. I love it. He said he got a phone call there, at his business, and the person on the other end said, "Why did you call me?" He said, "I didn't call you. Who are you?" And they said, "Well, you must have called, because your number is left on our telephone." He said, "Then, somebody dialed the wrong number. I didn't call you. But while I have you on the phone, may I ask you a question? If you were to die today, would you go to Heaven? Do you know that your sin is forgiven and that you're right with God?" The man said, "No, sir. I don't know

that.” Jerry said, “Let me tell you about it,” and led him to Christ right there, on the telephone—wrong number.

Well, that’s a great story. But a few days later, maybe a week or two later, the phone rang again. And this time it was a woman. She said, “Why did you call me?” He said, “I didn’t call you. Evidently, somebody is getting the numbers mixed up. But while I have you on the phone, let me talk to you,” and led the wife to Jesus Christ. Friend, listen. Souls can be made whole by trusting Christ.

Friends all around me are trying to find
What the heart yearns for, by sin undermined;
I have the secret, I know where ’tis found:
Only true pleasures in Jesus abound. (Harry D. Loes)

“If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.”

Would you like to make somebody new? Would you like for somebody to receive the same grace, and the same faith, the same transformation, that you have? I want to put it to you bluntly: If you don’t desire for someone to have what you have, I don’t want what you have, because I doubt very seriously that you’re saved. How can you have the love of Jesus in your heart? How can you believe you’ve been redeemed? How can you believe that a person can be made new by faith in the Lord Jesus and be silent about it? No, friend, there is a confidence—and what is it? *“If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature.”*

VI. The Soul Winner’s Commission

Now I want you to hear the sixth of these reasons, and the last one. It is the soul winner’s commission—the soul winner’s commission. Look, if you will now, in verse 18: *“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ,”*—to *reconcile* means, “to be brought back to God.” How are we reconciled? By Jesus Christ—*“and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation”* (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Look at your pastor, and I want to tell you something: God has called you to the ministry. God has given to you the ministry of reconciliation. *“To wit,”*—listen, here’s your message—*“that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;”*—now—*“and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ,”*—underscore that, if you don’t mind writing in your Bible, “ambassadors for Christ”—*“as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God”* (2 Corinthians 5:19–20).

You are an ambassador. What is an ambassador? An ambassador is somebody who represents the person of a king in the court of another. That’s what he means when he says, *“We pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”* Jesus is in the Glory, and you’re here on Earth. And He has commissioned you as His ambassador. The King

of kings has commissioned you. Don't ever say that you're not important. Don't ever say that you have no consequence. Friend, you are an ambassador of Heaven. Does that sink into you, or is that just rhetoric?

I was at a presidential inauguration. Joyce and I got in a cab after the inauguration. And since we were coming out where all the big shots were coming out, the man said to me, "What do you do?" I said, "I am an ambassador." He said, "What?" I said, "I'm an ambassador." He said, "Oh?" He said, "Where are you an ambassador from?" I said, "Oh, listen. I'm the ambassador of a King." "A King?" "Yes," and I said, "His name is Jesus." And I shared with that cabbie the love of Jesus Christ and the reconciliation that comes by faith in Him.

You are an ambassador. Don't get the idea that you're a fifth wheel—that you're not important. Who could have a greater honor? Who could have a greater commission than to be an ambassador? Who could have a greater message than the message of reconciliation? Therefore, a Christian not engaged in evangelism is guilty of high treason against his King, and he's guilty of apostasy. Don't you want God to use you?

Paul said, "You want to know why I labor? I want to please the Lord. You want to know why I labor? I want a reward, when I see Him. You want to know why I labor? I don't want souls to go to Hell; I want them to know Christ. You want to know why I labor? The love of God constrains me. You want to know why I labor? I have been appointed as an ambassador of the King of kings and the Lord of lords. That's what motivates me. That's why I labor."

Conclusion

Bow your heads in prayer. Would you pray right now, "Lord God, give me the same kind of motivation that Paul had"?

I was in a Bible conference, when I was a young Christian, in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. I'd not been saved very long at all, but I remember the service. I was in the balcony, and the speaker spoke on soul winning. And then, he said, "How many of you will endeavor to win a soul to Christ this year?" I lifted my hand, and God put me on the pathway of being a soul winner. I want to ask you a question: How many of you, while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, would say, "Lord Jesus, I am already a soul winner, or I want to be one"? Would you lift your hand? "I'm already a soul winner, or I want to be one." Hold it up a minute. Hold it up till it hurts. Don't take it down. I want you to pray this: "Lord Jesus, help this not to be an idle boast. You see my hand. Move my heart."

Take your hands down. Now if you are here today and you're unsaved—you say, "Pastor, my soul must be important, if people will do this to get people like myself saved." And that is true—would you like to be saved? To be saved means that every sin

is forgiven, buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness. To be saved means that God lives in your heart through the Holy Spirit. To be saved means that, one day, you're going to Heaven. And you can only imagine how great Heaven is.

Would you like to be saved? Would you pray this prayer, remembering, as you pray, that salvation is a gift—you can't earn it; you'll never deserve it—pray this prayer: "Dear God, I need to be saved, and I want to be saved. Jesus, You shed Your blood on the cross to pay my sin debt. Thank You for doing that, Jesus. Thank You, Jesus. Thank You. Now Lord Jesus, You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, right now, this moment, where I am in this seat, now, now, I trust You to save me. I'm not looking for a feeling. I'm not asking for a sign. And I'm standing on Your Word. No matter how I feel, I trust You to save me. Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith, and that settles it. You're now my Lord, my Savior, my Master, my God, my King. I love You, Jesus. Thank You for keeping Your Word, for You said, '*For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*' (Romans 10:13). Thank You, Jesus, for saving me."

Now I want you to pray this prayer: "Lord Jesus, because You have saved me, help me never to be ashamed of You. And give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray."

Motivations for Soul Winning

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: June 19, 1983

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:9–21

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.”

2 CORINTHIANS 5:9

Outline

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- I. The Acceptance That Paul Sought
- II. The Accounting That Paul Faced
 - A. The People Assembled
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- V. The Accomplishment Paul Saw
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Introduction

Would you be kind enough to take your Bibles tonight and turn to 2 Corinthians 5, and we're going to begin reading in, ah, verse 9. Second Corinthians 5. We're having three months of emphasis at Bellevue Baptist Church. The first month of emphasis has been on prayer, and we've called that upreach. The second month of emphasis has been upon the word *care*, and we call that inreach. The third month of emphasis is going to be around the word *share*, and we call that outreach. Now we are doing the first two months to get ready for the third month. And in the month of July, I'm praying that every one who is a Christian and a member of this church will have the joy during that month of bringing at least one soul to Jesus Christ. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

Now look tonight. I see about twenty-five hundred plus in this auditorium tonight. Wouldn't it be wonderful if in the month of July we would see two thousand, five hundred people come to Jesus? Is that impossible? I don't think it's impossible. As a matter of fact, I think it is possible and probable if you'll pay attention tonight and do what our Lord would have you to do. Now I want to begin reading in verse 9. They were accusing Paul of being beside himself, and, ah, they were accusing him of being

mentally unbalanced and working himself into the grave. And he's explaining why he did what he did, and he begins the sentence, "Wherefore we labor (that is, here's the reason I work as I do), that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of 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. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God: and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences. For we commend not ourselves again unto you, but give you occasion to glory on our behalf, that ye may have somewhat to answer them which glory in appearance, but not in heart. For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God (that is, Paul says, "If I'm crazy, I'm crazy about the Lord): or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if he died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ Jesus, excuse me, Jesus Christ, and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though Christ did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made hi to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Now some years ago I used to teach a class in this church called "God's Invasion Army." And when we would study in "God's Invasion Army," we studied this particular chapter because this chapter is a great chapter on soul winning, and it teaches the mighty motivation of the soul winner. In this chapter, Paul is telling what impelled him. Paul is telling what drove him. Paul is telling what motivated him, what made him the master soul winner that he was. You see, motivation is a very important thing. If you get motivated rightly, you'll be surprised what you can do.

There's an old story of a man who was walking through the woods, and he heard a noise behind him. And looked behind him, and there was a great grizzly bear. And, of course, he started to try to run and get away from the bear. And so this man started to run. And as he was running, the bear took after him. And everybody knows that a bear can outrun a man. And so the bear was gaining on this man. And he could hear the thunderous footprints behind him as the bear was coming on. And the bear got so close he could feel the warm, hot, moist breath of the bear on the nap of his neck and could hear those huge paws with the tremendous claws as they were whistling through the

ears. The bear was grabbing for him and making great swipes for him. And this man thought to himself, *There's no way I can save my life unless I can find a tree that I can get up in.* Then he saw his tree. And he said, "Oh no, there's not a limb lower than twenty feet and the trunk is too big around for me to grab. I'll never make it. No man can leap twenty feet in the air." But he said, "It's my only chance, anyway. I might as well try." And so as the bear made one more lunge for him, this man, with his heart just about to come out of his throat, made a tremendous leap for that limb. He missed it, but he caught it on his way back down!

You can do amazing things if you're properly motivated. Paul tells us about his motivation. Paul tells us what just kept him going all of the time, so much that some people said he'd lost his mind, that he was beside himself because night and day he did not quit. Now what are those motivations?

I. The Acceptance That Paul Sought

The very first one is this: He wanted to please the Lord. Look, if you will, in verse 9: "Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him." Now the word accepted means to be looked at a little more carefully. It really means to be acceptable to Him. Now He accepts us when we receive Him by faith. Now Paul wasn't trying to work his way to heaven. But what it literally means is that we may be pleasing to Him. Paul wanted to please Jesus. Do you? If you do, look at me and nod your head so I know you're listening. Do you want to please Jesus? Nod your head. Now, friend, listen. If you want to please Jesus, then you'd better get busy about this matter of soul winning, because He has commanded you in this matter of soul winning. And I want to tell you, no matter what else you do, if you're not a soul winner, if you're not endeavoring to bring people to Jesus (are you paying attention?), you're not pleasing to Him. Amen or Oh me. Now you say, "But I give my money." I don't care. You say, "I teach my class." I don't care. You say, "I live a godly life." I don't care. I care not how circumspectly you walk, how faithfully you attend, how liberally you give, how beautifully you sing, how eloquently you preach, how anything else. If you're not endeavoring to bring people to Jesus Christ, you're not pleasing the Lord. Jesus has commanded it; not requested it. The Great Commission says, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have requested you." Is that what it says? "...whatever I have suggested you." No! "...whatsoever things I have commanded you." And the church that is not in evangelism is in rebellion against God. The Christian who is not trying to bring somebody to Jesus Christ is a Christian that is not pleasing to God. I've told you before, the great, saintly Andrew Murray said, "There are two classes of Christians: soul winners and backsliders. You want to please

the Lord? Then obey the Lord. Paul says, “This is why I do it, that I might be acceptable to Him.” The very first reason then is the acceptance that we seek.

II. The Accounting That Paul Faced

The second motivation is the accounting that we face. Continue to read here. Look, if you will, in verse 9 as Paul goes to say, “Wherefore we labor, that, whether present or absent, we may be 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 that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” One of these days, one of these days, and, perhaps, much sooner than you realize, you’re going to come to the judgment seat of Christ as a Christian. Now the Great White Throne Judgment is for the unsaved, and we’ll not appear there. That judgment in Revelation 20, beginning in verse 11. We’ll not appear there. That Great White Throne is not for Christians. But the judgment seat of Christ is for Christians, and we’re going to appear there.

A. The People Assembled

I want you to notice the people who will be assembled. He says, “We all must appear...” That means Adrian Rogers is going to be there. Tommy Lane is going to be there. Ken Babrick is going to be there. And you’re going to be there if you’re saved because Paul is talking to Christians, and he said, “We all...” No one is excluded. Remember Ralph Edwards used to come on television and find some unsuspecting person, and say, “This is your life?” And then his life would be portrayed there on the screen and, and passed by in dress review. That’s going to happen in your life. One of these days your life, as a Christian, is going to be portrayed and you’re going to face the record that you lived as a Christian. You are going to give an account of the life that you lived. Paul said, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...” The people assembled.

B. The Place Appointed

The place appointed—the judgment seat of Christ. The word that is translated in the into English, *judgment seat*, is the Greek word *bema*. And it was not a civil courtroom. But the judgment seat was a raised platform in the middle of the athletic field, that after the runner would run his race, he would come to that judgment seat, he would come to that referee stand, and there he would receive his laurels, just like our boys who won the World Cup received, I suppose, a cup. I don’t know what they received. They received something, ah, to show that they had played and they played well. Now those boys who did not win the tournament were not put in prison. They just simply did not receive an award. Now, friend, one of these days I’m going to face the Lord and I’m going to come to that judgment seat of Christ. I’m going to come to that bema, and, and, and I’m going to be judged. Now we’ve seen the people assembled. We’ve seen the place appointed,

the judgment seat.

C. **The Purpose Assigned**

Now what is the purpose assigned right here? That we may receive the things done in our body. Now what he means is while we are alive here on earth in our physical, literal, earthly body. There's one thing that you cannot do when you get to heaven. You can praise in heaven. You can sing in heaven. You can testify in heaven. You can shout in heaven. You can worship in heaven. But there's one thing, so far as I can see in the Bible, you can't do in heaven, and that's win souls. That's one thing we can do down here we can't do up there. All the soul winning you're going to do you're going to do this side of the grave. And we're going to receive the things done in our body; that is, whether or not we won souls to the Lord Jesus Christ. And, therefore, for some people there's going to be a reward. Now I know there are people who don't believe in rewards in heaven. As a matter of fact, I never have been able to understand it, but it, it almost every time that I preach that there are going to be rewards in heaven, somebody gets their hackles up, and they say, "I just don't believe in rewards." Well, friend, let me just give you a few verses. 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." What are you going to do with that verse? Let me give you another one. First Corinthians 3:8: "...if, every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." Let me give you another one. Matthew 6:20: "Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." The soul winner is going to receive in heaven the soul winner's crown. I don't know exactly what it's going to be like. Frankly, I don't expect it to be some, something made of metal that I'm going to wear around on my head. I'm not looking forward to that. What Paul is using, and what the Bible is using when it speaks of the soul winner's crown is an analogy or a metaphor or a simile or something that we can relate to. I have no problem wearing a crown if the Lord wants me to. But beyond that is the emblem, the symbol of being crowned, being pleasing to our wonderful, wonderful Savior. There's going to be a reward when our Lord says to the soul winner, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And there's going to be a loss for others. I mean, those of you who are going to heaven, those of you who are saved, if you're not a soul winner, when you face the Lord Jesus Christ, some way, some how in ways that I cannot even explain, you are going to suffer loss. The Bible says, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." Saved, but singed. He'll get into heaven with his coattails smoking. And the, the very things that he did for the Lord Jesus Christ, so many of them are going to be eroded away by his lack of obedience to the Lord, and the reward that he could have had will not be there. Are you listening to me? Folks, as surely as I'm standing in this pulpit, you're going to give an account for

the way that you've witnessed the Lord Jesus Christ. And if you're not a soul winner, in that day you'd give a million worlds like this one had y you been a soul winner. The Bible says, "He that winneth souls is wise." It is the Great Commission. It is not incidental; it is fundamental, and it is for every Christian. Now there's a third thing that motivated Paul.

III. The Apprehension That Paul Had

Not only the acceptance that he sought, and, and not only the accounting that he faced, but a third thing, the apprehension that he had. I want you to notice in chapter 5 now and verse 11. He goes on to say, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..." The terror of the Lord. The apostle Paul knew that God was a God of love, infinite love, and he's going to speak of that love in just a moment. But he also speaks of the terror of the Lord. Paul knew that the lost were going to die and go to hell. And Paul had a holy fear of that judgment that some would face. Paul was not expecting to go to hell himself, but Paul was terrified at the fact that others might miss heaven and go to hell. You say, "Well, I, you know, I just don't believe in, in, in being afraid of God." Well, I want to tell you something, friend. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom," the Bible says in Proverbs 9:10. And a man that does not have a healthy fear and respect for God is devoid of one spark of wisdom, one spark, one ounce of wisdom. And those who fear God the most love Him the best. And all the fear of God is, is love on its knees. That's what it is. And Paul says, "Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..." The knowledge of this terror made Paul a great persuader. There are those today who don't like the idea of hell. They don't like the idea that a man could die and go to hell. They try to explain hell away. But before you explain hell away, I want you to answer these questions: If there is no hell, is not this book a bundle of lies and a bundle of blunders? For the Bible tells us about hell. Secondly, if there is no hell, is not Jesus Christ the world's greatest deceiver? For Jesus Christ had more to say about hell than any other preacher or prophet in the Bible – Jesus Christ Himself. Let me tell you, or let me give you an example of what the Lord Jesus said in Mark 9:43-44. Jesus said, "If thy hand offend thee, cut it off: for it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell..." Jesus said it would be better to be a crippled sinner than a, a crippled saint than a whole sinner. That's what He's saying. He goes on to say, ah, "...having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched, where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched." Now do you think Jesus Christ was lying? Do you think Jesus Christ was deceiving when He warned about hell fire? I want to ask you another question. If there is no hell, was not Calvary a mistake? Was not Calvary the blunder of the ages - that God allowed His darling Son to die in agony and, and blood upon the cross to save us from a non-existent hell? I want to say, by the

spit that befouled His beard, by the spear that was thrust into His side, by the scourge that was laid upon His back, by the thorns that crowned His brow, by the nails that were driven through His quivering palms, there is a place called hell. Had there been no hell, there would have been no Calvary. I want to ask you another question. If there is no hell, can there be any heaven – for the same Bible that tells us about hell tells us about heaven?

There's an old story of some boys on a ship who asked the chaplain, the sailors asked the chaplain, "Chaplain, do you believe in hell?" He said, "Yes, I do. Why did you ask?" They said, "Simply this: If there is no hell, we don't need a chaplain. And if there is a hell and you don't believe in it, we don't want you for a chaplain."

Amen. And I say, I don't want any preacher standing in a pulpit where I'm a member of a church who denies what the Bible clearly and plainly says about hell. And so Paul is saying, "You want to know why I labor, even to the point that some people think that I've lost my mind." Paul said, "I have an apprehension. Knowing the, the terror of the Lord, I persuade men. I become the great persuader."

IV. The Affection Paul Received

But there was another reason, and that was the affection that Paul had received. Continue to read in verses 13-15. Paul goes on to say, "But whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. For the love of Christ constraineth us..." Now here's another reason – the love of Christ constraineth us. Not Paul's love for Christ; Christ's love for Paul. As Paul got to thinking about how He died for all, and that all died with Him, and that he, he thinks of His vicarious atonement, that Jesus, "Him who knew no sin, God hath made to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." When Paul thought about that, it moved the heart of Paul. Paul thought of the great cost of Calvary, how much Jesus suffered and bled and died and how much Jesus loved him, and Paul says, "That love moves me. That love constrains me."

Years and years ago I read a story about a little crippled boy in Chicago. That little fellow had a crippling disease that enabled him to walk. He had no daddy, and his mother was very poor and she had to work as a maid and to do domestic work so they could keep body and soul together. Each day, when she would go off to work, she would leave him there in the little threadbare apartment. They had no rugs on the floor. But she would take clean newspaper and spread them out on the floor for the little crippled boy to play on and to crawl around on until she got back from work. He was a bright little boy and he had learned how to read, almost taught himself how to read. And so he was reading the newspapers as he was crawling around on them. And as he was reading the newspaper, he read a story of an eminent physician, a skilled surgeon from

Austria named Dr. Lorenz. And Dr. Lorenz was coming to the United States, according to this newspaper article, to perform, ah, surgery on another child who had been crippled. And the story made much about it. It was a very prominent family, and they had the tremendous expense of paying this skilled physician from Austria. And they had brought him all the way across the ocean to Chicago to perform this surgery. And when this little boy's mother came home that evening—the little boy's name was Michael—and Michael said to his mother, "Mother, come here. I want you to see something. Mother, read this, read this." And the mother read it. And as she read it, of course, her eyes brimmed with tears because she knew this was something that was happening among the wealthy in Chicago, but not for her. And the little boy asked, he said, "Mother, do you think, do you think that perhaps that doctor could operate on me?" And the mother said, "No, son. That would be impossible. He hasn't come to people like us. He's coming to a wealthy family. And, and there's no way." Little Michael said, "Well, momma, you can't blame a guy for wanting it, can you?"

That broke her heart. She made up her mind that she herself would go and see the eminent surgeon, the great Dr. Lorenz. And she found out somewhere where he was staying in the fine hotel, and he had this suite of rooms there. And she made her way in. And somehow she brushed her way past those who were supposed to keep people like her out. And before the doctor had known what was happening, this woman burst into the room and threw herself at his feet and began to weep at his feet. He was a compassionate man, and he said, "My dear, please get up. What, what's wrong? Tell me." And she just poured out that story of how her boy had been crippled, and how poor they were, and how they'd read about his ability, and all of the rest of it. And, and she said, "Oh, could you, could you, please, do something for Michael?" And the doctor said, "Er, do you have any money?" And then she started to weep again. He said, "No, you don't understand. Not for me. Do you have any money for the hospital? Do you have any money at all?" She said, "We don't have any money." He said, "Let me see what I can do."

And this godly physician set about to raise the money himself and, on his own, performed the surgery and did not charge one red cent. It was a very delicate surgery. And the weeks turned into months as there was that period of recuperation. They were wondering whether or not the surgery would be a success. But Michael and the nurses were working, and, and he was going through those exercises and all of that restoration that he's supposed to go through.

One day, when Michael's mother, after work, came by to see him there in the hospital, he said, "Mother, you close your eyes and don't you open your eyes till I tell you to." She closed her eyes. And then she opened her eyes, and he'd gotten off the bed and had walked from the bed over to the window all by himself. When she opened

her eyes and saw what had happened, that Michael actually had walked, she started to shout and clap her hands and dance around that hospital room and praise the Lord. A few weeks later, Dr. Lorenz came into that hospital room and he said, “Michael, I’m going to have to go.” “Where are you going, Doc?” “Well, I’ve got to go back to Austria. I’ve got to go back to my family. I’ve got to go back to my practice. You’re going to be well. You’re going to be all right. I’ve got to tell you goodbye.” By that time this little boy, who’d come to love and respect that doctor more than any man on the face of this earth, said, “Doc, come here. Come close to me. I want to tell you something.” And he put his arms around the neck of that doctor. And with tears of gratefulness and thanksgiving streaming down his cheeks, he said this to Dr. Lorenz: He said, “Doc”—this is the way a little boy from the south side of Chicago would put it—“Doc, as long as there’s a tongue wagging in my head, there ain’t nobody ever going to forget what you’ve done for me.”

Now, friend, listen. How much more has the Great Physician done for me? How much more has the Lord Jesus done for you? And would I not say, “Dear Lord Jesus, as long as I have strength; dear Lord Jesus, as long as I have a voice; dear Lord Jesus, as long as You give me breath, I’m not going to let anybody forget what You’ve done for me.” That’s what Paul is saying. Paul is saying, ‘You think I’m crazy? You think I’m beside myself?’ He says, “The love of Christ constrains me.” These words were found penned on the wall of an insane asylum, but the man who wrote these words was not altogether insane: “Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made; where every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade. To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry. Nor could the scroll contain the whole though stretched from sky to sky.” That’s another thing that made Paul a soul winner – the love, the love of God.

V. The Accomplishment Paul Saw

But then there was something else. Not only the affection he received, but the accomplishment that he could see when someone would come to Christ. Look now in verses 16 and following. He says, “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” Paul knew that he was in the transformation business. Paul stopped seeing men according to the flesh. Paul stopped seeing whether they were white or black or red or yellow. Paul stopped seeing whether they were rich or poor, educated or ignorant. Paul stopped looking at them from what side of the tracks they’re from. He said, “I don’t see them that way. I see the capability, the potentiality of a man being made a new creature in Christ Jesus. I look at people from a different perspective. I don’t know them as other people know them. You can

judge them according to the flesh if you want to, but I'm going to look at them this way. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; all things are become new." Have you ever thought about the privilege that is ours of leading a soul to Jesus Christ? There are many of you out here today that I've had the privilege of introducing to Jesus Christ. And I look at you now, and I remember the heartache and the sorrow that was in your life before you came to know the Lord Jesus, and I know what you are now. I know what I am now. I know what happened to me because Christ came into my heart. Aren't you glad that you've been transformed? Aren't you glad that you've been made new? And I'll tell you, dear friend, if Jesus has done that for you, He'll do it for someone else. He'd done it for Paul. And Paul knew that when we fish for fish, we take them out of life into death. But when we fish for men, we take them out of death into a beautiful life. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation..." So many times we see people after the flesh, and we look at them and, and despise them sometime or ridicule them and, because we don't see the value of that particular person.

I read about a lady of Paris one day who was walking down the streets of Paris. And she had a very beautiful, big, gorgeous diamond on her finger. She was dressed in silks and laces. And somehow she was jarred, and the setting came out of her ring, and it fell down to the pavement. And then it fell into the gutter there and in where the slime of the sewer of the Paris streets was flowing. And she was aghast, this elegant lady. And when she saw what had happened, without waiting she took and ripped that silk glove from her hand and rolled up her dainty lace sleeve, and put her lily-white hand down into that slime and fished around for that diamond. There she was, a lady of Paris, down on her knees in the gutter because of the value of that diamond to her.

Men are worth more, men are worth more. "What should it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul." Your soul, my soul, any soul is worth more than all the diamonds, all the emeralds, all the rubies, all the stocks, all the bonds, all the schools, all the education, all the railroads, all the airplanes, all the buildings all over this world put together. And so Paul here is thinking about how people can be transformed. He said, "I'm not going to see a man after the flesh. I'm going to see the potentiality of that man as he is transformed." The accomplishment that we see.

VI. The Assignment Paul Was Given

Now I want to tell you another thing that moved and motivated the heart of the apostle Paul, and that was the assignment that he was given. Continue to read here, if you will, in verse 18. Paul does on to say in verse 18 of this same chapter, "All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation.' That is, the assignment that we're given.

“...the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us (that is, unto me, unto you) the word of reconciliation. Now then (on the basis of that, listen to what Paul says), now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God.” What is the assignment that I am given? I am an ambassador of the King of kings.

Suppose Ronald Reagan were to call you this evening. No one else, the president himself. And suppose the president were to say to you, “I have a special mission, a special assignment, I would like for you to fulfill for me.” Whether you’re a Democrat or Republican, you’d be overwhelmed. You would be awed that the president of the most powerful nation upon the face of this earth, that powerful leader would come to you and say, “There’s something I want you to do for me. I want you to be my special envoy. I want you to be my representative.”

Friend, the King of heaven has said that to you. He has committed to us the ministry of reconciliation. He has made me an ambassador. When I was a little boy, I belonged to an organization in our church called “Royal Ambassadors.” And we were taught then that an ambassador is one who represents the person of a king in the court of another. Now that’s high cotton. That’s something. You know, I used to get around some of these lawyers and doctors and business moguls. I used to kind of feel inferior to them. I don’t feel inferior to them any more, not because I don’t respect them. I just didn’t realize who I was. Friend, I want to tell you, they’re going to have to look up to see my job, not because I’m a preacher, but because I’m a Christian. They’re going to have to look up to see your job. You, I don’t care who you are, madam layman, mister layman, you are an ambassador for the King of kings and the Lord of lords. You’re somebody. You don’t have to be a fifth wheel. You are somebody. You count for God. You have been given this assignment. And, and so our Lord has called us. Our Lord has called us. Our Lord has ordained us. Our Lord has commissioned us that we should go and bring forth fruit, and that our fruit should remain.

Conclusion

Years ago there was a Sunday school teacher who took seriously the command of Christ to win souls. This man didn’t really know exactly how to win souls, but he did the best he could. He had a nineteen year-old boy in his class who was lost. And this Sunday school teacher visited that boy. The boy worked downtown as a shoe salesman. The teacher went to the shoe store where the boy worked and went back into the back where the shoes stacks were, and he laid a trembling hand on the shoulder of that shoe clerk and pressed the claims of Christ upon that boy. The shoe clerk wanted Christ. He repented of his sin and was saved. Because he was saved, he went to his

local church and told them, “I’ve become a Christian. I want to be a member of this church.” The church didn’t receive him. The church thought he didn’t know enough, perhaps wasn’t sincere enough. It took the church one year to receive Dwight L. Moody into church membership, because that’s who the nineteen year-old boy was, Dwight L. Moody. If you know anything about Dwight L. Moody, you know he was the Billy Graham of his day. Few men in the history of Christendom have been used like Dwight L. Moody was used. Dwight L. Moody had such a burden for souls that he started organizing Sunday schools in Chicago, and he got boys and girls. He had unique methods of getting boys and girls together to teach them the gospel. He became so effective that he was invited to go overseas to preach in England. He went overseas and was invited into the church of F. B. Meyer. Have you ever read any of F. B. Meyer’s books? An Englishman. An imposing name – Frederick Brotherton Meyer. And he was a cultured, erudite, learned, British divine. And when Moody got up in his pulpit to preach, Moody had no seminary training, had no college training. He murdered the king’s English. Now he didn’t disappoint the king, but I’ll tell you, he murdered the English. He was one of the few men who could pronounce the word Jerusalem in two syllables. And as he preached, Moody used some, what we would call today, tearjerkers. They were real stories, but Moody’s great heart just caused him to tell these stories. And it mortified F. B. Meyer. And F. B. Meyer was sitting there with a slow burn, thinking *Oh, how did I let this uncouth, uncultured, ignorant American in my pulpit. When will it ever end? When will it be over?* And Moody just kept on preaching. Later on, F. B. Meyer was having tea with one of the ladies. And he said to her, “And how does it go this afternoon, madam?” She said, “Wonderful, wonderful. Since Moody has been here, I have won every girl in my class to Jesus Christ.” F. B. Meyer said, “I learned something that day of the language of the human soul and my life was never the same.”

And F. B. Meyer later on testified that a transformation took place in his life because of the life of Dwight L. Moody. Later on, F. B. Meyer came to the United States to preach, and he was preaching in a college, and he was preaching on total surrender. It was a Christian college. There were students there for the ministry. But he was talking about giving everything to Jesus Christ. And he said something like this: “If you are not willing to give everything to Jesus Christ, would you at least come this far? Would you say, ‘O God, I’m not willing, but I am willing to be made willing.’ Would you at least tell Him that?” There was a young man sitting out there. His name was Wilbur Chapman. Wilbur Chapman said, “O God, that’s me. God, I’ve been about to quit. I haven’t let You have everything. And, God, You know what a struggle I’ve had. It’s so hard for me, Lord. But, Lord, I’m going to do what F. B. Meyer said. And, Lord, even though I’m not willing, God, start with me where I am. I am willing to be made willing.” And God started with Wilbur Chapman where he was and made him willing.

And Wilbur Chapman became a mighty, flaming evangelist for the Lord Jesus, whose life was touched by F. B. Meyer. Wilbur Chapman was used mightily across the continent as an evangelist. He needed a helper. He went out and found a young WMCA clerk, an ex-professional baseball player who was now doing WMCA work. This man himself had, had had a dramatic conversion. His name was Billy Sunday. And Billy Sunday started a work with Wilbur Chapman. He did counseling. He helped put up the tent, put out the chairs, put out the songbooks. He did anything he was asked to do. When Chapman finally got out of evangelism and retired, or whatever he did, he turned everything over to Billy Sunday, even his sermon notes. Billy Sunday didn't know how to prepare a sermon, especially at first, but he did a better job with Chapman's sermons than Chapman did. Sometimes the preacher boy ask me, "Brother Rogers, can I use your outline?" I say, "Man, if it'll fit in your gun, shoot it." Amen. And old Billy Sunday would take Wilbur Chapman's sermon outlines and he preached. And you know the ministry that Billy Sunday had. It was almost proverbial, people hitting the sawdust trail. And it is said that he won over a million men to Jesus Christ.

And Billy Sunday came in 1924 to Charlotte, North Carolina, held a mighty revival crusade. And there in Charlotte, that city had a spiritual upheaval as many came to Christ. Then, the depression came and many felt that the depression was God's judgment on America. And there were a group of people who came out of the Sunday crusade there in Charlotte who banded themselves together for a prayer meeting. And they began to pray for an awakening, another revival, that would come to Charlotte, that would shake Charlotte, shake America, and shake the world.

As they continued to pray, God sent another evangelist to Charlotte, North Carolina as a result of that prayer meeting. That man's name was Mordecai Ham. He came to Charlotte, North Carolina in 1934, and there Mordecai Ham held forth and preached a revival crusade. In that revival crusade, a, a long, lanky, sixteen year-old farm boy came to that revival crusade. The preaching was so hot he couldn't stand it. He, he left the auditorium and got up in the choir so he'd be behind it. But the Spirit of God found Billy Graham up there in the choir, and Billy Graham gave his heart to Jesus Christ.

That's a marvelous chain of events, as you trace it backward, as you see how one life touched another life that touched another life that touched another life that touched another life. But you remember when it started? When a Sunday school teacher, a man that most of you don't even know the name of, Mr. Edward Kimball, led Dwight L. Moody to Jesus Christ. And you may not know his name, but I'm going to guarantee you something. There's someone who knows his name, and that's our Lord.

You don't know what you're going to do when you win a boy to Jesus. You don't know what you're going to do when you win a girl to Jesus. You don't know what you're going to do when you met a, win a man or a woman to Jesus Christ. Friend, listen. We

are ambassadors for Christ. Win somebody to Jesus Christ. Get souls on your heart so that you might be pleasing to Him. One of these days you're going to face the judgment seat of Christ. I tell you, people are dying and going to hell. Jesus loves you so much He died for you.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: July 22, 1990

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:10–11

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“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 5:10

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Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles tonight and turn to 11 Corinthians 5 and then be prepared to turn to 1 Corinthians 3. I want us to think tonight on the judgment seat of Christ.

Second Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 10. The Bible says, “For we must (what’s that next little word?) all...” So say to yourself, he’s talking about me tonight, okay. He’s talking about me tonight. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one (again, I’m talking about you and me) may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” The apostle Paul included himself and he was talking to the church at Corinth, so this is not the final judgment of the unsaved. This is something that will happen to the saved. Every one of us will receive the things done in his body, according as to whether it be good or bad.

Now having read that, I want you to go back, if you would, please, to 1 Corinthians chapter 3 where we pick up the same thought. First Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 11. The apostle Paul is explaining, ah, the judgment seat of Christ, and he 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 (those are three very precious, beautiful, wonderful, costly things that have already been through the fire. And then he

mentions another category), wood, hay, and stubble (sounds like the story of the three pigs, doesn't it?) Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed (or tested) by fire; and the fire shall try (or test) every man's work of what sort it is." That is, whether it's gold and silver or precious or whether it's wood, hay, or stubble – what sort it is. "If any man's work abide (that is, is able to withstand the fire), if any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon (that is, the foundation of Jesus), he shall receive a reward. But if any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire." Now, my brothers and sisters in Christ, one of the most sobering thoughts that I can possibly give to you is this: that one day, and perhaps much sooner than we realize, every one of us will stand before Jesus Christ to be judged as to how we have lived our Christian life. Now I don't know whether you believe that or not, or even have thought about it. Maybe you've thought, *Since I'm saved and I have been born again, I'm just going to go right on to heaven and I'm never going to have to give any account for the way that I've lived, the way that I've prayed, the way that I've witnessed, the way that I've given, the way that I've sacrificed. It makes no difference. God is an equal opportunity employer and He's just going to take us all to heaven and everything is going to be the same for everybody.* My dear friend, that is not so. The Bible says we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ. Now learn this about every Christian. There's a three-fold judgment for every Christian. You are judged as a sinner. You are judged as a son. And you are judged as a servant. Okay. Now your judgment as a sinner has already passed. That took place at Calvary when Jesus died for you. You died with Him. And, therefore, your judgment, so far as sin, that's already done. It's gone. Hallelujah. The Bible says in Romans chapter 8 and verse 1: "There is now therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus..." I will never, ever be judged as a sinner. If God were to ever mark up one-half of one sin against me, I would be damned, consigned to hell forever. But the Bible says, "Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin." Praise God. Hallelujah. My sin is gone, buried in the grave of God's forgetfulness; sin, past, present, future, any sin, every sin, because I have received Jesus Christ as my personal Savior. I will never come into condemnation. Jesus said in John 5, verse 24: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me and he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." And so that's my judgment as a sinner. I'll not have to go to the final judgment, the Great White Throne Judgment and be judged like the unsaved will be because, hallelujah, I settled out of court. Now I have another judgment, and that is my judgment as a son. Day by day, God is chastising me and correcting me, for the Father says, "What son is he whom the father chasteneth not?" And, and, and day by day, God chastises us. I don't know whether God ever carries you to the woodshed. He

carried me to the woodshed frequently and, and He administers His corrective judgment upon my life. Now, ah, He is judging me that I'll not be condemned with this world. And the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, "If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged." I mean, you can say, "Lord, You don't need to do it. I, I realize I'm wrong. And, God, I repent and I turn from that sin and I judge it." And God, when He, He chastises us as sons, is not trying to get even with us. He's correcting us. And so, all of us are facing that kind of a judgment day by day. We have been judged as sinners. That's past. We are being judged as sons. That is present, day by day. That is what we call the chastisement of the Lord. Ah, but there's coming another judgment that is out in the future, and that is where we will be judged as servants. That's what the apostle Paul means in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verses 10 and 11: "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." Now that's what we're talking about tonight – the judgment seat of Christ. The judgment seat of Christ is not to determine whether you go to heaven or hell. Friend, that's already determined in this life. If you've received Christ, you know you're going to heaven. If you've not received Christ, you're going to hell if you don't receive Christ. That's already settled right now. The judgment seat of Christ is a judgment of rewards, as we're going to see in a moment, and it does not determine whether you're saved or lost, but it is God's way of setting your life in review, in dress parade, and then God is going to reward you as we're going to see. Every one may receive the things done in his body, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Now, dear friend, since you're going to stand there, I hope tonight that you'll get out your pen and your pencil and you'll mark these Scriptures down and you'll make some notes. Let me tell you what that judgment seat of Christ is going to be like.

I. A Place of Review

First of all, it's going to be a time of review. It's going to be a time of review. Your life is going to pass by in review. Now you may think that you never have to face the way that you live, but you will. The Bible makes it very clear over there in 11 Corinthians chapter 5. Look at it very plainly. The Bible says here, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done (how?) in his body..." That's where you are right now, isn't it, in your body? Are you there? Hello. All right. Now if you're there, if you're in your body, what you're doing right now tonight one day you'll give an account of. That's the reason I often tell people when they preach to pay attention because you're going to have to give an account of what you've heard or what you would have heard if you had listened. You see, everything, things done in your body, whether it be good or whether it be evil. Now God's candid camera is grinding away. God's tape player is playing. God's stenographer is writing. And one of these

days, as Christians, we're going to hear God say, "This is your life." You say, "I thought my sins were under the blood." They are. We'll explain that later on. But still, it's going to be a time of review. My life, from the time I received Christ till the time I went to heaven, is going to be reviewed at the judgment seat of Christ. Now let me give you an example or let me give you an illustration that'll help clear it up. The word that is translated judgment seat is "bema" B-E-M-A. And the bema was a platform in the middle of the Olympic Games. And there the judges sat. The judges watched the runners as they ran. They reviewed the records of, of the runners. And as a runner would win or lose, the judges on the bema would reward or fail to reward, according to the way that that athlete had competed. They would get a laurel. They would get a, a, a, some, they call it laurel because it was actually made of the branches of the laurel tree. Just some, some leaves upon their head. The apostle Paul says, "They are running for a corruptible crown (leaves that will wilt), but we for an incorruptible." Now when an athlete would come and stand before the bema, if he failed to win the race, they didn't cut off his head. They didn't execute him. But, nonetheless, they were watching to see how he ran. And so it will be at the judgment seat of Christ. It is not a tribunal to see whether you're saved or lost, whether you're put in everlasting hell or taken to heaven, that's not the point. It is a place, however, the way that you have run the race, the way that you've lived for the Lord Jesus Christ is going to be reviewed. So put it down – the judgment seat of Christ is, first of all, a place of review.

II. A Place of Reward

Secondly, it is a place of reward. Now there are a lot of people who don't believe in rewards in heaven. They don't, they think that heaven is just going to be the same for everybody. But, my friend, heaven is not going to be the same for everybody. There are degrees of punishment in hell and there are degrees of reward in heaven. Now if you don't believe it, just lick your fingers and get your Bible and let me just show you something. Turn back again to 1 Corinthians chapter 3 with me and look with me in verse 8. First Corinthians 3 and verse 14. God makes it very clear. He says, "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." Verse 8: "...and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." You can't receive my reward. I can't receive your reward. "...every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor." And then turn with me please to Revelation chapter 22, the last book in the Bible, and look with me at the last chapter of the last book and see how God finally, ah, sums up His entire revelation, this great book that tells us how to be saved and go to heaven. Look in verse 12. Jesus is saying to you, my deacon friend; Jesus is saying to you, my staff member compatriot; Jesus is saying to you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, "Behold (Oh, He's trying to get our attention), Behold, I

come quickly...” And the word quickly means suddenly. That means it may be tonight. “...and my reward is with me, to give to every man according as his work shall be.” Now, my dear friend, you’re not saved by works. You’re saved by grace. But you are rewarded by works. “I’m coming quickly, and He, I’m going to reward you,” He says, “according to your works.” Look with me if you would in Matthew chapter 16 now. Just turn to Matthew chapter 16 and look with me in verse 27 of Matthew chapter 16. I’m talking to you guys you say, “I don’t believe that there are going to be rewards in heaven.” Matthew chapter 16 and verse 27: “For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father...and then shall he reward every man (there it is again) according to his works.” You’re not saved by works. Your works don’t take you to heaven. But, my dear friend, they follow you to heaven. And while you’re in the neighborhood in the gospel of Matthew, just go on to Matthew chapter 6 and look with me in verse 20. Here’s a verse that settles it, I think, once and for all. Matthew chapter 6 and verse 20. Jesus says, “But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...” Now may I tell you that that verse makes absolutely no sense whatsoever if heaven is the same for everybody. It makes no sense. If everybody has the same treasure in heaven, why did Jesus say, pray tell, lay up for yourself treasure in heaven? The judgment seat of Christ is going to be, first of all, a time of review and it going to be a time of reward. Now if that is true, what is the criteria or what are the criteria that God is going to use when He determines our reward? Well, may I mention several things?

A. For the Quality of Your Service, Not the Quantity of Your Service

First of all, when God comes to reward you, He’s going to reward you for the quality of your service, not for the quantity of your service. Look, if you will, again in 1 Corinthians chapter 3. Now just go right back to where we started, 1 Corinthians chapter 3, and see how the apostle Paul explains it. He says here in verse 12...well, he says in verse 11 that our lives are like a building. Every one of us are building and making out of our church and out of our personal lives a temple. And he says in verse 11: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus.” Now if you’re going to build a building, you don’t start and build from the roof down. You build from the foundation up. And in order to get any kind of reward, first of all, you’ve got to be saved. You’ve got to lay the foundation. You have to receive Jesus Christ. “...other foundation can no man lay that that is laid, Christ Jesus.” “Upon this rock I will build My church...” Now suppose you begin to build. Some build upon that foundation gold and silver and precious stones. What a magnificent temple that is. Other people build upon Jesus Christ who are just as saved, but they build out of wood and hay and stubble – cheap, ephemeral, combustible materials. Now God says that, “My judgment is going to be like a fire.” And the fire is going to test every man’s work. Now notice. It doesn’t say of how much it is. It says of what sort it is. Do you see that? Not what size, but what sort. Had

you rather have a handful of diamonds or a truckload of hay? Huh. Which would you rather have – a handful of diamonds or a truckload of hay? That’s what he’s talking about. He is saying that the emphasis is not going to be upon quantity; it is going to be upon quality. Now gold and silver and precious stones have already been through the fire. Wood, hay, and stubble have not. And what he’s trying to say, or what he is saying. He’s not trying to say. He said it, is that the fire is going to see of what sort your work is. Now what he’s really talking about here is the difference between the natural and the supernatural. It’s going to be upon quality. You know, there are a lot of people who work. I mean, they do church work. They work their fingers to the bone, and yet that work is not accepted. They give, but God doesn’t accept their gifts. They sing, but God doesn’t hear their singing. They pray, but their prayers are not answered. And they say, “Well, Lord, I’ve been very, very busy for You.” But, dear friend, there’ll be no reward. You see, the apostle Paul said; he was talking to Timothy again about this bema and this judgment seat and running the race. He said, “In the masteries no man is crowned, except he strive lawfully.” That means if you break the rules, it doesn’t matter if you come in first. If you cut across the corner of the field rather than staying on the track. What about people who are serving God, but they’re not serving according to this book and according to Revelation? Wood, hay, and stubble. No man is crowned, except he strive lawfully. And so at the judgment seat of Christ when rewards are, are given, number one, the emphasis is going to be upon quality, not upon quantity.

B. Not Only for What You Did, But What You Attempted to Do

Number two: God, when He judges you, is going to judge you not only for what you did, but what you attempted to do. You see, the Lord is going to look, dear friend, at the things that you assayed to do in the name of Jesus. Turn with me to 1 Kings chapter 8 for a moment. I want to show you something very, very interesting. First Kings chapter 8 and about verse 17. Let’s begin reading there. God is, is talking to David. And David, you know, collected a lot of materials because he wanted to build a temple, ah, to worship the Lord in. And here’s what God said to David in 1 Kings chapter 8 and I begin reading in verse 17. Hum. God says, and He said this about David rather than to David. “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 (now Solomon is speaking), Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.” Do you know God knows? God knows not only what we’ve done, but what we’ve attempted to do. Let me give you an illustration. Do you remember reading some years ago (now it’s been more than two decades ago), where there were five wonderful young men. They went down to Ecuador to try to take the gospel to the Auca Indians. And they landed their little plane there – Nate Saint and others of them. And they were speared and killed by the Auca Indians. Now do you think that when they

stand before the judgment seat of Christ, the Lord is going to say, “Well, no reward for you. You attempted to take the gospel to the Auca’s, but you died in the attempt. You were not successful.” Oh, my dear friend, oh no. You see, it was in their heart to take the gospel to the Aucas. And others took the gospel to the Aucas because it was in their heart to take the gospel. David wanted to build a temple, and God wouldn’t let him build the temple, but God said, “David, I know your heart. I know you wanted to.” Let me tell you something, friend, and I’m pointing this finger out right now to this entire congregation. We have a congregation where most of our people are not winning souls. But the worst thing about us is not that we’re not winning souls. The worst thing is that most of us are not even endeavoring to win souls to Jesus Christ. It’s not even in your heart. God is not going to say to you, “Shame on you. You didn’t win souls.” But I believe one day He’s going to say, “Shame on you,” if it wasn’t in your heart to win souls, if you had no desire to win souls.

C. Not Only for What You Did, But Why You Did It

I’ll tell you a third thing that’s going to, to measure your reward. Not only are you going to be rewarded according to quality and not quantity; not only are you going to be rewarded according to what you attempted rather than what you achieved, but you’re going to be, ah, rewarded according to motivation – not only what you did, but why you did it. You’re in 1 Corinthians. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 9 for a moment and look with me in verse 16. First Corinthians 9 and verse 16. Paul 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!” Paul was a God-called preacher. Paul said, “I can’t get out of it. God put me in the ministry.” I’ve often thought, Adrian, what would you do if you weren’t a preacher? And I draw a blank. I can’t even consider not being a preacher of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Some Mondays I’ve tried to consider it, but I, I’m hooked. And it’s really not bad. It’s glorious. And I, I thank God that He’s called me to preach His glorious gospel. That’s what Paul says. “Though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is me if I, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.” But notice in verse 17: “For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward...” I have a reward. Now, you see, dear friend, the unwilling preacher, the unwilling servant does not get rewarded. There are people who do things, and what they do may be good, and they may do it out of necessity, but they lose their reward. Those of you who are in the choir tonight. Why are you in the choir tonight? You say, “Brother Whitmire would kill me if I didn’t come.” Well, you’re doing it unwillingly then. Or, you know, or why, why do you give your money? You say, “Well, you know, the, you, you’ve got to do it. You’re a member of Bellevue. They expect it.” Oh, dear friend, what you don’t give willingly may I tell you, God neither needs nor wants. He’s doesn’t need it. The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof. And He doesn’t want it if you don’t give it willingly.

Jesus talked about those who sounded a trumpet before them before they gave. He said, "They have their reward." That is, that's the only reward they get. Jesus talked about those who prayed on the street corners to be seen of men. He said, "They have their reward." That is, that's the only reward they get. But He said, "When you pray, you enter into your closet and close the door and pray in your secret, in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will (do (what?)) reward you openly." You see God looks at what we do. But God looks beyond what we do and God asks, "Why did you do it?" Paul said, "If I do this thing willingly, I have a reward." Turn with me to Matthew chapter 10 here for a moment. Let me show you something else. Look with me in verse 41. Matthew chapter 10 and verse 41. I love this. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward..." Those of you who help keep preachers in your home or give love offerings or help any man of God. God says, "When you receive that prophet; you help that man of God to do his ministry, you have a part in that prophet's ministry." And I think that's a wonderful, wonderful promise. "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward." Well, that sounds pretty wonderful, doesn't it? But now I love verse 42: "And whosoever shall give to drink one of these little ones..." We've not talking now about entertaining Billy Graham in your home this time now. "But whosoever shall give to drink one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward." Now we sit here in this auditorium, air-conditioned, on these cushy seats. Don't you like those seats? Say amen. The Building Committee said, "Pastor, you're so long-winded we've got to have these seats." We sit here in this air-conditioned, beautiful, and how we thank God for it, house of worship. But you know why it's so quiet and serene in here? Because over in the nursery little children are in the ballroom. That is, they're bawling. I mean, in, they, they're over there crying and, you know, they're having to do those diaper changes and all that. And the Scripture over the door over there is, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed," over there. Ah, they, they're going through all of that. And, and nursery workers are over there wiping little noses and changing diapers and flushing them. They don't flush them anymore. Throw them away, I guess, and whatever all they're doing over there, and giving bottles and rocking and singing and giving a cup of cold water. Jim Whitmire is up here, you know, leading the music. Friend, listen. God's going to reward you, Jim, if you'll straighten up. I think He might. Friend, let me tell you something. Let me tell you something. Anything does, even a cup of cold water, the Lord knows. When you walk through that hallway tonight and give a smile in the name of Jesus, it's recorded. I mean, the smallest thing, down to a cup of water, God takes note about. Isn't that exciting? Isn't that a thrill? It pays to serve Jesus. It pays every

day. It pays every step of the way. And whether you're Billy Graham or whether you're a nursery worker, dear friend, God is going to look not at how much you did, but the quality of your work. God, dear friend, is going to look at the motivation of your work. God is going to look at what you attempted. And God is going to take the smallest thing, and He says, "You will in no wise lose your reward."

III. A Place of Reevaluation

Now I've said this about the judgment seat of Christ. I have said, first of all, it is a place of review. I have said, secondly, it is a place of reward. I'm going to say thirdly it is a place of reevaluation. We're going to see things so differently at the judgment seat of Christ. Things that look so important now will not be important then. And things that may not seem important to other people will be very important there. You see, God doesn't see as man sees. Do you remember when, ah, Samuel, or remember reading about it. Of course, you weren't there. But when Samuel went to anoint the king of Israel, and, ah, he got the sons of Jesse out there, and he had them come by. And so Jesse wanted one of his sons to be the king of Israel. And he had some handsome sons. Little David was still out there in the field keeping the sheep. And, ah, Jesse wanted his son, Eliab, to be the king. And so he brought Eliab in. And I can just see Eliab. Boy, he was one of these fellows, you know, just built like this and big shoulders and a big crowned, with a sun-crowned big locks of hair and a winsome smile. And, surely, if there was ever a man that looked like a king it was Eliab. But I love what Samuel said, God said. Well, let's just turn to it in 1 Samuel 16. It's a great, great text, and I want you to see, dear friend, ah, how God is going to reevaluate things. First Samuel chapter 16 and, and verse 7: "And the LORD said unto Samuel (now this is concerning Eliab), And the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance (oh, he was so handsome), nor on the height of his stature (oh, he was, he was so tall. But God said) because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, the LORD looketh on the heart." You think all the shot shots who've gotten through life because they're tall, dark, and handsome. Doors just open to them. You know anybody like that? I mean, man, they just walk in a room and everybody says, "Who is that?" They've got that smile and, and they've got that air of confidence, and doors just open. Everybody says, "He's a great man." He may not be at the judgment seat of Christ, dear friend. I don't care how tall he is. I don't care how handsome he, how handsome he may be. The judgment seat of Christ is going to be a time of reevaluation. Remember there in Luke chapter 16 where Jesus was there, and they were receiving the offering? And the Bible says that, that many rich men came and they put their offering in the offering. And well they ought to, for the Bible says, "Unto whomsoever much is given, of the same shall much be required." But Jesus said then a

little widow came. I can see her there in her little patched dress, clean and ironed, but just patched, and her little children. No one to work for her, take care of her. No Social Security. She has what the Bible calls “the widow’s mite.” It was all that she had. It was between her and starvation. And there all of these other rich people putting their great gifts in the offering. And this little lady, I guess, self-consciously, unties her little handkerchief and drops the widow’s mite in there. The important thing is that Jesus was watching. And Jesus said she gave more than they all. He didn’t say she gave more than any of them. He said she gave more than all of them. And her gift, I suppose, down through the centuries has inspired millions of dollars to be given to the Lord Jesus Christ. But in that day, everybody would say, “Look, we got a gift of \$100,000! Hurrah!” Or there was a little widow. She put something in, too. Hm. But wait to the judgment seat. Wait to the judgment seat. Eliab will be there, but the little David will be ahead of him. The rich will be there, but the little widow will be ahead of them. I mean, when we see things in the clear light of eternity, it’s going to look so different. Mary of Bethany, who took that alabaster box and broke it at Jesus’ feet, some rebuked her. But Jesus said, “Whatever this woman has done will be spoken of as a memorial to her wherever the gospel is preached.” There were those who criticized her then. And, by the way, when you serve the Lord Jesus, you’re going to be criticized now, but oh what a day it’ll be at the judgment seat of Christ. Don’t, do, listen, listen. Don’t let criticism stop you from serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Every now and then some pastor will pastor a large church like Bellevue, and somebody will say, “Well, he must be a pretty good preacher. He pastors a church like Bellevue.” Well, I want to be a faithful preacher. I know there are other people who can preach the gospel better than I can, but nobody can preach a better gospel than I can. Thank God for that. But, my dear friend, did you know that some of the world’s greatest preachers are in little crossroad churches and nobody ever hears their name? Did you know that? And, and, and it’s not that they could not have gone to some other church. It is they would not. They said, “This is where God put me. This is where God planted me. This is where I’m going to bloom and bear fruit right here.” They’re not there because, ah, they don’t deserve to be somewhere else. They’re just faithful. And the Bible says many that are first shall be last, and many that are last shall be first. I’m telling you this: That when we come to the judgment seat of Christ, it will be a time of review. It will be a time of reward. It will be a time of reevaluation. God expects more from some people than He does others, anyway. God expects more from the Spurgeons and the Billy Grahams than He does ordinary people. God knows what He’s given to you. And just a cup of water He places in your hand, then just a cup of water is all that He’ll demand. Years ago I told this congregation a story that bears repeating. There was a preacher. His name was F. B. Meyer. F. B. Meyer had his heart touched and changed by an evangelist named Dwight L. Moody. Now F. B. Meyer was

a cultured, erudite, lettered scholar. Dwight L. Moody never went to seminary, never went to college. He murdered the King's English. He was the only man living, they say, that could pronounce the word Jerusalem in two syllables. He, he just, ah, he, he was a man with a heart on fire for God. Now let me tell you how Moody got saved. Moody was a shoe salesman. And there was a man named Mr. Kimble who went in to see Moody to witness to him to bring him to Christ. They went back where the shoe racks were. And Mr. Kimble laid a trembling hand on the shoulder of Dwight L. Moody and told Dwight L. Moody about Jesus Christ. Moody was saved. He was born again back there in the shoe store. He went to the local church and told them that he was saved, but they weren't convinced. And it took a year for them to even let him in church membership. But Moody had a heart hot for God and he began to do Sunday school work in the city of Chicago. He wanted to bring boys and girls to Christ. He would get the boys and girls and bring them to Christ. He was so proficient that hundreds were being saved. And, and he began to preach revival crusades. Untaught, unlettered, Dwight L. Moody. His fame was so great that he went to England. And that's where he preached in the church of F. B. Meyer. Frederick Brotherton Meyer, F. B. Meyer; an imposing name, an imposing cleric. Myer thought he wanted Moody to preach, but when Moody got up there to preach, Meyer just, he, he hung his head in shame. He said, "Oh no. How did I get this uncouth, uncultured, unlettered American to preach in this pulpit?" Again, Moody did not know theology, but he knew God. He didn't know the king's English, but he knew the King. And he preached and he told what we would call some deathbed stories. He told about one of his Sunday school teachers who learned that he was going to die. And before he died, he had won every scholar, every pupil in his Sunday school to Jesus Christ. And Meyer was thinking, Oh, how uncouth. He's playing on their emotions. Later, after Moody was finally gone, Meyer was having tea with some of the ladies. And he said, ah, to this particular lady, who was a member of his congregation, "And how goes it with you today, madam?" She said, "Wonderful, Brother Meyer," she said, "since Moody has been here." She said, "I have won every girl in my Sunday school class to a saving faith in Jesus Christ." F. B. Meyer testified. He said, "That day I learned the language of the human soul and my ministry has never been the same." F. B. Meyer left England to come to America to preach. He was preaching in a Bible conference, and in that Bible conference were a lot of preachers out there in a college. And, ah, F. B. Meyer said to those college students, "Some of you have not made a full commitment to Jesus Christ. And the reason that you've not made a full commitment to Jesus Christ is you've not been willing to give him everything. And maybe I'm talking to someone who is that way." But F. B. Meyer said in that anointed sermon, "If you're not willing, tell God that you're not willing. But tell Him that you need to be willing and you want to be willing, and ask God to make you willing to be willing." There was a student

out there. His name was Wilbur Chapman. Wilbur Chapman heard Meyer preach now with this heart power with the language of the soul, and Chapman said, "Oh God, that's me. I have not been willing to give You everything. But, Oh God, please start with me where I am. And Oh God, make me willing to be willing." And God made him willing. God touched his heart and, and, and Chapman gave his heart to Jesus Christ. He became a great evangelist. He was used mightily of the Lord. His ministry got so big he needed a helper. He found an ex-YMCA clerk, and ex-baseball player, and now a YMCA clerk, a man named Billy Sunday. And he asked Billy Sunday, "Would you come and help me in my revival crusades?" And Sunday came and helped with the counseling, helped take down and, ah, put up and take down the tent, and did these other things, and he would preach some; this great baseball player, Billy Sunday. When Wilbur Chapman retired, Billy Sunday took over Chapman's ministry. He even used Chapman's sermon notes. He wasn't all that original. He preached from, ah, Wilbur Chapman's sermons, but he put that Billy Sunday flavor in there, and many of you have heard Billy Sunday preach. He held a great crusade right here in this city. Well, Billy Sunday went to Charlotte, North Carolina, and held a crusade, and God moved in that crusade in a great way. And in that crusade in Charlotte, North Carolina, a group of businessmen got together to pray, "Oh God, send another revival to Charlotte that not only will shake Charlotte, but will shake the world." And they continued to pray right there in Charlotte, North Carolina. Well, after the Sunday crusade, as a result of that Charlotte prayer meeting, there was another crusade held in Charlotte, North Carolina. This time the evangelist was a man named Mordecai Ham. By the way, he's been in this city, too. Mordecai Ham, Dr. Mordecai Ham, a, a man who knew how to preach hell, hot heaven, sweet sin, black judgment sure, and Jesus saves. And old, old Mordecai Ham came and preached in Charlotte, North Carolina. And one night there came a long, lanky dairy boy off one of the dairy farms there, a boy named Billy. And he was out there. And old Mordecai Ham would preach, point that finger. It kind of got, ah, kind of uneasy for this tall, lanky farm boy, and so he joined the choir. Got up in the choir so he could get behind the preacher. So he thought maybe it wouldn't be as bad back there. That's why all these sinners are back there, right there. That's the whole reason. Got back there. But the spirit of God found that boy named Billy; incidentally, Billy Graham, and Billy Graham was saved in that revival crusade. And, of course, we all know Billy Graham, who has preached to millions around the globe, before kings and presidents and pr, princes. Thank God for Billy Graham. Thank God for his ministry. One of these days, dear friend, listen. Billy Graham will come to the judgment seat of Christ. Not only will Billy Graham come there, but Mordecai Ham will come. Not only Mordecai Ham come there, but Billy Sunday will come. Not only will Billy Sunday come, but Wilbur Chapman will come. Not only will Wilbur Chapman come, but F. B. Meyer will come. Not

only F. B. Meyer come, Dwight L. Moody will come. And also Mr. Kimble, the Sunday school teacher, who led Moody to Jesus Christ. We've heard of the Billy Grahams and the Billy Sundays. Not many of us have heard of the Mr. Kimbles, who won one school boy or one shoe clerk, 19-years old, to Jesus Christ. But, you know, somehow I just have in my mind that when Billy Sunday and Billy Graham are there, standing right with them will be this man, Mr. Kimble, don't you? You see, the Bible says many that are last shall be first, and many of the things that we don't think are so important are going to seem important in that day.

IV. A Place of Regret

The judgment seat of Christ is a place, my dear friend, of review, a place of reward. It is a place of reevaluation. I want to say one last thing. It's going to be a place of regret. Look, if you will, go back again, if you will, to 1 Corinthians chapter 3 for a moment. One of the most challenging verses in the Word of God, 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." Verse 14: "If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward." Ah, but look at 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." A time of regret. Did you know that you can lose your reward? Did you know that your life can go up in smoke? Did you know, dear friend, it's possible even to have a reward and then to lose it? Turn with me to 1 John chapter 2 and verse 28. Let me show you something here. First John chapter 2 and verse 28: "And little children, abide in Him (that is, keep on serving Him. Don't quit. Don't backslide), that when He shall appear, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." Some are going to be ashamed when the Lord Jesus comes. Turn to 11 John now and look in verse 8: "Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward." Go on to Revelation chapter 3 and verse 11. Look at it if you will. "Behold, I come quickly. Hold fast which thou hast, hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown." Some of you, who used to be soul winners; some of you, who used to be prayer warriors; some of you, who used to be good stewards, you say, "Well, I've got all that laid up and now I'm going to live for the world, the flesh, and the devil." Oh no. You can lose your reward. Don't let anybody take your crown. "If any man's work shall be burned, he'll suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire." You say, "Pastor, what does that mean?" Well, remember the foundation? That's Jesus Christ. Now Jesus Christ is that solid rock. That won't burn. You can build upon Jesus gold, silver, and precious stones; wood, hay, and stubble. Now, my dear friend, if you have Christ as your personal Savior, even though the wood, hay, and stubble of your life may burn up, the foundation still remains and you'll be

saved. You'll be saved, but singed. Saved yet as so by fire. You'll get into heaven with your coattails smoking. Well, I know what the average Baptist, carnal Baptist, is thinking. You know what the carnal Baptists are thinking right now? I'll tell you what a carnal Baptist is thinking. Some of you businessmen already got it figured out. You're thinking this: *Well, let me see. I'll admit, pastor, I'm not living like I ought to live, but I have been saved. And anywhere up in heaven ought to be pretty good. I mean, just build me a cabin in the corner of gloryland. That's all I want. Just anywhere up there. I'll be satisfied. It'll satisfy me.*" Well, I can't explain it, my dear friend, but I'm going to tell you it won't satisfy you. It won't satisfy you. You will suffer loss. Let me, let me explain it this way: Suppose you're a man who does not believe in banks. And so, in your house you have all of your money, all of your goods, all of your stocks, all of your bonds, all of your securities, all of your valuables are in your home. You're asleep one night. You wake up choking. You open your eyes and the room is full of smoke. The curtains are on fire and the flames are running up the curtains. The timbers in the roof of your house are burning and the roof is caving in. Your dresser has the billfold there. Your stocks and bonds are in that dresser drawer. Your wife is there. Your children are in their bedrooms. But you look up and the house is just caving in on you. There's nothing you can do, except just at that moment just leap through a window, and you get out with a smell of smoke in your clothes, embers in your hair. At that moment the house caves in. You hear the moans and the shrieks and the groans of your precious wife and your darling children as they writhe in the flames. And you see all of your life savings and the house that was uninsured go up in smoke. And the only thing that's left is the foundation. And then suppose you said to a neighbor, "Well, my children perished. My wife died. All of my life's work is gone in smoke. But I saved my neck. Hallelujah. Let's go get a steak and celebrate." I don't think you would, my dear friend. And I don't think that some of you, when you get heaven and find out that your loved ones went to hell and all of your life's work went up in flames, are going to say, "Well, I'm satisfied." I can't explain it. And I know that heaven is going to be wonderful, but I can't get away from this verse that says, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss...." The judgment seat of Christ is going to be a time of reward for some and a regret for others.

Conclusion

Now let me say something to you as your pastor. Many of you who are members of this church, you think that you're doing God a favor when you get here on Sunday and hear me preach. Many of you are not tithers. Many of you are not prayer warriors. Many of you are not witnessing. Many of you have doubtful habits in your lives. And I'm telling you, as surely as my name is Adrian Rogers, you're going to stand before the Lord. And it is time tonight that you got out of the feet, out of the boat with both feet and begin to

go for God. Your life of service for Jesus may be measured not in years, but in months and weeks and even days. Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly and my reward is with me to give to every man, according as his work shall be." Let's bow in prayer. Heads are bowed, eyes are closed. Father God, I pray tonight that You would burn the message into our hearts, into our souls. And, Lord, I pray that tonight will be a time of renewal and a time of revival and a time of rededication for many of us here tonight. In the holy name of Jesus, amen.

Let the Earth Hear His Voice

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 29, 2004

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:13–20

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Unbounded Love of Christ
- II. The Unlimited Atonement of Christ
- III. The Unconditional Invitation of Christ
- IV. The Undiminished Commission of Christ
 - A. All Men Need Reconciliation
 - B. Reconciliation Has Been Made Possible by the Finished Work of Jesus on the Cross
 - C. We Have Been Appointed as Ambassadors
 - D. As God's Ambassadors, We Should Beg Others to Be Reconciled to God

Conclusion

Introduction

Well, amen. Let the earth hear His voice. Take your Bibles and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5. We're going to revisit a passage that we spoke to you about several years ago—2 Corinthians chapter 5. Let the earth hear His voice.

May I ask you a question? Has anybody ever called you a religious fanatic? I've been called a religious fanatic. Has anybody ever called you a religious nut? I've been called a religious nut. I'm fastened to a good bolt, but I've been called a religious nut. But look, that's as old as the hills.

The Apostle Paul was called crazy because of his missionary passion. I want you to look, if you will please, in 2 Corinthians 5, and look, if you will, in verse 13: *"For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause"* (2 Corinthians 5:13). There were some saying that Paul was beside himself—that is, he was schizophrenic, that he was a nut. He was like the man who was so schizoid that somebody met him and said, "How are you doing?" He said, "I'm okay, and so am I"—beside himself.

I heard about a man—went into the psychiatrist's office, spoke to the nurse, and the nurse went back to see the doctor and said, "Doctor, we've got a problem. There's a man out here who thinks he is invisible." The doctor said, "Go tell him we can't see him."

I'm not talking about that kind of crazy. I'm talking about another kind. I'm talking about people who are so geared up to share the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of you folks in

this congregation, people will say—those that you work with—“You’re going to do what? You’re going to spend what? You, man, you’re crazy—you’re crazy.” That’s what they said to Paul. They said, “Paul, you are beside yourself.” And then, he explains to them, though, “There’s something that impels me and compels me, and it is the love of Jesus Christ.” Look, if you will, in verse 14: *“For the love of Christ constraineth us”* (2 Corinthians 5:14).

If you have seen the film, “The Passion,” or will see it, you will see love displayed as you’ve never seen it before. You will understand something of His mighty, mighty, mighty love. That is the missionary force. That’s what constrains; that’s what impels; that’s what motivated; that is what drove the Apostle Paul. He said, “I’m not crazy. The love of Christ constrains us.”

When I was first saved, one of the songs that blessed me as a young teen:

I was sinking deep in sin,
Far from the peaceful shore.
Very deeply stained within,
Sinking to rise no more.
But the Master of the sea
Heard my despairing cry,
From the waters lifted me,
Now safe am I.

Love lifted me!
Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help,
Love lifted me! (James Rowe)

Paul said, “I’m not crazy. It is the love of Christ that lifts me.”

Now listen. The title of the message today is “Let the Earth Hear His Voice.” Did you know that there are some people who believe—honestly believe this—have a form of theology that teaches this; they’re very serious about this—that God does not love everybody. You say, “Oh!” No, I’m telling you. You’ll hear it—you’ll hear it taught on college campuses. You’ll hear it taught by evangelicals. You will hear it taught in churches here and there—that God only has a select few that He loves, but that He does not love the entire world; that some are loved and, therefore, predestined for Heaven, and there are others who are not loved of God—not chosen, not elect—and, therefore, have no chance—none, nada, none—of ever going to Heaven. There are some who believe that. There are some who teach that. I reject that with all of the unction, function, and emotion of my soul. I believe that God wants everybody saved. There are those who believe that some being born today—no matter what age they may

attain, whether they die in infancy or whether they die of old age—will never have an opportunity, a chance, to be saved. No matter what else happens, if they are not one of the elect, they cannot be saved.

Now I want to make it very clear—I believe in the sovereignty of God. I believe in election. I believe in foreknowledge. I believe in predestination. But I do not believe in fatalism that says some can never, ever, ever be saved, no matter what. Predestination is certainly true; foreknowledge is true; election is true. But it's only part of the truth. And *if you take part of the truth and try to make that part of the truth all of the truth, then that part of the truth becomes an untruth*. You have to see what the Bible says. This is why they accused Paul of being insane: because of his passion for the lost.

There are several things I want to lay on your heart, this morning, that impel the missionary cause. Now some of these people who believe that God only loves some are missionaries. I want to say, in all honesty and fairness, some of them are soul winners; and, I thank God for that. But I'm going to tell you, if you take this kind of belief and let it go to the extreme, it is deadening to evangelism. It is stultifying to soul winning. Now there are some who believe it who are soul winners, and there are some who don't believe it who are not soul winners. But I want to tell you why I believe that we need to let the earth hear His voice, and I want to tell you why I believe that God wants every precious soul on the face of this earth to be saved.

I. The Unbounded Love of Christ

Number one: the unbounded love of Christ—the unbounded love of Christ. Look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians 5, verse 14: *“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all”—“one died for all”—“then were all dead”* (2 Corinthians 5:14). Does God love everyone? Did Jesus only die for a certain few—for the chosen ones? Friend, can I walk up to any man on the face of this earth and tell him, without stutter, stammer, apology, or equivocation, “God loves you”? I can do that without qualification.

I remember in Los Angeles, one time, I was out by myself walking down the street. I saw a man coming down. Now he was a hippie. That's back in the hippie days. He was in beads. He had the whole thing. I mean, he looked like Hollywood had made him up. I said, “Well, I'm going to try something.” I said, “Do you have a moment?” He said, “Yeah, man.” I said, “Can I tell you something?” He said, “Sure.” I said, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” He said, “Groovy, man.” Friend, it's groovy—it is—that God loves everyone.

Let me give you some verses. Now you don't have time to look them up. I've selected them out. I'll read them. You jot them down. John 3:16—you remember that one? *“For God so loved”—what?—“the world...”*—let the earth hear His voice—*“For*

God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever...—I'm glad that's there; you can put your name right there—*“that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”*

Now how do these people believe, that believe contrariwise—how do they interpret this? They say, “God so loved the elect—God so loved the elect.” You say, “Oh, they wouldn't do that.” John Owen, who is the patriarch of this kind of thought, said—one of the patriarchs—said, in his retranslation, quote, and I'm quoting him, “God so loved His elect throughout the world that He gave His Son to the intention that, by Him, believers might be saved.” Well, friend, that isn't what it says. It says, *“For God so loved the world.”*

We're not to add or to subtract from the Word of God. You don't have to do fancy footwork. Just take it as it says. There's nothing true; there's nothing in any of us that would merit God's love—nothing in me. But there's something in God that says that God loves. Not only is God all powerful, omniscient, sovereign, but God is all-loving. Now people say, “Well, when it says, ‘God so loved the world,’ he's just talking about the world of the elect.” No, he's not talking. He's talking about the world of darkness and of sin.

Look at that, John 3:16, in its context. Look—John chapter 3, verse 16: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.”* He's not condemned because he could not be saved, but because he has not believed. *“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil”* (John 3:16–19). It's obvious he's not talking about the world of the elect. He's just talking about the world. God loves the world, and we're to love what God loves. That's what makes us soul winners.

Years ago, I read about an elegant woman in the streets of Paris. She was dressed in all of her finery—one of the Parisian ladies walking down the streets of Paris—and she had a very beautiful diamond ring. And when she pulled off her glove, the ring came off with the glove and fell in the gutter. And there was slime and dirty, filthy water running down the gutter. She tried to retrieve her ring. She took her parasol—her umbrella—with the crook, and she tried to fish it out. Finally, this elegant woman took off the other glove, did her dress *this way*, got down on her knees, and put her hand down in that slimy, filthy water—her delicate, little, pretty hand. Why? Because a diamond was down there.

Friend, I tell you what. We need to see every soul like that woman saw that

diamond. I don't care who they are—they are precious to the Lord Jesus Christ. They may be in the slime; they may be what you call "in the gutter," but they're precious to Jesus. Friend, I want you to see the unbounded, unbounded, unbounded love of Jesus Christ.

II. The Unlimited Atonement of Christ

Second reason that we need to let the earth hear His voice: Not only because of His unbounded love, but it follows, as night follows day, because of His unlimited atonement—His unlimited atonement.

Now there are some who say that Jesus doesn't love all. Therefore, when He died, He only died for the elect. They call that a *limited atonement*. But what does Paul say, in our passage of Scripture, after he talks about the unbounded love? Look in verses 14 and 15: "*For the love of Christ constraineth us; because...that if one died...*"—now, notice—"if one died for all,"—a-l-l—"then were all dead: and that he died for all,"—a-l-l—"that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14–15). How many... For whom did Jesus die? For all. Look in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 19—go down a few verses: "*To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself*" (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Now Jesus died for the elect, beyond the shadow of any doubt. He died for me. He died for you. He died for all who are saved. But He died for all—saved or lost. He died for all.

Now there are some who say He only died for the elect. I have a pastor friend who believes that Jesus only died for the elect. I said to him, "Sir, would you do me a favor?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Would you give me a verse in the Bible—just one verse; not two, not three, not four, just one—that says that Jesus died only for the elect? Just give me one verse." This dear friend pulled a quarter out of his pocket and said, "If I were to ask you to get water out of this quarter, could you do it?" I said, "No." He said, "The only way you could get water out of it, therefore, would be for someone to put water in it first. Is that right?" I said, "Absolutely." He said, "So if a man is totally depraved, the only way that faith could come out of that man is for God to put the faith in him first of all. Isn't that true?" I said, "Absolutely." And I said, "And 'God hath dealt to every man a measure of faith' (Romans 12:3), and 'Christ is that light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world'" (John 1:9). Now I said, "Put your quarter back in your pocket, and give me my verse." I'm still waiting on a verse.

Friend, listen. The Bible teaches that Christ died for all. Let me give you some verses. Jot them down. John 1, verse 29: "*The next day John*"—this is John the Baptist—"seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). That's what John the Baptist said. Can

you imagine John the Baptist standing there on the banks of Jordan, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the elect”? No, “the sin of the world.”

John 12, verses 46 through 48—Jesus said, *“I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”* (John 12:46–48). Now what does He say? “I’ve come as a light to the world.” It’s very obvious He’s not talking about the world of the elect here, because He’s talking about that world being judged—the world He died for.

Here’s one that these people have a great difficulty with—1 John 2:2. It speaks of Jesus as being *“the propitiation for our sins”*—that’s a big double-jointed word. What does the word *propitiation* mean? It means He is the “satisfaction” for our sins. God sees His sacrifice and is satisfied. God’s justice is satisfied: *“He is the propitiation for our sins:”*—now, John is talking to the Church; he’s talking about himself, and he says—*“and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1 John 2:2). Jesus is the propitiation—not just for those who are saved, but for the sins of the whole world. Now those who are die-hard say, “Well, no. That means He’s the propitiation for our sins and the sins of the whole world of the elect.” But he’s not talking about the elect here.

Go down a few verses now—1 John 2, verses 15 and 16: *“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. 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 2:15–16). And that is the context in which he says, *“He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world”* (1 John 2:2). What he’s saying is, not the world of the elect—the world of the lust unto the eyes, and the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. He died for that world.

Put this Scripture down—2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1. Peter talks about some wicked, vile men who denied the Lord Jesus; and yet, Peter says Jesus died for them. Let me show you: *“But there were false prophets also among the people,”*—these are not elect; these are false prophets—*“even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord”*—now listen to this—*“that bought them,”*—“denying the Lord that bought them”—*“and bring upon themselves swift destruction”* (2 Peter 2:1). They had been bought, but they denied the Lord Jesus. *Agorazo* is the word that means, “to buy out of the slave market, to redeem.” But they denied Him. These are apostates, false prophets, teaching damnable heresies, but they have been bought with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Let me give you another scripture—1 Timothy 2, verses 3 through 6: *“For this is*

good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour;”—now listen to this phrase—“*who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth*”—“who will have all men to be saved.” “*For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself*”—listen—“*a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*” (1 Timothy 2:3–6). Does that mean that everybody is saved? Of course not! The death of Jesus Christ makes salvation possible. Faith brings it to the heart and makes it—achieves it—for those who believe.

Now I could give you other scriptures. Let me give you a couple, and I’ve got to hurry on. Hebrews 2:9: “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*”

Friend, can black print on white paper be clearer? Do these scriptures teach a limited atonement? I’m going to be preaching a series soon on Isaiah chapter 53. Isaiah 53, verse 6—listen to it: “*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid upon him the iniquity of...*”—how many?—“*of us all*” (Isaiah 53:6)—“of us all.”

One last, and I must move on—Romans chapter 5, verses 5 and 6: “*And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly*” (Romans 5:5–6). That’s who He died for—He died for the ungodly.

III. The Unconditional Invitation of Christ

Now here’s the third thing I want you to see. What I’ve said... Listen—listen. I want you to follow. And I’m just taking Paul here, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5. What I’m saying—Paul said, “I’m not crazy—I’m not crazy.” He said, “What drives me is the unbounded love of Christ.” And then, he says, “What sends me is the unlimited sacrifice—atonement—of Christ.” And then, that follows with the unconditional invitation of Christ. Christ gives an invitation to all.

Second Corinthians 5, now, verses 17 through 19: “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;*”—that’s where you come in; that’s where I come in. Jesus reconciled all things. We now have the ministry of reconciliation. Now listen to this, verse 19. Here’s the key—“*...that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the [ministry] of reconciliation*” (2 Corinthians 5:17–19).

Jesus loves all. He died for all. And now He invites all to come to Him. This is an unconditional invitation. Now the Lord wants everyone to be saved—not just some to be

saved. “Pastor, are you sure about that?” Absolutely. Let me give you some Scripture.

Second Peter chapter 3 and verse 9: *“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness;”—*they were asking, “Where is the Second Coming? Has He forgotten? Is He slack?” He said, “No”—*“but [He] is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9). Do you think the Lord is willing that some should go to Hell? Does He allow some to go to Hell? Absolutely. We’ll talk about that. But is that His will? Did He, from all eternity, say, “This one is saved, and this one is lost; this one is saved, and this one is lost,” or, “These few are saved, and these many are lost”? It doesn’t say He’s not willing that “many,” but “any,” should perish. He doesn’t want the people of this world to die and go to Hell. He invites all. And He’s *“not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2 Peter 3:9).

First Timothy chapter 2, verses 3 through 6: *“This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved”* (1 Timothy 2:3–4). Well, somebody says, “That isn’t what He means.” Well, friend, if He didn’t mean what He said, why didn’t He say what He meant? He wants all people to be saved. If you change it, language loses its meaning; it doesn’t make sense. Don’t change the meaning of “all.” If you do, then what are you going to do with a verse like Romans 3:23? *“For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God”* (Romans 3:23). Well, you say, “Only some have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” You can’t do that.

IV. The Undiminished Commission of Christ

Now here’s number four. Now follow with me. They said, “Paul, you’re nuts.” He said, “I’m not crazy.” Number one: There is the unbounded love of Christ. Number two: There is the unlimited atonement of Christ. Number three: There is the unqualified invitation of Christ. And number four—now, here it comes to you: There is the undiminished commission of Christ. We’re to take the gospel to all.

Notice, again, verses 18 and following: *“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation”* (2 Corinthians 5:18). Look in verse 20: *“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled unto God”* (2 Corinthians 5:20). Now Jesus does not secure the salvation of all by His atoning death, but He makes it possible. And He tells us that we can say to anybody, any place, any time, “God loves you. Christ died for you. If you will repent of your sin and trust Him, He will save you.” This in no way diminishes God’s foreknowledge. It in no way takes away from God’s sovereignty. But God does not force His love on anyone.

There are some who talk about *irresistible grace*—that you cannot say *no* to God.

Yes, you can. You can resist God. The Bible is full of those who resisted God. There are those of you sitting in this auditorium today, and you're going to hear the message—and, in a moment, I'm going to ask you to give your heart to Jesus Christ—and you can say *no*. That's your dubious privilege. But if you want to be saved—you listen to me; you listen to me—if you want to be saved, you can—if you want to be saved, you can. You say, "Well, what if I'm not one of the elect?" Friend, I'll tell you who the elect are. Listen carefully. The *whosoever wills* are the elect. They're the elect. If you want to be saved, come on! Come on! Come on! He loves you. He died for you. He invites you. If you want to be saved, whosoever will may come.

Now we are commissioned to give this invitation. There is a Lord, a God, who says, "*Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden*" (Matthew 11:28). We are ambassadors. When I was a boy, I learned that an ambassador is somebody who represents the person of a king in the court of another. What a privilege and what a responsibility to be an ambassador of Heaven's King! Can you think of a higher privilege than to be an ambassador of the King of kings? You'd have to step down to be the President of the United States. An ambassador of the King of kings, to represent the Lord Jesus Christ—and what a responsibility!

Suppose there's a man who's to be electrocuted in the electric chair. He's been adjudicated guilty. The people petition the governor and say to the governor, "Please don't electrocute that man. There are mitigating circumstances. He ought not to be put to death." Suppose the judge, the governor, who has the power to commute that sentence—to pardon the man—calls you into his office—says "I am providing a pardon for this man. I want you to deliver the pardon. And if he accepts it and receives it, he'll go free." And so he hands you the pardon. You say, "Judge, thank you for the mercy that you're showing this man." You put the pardon in your breast pocket, go out. And then, there's a business deal, and you do it. Then, there's a golf game; and then, there's a meal; and then, there's a vacation. And one day, you pick up the newspaper, and you read this man is electrocuted. You have the pardon in your pocket. You could have—you should have—but you did not.

Now the Bible says that, if you fail to obey God, you're going to be held culpable. Put this verse down—Ezekiel 33, verses 7 through 9: "*So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou does not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul*" (Ezekiel 33:7–9). Now if you believe that there is a kind of predestination and election, that men are going to be saved no matter

what, or lost no matter what, this verse makes no sense to me whatsoever.

I'm going to conclude the message, but I want to give you some points. Now I want you to think about these things. What we're talking about is to let the earth—let the earth—hear His voice.

A. All Men Need Reconciliation

Point number one—listen: All men need reconciliation. We are sinners by nature; by birth, separated from a loving God; and, therefore, at war with God. All men need reconciliation. It's not God that needs to be reconciled; we need to be reconciled.

B. Reconciliation Has Been Made Possible by the Finished Work of Jesus on the Cross

Number two: Reconciliation has been made possible by the finished work of Jesus on that cross. When you see the film, "The Passion of Jesus Christ"—He will bow His head, and He will say, "It is accomplished. It is finished" (John 19:30). Reconciliation has been made. We call it *mercy*, but it's God's forgiving love. We call it *providence*—it's God's caring love. We call it *kindness*—it is God's understanding love. We call it Christ's *passion*—it is God's proven love. We call it *happiness*—it is God's encouraging love. We call it the *will of God*—it is God's unerring love. We call it *Heaven*—it is God's rewarding love. We call it *eternity*—it is God's unending love. "*The love of Christ constraineth us*" (2 Corinthians 5:14). Reconciliation has been made.

C. We Have Been Appointed as Ambassadors

Number three: You, me, I—we—have been appointed as ambassadors. That's our job; that's our calling. The King—Heaven's King—has appointed us. Dr. R. A. Torrey, a preacher of another generation, said, "I would like to ask what right any man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he is not a soul winner." There's absolutely no such thing as following Christ unless we make the purpose of Christ's life the purpose of our life. You can't be a follow of Jesus unless His purpose is your purpose. An ambassador is concerned about the things of his sovereign king.

D. As God's Ambassadors, We Should Beg Others to Be Reconciled to God

Number four—and finally: As God's ambassador, which I am, today—you're looking at a real, live ambassador; I am an ambassador of Heaven; and, if you're in this service today, and you're not absolutely, totally, absolutely certain that you're saved, I have been sent here, commissioned, anointed, appointed of God to tell you, you can be reconciled to God—we, then, as ambassadors of Christ, beg you be reconciled to God—be reconciled. You have the privilege of saying *no*, but you have the blessing of saying *yes*.

One of the great minds of this world was C. S. Lewis. C. S. Lewis said that, "In

reality, the world is divided into two categories: those who, like Satan, say to God, 'Not Your will, but mine be done,' and those, who like our Savior, say to the Father, 'Not my will, but Thine be done.'" You're in one of those two categories. Now C. S. Lewis says, "Of those in the first category, who follow the thought of Satan and the spirit of Satan, who say, 'Not Your will—mine be done,' when that individual finally drops into Hell"—listen—"when that individual, who refuses God's love, finally drops into Hell, a broken-hearted God will say, 'Not My will—thine be done.' Your will. *"The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Singing the joyful sound: "Whosoever will may come." Isn't that good news? And that's what we're all about. Let the earth hear His voice!

Conclusion

Beginning with those in this building, would you bow your heads in prayer. While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you are not absolutely certain today that you're saved, if you cannot say, "I know that I know that I'm saved," I want to lead you in a prayer today. And in this prayer, you can pray and ask Jesus Christ to come into your heart, and He will come, for He says, *"I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and [fellowship] with him"* (Revelation 3:20).

Would you pray a prayer like this: "Dear God, I know that You love me; Jesus, I know that You died for me; I know, Lord Jesus, that You invite me to come; and now, I open my heart; I receive the gift of salvation; I want peace with You, dear God; I want to be reconciled by the precious blood of Jesus Christ; save me, Lord Jesus; thank You for doing it. In Your name I pray. Amen."

Let the Earth Hear His Voice

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 29, 2004

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:13–20

Outline

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- II. The Unlimited Atonement of Christ
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Conclusion

Introduction

Gracias, Diego Maldonado. We thank God for you. Praise the Lord God. Would you take God's precious and holy Word and find your place in it, as the choir is finding theirs—2 Corinthians chapter 5. In a moment, we're going to begin reading 2 Corinthians chapter 5.

May I ask you a question? Have you ever been called a religious fanatic? Have you ever been called crazy, or a religious nut? Yes, I have, but I'm fastened to a good bolt—the Lord Jesus Christ. But do you know that, if you really are out-and-out for the Lord Jesus Christ, people are going to call you crazy? They're going to call you a fanatic. They're going to call you a nut, or whatever, because they cannot believe that you believe what you believe and, therefore, do what you do. Now that's not old. They were saying the same thing about the Apostle Paul.

Look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and look, if you will please, at verse 13: "*For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God*" (2 Corinthians 5:13). Now *to be beside yourself* is just another way of saying, "being unbalanced." It's schizophrenic. Beside yourself—"here I am, and here I am. It's beside myself."

They asked a schizophrenic, one day, "How are you doing?" He said, "I'm doing fine, and so am I."

Now there are people like that who just, you know—they're double-minded and schizophrenic. And people have that true sickness—we need to have compassion on

them. But what about people who, like you, just are so much in love with the Lord Jesus Christ that people call you crazy? They say, “You’re beside yourself.” That’s what they were saying about the Apostle Paul. “He’s lost his mind. What impels him? What drives him? What motivates him? What sends him? What makes him the man that he is? He must be a religious fanatic, or perhaps he’s unbalanced. He’s lost his mind.” So he tells us, “No”—said, “You want to know what motivates me? You want to know what drives me? You want to know what makes me the man that I am? It is the love of Christ.” Look, if you will, in verse 14—he says, “*For the love of Christ constraineth us*” (2 Corinthians 5:14). That is, “I am driven; I am constrained; I am impelled by the love of Christ.”

Those of you who have see the movie, the film, “The Passion of the Christ,” will never, ever, ever be the same, if you had your eyes open, your mind alert, and your heart softened. You’re going to see love described and delineated on the film in such a way that you will never, ever doubt again the greatness of the love of the Savior for you.

What held Jesus to the cross? It was not those searing iron nails that held Him to the cross. Jesus Christ was bound to the cross by the golden cords of love. They taunted Him. They said, “You’re the Son of God. Come down from the cross, and we’ll believe.” He could have come down. Thank God, He didn’t. There was only one man Jesus refused to save, and that was Himself. They really wanted to know who He was—they would not have said, “Come down from the cross.” They would have stood in front of that grave and said, “Come out of the tomb.” That shows that He’s the Son of God with power—that He endured the cross for us. “*Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:13). “*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet [enemies], Christ died for us*” (Romans 5:8).

I was a youngster when I got saved. One of the songs that enraptured me was that song,

I was sinking deep in sin
Far from the peaceful shore,
Very deeply stained within,
Sinking to rise no more.
But the Master of the sea
Heard my despairing cry
From the waters lifted me
Now safe am I.

Love lifted me!
Love lifted me!
When nothing else could help,
Love lifted me! (James Rowe)

And every child of God has to say *amen* to that. Paul knew that God's love had lifted him, and he said, "I'm not crazy. The love of Christ constraineth me."

Now we're talking today about letting the earth hear His voice. The title of our message today is "Let the Earth Hear His Voice." May I tell you something? There is a form of theology that is being taught in this city and around the world, on college campuses and other places, that says this: that there are certain people who are God's elect. They are the ones that are loved of God. God doesn't love everyone. As a matter of fact, He loves some, and He hates others. And some can be saved, and others cannot be saved. Those who are loved are the elect, and they will be saved; and, really, there's nothing they could do to keep them from being saved. There are others who are lost, and they're born lost. They were lost before they were born. They are lost as children. They are lost as adults, or how long they will live. There is nothing they can do, because they don't happen to be a part of the elect. Therefore, they cannot be saved. Now you say, "Do people really believe that?" You'd better believe they do.

Now let me make it clear at the outset of this message—I believe in election; I believe in predestination; I believe in foreordination; I believe in foreknowledge; I believe in all of these things. I believe in the sovereignty of God. But I do not believe for one skinny minute in fatalism that says that a person who is born today, tomorrow, or whenever has no opportunity—none whatsoever—to be saved. I reject that with all of the unction, function, and emotion of my soul. I believe—and I'm going to show you this morning—that God wants all people to be saved.

Now friend, there are those who have this form of theology and are evangelistic—I have to give them that. And they are soul winners—I have to admit that. And there are others who believe as I'm going to preach this morning who are not soul winners and who are not evangelistic, and shame on them. To be honest, I have to say that. But I will say this: that, as a class, those who believe in a certain amount being saved, and that God doesn't desire to save all, and that Jesus only died for some, as a class, they do not have the missionary drive, and zeal, and soul-winning passion that I believe God wants the Church to have and God wants me to have. And I believe that, if you take it to its logical conclusion—that some are going to be saved no matter what; some are forever damned no matter what, and there's nothing you, me, or anyone else can do about it—friend, there's nothing more debilitating, stultifying, or destructive to missions and evangelism than that thought carried to its logical conclusion. And there are those who do carry that thought to its logical conclusion. So before it reaches its logical conclusion, let's just stop it in its tracks, if we can.

I want you to look, now, in God's Word—we're going to stay primarily in 2 Corinthians chapter 5; but, once we make a point, we'll go to other places in the Scriptures, to prove that point, beside our passage—there are several things I want you

to see, as we're talking on this subject: "Let the Earth Hear His Voice."

I. The Unbounded Love of Christ

Number one: the unbounded love of Christ. The emphasis is on the unbounded love of Christ. There are no restrictions on the love of Christ. Second Corinthians 5, verse 14, again—the Apostle Paul said, "I'm not crazy." *"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead"* (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Now Paul said He loved us so much that He died for all. Does God love everyone or only some chosen ones? Now obviously, there's nothing in any human being that would cause God to love us. There's nothing in us that merits God's love. If God loves us, it is by grace, but He does love us. *"God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Now therefore, I can say to any man, any woman, any boy, any girl, any place, any time, "God loves you—God." There are some who don't believe that, Brother Mark. There are some, choir, who don't believe that you can just walk up to an individual and say, "God loves you, beyond the shadow of any doubt or peradventure." You would have to say, "God might love you. I don't know whether He loves you or not, so I'm going to tell you. But He might love you; He may not love you."

I was in California, one time, walking down the street, back when the hippies were true enough hippies. I saw a hippie. I mean, he was dressed out—tie-dyed, spangles, beads, everything. He was clicking along like that. Just two of us on the street. I said, "This is my opportunity." I walked up to him. I was dressed kind of like I'm dressed today. I said, "Hey, do you have a moment?" He said, "Yeah, man." I said, "May I tell you something?" He said, "Lay it on me." I looked him straight in the eye, and I said, "God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life." He said, "Groovy, man." Friend, it is groovy. It is groovy that God loves everyone. Red, yellow, black, and white; young and old; rich or poor; American or otherwise—God loves us all.

But there are some who don't believe that—I mean, evangelical Christians. I don't know what they do with verses like our favorite verse, John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth"*—whosoever, whosoever, whosoever believeth—*"in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Now there are those who say, "Well, that word *world* doesn't mean, 'world.' It means, 'the elect.'" And they read it this way: "For God so loved the elect."

You say, "Do they really do that?" John Owen, one of the great progenitors of this line of thought, said this—and I'm going to give it directly; here's his retranslation: "God so loved His elect throughout the world that He gave His Son to the intention that, by Him, believers might be saved"—"God so loved the elect throughout the world..." May I suggest to you that's not what it says? It says, *"God...loved the world."*

Now don't add to or take from the Word of God by fancy footwork. Friend, God loves the world. They had to change it about: "Well, God is sovereign. He can love whoever He wants." I agree. And He wants to love all. Not only is He all-powerful—He is all loving. Now some people say, "Well, when it says 'the world,' it's talking about the world of the elect." No, it's not. It's talking about the world of sinners. Listen to it in context—John 3, verses 16 through 19: "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*" (John 3:16–19). It's very obvious he's not talking about the world of the elect. He's talking about the world of darkness and sin, the world that ought to be condemned.

Now when we see that God loves the world, what does that say to us? What is our purpose driven by His passion? It is to love what God loves. If God loves the lost, we are to love the lost.

I read, some time, years ago, about a woman in Paris, dressed in her elegant satins and silks, going down the Parisian streets. She had on a long glove, which she took off. And when she did, a very valuable ring set with a huge diamond fell off and dropped into the gutter. This elegant lady took her parasol and tried to lift the diamond from the gutter. She couldn't do it. But the stone was so precious to her, she fixed her dress, took off the other glove, got down there, and with those dainty hands fished around in the slime of the gutter to get her precious diamond.

Now we need to see every soul that way. I don't care who a person is. I don't care what kind of condition they're in. I don't care how wicked, how vile, they may be, how degraded they may live—they are precious to Jesus Christ. God loves every person. I believe that you can walk up to any person, any time, any place, and say, without stutter, stammer, fear, apology, or contradiction, "God loves you—God loves you," no matter whether they're a sinner or a saint. "*For God so loved the world*"—the unbounded love of God.

II. The Unlimited Atonement of Christ

Number two: Because of the unbounded love of God, there is the unlimited atonement of Christ—the unbounded love of Christ; the unlimited atonement of Christ. Christ died for all. Now these people, who believe that God only loves some, believe, correspondingly—and there's a corollary truth—that, since He only loves some, He only died for some. And they call that *limited atonement*. Well, I want to show you, from the

Word of God, not only does He love all, but He died for all.

Second Corinthians 5, now, verses 14 and 15: *“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if Christ died for all...”*—do you see it? Underscore it—*“that if [Christ] died for all, then were all dead.”*—how many did He die for? As many as were dead in trespasses and sins—*“and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again”* (2 Corinthians 5:14–15). He died for all. He died to reconcile the world. Look in verse 19: *“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself”* (2 Corinthians 5:19). Now there are those, again, who say He only loves the elect; and, therefore, He only died with a limited atonement—that His blood was not effective to save all, only for those for whom He died. They believe this. And there are some of them—very fine people. They’re just mistaken.

I asked a pastor friend of mine who believes this—I said, “I want to ask you a question. Will you do me a favor?” He said, “Sure.” I said, “Would you give me one verse—not two, not three, not four, but one verse—that says that Jesus Christ died only for the elect?” He said, “Well, let me illustrate.” And he took a quarter out of his pocket, and he said, “If I were to ask you to get water out of this quarter, could you do it?” I said, “No.” He said, “Why not?” I said, “There’s no water in the quarter.” He said, “So the only way that anybody could get water out of the quarter would be for somebody to put water in it first. Isn’t that right?” I said, “Right.” He said, “So the only way that faith can come from a depraved heart is for God to put the faith in first. Is that not right?” I said, “Absolutely.” And I said, “And the Bible says, *‘God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith’* (Romans 12:3), and that, *‘Christ is that Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world’*” (John 1:9). Now I said, “Put your quarter back in your pocket, and give me my verse. I’m not looking for an illustration. I’m not looking for an argument. I’m looking for the Word of God.”

Oh sure, there are plenty of scriptures that say He died for the elect, but there’s none who say that He died *only* for the elect. The Scriptures say He died for the world. Now friend, you don’t have to be a lawyer, I don’t think, to understand that.

Let me give you some scriptures that make it clear that His atonement was not limited. John 1 and verse 29—the great John the Baptist, baptizing down in the muddy River Jordan, saw the spotless, sinless Lamb of God coming, and John lifted up his eyes when He saw Jesus coming, and he said, *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). Isn’t that great? Now can you just imagine what it would have sounded like if he had said, “Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the elect?” Think about it—think about it. No—*“Behold the Lamb of God, [that] taketh away the sin of the world.”* Why did the Lamb of God come? Let’s find out.

John 12, verses 46 and following—Jesus said, *“I am come a light into the world, that*

whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness” (John 12:46)—“I’m come a light unto the world.” The Apostle John, talking to the saints about their salvation and their responsibility, said, in 1 John 2:2—a key verse, speaking of Jesus: *“And he is the propitiation for our sins:”*—now, that’s a big word. How many times a day do you use the word *propitiation*? What does it mean? He is the satisfactory sacrifice—He is the satisfactory sacrifice for our sins. And then, he says—*“and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”* He didn’t just die for the elect. John’s part of the elect—the saints to whom John was speaking—were part of the elect. But what he’s saying: “He died for the whole world.” What does black print on white paper mean, if it doesn’t mean that He died for the whole world?

Now some people say, “Well, you know, He just died for the world of the elect.” And they put these codicils on; they put these explanations on. But the world that John is talking about here is definitely not the world of the elect. He describes that world in a few verses down. We’re still in 1 John, the second chapter, and notice what he says in verses 15 and 16: *“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. 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 2:15–16). Now the world he’s talking about is obviously not the world of the elect—the world of degradation and sin. It’s the world, friend, of the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And the Bible says, “He”—Jesus—“is the satisfactory sacrifice—not only for our sins, but also for the sins of those who are living in degradation and sin.”

Did you know the Bible teaches that even apostates—God-hating apostates and false prophets—have been bought with the precious blood of Jesus Christ? Put this verse down—2 Peter chapter 2, verse 1—Peter says, *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them,”*—underscore that phrase, *“the Lord that bought them”*—*“and bring upon themselves swift destruction”* (2 Peter 2:1). The word *bought* here is a Greek word, *agorazo*, which means, “to redeem or to buy out of the slave market.” He redeemed us. He bought us. But the Bible says that He even bought these heretics, these false teachers, these who are bringing upon themselves swift destruction. They also have been bought with the precious, rich, red, royal blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus gave Himself a ransom for all. First Timothy 2, verses 3 through 6—jot these down: *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”* (1 Timothy 2:3–6). If Christ died for all, does that mean

that all are saved? Of course not. His death provides the possibility and the availability of salvation to all. But faith secures it, when we believe and trust in Him.

Now friend, let me give you a couple more scriptures, and then we'll go on. Hebrews 2:9: *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour;"*—now listen to this—*"that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."* Now folks, there it is—there it is. He tasted death for every man. That's the reason the prophet Isaiah dipped his pen in golden glory and wrote, 700 years before the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in Isaiah 53, verse 6: *"All we like sheep have gone astray..."*—how many people have gone astray on earth? All—*"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6). Just as all are sinners, Christ died for all. You can't make it mean anything else than this.

III. The Unconditional Invitation of Christ

Number one: There's the unbounded love of Christ. Number two: There is the unlimited atonement for Christ—Jesus died for you, for me, for them, for us, for all. Number three: It follows, therefore, there is the unconditional invitation of Christ—He invites all to be saved. Now He doesn't just invite some to be saved. If He only died for some, then He would only call some. And they believe that He only called some—that I can preach, but only He can call these people. Now He does call, but He calls all. He wants all to be saved.

Begin now—we're in 2 Corinthians 5—look, if you will, in verses 17 and following: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself"* (2 Corinthians 5:17–19)—*"reconciling the world unto himself."* Now there are those who teach that God, therefore, since He does not love all, and since that Jesus did not die for all, does not call all to salvation. But that is not true. Our Lord desires that all—a-l-l—hear His voice and believe on Him.

Now I want to give you some ancillary scriptures. Second Peter chapter 3, verse 9—2 Peter chapter 3, verse 9: *"The Lord is...not willing that any should perish..."*—now, if you believe in a limited atonement, you have to change that to say, "The Lord is willing that many should perish," because most people are lost. You'd have to change it to say, "The Lord is willing that many should perish." But this says—*"The Lord is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Now that is God's will—that all should come to repentance. Now friend, God wants people, whoever

they are, to repent and come to Jesus.

First Timothy 2, verses 3 through 6—I've referred to this before; listen to it again: *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will"—or "wills to"—"have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of truth"* (1 Timothy 2:3–4). God wills it.

Now friend, if God doesn't want all men saved, why didn't He say so? A little girl said, "If God didn't mean what He said, why didn't He say what He meant?" When God says "all," He means *all*. When God says He's not willing that any should perish, He means that. If you change it, language loses its meaning. We're at sea. We have a Bible, but what good is it, if we can say, "That's what it says, but that's not what it means"? Take Romans chapter 3, verse 23: *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God"* (Romans 3:23). Would you say, "Oh, it doesn't mean all have sinned?" No—*"all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* Let *all* mean, "all."

IV. The Undiminished Commission of Christ

Now number four. There, it follows... Now follow what Paul is saying. Paul said, "I'm not crazy—I'm not crazy. There is the unbounded love of Christ. There is the unlimited atonement of Christ. There is the unqualified invitation of Christ—I'm not crazy." And therefore, there is the undiminished commission of Christ. "I have been commissioned to take this message." Look, if you will now, in verse 18: *"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation"* (2 Corinthians 5:18).

Now what is our ministry? To let the earth hear His voice; to say to men, women, boys, and girls, wherever they are, "Jesus died for you. He loves you. He invites you. Be reconciled to God." Look in verse 20: *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you [through] us:"—or, "by us"—"we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"* (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Now what is an ambassador? An ambassador—I learned this as a kid—an ambassador is someone who represents the person of a king in the court of another. Have you ever seen a live ambassador? Do not say *no*, because you have—he's standing here, preaching. I am an ambassador of the King of kings. And I can tell you—listen—I can tell you with such authority—listen—as if Jesus Christ were here in the flesh, I can tell you that God wants you reconciled. Paul says, *"in Christ's stead"*—"in the place of Christ, I'm standing here as His surrogate. I'm standing here with His words, with His appointment. I have the sovereign God behind me." And God says, "You're my ambassador to tell people Christ loves them; Christ died for them; Christ invites them; and they can now be reconciled to God."

It's not God that needs reconciliation; it's lost sinners. They are sinners by nature, by

birth, by choice, by practice. And sin is warfare against God. It's a clenched fist in the face of God. But God wants us reconciled. He wants people to be saved. And I'm here in Christ's stead. It's as if Jesus were standing here, saying to you this morning, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

Again, I want to tell you that anybody who wants to be saved can be saved. You say, "Well, Pastor Rogers, what if I'm not one of the elect?" Listen. The Bible says, "Whosoever will may come" (Revelation 22:17). Do you want to be saved? Do you want God? Then, come on. Do you think God is lying when He says, "Whosoever will may come"? You say, "Well, what if I am not one of the elect?" Come on, and you will be. Let me tell you who the elect are: The elect are the "whosoever wills." And if you want to come, you may come.

Now God's not going to force it on you. There are not enough demons in Hell or out of Hell or any other place to drag you down this aisle, this morning, if you don't want to come. But there are not enough angels—good angels, bad angels, or fallen angels—that can keep you from coming, if you want to come. "Whosoever will may come." And I am an ambassador of Heaven's King, and so are you, if you're saved. That's what the business is all about. Can you think of a higher privilege? Can you think of a greater responsibility than to be an ambassador of Heaven's King?

Suppose the governor of the state is going to pardon a criminal who's to be electrocuted. The people have petitioned the governor and said, "There are mitigating circumstances. This man should not be electrocuted. Please pardon him." And the governor says, "All right, I'll pardon him." And the governor calls you, and the governor says, "I'm going to pardon this man. Here's the pardon. You deliver it to the prison. Do that for me. I am appointing you as my ambassador, my spokesman. Take the pardon." Suppose you put it in your breast pocket. And then, you go off to a round of golf; and then you work on a business deal; and then you go out with friends to dinner; and then you take a few days vacation; and then you pick up the newspaper, one morning, and you read where that man is electrocuted. And you reach up there in your breast pocket, and there is the pardon undelivered. Now friend, you would be complaisant in that man's death.

You say, "Pastor, is it that serious?" Let me give you some Scripture. Ezekiel 33, verses 7 through 9: "*So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou does not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.*" God said, "You don't warn him; he dies—you are guilty." "*Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul*" (Ezekiel 33:7–9).

Paul wasn't crazy. Paul wanted the earth to hear the voice. Paul did not want to have bloody hands for failing to share. We can't all go overseas. We can't all take short-term mission trips. We are not all gifted to preach or to sing. But there's something everybody can do. Let me give you these facts, and I'm finished.

A. All Men Need Reconciliation

Number one: All men need reconciliation. Agreed? All men—those who have been saved needed it, and those who are not saved still need it.

B. Reconciliation Has Been Made Possible by the Finished Work of Christ on the Cross

Number two: Reconciliation has been made possible by the finished work of Jesus Christ on that cross. With His blood He hath reconciled God and man.

C. We Have Been Appointed as Ambassadors

Number three: We have been appointed as ambassadors. It is our job; it is our responsibility; it is our duty. Dr. R. A. Torrey said this: "I would like to ask what right any man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he is not a soul winner. There's absolutely no such thing..."—listen—"absolutely no such thing as following Christ unless we make the purpose of Christ's life the purpose of your life." What is the purpose of His life? *"The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). That ought to be the impelling purpose of your life.

D. We Have Been Appointed as Ambassadors to Christ for Christ's Glory

Last of all, we, friend, have been appointed as ambassadors for Christ. You, you—Brother Mark, myself, Jim Whitmire, Carter, choir, deacons—we're all ambassadors.

Conclusion

Now I want you to listen very carefully to what I'm about to say. Not everybody in this building this morning is saved. I can tell you without any equivocation—none whatsoever—that God sent me here today to tell you that He loves you, that Christ died for you, that He wants to save you, and that He invites you. This grace is not irresistible. You can resist it to your own peril, but you can receive it. And "whosoever will may come."

C. S. Lewis, a brilliant thinker, said, "All of the world is divided into two categories. On the one side there are those who have the spirit of Satan. Satan said to the Almighty, 'Not Your will; mine be done.' That's one category of persons. The other part is divided into those who, like the Savior, say to God the Father, 'Not my will; Thine be done.'" Everybody in this building is in one of those categories, right? You're in one or the other. Now if you're one of those who follow Satan and the philosophy of Satan, who

go on stubbornly, willingly, arrogantly refusing redemption, and you say to God, in effect, “Not Your will; mine be done,” one day, you will drop into Hell—now listen—and a broken-hearted God will say, “Not My will; thine be done.” *“The Lord is...not willing that any should perish”* (2 Peter 3:9).

Three men were in a restaurant. Two of them got in an argument, and one said to the other one, “You go to Hell.” The third man, who was a Christian, leaned over to the man who’d just been told to go to Hell and said, “Look, I’ve been reading the instruction book. You don’t have to go, if you don’t want to”—“you don’t have to go, if you don’t want to.”

“Whosoever will may come.” Come to Jesus. God sent me here today, as an ambassador of Heaven’s King, to tell you He wants to save you.

Bow your heads. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. I want you to pray today and ask Jesus Christ into your heart. And I promise you, if you want to be saved, He will save you. He died for you.

Would you pray a prayer like this—pray it sincerely: “Dear God,”—that’s right; just speak to Him—“I know that You love me, God; Jesus, You loved me enough to die for me; thank You, Jesus; now, Lord, I open my heart; I receive You as my Lord and Savior; I want to be reconciled; I want peace with God; I want power for living; I want a home in Heaven; come into my heart; forgive my sins; cleanse me; save me because of Your precious shed blood; thank You, Jesus; thank You, Lord; and now, begin to make me the person You want me to be, and help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Our House: A Lighthouse

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: March 5, 2000

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:13–21

Outline

Introduction

- I. The Unbounded Love of Christ
 - II. The Unlimited Atonement of Christ
 - III. The Unconditional Invitation of Christ
 - IV. The Undiminished Commission of Christ
- Conclusion

Introduction

Now I want you to be finding 2 Corinthians chapter 5. And while you're finding it, let me just talk to you about what the Lighthouse Ministry is, that we want you and your family to enter into. In just a moment, on the Image Magnification, I'm going to put something up that will graphically illustrate what I'm talking about.

The Lighthouse Ministry is so simple that it must be of God. Now here's what I'm asking you to do, what Joyce and I have already done; what I'm asking you to do, you and your wife—or, if you live alone by yourself, whoever. Your husband may be gone—you're there, whoever. You may be a college student—wherever. You're saying that, "God helping me, I will make my apartment, my house, the place on my street, a lighthouse to those around us."

So how will you do that? Well, you can take neighbors to your right—you can count off. You can say, "I will make myself a lighthouse to two neighbors on my right, three neighbors on my right, four neighbors on my right," whatever size you want to bite off, and then, "I'll make myself and our home a lighthouse to those on our left: two, three, four, five, wherever; and, correspondingly, to those across the street." So if you'll say, "I'll take four neighbors to my right, four neighbors to my left, eight neighbors across the street—what I'm going to do: I'm going to familiarize myself with their names." Now most of us don't even know the names of that many neighbors. Now that is the truth, folks. About the only time now we see our neighbors today, you know—we say "hi" when his garage door is going down and ours is going up. "How you doing, guy?" That's about it.

Well, we're going to learn the names of our neighbors. And by the way, we have an ability now to give you a printout that has the names of all your neighbors. That's done

for us. And so you can say, “Oh, that’s her name. Well, I’m glad to know that.” And so we’ll be able to do that for you.

Secondly, you will be able to say, by whatever means, to your neighbors, in your time, very casually, very lovingly, very sincerely, “Joe and Mary, Joyce and I have made our house a lighthouse of prayer for our neighbors round about us.” That doesn’t mean that they’re some special case, therefore. They just happen to have the fortune, or misfortune, of being your neighbor. And so you just say, “Our house is a lighthouse of prayer, so we’re going to be praying for you on a regular basis.”

Everybody wants somebody to pray for them. When people tell me they pray for me, and I know they mean it—I have to—it’s hard for me to hold back the tears. People say, “I am praying for you. And look, we’re praying for you, not because we think you’re bank robbers or ax murderers; we’re praying for you because we love you. If you have any prayer need, let us know. Somebody’s sick, somebody going away to school, a change of job—whatever—anything, anything we can pray about—just let us know, because we’re praying for you.” You might say, “Here are some little cards. Just put it in our mailbox. You don’t even have to say anything. We’ll pick it out, and we’ll pray for you.” Now that is the basis of the Lighthouse Ministry. Is that not simple?

And then, when you’re out—like Joyce and I walk in our neighborhood when the weather’s nice—you can walk past those houses, be memorizing those names, and just praying for those dear people. Then, there may come a time later on, when we’re having the Passion Play or whatever—you’ll feel a whole lot more comfortable inviting them to come to that, or whatever. And that’s all we’re asking you to do. We will show you some wonderful ways to share the Lord Jesus Christ. But wouldn’t it be wonderful if, just all over our city, people were praying for their neighbors? Isn’t there something in the Bible that says something like, “Love your neighbor”? Isn’t it in the Bible? I believe that is in the Bible.

Now let me just show you what can happen if we begin to make a house a lighthouse. Get—all right, now there. Actually, let’s get it a little darker up here and get it as bright as we can on the screen. That line—that diagonal line that’s going through that circle—is I-40. That little steeple there—that is Bellevue Baptist Church. That is an actual map. That is a radius of three miles around Bellevue Baptist Church, which is the traditional harvest field definition for many people. Bellevue, of course, has a bigger vision than three miles.

But now, let’s suppose... Here are the people. That’s that three-mile radius. Here are Bellevue families, scattered out there; and, you’re going to see them. Many of them are outside that three-mile radius. Now let’s just suppose that they start being lighthouses. Let’s just put a few lighthouses up there. All right now, there’s the light, beginning to shine in these neighborhoods, all out around. And these are homes; there

are just, you know, a handful. Actually, by the way, these green things represent Bellevue households that are there. But now, let's say, "Oh, we're getting more lighthouses. More people are getting moved by the Spirit of God," and the lighthouses are growing. And so we're going to pray. Let's have some more lighthouses. All right now, you see what is happening to our city? Our city, now, is getting just blanketed. Every neighbor is being prayed for. Now let's have some more lighthouses. Oh my goodness! Look—it's just gone almost completely light. And this is... Is there another one? All right. Let's see. There you go. Let the light shine.

Now I want to ask you a question: Would it not be wonderful if our city were blanketed by prayer like that, and people in this city are being prayed for by name? If you believe that, let's show it. All right now, that's what we're talking about. That is so incredibly simple—that everybody is being prayed for. And everybody needs to be prayed for. And so all we're asking you to do is to say, "God being our helper, we'll make our house a lighthouse." Nobody's going to check up on you. That's between you and God. But we're going to be showing you how to make your house a lighthouse.

Now that is the plan. Let's get the theology. Would you turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 5? And look up here, and let me tell you something else.

By the way, a mother came to visit her son at college. He was away. He had to work his way through school. She said, "Son, I want to go with you to your job." He said, "Oh Ma, I don't think so." "No," she said, "I want to go." So she went and found out what he was doing was visiting a neighbor's house, and he was vacuuming the floors, doing the dishes, and the laundry. She said, "Son, I could never get you to do that at home. Why are you doing that?" "Oh," he said, "Mama, I was looking for an exciting job, and I saw an ad in the paper that said, 'light house keeping.'" He thought he was going to be a keeper of a lighthouse, but he was doing light housekeeping.

Now I want you to do some lighthouse keeping. I want you to be a lighthouse keeper. And may I tell you something? Listen to me carefully. By the way, we're going to be asking you to make a contribution to reaching the world for Jesus Christ.

There is a false and erroneous theology that is out in the world, and many people believe it. Let me tell you what they believe—and they teach it; they teach it here in our city: that God doesn't love everybody and that God has not designed salvation for everybody. Only a select and elect few does God desire to be saved. They do not believe that Jesus died for everybody. Frankly, folks, they don't believe that. And they will tell you they do not believe that Jesus died for everybody because He doesn't love everybody. And they believe that, today, all over the world, little babies will be born, and those babies have not one scintilla of an iota of an opportunity to go to Heaven—not at all. It's already determined. They will not go to Heaven. They will die and go to Hell, and there's nothing you, they, or anybody else can do about it.

I reject that with all of the uncton, function, and emotion of my soul. That is wrong. I don't believe that for one moment, and I want to tell you why I don't believe it. And if you believe it, and if you're a thinking person, you're going to find out that the spirit of missions will die in your heart, the longer you think about it. Now there may be some who will override that, because they don't get their theology and their emotions lined up together. But I'm telling you, folks, that there are people who believe that, and it is stultifying to the cause of Christ and to world missions.

Now having that in my heart and in my mind, let's look in the Word of God. Now let me say, even before we look at this passage of Scripture, I want you to know I believe in the sovereignty of God—I believe in election; I believe in foreknowledge; I believe in predestination. I believe all of that, but I do not believe in fatalism.

You know, there are certain people who believe, you know, that just everything is predetermined, like the dear, sweet, little old lady who fell down the cellar stairs, and got up, and brushed herself off, and said, "I'm glad that's over with." I don't believe that. That's fatalism.

Now the Apostle Paul, in the scripture that we're going to look at, had—they had accused him of being mad. They had accused him of being beside himself because of his passion to reach the lost. And here's his answer—here's his answer to these people who accused him of being mad. Begin in verse 13: "*For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God; or whether we be sober, it is for your cause*" (2 Corinthians 5:13). Some said, "Ha, he must be drunk; and now, he's sometimes sober, and sometimes he's drunk. Sometimes he's beside himself; sometimes he's inside himself." He says, "No. Listen. If you want to see what motivates me, if you want to see what drives me, if you want to see what impels me, if you want to see what made me—and makes me—a great missionary, here it is."

"For the love of God constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more"—that is, "after the flesh." "Therefore if any man be in Christ [Jesus]"—or, "in Christ"—"he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God

in him” (2 Corinthians 5:14–21).

There are four things I lay on your heart, this morning, and I pray God the Holy Spirit will help me to do that.

I. The Unbounded Love of Christ

First of all is the unbounded love of Christ—the unbounded love of Christ. In verse 14, you see it. Paul says, *“The love of Christ constraineth us”* (2 Corinthians 5:14).

Question: Does God love everybody, or does God just love the elect? I mean, can I come to a man, a woman—anybody on the street—and tell him, without stutter, stammer, equivocation, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life”? Can I say that? I believe I can. But there are those who say, “No, there are boundaries on the love of God. God does not love everybody—in the salvation sense, that He wants them saved.”

Now I’m going to give you a lot of Scripture today. You allow me to read them. You jot them down on a piece of paper. Don’t try to turn to them unless you’re very dexterous, because we don’t have that much time. So first of all, we’re just talking about, “Does God love all? Is God’s love unbounded?” This is what Paul is saying: “It is the love of Christ that constrains me—not my love for Him, but the love of Christ: His love for me.” Listen to these scriptures.

The one you’re most familiar with is found in John chapter 3, beginning in verse 14: *“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved...”*—what’s the next word? “The world”—*“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already,”*—Why? Because he wasn’t elect? No. Listen—*“because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light”* (John 3:14–19).

Do you know some of these people interpret this verse? “For God so loved the elect.” I’ll guarantee you. As a matter of fact, John Owen, the great theologian—I say “great” in parenthesis, or quotation marks, because he’s not great at this point—actually translates this, in his own retranslation, “God so loved His elect throughout the world, that He gave His Son to this intention, that, by Him, believers might be saved.” Now the Bible says something about adding to or taking from the Word of God. No, it doesn’t say that, “God so loved His elect.” It simply says, “God loved the world” (John 3:16). And the world that He’s talking about is the world of darkness and sin. Look, in verse 19: *“And*

this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light” (John 3:19). It takes a lot of fancy footwork to get around this plain verse of Scripture and to make God a respecter of persons.

Now I want to be very clear. There’s nothing in any sinner—in me, in you, or anything else—that merits the love of God. If He loves us, it is by His sheer grace. And there’s nothing in me that deserves that love. But I’ll tell you, there’s something in God that gives that love.

We know that God is omniscient—He knows everything. We know that God is omnipotent—He can do anything. And I’m going to tell you something else: God is omnibenevolent—that is, He loves all things. And if God loves all—I mean, if God loves *all*... He doesn’t love all things; He hates sin. But He hates sin because He is a God of love. If you love health, you’re going to hate germs. But God loves the world. He is omnibenevolent. And God is a God of love. And we need to love what God loves. Now when we love what God loves, then we’re going to be a missionary.

Years ago, I read about a woman in Paris. She was an elegant lady. She dressed in her silks and her satins. She had her white gloves on. She had her parasol in Paris. But somebody saw this lady down on her knees like this, had her dress fixed. She had taken off her white glove, and she’s down there in the water, in the gutter, and the offscouring of the street, fishing around in the slime, in the streets of Paris. Do you know what had happened to that lady? She had dropped her great big diamond. It had fallen in the gutter. And she had tried to delicately fish it out with her umbrella handle. She couldn’t get it. Finally, she got down on her knees, took off her glove, and put that dainty hand down there in the gutter. Why? Because there was a diamond down there.

And I’ll tell you, folks: There’s something about a love for souls that will cause us to forget our pride, and to get down there—whomever they are, wherever they are. The dredges, in the worse place—there are spiritual diamonds there that Jesus loves. And I’m telling you, you can look at any man, woman, boy, girl on the face of this earth, and tell them, without apology, “God loves you—God loves you!” It is the undaunted love of God. He loves the world.

II. The Unlimited Atonement of Christ

Second point: Not only is there the unbounded love of God, but there is the unlimited atonement of Christ—the unbounded love of Christ; the unlimited atonement of Christ.

Look now, in verses 14 and following, in this same chapter—look at it: *“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:14–16).* Go down to verse 19: *“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself”*

(2 Corinthians 5:19).

Now there are some who say that Jesus did not die for all; He died only for a select few. I asked a pastor who believes this theology, not so long ago—I said, “Sir, will do me a favor?” I said, “Would you give me one verse—not two, not three, not four, not five; just one verse—that says that Jesus died only for the elect?” Now I say, “I can give you many that say He died for the world, that He died for all. Just give me one verse.” Friend, I’m still waiting on that verse. He couldn’t do it. You can’t do it—you can’t do it. They can’t do it; you can’t do it. Now you can give me many verses that say He died for the elect, which I believe with all of my heart. But you can’t give me any verse that says He died *only* for the elect. I’ll tell you, friend, that He died for the world.

Now if you think I’m wrong about this, I’m just going to give you some Scripture, and then you see if what I am telling you is correct, for... I’ve already given you John 3:16: “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son...*” Let me give you some more Scripture that teaches the same thing, and you jot these down.

John the Baptist saw Jesus coming before he baptized the Lord Jesus. And in John chapter 1, verse 29, John the Baptist pointed to the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus, and said, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29)—“*taketh away the sin of the world.*” There’s nothing here said about the elect. Suppose John the Baptist had stood there that day and said, “Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of a chosen few.” That just doesn’t sound right. Why doesn’t it sound right? Because it’s not right.

Put down John chapter 12, verses 46 and following—Jesus said, “*I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness. And if any man*”—underscore that—“*hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world,*”—listen to this—“*but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*” (John 12:46–48). The emphasis here is this: Jesus said, “I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” It’s obvious that the world He’s talking about is the world that will be judged if that world rejects Him. Jesus died for that world.

Now let me give you another verse—in my estimation, incontrovertible: 1 John 2, verse 2—speaking of Jesus—and it says, “*And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world*” (1 John 2:2). Now *propitiation* is a big word. It just simply means He is the “righteous satisfaction” for our sins; He is the “atonement” for our sins—“*and not for ours only*”—John is talking to the saints—“*but also for the sins of the whole world*”—“*the sins of the whole world.*” Jesus died for everybody.

Some—I’ve listened to people say, “Well, that only means the world of the elect.”

No! If you know anything about interpreting Scripture, you know every text has a context—the Scripture around it. What world is He talking about? He’s in 1 John 2:2. Read 1 John 2:15: *“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. 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 2:15–16). And he says that Jesus died for that world. He died for *that* world.

You can be bought with the precious blood of Jesus, and reject what He did for you. Second Peter 2, verse 1—Peter is talking about apostates. These are people who reject Christ willfully, deliberately, knowingly reject Christ. They’re Hell-bound. But listen to what he said—2 Peter 2, verse 1: *“But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them,”*—they were bought, but they denied Him—*“and bring upon themselves swift destruction”* (2 Peter 2:1). These heretics were bought with the precious blood. And the word *bought* is a word—it means, “to buy out of the slave place,” or, “to buy in the marketplace”—*agorazo*.

Now Jesus shed His blood, a ransom for all. First Timothy 2, verses 3 through 6. Now jot these scriptures down. Paul is teaching we’re to pray for all. And then, he says, *“For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time”* (1 Timothy 2:3–6). God wants all men saved. He gave His Son Jesus, a ransom for all. Does that mean that all are saved? No. It only provides salvation for all. Faith procures salvation for all, when you receive what Jesus did.

Hebrews 2, verse 9: *“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man”* (Hebrews 2:9). Jesus tasted death for every man. Isaiah 53, verse 6: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him”*—on Jesus—*“the iniquity of us all”* (Isaiah 53:6).

You say, “Adrian, why, why, why are you bearing down on this point?” Listen, friend. I’m talking about the heart of missions. Listen to my heart. You can tell any man anywhere, any woman anywhere, any boy, any girl, anywhere, “God loves you!” And I can tell you what else you can tell them: “Jesus died for you—Jesus died for you.” He gave Himself, a ransom for all. *“[God] hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.”* You can say that, friend, because the Bible teaches it.

III. The Unconditional Invitation of Christ

Now here's a third thing I want you to see, and that is the unconditional invitation of Christ. You can invite anybody to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Begin now in verse 17 of this same chapter: *"Therefore"*—therefore—*"if any man..."*—I love that—*"if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God,"*—surely He's sovereign—*"who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation"* (2 Corinthians 5:17–18). That's what missions is. That's what being a lighthouse is. We have the ministry of reconciliation. And so therefore, verse 20: *"Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God"* (2 Corinthians 5:20). There is an unconditional invitation.

Now if I don't believe that our Lord desires everybody to be saved, and I believe that the "whosoever will" in the Bible is only subterfuge, smoke, and mirrors—that God doesn't really mean "whosoever will"—now, what's that going to do? If I believe that some people are going to be saved, regardless of what I do, and some people are going die and go to hell, regardless of what I do—then, why? What's it all about? That's an exercise in futility and a surrender to fatalism. No. God invites the world. Look, in verse 19: *"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself"* (2 Corinthians 5:19).

Now there are those who say that God doesn't desire everybody to be saved. All right, still. Just jot these scriptures down. Second Peter 3, verse 9—the Apostle Peter said, *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness;"*—listen to this—*"but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9). Now it takes nerve for somebody to change that to read, "He is willing that many should perish and only some come to repentance." How can you do that? What does black print on white paper mean? "[God] is...not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

First Timothy 2, verses 3 through 6—I gave you this before, but listen to it: *"For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time"* (1 Timothy 2:3–6). That doesn't mean that all men are going to be saved, but it means that God makes their salvation possible through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now to say that *all* doesn't mean "all" here, it would do just as much damage as if I were to come to Romans 3:23, that says, *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God,"* and say, "Well, some have sinned and come short of the glory of God." No, you can't do that.

Now I can tell you that I can see any person, and I can tell that person, number one, of the unbounded love of Christ—He loves you. I can tell him of the unlimited atonement of Christ—He died for you. And I can tell him, “As an ambassador, He invites you. He wants you to be saved.” He “*gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time*” (1 Timothy 2:6). And friend, that lights the evangelistic fire in your heart and in your life.

IV. The Undiminished Commission of Christ

Now last of all, I want you to see—and this is where you come in—the undiminished commission of Christ. Now look, if you will, in verse 18 of this same chapter: “*And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation*” (2 Corinthians 5:18). Skip to verse 20: “*Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God*” (2 Corinthians 5:20). That is the undiminished commission. We are ambassadors. You’re looking at an ambassador of a King. I am an ambassador.

Paul said, “You accuse me of being crazy? I’m not crazy. The love of Christ constrains me. He died for all. He wants all men to be saved. And I am His ambassador.”

When I was a teen, I learned that an ambassador is one who represents the person of a king in the court of another. Now if we fail as ambassadors, it is high treason against Heaven’s King. He has given us the Great Commission, and that is to go into all the world with the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And we are ambassadors. Now He has made peace with the blood of His cross. He has reconciled the world to Himself, but that does man no good until he accepts what the Lord has given to him and done for him.

Suppose there’s an earthy king. I’m his ambassador. He said, “There’s a man in my kingdom who has sinned against me. He’s going to be executed. He thoroughly deserves that execution. But my love motivates me, my mercy motivates me, my grace motivates me—I, with my own riches, have paid for his crime against me. You are my ambassador. You go deliver the message that he has been pardoned—that he’s to be set free. Give it to the executioner. Ask him if he will accept the pardon. You’re my ambassador. You go!” Now suppose you took that pardon, and, as an ambassador, you put it in your pocket. Then, you went back to your home, and you got busy with your affairs. Maybe you went on a vacation; maybe you got busy in business; maybe you’re watching some amusement. And then, you pick up the newspaper, and you find that that person has been executed. You reach in your pocket—there’s the pardon. The reconciliation had been made, but you failed to go and to take the message. Now according to the Scripture, you’re blood guilty.

Let me give you a verse that teaches that—Ezekiel 33:7: *“So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and warn them from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity, but thou hast delivered thy soul”* (Ezekiel 33:7–9).

I wonder if we have bloody hands today. I wonder, can we live next door to somebody who’s destined for Hell, somebody for whom Jesus died, and we don’t even pray for them, we don’t even show the love of Jesus Christ to them? Let me tell you what Dr. R. A. Torrey said—and I want you to listen to this, because it is challenging—he said, “I would like to ask what right any man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he’s not a soul winner.” You say, “amen,” or, “oh, me”? Listen: “I would like to ask what right any man has to call himself a follower of Jesus Christ if he’s not soul winner. There is absolutely no such thing as following Christ unless you make the purpose of Christ’s life the purpose of your life.” Is the purpose of the life of the Lord Jesus the purpose of your life?

Conclusion

Let me tell you what I can say, as I said in the in the introduction, without stutter, without stammer, without trepidation, without apology. I can tell you this from the Word of God. Now I believe in sovereignty; I believe in election; I believe in predestination. I believe in all of that. But I can tell you this—and I believe God knows who the elect are. I know that from all eternity He’s known that. He never learns anything or forgets anything. He doesn’t change—but, I can tell you this, and you listen to me. If you’re not saved here, I’ve got some wonderful news for you: God loves you—God loves you.

And I’m going to tell you something else: Jesus died for you. Your sin has been paid for with the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I’m going to tell you something else: He invites you. He says, “Whosoever will, may come” (Revelation 22:17). And I’m going to tell you something else: I am His ambassador. I am the one sent by the King to save you. Be reconciled—be reconciled. Come to Jesus. And if you do, every sin will be forgiven. The Holy Spirit will come into you, make you a new person. And when you die, or when Jesus comes, He’ll take you home to Heaven.

Give Me That New-Time Religion

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 16, 1986

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 5:17

Outline

Introduction

- I. We Receive It by a New Testament
- II. We Enter It by a New Birth
- III. It Changes Us into New Creatures
- IV. Because of It, God Gives Us a New Name
- V. It Puts a New Song in My Heart
- VI. Because of It, We're Headed for a New Heaven and a New Earth

Conclusion

Introduction

And now would you take God's Word and find with me 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17—2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17. I want to speak to you on this subject: "Give Me That New-Time Religion"—"Give Me that New-Time Religion."

Listen to the Scripture: *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new"* (2 Corinthians 5:17). All things are become new. Now I'm not opposed to the old-time religion. I want to tell you everything that we have in America that is worth having, I believe, is due to that old-time religion.

Those people who came to this country came to this country primarily—our founding fathers—seeking God. And if you read the Constitution, you can find that, written in the Constitution—if you read our history, you can find it written large in our history, you can find it stamped upon our money—that America is great, because America is a country, a nation, based on a Judeo-Christian ethic, and because of the faith of that old-time religion.

Less than one percent of the population in 1776 were not members of a Protestant church. These people believed in God. That is the matrix out of which we've come. Now we talk about our progress in America. Well, we've split the atom. We've walked on the moon. And we're in deeper problems than we've ever been. All right, before this age of aspirin-eaters makes fun of those people back yonder, we'd better look back to the pit from which we have been dug. Thank God for the old-time religion.

But I want to tell you friend, that the old-time religion is also the new-time religion.

And the reason that the old-time religion is also the new-time religion is because the

old-time religion is the all-time religion. Amen? And if the old-time religion is the new-time religion, and the all-time religion, it's the any-time religion. That means you can have it today. Thank God for the new-time religion. For God said in His Word, "Behold I will make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). Now I want us just to take our Bibles today and search a little Scripture.

I. We Receive It by a New Testament

First of all, would you turn with me to Hebrews chapter 9? I want to show you a very interesting passage of Scripture. I begin reading in verse 14—Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 14: *"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge"*—that word, *purge* means *cleanse*—"your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" Now notice verse 15 particularly: *"And for this cause he"*—that means, Jesus—"is the mediator of the new testament,"—if you don't mind marking in your Bible, just underscore that phrase, *"new testament"*—"that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:14–15).

Well, you say, "Pastor, what does that mean?" Well, in order to understand what it means, first of all you have to understand what a testament is. A testament is a will—a will. That means the new will, the new legacy. Has anybody ever left you a legacy? Have you ever inherited anything? Then, you know what a testament is. When a person fills out a will, it is called a *last will and testament*. Now that's what this new testament is. Friend, this is what Jesus has left to us. This is what we received at the death of the Lord Jesus. And where there is a testator, the Bible means there must have been His death. Where there is a legacy, then someone has died. Christ has died, and through His death we are the inheritors.

And it takes care, this passage of Scripture tells us, of all of the things that were due in the past. All of us were bankrupt; we had a sin debt that we could not pay. And Jesus paid it with his blood. When Jesus died upon the cross, He said, *"It is finished"* (John 19:30). And that literally means "paid in full." I've got wonderful news for you. Because of the New Testament, your sin debt is paid in full. That's your inheritance. Not only is your sin debt paid—there's still plenty left. Because our verse of Scripture talks not only about what is in the past, but it also talks about what is in the future, and it talks about an eternal inheritance in Heaven.

I was with a fellow the other day, and he was showing me around the very wealthy part of town. We were out by the riverfront, and he said, "You see this mansion; you look at this mansion; you see this." I acted very unimpressed. I kept saying, "You ought to see my brother's place. You ought to see my brother's place." And after a while, he

said, “Who’s your brother?” I said, “The Lord Jesus—the Lord Jesus.”

You know, the Bible says He is not ashamed to call us brethren. We are next of kin to the Trinity. We really are. And in our inheritance, we are heirs of God, and joint heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. We have a new testament.

I heard of two beggars sitting on the street corner crying—or one of them was crying. And one said to the other one, “Why are you crying?” He said, “Well, look in the newspaper. J. D. Rockefeller, the richest man on earth, has died.” He said, “Well, why are you crying? You’re no kin to him.” He said, “That’s why I’m crying.”

Now friend, listen. We are inheritors of the Lord Jesus Christ. We have joined an inheritance with the saints of light. And so the very first thing I want to tell you about this new-time religion is we received it by a new testament—by a new testament, a new testament.

II. We Enter It by a New Birth

But wait a minute. We enter by a new birth. Turn with me to John 3, and let me show you something else here, in John chapter 3. The Lord Jesus Christ was talking to Nicodemus, and Jesus said, in John chapter 3, verse 5: *“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again”* (John 3:5–7).

Now how do you get into this new testament? You get into this new testament by a new birth. Jesus told Nicodemus, a stronger man morally than any man, woman, boy or girl in this auditorium: *“Ye must be born again.”* Because, you see, it didn’t make any difference how good Nicodemus was, he wasn’t good enough; because God demands perfection. That’s the reason Jesus said, *“That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* It may be religious flesh; it may be cultured flesh; it may be moral flesh; but it is still flesh. See, you have to be born again. And if you haven’t been born again, the time will come when you wish you’d never been born at all. Jesus said, of Judas, *“It had been better for that man that he had never been born”* (Mark 14:21).

Now what does it mean to be *born again*? It means that you receive a new nature; you receive a new life; Christ comes into you. When I was born the first time, I had a set of genes and chromosomes, and that made me what I am by nature. But when Jesus came into me, I was regenerated—regenerated. I have new genes that have come into me, supernatural. I have, now, the life of God. I have been made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). And God actually has lived in me, and has changed me, by the new birth from the inside. More important than the question, “Is there life after death is?”—“Is there life after birth?” You know, there are a lot of folks who, after they are

born, do not have life; they have existence.

Jesus said, “I’ve come that you might have life” (John 10:10). Folks, listen. It’s not eternal existence that you need. You’re going to exist eternally, either in Heaven or in Hell. It is eternal life that you need. Jesus said to people already existing, “I’ve come that you might have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). People wanting to live forever don’t even know what to do on a rainy afternoon. What are you going to do a billion years in Heaven, if you don’t have this life in the Lord Jesus Christ?

III. It Changes Us into New Creatures

So this new-time religion, we receive it by a new testament; we enter it by a new birth. Have you been born again? And that changes us into new creatures. Remember the scripture that we read to begin with? Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 17:

“Therefore if any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Christians are not just nice people; they are absolutely new Christians. Now don’t get the idea that we are kind of like a tadpole, and that tadpole goes through a form of metamorphosis until he becomes a frog. Oh no. We haven’t just gotten better and better. We are more like a frog that’s been kissed and turned into a prince. That’s what we’re like. You see, we’re not just better people: “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creation.” We are made brand new. This is a supernatural work of God. Friend, it is the new-time religion.

Years and years ago, I was in an evangelism conference down in Florida, and I heard a man tell a story he said is a true story. It is about two young preachers who came to a community to hold a revival crusade, and nothing much was happening. And these two preachers had been studying the history of revival, and they found out that one way to get a town revived was to find the meanest man in town and to get that man saved. And so they decided they would find out who the meanest man was, and it was the blacksmith. This blacksmith, whose name was John, had murdered a man. And somehow, through a technicality, or whatever, they could never convict him. But everyone knew that he had murdered a man. And he was a very mean man—very strong, very heartless—seemingly. Everybody left him alone. And those who even had business in the blacksmith shop went in and quickly got out.

Well, they decided they would go witness to this blacksmith. The blacksmith had a nickname. They called him Black John. He had a black, bushy beard and hair. He was a very muscular man—very tough, and very seemingly heartless. But they decided they would get enough courage; they would go talk to him. They went into the blacksmith shop, and there he was, with his big hammer, pounding upon that hot steel. And they started to talk to him about the revival, and invited him to the revival. He just kept pounding away. So they decided they would pray for him. And so. they said, “We will

pray for you.” He didn’t say much. He just kept pounding. And so they began to pray. And one man said, “When I saw him with that hammer in his hand, I didn’t want to bow my head and close my eyes.” He said, “I remembered the Bible said, ‘Watch and pray.’ So,” he said, “I prayed for him as he was pounding on that hot steel.” But after they had prayed for him—evidently, no one had really prayed for that man like that and shown love to him—he said, “I’m going to come tonight to hear you preach.”

They went back and told the pastor of that church that Black John was coming that night to the revival crusade. They thought the pastor would be elated; but he was dejected and almost frightened. He said, “Pastor, what’s wrong? Are you ashamed to have him come to this church? Don’t you know that God loves him also?” The pastor said, “I know that God loves him, and I’m really glad, in a way, that he’s coming. But what you boys don’t understand, you are new here in our city; we’ve got a real problem. The man that that man killed was the husband of our church pianist. She is one of the sweetest most Christ-like women in this world. And she’ll be there playing the piano, when that man comes into the service. He’s the man who killed her husband. I don’t know that she ought to be subjected to that. I know that God wants him to come, but, frankly, gentlemen, I’ve just got a problem with it.” They said, “Well, pastor, we’ve already invited him, and he’s coming. And beside that, we’ve already told almost everybody in town that he’s coming.” So they just committed it to the Lord in prayer.

That night, the door opened, and John came in, and took his seat somewhere near the back. They looked at him; they looked at the pianist. She continued to play. They had the song service, and the preacher got up and preached his heart out, and preached salvation in Christ, and the grace of God, and the forgiveness of God, and the power of the new birth through the Lord Jesus Christ. And he gave the invitation, and down the aisle came that blacksmith. He stood there at the front, and put that big burly hand into the hand of the pastor, and gave the pastor his hand, and gave Jesus his heart. The pastor prayed for him, and led him in a prayer to receive Christ as his personal Savior. At that time, the music stopped. The pianist stopped playing altogether. Every eye went to the piano. The pianist stood up. They thought she was leaving. But she didn’t leave. She came down to the front, and she looked right into the eyes of that blacksmith, and then, she leaned over and planted a holy kiss upon his cheek, and went back and began to play again.

After the service, people came to her and said, “How did you do that? How were you able to do such a thing to the man who murdered your husband?” “Oh,” she said, “that was not the man who murdered my husband; that was a new creature in Christ Jesus.”

Now friend, that’s what I’m talking about. If any man be in Christ Jesus, he’s a new creation. It doesn’t make any difference what you’ve done. There are no yesterdays; they are all tomorrows. A prostitute becomes an arch-virgin. I want to tell you that the

murderer becomes cleaner, whiter, than snow. That's the new-time religion. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creation."

IV. Because of It, God Gives Us a New Name

Listen. We receive it by a new testament. We enter into it by a new birth. It issues in making us a new creation. And because of that, dear friend, God gives us a new name—a new name.

Revelation chapter 2, verse 17—listen to it: "*He that hath an ear...*"—have you got your ears on this morning?—"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Revelation 2:17). Not only, dear friend, do you become a new creation; you get a white stone with a new name in it.

You say, "What does that mean?" Well, let me tell you what it means. Back in Bible times, when people would become very, very close friends, and they would enter into a covenant relationship with one another, sometimes, to symbolize that, they would take a beautiful, beautiful stone; and, they would break that stone evenly, and one person would write his name on one side of the stone, and the other would write his name on the other side of the stone; and then, they would exchange it. And what it was, was a way of saying, "I belong to you, and you belong to me. And since I belong to you, and you belong to me, we are both a part of one whole, one complete piece. Since we are the other half of each other, all that I have belongs to you, and all that you have belongs to me."

Now if a very wealthy man had written his name on one half of that stone, that meant that, when you came into his town, or when you came into his home, or when you came into his village, all that he had belonged to you. It was like a credit card. You just had to show it. It was Heaven's credit card. You shouldn't leave home without it. You would have this white stone, and on it would be the name of your friend, your covenant benefactor. His name would be one there.

Now that's what the Lord is saying: "I give to you a white stone and a name written on it; a new name." It is not that he gives us a new name by which we are called. He gives us a new name we can call Him by. You see, it is His name that is on the stone. But it is a new name. You see, before a man is saved, he knows God as Creator; he knows Him as justice; he knows Him as power; he knows Him as avenger. But you see, when we get saved, we know Him by a new name. We know Him by friend. We know Him by Savior. We know Him by *Abba, Father*. As a matter of fact, we know Him in ways that we can't even describe.

Last night, as I was having fellowship with my Lord upon my knees, the tears began

to flow. And as I praised the Lord, I thought, “Lord, I cannot describe to other people what You mean to me; I cannot put it into words.” Nobody knows that name except the one who has received it. And you. you can’t tell me how much Jesus means to you. You don’t have the words. You don’t have the vocabulary to express the new name that has been given to you. But he who has received it knows that name. And thank God for it. Thank God for the personal, intimate relationship. That means that He is my God like He is no one else’s God. You see, listen, friend. Let me tell you—God loves all of us; but, wait a minute—He loves each of us. Now don’t just say that He loves all of us. He does. But wait a minute—He loves each of us. God gives you a stone with His name on it.

V. It Puts a New Song in My Heart

You see, listen. I receive it by a new testament. I enter it by a new birth. It makes me a new creature. I get a new name by which to call Him. And do you know what that does? It puts a new song in my heart. It really does. Psalm 40, verse 3: “*He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD*” (Psalm 40:3)—a new song. We have a song to sing now that the world knows nothing of; it’s the song of the soul set free.

I’ll sing it, and tell it wherever I go,
I want all to hear it, I want all to know
The joy of salvation that makes my heart glow,
For I have been born again. (R. H. McDaniel)

And notice: “*He hath put a new song in my mouth...many shall see it.*” He doesn’t say, “Many shall hear it.” He says, “*Many shall see it.*” I’m glad He said that, because you see, some of us have to have a song that can be seen and not heard. Not all of us have a voice like Miss Lee, but we can all have a song in our heart. The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 5, verse 19, we’re to be “*singing and making melody in [our] heart to the Lord*” (Ephesians 5:19).

You see, there ought to be a song that can be seen: “*Many shall see it.*” Every one of us ought to be a two-legged song in a major key, praising the Lord. Brother Whitmire tells me, “Preacher, you’re a prisoner singer.” I say, “What do you mean?” He said, “You’re always behind a few bars and can’t find the right key.” That’s all right. I’ve got a song in my heart, because I’ve been born again.

It’s the joy of the Lord that makes my heart sing. Do you have that? Do you know the Lord? I mean have you received your legacy, the new testament? Has it caused you to enter into it by a new birth? Has it issued in you by you becoming a new creature? Has God given to you a new name? That means, Does God’s Spirit bear witness with your spirit that you’re a child of God? And because of that, do you have a new song? Is there

joy in your heart? Has He set you free and given you a new song?

VI. Because of It, We're Headed for a New Heaven and a New Earth

Let me tell you what else will happen. Because of all of these things, dear friend, we're headed for a new heaven and a new earth. Would you take God's Word, and turn to Revelation chapter 21. Let me show you something here very wonderful—Revelation chapter 21: *“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea”* (Revelation 21:1). Now remember, John was on an island now, and that island had separated him from his people. He was on the Devil's Isle of that day. But he sees Heaven, where there is no more separation: *“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband”* (Revelation 21:2).

How many times have I stood here, right down here, and watched a bride come down the aisle? *Now you know, there is nothing more beautiful than a bride I've never seen a bride that wasn't beautiful. I've seen some that just did make it, but I have never seen a bride that wasn't beautiful.* And here's, *“And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men,”*—the word *tabernacle* means “dwelling place”—*“and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away”* (Revelation 21:2–4). No more moan, and groan and woe. No more crying, and sighing and dying. These former things, they are passed away. And listen to verse 5: *“And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful”* (Revelation 21:5).

Do you see why I call it the new-time religion? *“I make all things new.”* You cannot imagine the glory, the splendor, of this place called Heaven. You say, “Adrian Rogers, do you believe in Heaven?” Yes, I do. I believe in a real heaven. I don't believe in some sort of a gaseous, mystical, whispery, ethereal sort of a state of being or unconsciousness. I believe in a heaven more real than this platform that I'm standing on right now—that kind of place. Dwight L. Moody said this, and I like what he said: “My heaven is a solid heaven. After the resurrection has come, you will have a resurrection foot and something to tread on; a resurrection eye and colors and substances to see with it; a resurrection ear and voices and music to regale it; a resurrection heart and love to satisfy it.” And then, he said, “I have no patience with your transcendental, gelatinous, gaseous heaven.” I say, amen.

Thank God for a real heaven. Jesus said, *“I go to prepare a place for you”* (John

14:2). And there will be no more pain, no more dying. If there were a place on this earth where there was no more pain, no sickness, no sorrow, no parting; if there were a place on this earth where everybody lived in health, and fellowship, and where every need was supplied, would you not want to seek that place?

Well, friend, there is no such place here on earth; but, there is a place, and it is called Heaven. One of the great men that I love to read after is Dr. Harry Rimmer, and if you find any books by Dr. Harry Rimmer—he's written a lot of things on science and the Bible and so forth—buy those books; they'll be a great blessing to you. But Dr. Harry Rimmer got old, and he was ready to go to Heaven. And he was listening to Dr. Charles Fuller, the Old Fashioned Revival Hour. How many of you remember listening to Dr. Fuller, the Old Fashioned Revival Hour?" Yeah, quite a few of you. That was a program that was on before there was so much religious broadcasting on. It used to come on in the morning, and I used to listen to it in my home as a little boy. It was sponsored by "those good old Ballard biscuits." And we would listen to that program—Old Charles Fuller and the Old Fashioned Revival Hour, from Long Beach, California. Some of you may remember hearing that program. And he had announced that he was going to preach that coming Sunday on Heaven. Dr. Harry Rimmer, a great, great man of God, was listening, and he decided he'd write Charles Fuller a letter. And this is what he said; and, I want you to listen to it because it's a beautiful letter:

"Next Sunday, Dear Dr. Fuller—next Sunday, you're going to talk about Heaven. I'm interested in that land, because I've held free title to a bit a property there about 50 years. I did not buy it; it was given to me without price. But the donor purchased it for me at a tremendous sacrifice. I am not holding it for speculation; it is not a vacant lot. For more than half a century, I've been sending materials up to the greatest architect of the universe, who has been building a home for me, which will never need remodeling or repairing, because it will suit me perfectly, individually, and will never grow old. Termites can never undermine its foundation, for it rests upon the rock of ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods cannot wash it away. No locks or bolts shall ever be placed upon the doors, for no vicious person can enter the land where my dwelling stands, almost complete, almost ready for me to enter in and buy a piece eternally without fear of being ejected.

There's a valley, a deep shadow, between this place where I live and that which I shall journey to in a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that city without passing through this valley. But I'm not afraid, because the best friend I ever had went through the same valley long, long ago, and drove away all of its gloom. He has stuck with me through thick and thin since we first became acquainted 55 years ago. And I have His promise, in printed form, never to forsake me or leave me alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of the shadow. And I shall not lose my way when He is with me.

I hope to hear your sermon on Heaven next Sunday, but I have no assurance that I shall be able to do so. My ticket to Heaven has no date marked for the journey, no return coupon, and no permit for baggage. Yes, I'm ready to go. I may not be here while you're talking next Sunday, but I'll meet you there some day. Harry Rimmer."

He died before the next Sunday and graduated to glory. I like that kind of faith. Now you may call that old-fashioned. You may call that sentimental. But I tell you, dear friend, I'm looking forward to a new Heaven and a new earth; I'm looking forward to that place called Heaven.

Can you imagine? I mean, can you imagine what Heaven is going to be like? Can you even think about what Almighty God has done in this place called Heaven?

Dr. Robert G. Lee, former pastor of this church was at a mother's grave. He had preached a funeral, and a daughter came to him, and said, "Dr. Lee, would you tell me what Heaven is like? Where is my mother and what is Heaven?" Dr. Lee said, "I told her that Heaven is the most beautiful place that the wisdom of God can conceive, and the power of God could prepare; the most marvelous place that the wisdom of God could conceive, and the power of God can prepare.

Conclusion

Do you have a place in Heaven? Are you like Dr. Harry Rimmer? Well, let me ask you, Do you believe in the new testament? Have you experienced a new birth? Have you become a new creature? Has God revealed Himself to you with a new name? Has God given you a new song? If so, you can look forward to a new heaven and a new earth.

Thank God that the old-time religion is the new-time religion. And if you want something new, try something old. "*Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31).

The Tragedy of an Unclean Christian

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: February 25, 1990

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 6:14–18

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Conclusion

Introduction

I want you to take your Bibles tonight, as we prepare our hearts for our Lord's Supper communion, and look with me at three separate passages of Scripture that are linked together by the Holy Spirit and divine inspiration. First of all, I want you to turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 6—2 Corinthians chapter 6.

What we are going to be talking about tonight is "The Tragedy of an Unclean Christian." Now many of us are contaminated, and because we are contaminated, we contaminate everything that we touch. And there is a contamination and a pollution about the lives that we live. Many of us are polluted, and we pollute other things, in a spiritual sense.

Now keep that in mind. And I begin reading here, in 2 Corinthians 6, verses 14 to 16. God says, "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:*"—that means many things; it means, primarily that a saved person should never marry an unsaved person—"*for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what*

part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:14–16).

Now here’s the *wherefore*—look at it, in 2 Corinthians 6, verse 17: “*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you...*”—underscore that phrase, because that is the key phrase for me tonight—“*touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:17–18).*

Verse 17 gives us this injunction to “*touch not the unclean thing.*” Now what is He talking about? Turn backward in your Bible, please, to Numbers chapter 19. Look with me now, in Numbers chapter 19, and I’m going to read the entire chapter. It’s a brief chapter, but I want you to notice, as I read chapter 19 of Numbers, that the word *unclean* is used 15 times. Listen to it: “*This is the ordinance of the law which the LORD hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer*”—now, boys and girls, that is a female cow—“*without spot, wherein is no blemish, and upon which never came yoke: and ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest, that he may bring her forth without the camp, and one shall slay her before his face: and Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood with his finger, and sprinkle of her blood directly before the tabernacle of the congregation seven times: and one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn: and the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even.*” That is, until sunset. “*And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water, and bathe his flesh in water, and shall be unclean until the even. And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin. And he that gathereth the ashes of the heifer shall wash his clothes, and be unclean until the even: and it shall be unto the children of Israel, and unto the stranger that sojourneth among them, for a statute for ever. He that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean seven days. He shall purify himself with it on the third day, and on the seventh day he shall be clean: but if he purify not himself the third day, then the seventh day he shall not be clean. Whosoever toucheth the dead body of any man that is dead, and purifieth not himself, defileth the tabernacle of the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from Israel: because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet*

upon him. This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean. And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields, or a dead body, or a bone of a man, or a grave, shall be unclean seven days. And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel: and a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at even. But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation, because he hath defiled the sanctuary of the LORD: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean. And it shall be a perpetual statute unto them, that he that sprinkleth the water of separation shall wash his clothes; and he that toucheth the water of separation shall be unclean until even. And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even” (Numbers 19:2–22).

Now you can understand why Paul said, in the New Testament, to “*touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*” (2 Corinthians 6:17). You say, “Pastor, I really don’t understand very much; as a matter of fact, I’m quite confused, after that.”

Well, I want you to turn to one other verse, and then we’re going to have the message. Turn, if you will please, to Hebrews chapter 9. And I want you to see how these verses all will come together here, in a moment. And then, I’ll explain it and they’ll be a great blessing to our hearts—not because I am the explainer, but because of the truth that is there. Hebrews chapter 9, and I want you to read with me, beginning in verse 13: “*For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*” (Hebrews 9:13–14).

I. The Contamination That Sin Brings into the Light

Now go back with me to Numbers chapter 19, and let’s explain what this red heifer is all about. Let’s explain what we are talking about when we are talking about the tragedy of an unclean Christian. And the very first thing I want you to see is the contamination, the defilement that sin brings into the light. In the Old Testament, God had a law that you were not to touch a dead person. Now obviously, if you touched the dead person, you’d need to be cleaned, or you’d need to wait until any infection or defilement, any

microbes, would die and so forth. And there's much sanitation here; but it goes far beyond sanitation. God, here, is teaching an object lesson; and, the object lesson is that death and sin are inseparably linked together. Sin causes death, and, therefore, death is the visible sign of sin. And death has been used as a reminder that *"the wages of sin is death"* (Romans 6:23).

So when God said, "Don't touch a dead body," He was giving more than a lesson on hygiene. He was giving it by object lesson, saying, "Do not pollute yourself with sin." And when Paul, in the New Testament, said to *"touch not the unclean thing"* (2 Corinthians 6:17), he was not talking about dead bodies; he was talking about sin.

Now what kind of sin is it? Well, let's look in chapter 19, and I want to mention four kinds of sin that those of us in this congregation are going to have check up on. And believe me, I've had to check myself up, on these four kinds of sin.

A. Calculated Sin

First of all is what I want to call presumptuous sin or calculated sin. Chapter 19, verse 11, said that *"he that toucheth the dead body of any man shall be unclean"* (Numbers 19:11). When a man presumptuously walks up and lays his hand upon a corpse, upon a dead body, God says he is unclean. He did it. He did it willingly. He did it knowingly. He touched an unclean thing. And that's what I call calculated sin, or presumptuous sin.

Now my dear friend, the most dangerous sin in the world is that sin that you sin with your eyes wide open, saying, "I know that it is a deadly thing that I am doing, but I will do it anyway." David prayed, in Psalm 19 and verse 13: *"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me"* (Psalm 19:13). Now my dear friend, when you sin willingly, deliberately, and definitely knowing that it is sin, you are placing yourself in the worst kind of satanic bondage. Now many of us have been "touching an unclean thing"; we know that it is a deadly thing. My dear friend, if that is true of you, I warn you, I beg you, I adjure you, and I admonish you, to be cleansed tonight.

B. Casual Sin

But not only is there calculated sin—there's another kind of sin that most of us here need to be cleansed from—I know I do daily. And that's one that I want to call not calculated sin, but casual sin. Look, if you will, in Numbers 19, verse 14, and, *"This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean"* (Numbers 19:14–15). That is, if you do not necessarily, deliberately, and presumptuously defile yourself, but if you're just around defilement. If you're just in a place where there is death and defilement, you can have casual contact—casual

contact with sin—and casually you're corrupted.

Now you say, "Pastor, illustrate that for me." Well, if you work in an office where there's unclean conversation going on all the time—dirty stories, jokes, and innuendoes; or, perhaps, you pick up newspapers, and there you're reading the news, and over here is a salacious ad; or, maybe there's a book that you're reading, and some defilement is in that book—maybe some advertisement, or maybe some joke. Maybe just the people that you travel with, and just this old world that you live in, and there's sort of a contagion of sin.

Have you ever gone some place where the room was filled with cigarette smoke, and you weren't smoking, but you came home with the smell of smoke in your clothes, in your hair—you just felt unclean, and you needed to go take a bath? Well, my dear friend, that happens in a spiritual way, too. It just seems as though we are just caught up, and there's that contagion of what I want to call casual sin. Many of us need to come to the Lord daily, and say, "Lord, I've just been in a world, and it's just kind of rubbed off on me. It wasn't presumptuous sin; but, Lord, nonetheless, I've been defiled."

C. Careless Sin

And then, there's one I want to call, not only casual sin, but also careless sin. For many of us, it's not what others are doing; we did it, but we just weren't thinking. We didn't do it premeditatedly; but, nonetheless, we sinned. It wasn't calculated, but it was careless. Look, if you will, in verse 16: "*And whosoever toucheth one that is slain with a sword in the open fields...*" (Numbers 19:16). Maybe this is a person—he's fighting a battle, and he looks, and his buddy is over there, and he just reaches down, and he touches his buddy who is dead. Now he didn't intend to do it. He didn't just walk up and say, "I'm going to touch an unclean thing." But he did it.

It's what I want to call just careless sin. Or, a dead body, or a bone of a man—just a small thing. He's out there, working in his garden; perhaps he unearths a bone—there it is, he picks it up, he looks at it, and he says, "I ought not to be handling that bone like that," and he puts it back down. Now this is what we call just simply careless sin. Unguarded moments. We seem to trip over certain things, we stumble over certain things, and, many times, they are things that we might deem too small to notice. Only a bone—not a full body, but only a bone. But nonetheless, the Bible says we need to be cleansed from those kinds of careless of sins.

D. Concealed Sin

And then, my dear friend, there's one I suppose that is the most insidious of all: it's what I call concealed sins. Notice, in verse 16, the last part of verse 16, he mentions a grave. You see, if you touch a grave. Now that is, the sin is underground, you can't see it; and here's a man who is just walking on perhaps a grass-covered grave. And yet, the

Bible says he is unclean. Maybe he was not even aware, for a moment, that he was doing it. You know, it's what the Bible calls secret faults. Psalm 19, verse 12: *"Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults"* (Psalm 19:12).

Now for one part, you have presumptuous sin; oh, that's just touching a dead thing. Here, you have secret faults; and, that's just walking on a grave. My dear friend, this entire world around us is a world that contaminates us. And that's what I want to call a contamination—the defilement of sin. There's not a one of us, now, that doesn't need to be cleansed from calculated sin; not a one of us that doesn't need to be cleansed from casual sin; not a one of us that doesn't need to be cleansed from careless sin; and not a one of us that doesn't need to be cleansed from concealed sin, daily.

II. The Curse: What Happens If You Don't Get Cleansed

Now let me show you what happens if you don't get cleansed. Suppose you come to this service tonight, and God the Holy Spirit is talking to you about that kind of sin, and you don't deal with that defilement. Now let me show you what is going to happen to you.

A. There's a Loss of Fellowship in God

First of all, you're going to have a loss of fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ. Look, in verse 20: *"But the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation"* (Numbers 19:20). There is, my dear friend, a loss of fellowship in God.

Did you know that only sin separates the people of God? Is there anybody—I want everybody to listen to this question—is there anybody that you cannot get along with who is a member of this church? If that is true, either you, or he, or both of you, have sinned. It is sin that separates the congregation; it's sin that cuts a person off from the congregation. That defilement means there's loss of fellowship in God.

B. There's a Loss of Freedom with God

And it means there's a loss of freedom with God. Look also, in verse 20: *"He hath defiled the sanctuary of the Lord"* (Numbers 19:20). Now you sit here in church tonight, and this place we call *the sanctuary*, but, not only are you out of fellowship with that person, perhaps, who's sitting next to you, or some other person in this building, and there's no fellowship in God; but, there's also no freedom with God. You actually defile the sanctuary of the Lord. When you sing, you defile the song service. When you pray, you defile the prayer. When you take the Lord's Supper, you defile the Lord's Supper. Everything that you touch you contaminate, because, my dear friend, you have in you a loathsome defilement, because you have touched the unclean thing, and you have not been cleansed.

Now I can think of many things that it would be wrong to defile; but how horrible to defile the sanctuary of God! How horrible for one of you deacons to take in your hand these sacred elements, and, with unclean hands, defiled hands, you would serve the elements that represent the broken body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ! How horrible for a member to take in his hands tonight that ruby-red fruit of the vine that represents the blood of Jesus, and with defiled hands place that upon defiled lips and take that into your defiled body!

C. There's a Loss of Fruitfulness for God

My dear friend, what happens is, there's the loss of fellowship in God—you're cut off from the congregation. There's a loss of freedom with God, and you defile the sanctuary. There's the loss of fruitfulness for God. Look, in verse 22: *"And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean"* (Numbers 19:22).

It's not, dear friend, only that you bring judgment upon yourself; but you spread your defilement everywhere you go. A person who is a member of this church, who has unconfessed and unrepented of sin in his life, he defiles everything he touches. That's what the writer of Hebrews was talking about, over there in Hebrews chapter 9, verses 13 and 14: *"For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* (Hebrews 9:13–14).

Do you know what dead works are? Do you know what dead works are? Those are works that, rather than ministering life, minister death. You may teach, but your teaching ministers death. You may preach, but you're preaching ministers death. You may sing, but your singing is lifeless and cold. And the breath of death and defilement of sin is upon all that you do. You are spreading spiritual contamination. Now the Bible says, *"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD"* (Isaiah 52:11).

You young people in this single's choir group behind me, I want you to listen to me; and, every choir member, I want you to listen. If you are not willing to live a clean life, get out of the choir. You ushers, if you're not willing to live a clean life, do not come into this place and usher. You deacons, if you're not willing to live a clean life, resign; do not dare, do not have the audacity, to claim to be a deacon in this church. You Sunday School teachers, if your life is not pure—I said p-u-r-e, pure—do not—don't—dare to stand to teach in a Sunday School class. You say, "Well, I'm going to do something for the Lord." The only thing you're going to do, my dear friend, is to bring judgment upon yourself, and defile whatever you touch. The Bible says you're to *"come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you"* (2 Corinthians 6:17). And if you have a life that is defiled, then, my dear

friend, there is that loss of fellowship in God; there's that loss of freedom with God; there's that loss of fruitfulness for God. *"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD"* (Isaiah 52:11).

III. The Cleansing Agent

All right now, let me talk to you not only about that contamination, and that curse, but let me talk to you about that cleansing that this chapter gives us here. Now let me show you how you can be clean. The cleansing agent is described here, in Numbers chapter 19; and this, the ashes of this red heifer, picture the Lord Jesus Christ, the writer of Hebrews tells us very clearly.

A. It Must Be Acceptable to God

Let me say, first of all, that this heifer—this sacrifice, this animal that was slain—pictures Jesus; and let me show you how.

First of all, he was, or she was, without splotch, spot, or blemish. Look, if you will, in verse 2: *"This is the ordinance of...which the Lord hath commanded, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a red heifer without spot, wherein there is no blemish"* (Numbers 19:2). That is, this sacrifice has to be sinless—without spot, without blemish. That pictures the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice, the yoke could never have been upon the shoulders. That means this sacrifice has not been scarred by the yoke of sin.

Notice, in verse 3: The sacrifice is to be killed outside the gate—*"without the camp"* (Numbers 19:3). And that pictures the Lord Jesus who died outside the gate, on Calvary's cross, so long ago.

Notice, in verse 4, the Bible says that the blood is sprinkled seven times. Seven is the perfect number, and that speaks of the perfect blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice, in verse 5: *"And one shall burn the heifer in his sight; her skin, and her flesh, and her blood, with her dung, shall he burn"* (Numbers 19:5). This speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, who baptized His soul in Hell for us. This speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ who endured the fires of the wrath of Almighty God for us.

B. It Must Be Accessible to Man

Now dear friend, whatever it is that cleanses you, therefore, number one, it has to be acceptable to God; but, number two, it has to be accessible to man.

Look, if you will now, beginning in verse 6: *"And the priest shall take cedar wood, and hyssop, and scarlet, and cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer. Then the priest shall wash his clothes, and he shall bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp, and the priest shall be unclean until the even. And he that burneth her shall wash his clothes in water and bathe his flesh in water, and be unclean*

until the even. And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up”—oh, thank God for this!—“[outside] the camp in a clean place, and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin” (Numbers 19:6–9).

Now why did they keep these ashes? Well, these ashes were evidence of a finished sacrifice, and they were perpetually preserved, kept in a clean place for the removal of daily sin and its pollution. Now my dear friend, that blood of the Lord Jesus Christ presented in that tabernacle in Heaven, it's still there. It's not just that the blood cleansed so long ago. The Bible says, in 1 John 1, verse 7: *“The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”* (1 John 1:7). That is, it just keeps on cleansing. And there is blood now available on the mercy seat, now in a clean place for you, available now for you.

C. It Must Be Available by Faith

Not only, dear friend, must it be acceptable to God, accessible to man, but it must be available by faith. Look, if you will now, in verse 17—the Bible says, *“And for an unclean person they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put thereto in a vessel”* (Numbers 19:17). Running water is an emblem of the Word of God and the Spirit of God.

And then, the Bible says, *“And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave”* (Numbers 19:18).

Hyssop was what? It was little shrub. If you ever go to Israel—and I hope one day you can go with us—a little shrub that just grows out of the wall, very common. And what they would do is just reach up on a wall somewhere, get a handful of that shrub, dip it down into that solution of water and ashes and blood, and sprinkle it on. Hyssop, therefore, is an emblem of faith—faith. It just simply speaks of faith—a symbol of faith that applies the water and the blood. That's all it is: faith that applies the water and the blood.

My dear friend, listen. All of that was an Old Testament illustration of what you and I are going to enjoy tonight before we take the Lord's Supper. Listen again to what Paul said—or whoever it was that wrote Hebrews—in Hebrews chapter 9, verses 13 and 14—just perk up your ears and listen: *“For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of the heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* (Hebrews 9:13–14). Tonight, the blood of Jesus, applied with the hyssop of faith, will

purge you and make you clean.

Conclusion

Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. I want you, right now, to take spiritual inventory. If you've been touching the unclean thing, then what you have done is defiled yourself, and you've made yourself a defilement to others. You must ask yourself tonight, "O God, have I been guilty of calculated sin, presumptuous sin? Oh, dear God, have I been guilty of casual sin, contagious sin? O God, have I been guilty of careless sin—just carelessly handling things I ought not to handle? O God, am I guilty of concealed sin, secret thought, walking on the graves of this world? O God, if I am, cleanse me tonight.

Now as you ask God to cleanse you tonight, what I want you to do is let the Holy Spirit of God reveal to you what bone you've touched, what grave you've walked on, what tent you've entered. Let the Holy Spirit of God reveal that to you. And when He does, if He says you were rude to your wife, if He says that you were selfish, if He says that you have lust, if He says that you were dishonest, or if He says that you are bitter, whatever it is, you call that sin before the Lord, right now, and realize that the Lord Jesus Christ, pictured by that red heifer so long ago, baptized His soul in Hell, shed His blood that you might be clean, right now. You just take the hyssop of faith, right now, and apply the water and the blood.

And remember this: The Bible says that, *"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). Now we are going to wait for a moment before we have the Lord's Supper. This is a time for you to let the Holy Spirit of God search your heart. No one dare take the Holy Communion, no one dare take the Lord's Supper, with unconfessed, unrepented of, and uncleansed sin in his or her life. *"Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the LORD"* (Isaiah 52:11). We're going to wait just a moment; then I'm going to lead us in a time of prayer; and then, we are going to have our communion together.

Christmas Is Spelled G-r-a-c-e

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 6, 1998

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 8:9

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Introduction

I want you to take God's Word and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. And we're going to look at one verse tonight. And if you were to spell Christmas... Let me tell a good way to spell Christmas: g-r-a-c-e. That's how you spell Christmas. Look at this verse: *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich"* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Now friend, that is news, and I have news for you. Thank God for the birthday of the Lord Jesus that we celebrate at this time of year. Have you ever thought about it? If it were not for His birthday, what would your birthday mean? What would the cards, the cake, and the candles mean? I'll tell you what it would mean: Apart from His birthday, your birthday would mean you're one year closer to death and judgment. Wouldn't be much to celebrate, would it? But because of His birthday, every birthday that we have means that we are one year closer to Glory to be with the Lord Jesus Christ. Our home, our fellowship, our Lord—we are going to be with Him.

In the verse of Scripture that we read tonight, there are three wonderful truths: first of

all, that Jesus was rich; number two, that He became poor; number three, that we might be rich. And I want you to think about that, because that's what Christmas is all about.

I. The Lord's Glorious Possessions

First of all, I want you to think—first of all—about His glorious possessions. The Bible says here, in this verse, that Jesus Christ was rich. Now the Savior could never have become poor unless, first of all, He was rich.

I want you to put your bookmark there, and I want you to turn to Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6. And we're going to see just how rich this baby was. Isaiah chapter 9, and verse 6 and verse 7: The Bible says, concerning this child that Shawn just sang about, *"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given."*—now, the child that was born—that's Jesus in His humanity. The Son that is given—that is Jesus in His deity—*"and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with [righteousness] from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this"* (Isaiah 9:6–7). And in this passage, I want you to see just how rich our Lord Jesus Christ was, because this speaks of Jesus.

A. He Is Rich in His Person

For example, He was rich in His person, because, in this verse, Jesus is called—listen to me now—Jesus is called *"The everlasting Father"* (Isaiah 9:6). Do you remember what Jim Whitmire told us this morning, as he introduced our music? He said, "Jesus said, 'He that has seen the Father hath seen Me,'" or, "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; I and the Father are one" (John 14:9). Jesus is rich in His person. Jesus is the eternal God. Jesus did not have His beginning in Bethlehem.

Jesus—there never was a time when He was not. And when Jesus was born, that little baby, that Christmas morning, He was as old as His Father and older than His mother. He is God. He is rich in His person. By the way, there are people who say, "Well, I don't believe Jesus is God, but I believe Jesus was a good man." You can't have it that way. If Jesus Christ is not God, Jesus is a liar. If Jesus Christ is not God, Jesus is a fraud. If Jesus Christ is not God, by His own words, He is not good, for Jesus Christ said, *"Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God"* (Matthew 19:17). If Jesus is not God, Jesus is not good. And what Jesus was saying is, "Because I am God, I am good." He is rich in His person.

B. He Is Rich in His Position

Number two: According to Isaiah, He's rich in His position. The Bible says, *"And the*

government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isaiah 9:6). He's rich not only in who He is, but what He is. He is King of kings; He is Lord of lords. He can go no higher. He has the highest position that can possibly exist in all of the created spheres, because the Bible says that God has given Him a name that is above every name (Philippians 2:9). Every name the name of Jesus is above. I love that. Friend, when you worship the name of Jesus, you're worshipping the highest name. He was rich in His person—He is the everlasting Father. He is rich in His position—the government is upon His shoulders.

C. He Is Rich in His Power

He is rich in His power. Now next, He's called "*The mighty God*"—"The Mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6).

By the way, you will have Jehovah's Witnesses, who will come and knock at your door time from time to time. And the very first thing to ask them is, what do they believe about Jesus Christ, because, if they're wrong about Jesus, it doesn't matter what they're right about. Isn't that right? The Bible says, "If any come to your door and bring not the doctrine of Christ, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed" (2 John 1:10). Find out what they believe about Jesus. And the question I always ask them is, "Do you worship Jesus?" Now that puts them in a real bind, because, very frankly, they do not believe that Jesus is God. They do not believe He is co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. So just ask them this question: "Do you worship Jesus?"

Well, if they say, "No, we don't worship Jesus," you say, "Well, in the Bible, they worshipped Jesus," and show them passage after passage after passage, where Jesus was worshipped, beginning with the wise men who came, and knelt, and worshipped the baby Jesus. So—but, if they say, "We do worship Jesus," then you can say to them, "Do you mean that you worship someone who is not God?" for the Bible says, "I'm the Lord thy God, and you shall have no other gods before Me. Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only" (Exodus 20:3; Matthew 4:10). So on the one hand, if they don't worship Jesus, they're not doing what the Bible teaches; and, on the other hand, if they do worship Jesus and don't believe He's God, they're worshipping a false god. They're having some other god. They're committing the worst sin of the Bible, which is idolatry.

Do you see the problem that they have, if they do not accept that He is the Mighty God? They say, "Well, give me a verse of Scripture that shows that Jesus is God." And I always tell them, "Well, I have problems doing that." They kind of smile. And then, I say, "You know, there are so many Scriptures, I don't know which one to begin with. But let's just take this: Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6. And this Son is called 'The everlasting Father' (Isaiah 9:6). And *'the government shall be upon his shoulder,'* and He is called *'The mighty God'*" (Isaiah 9:6).

Now you know what they will say? They will say, "Oh, well, yes, He is a god, but not

the God,” or, “He is mighty God, but He is not Almighty God.” Now here, I want to give you a verse of Scripture, and I want you to write it down very clearly, because you’ll use this. Turn to Jeremiah 32 and verse 18. You’re in Isaiah; now, just fast-forward to Jeremiah 32, and look at this, in verse 18—speaking to Jehovah, *“Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name”* (Jeremiah 32:18). And when it says, *“the LORD of hosts,”* it actually says, “the Jehovah of hosts.” Jehovah is the Mighty God, and Jesus is Jehovah. That’s what Isaiah 9:6 says.

D. He Is Rich in His Possessions

Listen. He is rich. He is rich in His person—He is the everlasting Father. He is rich in His position—the government is upon His shoulders; He’s King of kings and Lord of lords. He is rich in His power—He is the Mighty God. And He is rich in His possessions. You see, everything was made by Him and for Him. It is all coming to Him. And so Isaiah goes on to say, *“Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with [righteousness] from henceforth even for ever”* (Isaiah 9:7). Satan tried to give Jesus the kingdoms of this world. He tried to give Jesus that which was already His. And our Lord is rich in His possessions. Everything belongs to Him. You don’t own a thing in this world—not one thing. All you are is a steward. Everything belongs to Him.

Put down in your margin, “Revelation chapter 4, verse 11”: *“Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created”* (Revelation 4:11). So our verse tells us, first of all, that Jesus was rich—rich in His person, rich in His position, rich in His power, rich in His possessions. Everything in the created universes was for Him, by Him, and it’s coming to Him.

II. The Lord’s Great Poverty

Now the second thing I want you to notice—not only His glorious possessions, but I want you to notice His great poverty. Second Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 9—go back to it, where we started: *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor”* (2 Corinthians 8:9). When did He do that? That Christmas night, when he stepped out of Heaven. When He came down to this earth, Jesus Christ took poverty upon Himself.

Now this time, I want you to leave our text, and I want you to go to Philippians chapter 2. Would you turn to Philippians chapter 2 with me for just a moment? And I

want you to see the poverty that the Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself that Christmas. Philippians chapter 2, and I begin reading in verse 5: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God,”*—that is, He was rich—*“thought it not robbery to be equal with God.”*—He didn’t have to grasp at equality with the Father, because He is co-equal and co-eternal with the Father. But now, notice verse 7—*“but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:5–8). Now that speaks of Jesus becoming poor.

A. He Became Poor in His Person

He became poor in His person. He, who was Almighty God, took human flesh upon Him. Now I can understand dust wanting to be deity, but I can’t understand deity willing to be dust. But Jesus laid aside the splendors of Heaven and became poor in person. He became a man. And the Infinite became an infant and was born in a smelly stable, laid in a feeding trough. He did that to redeem us.

B. He Became Poor in His Position

But not only did He become poor in person; He became poor in position. Remember the position that He had: “the government is upon His shoulders” (Isaiah 9:6). But now, here’s what it says: He *“took upon him the form of a servant”* (Philippians 2:7). Jesus had no reputation of His own. He laid that reputation aside. Notice, in verse 7: *“made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant”* (Philippians 2:7).

Now you have a monarch in a manger. You have a sovereign who becomes a servant. Can you imagine the Lord of Glory washing smelly feet—the smelly feet of fishermen? Jesus said, “I am among you as One who serves” (Luke 22:27).

C. He Became Poor in His Power

I’m talking now about His poverty—what Christmas meant for Him. He became poor in His person. He became poor in His position. He became poor in His power. Did you know that Jesus laid aside all of the prerogatives of power that He had? He left that in Heaven, and He came to this earth. And He became a servant, and He humbled Himself, according to verse 8—or, He became obedient. Notice verse 8: He *“became obedient”* (Philippians 2:8). That means, rather than the One giving the orders, He was the One, now, who took the orders. Now He was absolute God. He never laid aside His deity, but He laid aside the prerogatives of that deity, and became obedient. His absolute power as God was laid aside.

And do you know what Jesus did when He did His miracles? He did not do His miracles through the inherent power that was His as God but through power that was

given to Him from His Father. And He said, in John chapter 5, verse 19: *“The Son can do nothing of himself”* (John 5:19). Now when He said “nothing,” that’s big. He didn’t say, “Now I can do part of it; the rest of it I’ll have to depend upon the Father.”

D. He Became Poor in His Possession

Jesus became so poor. He became poor in His person—He became a man. He became poor in His position—He became a servant. He became poor in His power—He absolutely was totally limited to what God the Father could and would do through Him. And He became poor in His possession, because the Bible says, *“[He] became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:8).

Now what does that mean? It means that Jesus Christ was crucified. He died on a cross, having absolutely nothing. You see, He was born in a stable. He preached from a borrowed boat. He had to pay His taxes from a coin that came from a fish’s mouth. He said, “The birds have nests, and the foxes have holes; but the Son of man doesn’t have any place to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58). Jesus Christ, when He wanted to come into Jerusalem for His triumphal entry, had to ride in on a borrowed donkey. Even when Jesus Christ was buried, He was buried in a borrowed tomb. I’m saying that Jesus Christ knew absolute poverty—absolute poverty. Psalm 40, verse 17, which is a prophetic psalm, speaks of the Lord—and it says, *“I am poor and needy”* (Psalm 40:17).

Now Jesus took our sins. Sin always makes a person poor. Since Jesus took our sins, Jesus took our poverty. You see, the Bible says that Satan has come to steal, to kill, and to destroy (John 10:10). And so Satan is a thief. He is a robber. And Hell is an eternal poorhouse. What Jesus did when Jesus died on the cross—He took our poverty, and He became poor.

III. The Lord’s Gracious Provision

Now here’s the third thing I want you to see in this verse. First of all, we talked about His glorious possessions—He was rich. And then, we talked about His poverty; we talked about His great poverty—He became poor. Now here’s the third thing, and here’s what really ought to bless you: His gracious provision. He became poor, that we, through His poverty—*“that ye through his poverty might be rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Why Christmas? Why did Jesus leave Heaven? He wanted to make you rich. Now you see, without Christ you’re poor. I don’t care how much you have in the bank. I don’t care how much fur, and finery, and gold, and silver you have—you’re poor. Now you may think you have a lot. Jesus said to that church in Laodicea, in Revelation chapter 3, verse 17: *“Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked”* (Revelation 3:17). Oh, they were all decked out, but they were poverty-

stricken.

They're like the man who loved his Cadillac so much he had it gold-plated and wanted to be buried in it. They dug a great hole, and the crane lowered him down in the hole—that cadaver, sitting behind the wheel of his beautiful Cadillac. Two little boys were standing there. One looked at the other one and said, “Man, that’s living.” No, it’s not—he’s dead. And the Bible says, “She that lives in pleasure is dead while she lives” (1 Timothy 5:6).

Now the Bible is not against you having things—the Bible’s not against you having things. But I want you to listen to me very carefully. Jesus came that you might be rich. If you don’t know Jesus, you are a pauper. You see, *if you want to know* how much *you have*, you add up *everything you have that* money *cannot buy* and death *cannot take away*. Money, for example, cannot buy peace of heart. Money cannot buy the forgiveness of sins. Money cannot buy a home in Heaven. Money cannot quiet the cries of a guilty conscience or heal the bloody wounds of a wasted life. Jesus became poor, that we, through His poverty, might be rich.

I’ll tell you something else: You will never enjoy the things that money can buy if you don’t have the Lord Jesus Christ. These things will never give you satisfaction. And you will never have Jesus’ riches until you’re willing to admit your poverty. That’s the reason Jesus said, “How hard it is for a rich man to go into Heaven” (Matthew 19:23)—because he will not admit his poverty. You see, God makes something out of nothing. Until you admit you’re nothing, He can’t make anything out of you. Matthew 5, verse 3—He says, “*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 5:3). When you see yourself as spiritually bankrupt, then you’re ready for the Kingdom of Heaven.

Now let me talk to you about the riches that come to us through Christmas.

A. We Share the Riches of His Person

First of all, we share with the Lord Jesus the riches of His person. You see, when I preached last Sunday, “*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God*” (1 John 3:1), we are brothers to the Lord Jesus Christ. And even more than that, we’re members of His Body. We are in Christ, and Christ is in us. And through the Holy Spirit we have union with the Lord Jesus Christ. And you are “*accepted in the beloved.*” In Ephesians chapter 1, verse 6, the Bible says God has done this, “*to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved*” (Ephesians 1:6). Who is the Beloved? Jesus. And God said, “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Matthew 3:17; Matthew 17:5). Where am I? I am in Christ. And if I’m in Christ, I am rich in my person. When God looks at Jesus, He sees me. When God looks at me, He sees Jesus.

Now you may not believe that, but, friend, it is true. And as I preached last Sunday

morning that God loves you as much as He loves the Lord Jesus, in John chapter 17, He prayed, “Father, help them to know that Thou hast loved them, even as Thou hast loved me” (John 17:23). So you’re rich. You’re *“accepted in the beloved.”* You’re not accepted in yourself. But when you’re in Jesus, you are accepted before the throne. You are rich in your person.

B. We Share the Riches of His Position

You’re also rich in your position. Do you know where you are right now? Well, you’re in Jesus. And where is Jesus? Turn to Ephesians chapter 2 with me for just a moment, and look and see where Jesus is. Ephesians chapter 2, verses 5 and 6—look at it: *“Even when we were dead in sins, hath [He] quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;)”*—there’s the grace of Christmas—*“and hath raised us up together, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:5–6).

“Adrian, where are you tonight?” I’m in Heaven. “What are you doing there?” I’m sitting there. “Who are you sitting there with?” Well, I’m sitting there with Jesus, because I’m in Him, and He’s in me.” You say, “No, you’re not. You’re down here.” Well, friend, I’m also up there. I am seated with Him. That is my position.

Now if I were to put you in a barrel and put that barrel in the middle of the Mississippi River, where would you be? You’d be in the middle of the Mississippi River. If you’re in Christ, and Christ is in the heavenlies, where are you? You’re in the heavenlies also. *“He hath raised us up together with Him,”* and we’re seated with Him (Ephesians 2:6).

I got a letter from a friend a while back. And he didn’t say, at the end of the letter, “Keep looking up.” He said, “Keep looking down.” That was good, because he said, “Adrian”—that’s what he said. I knew what he meant. He said—“Adrian, you’re seated with the Lord Jesus Christ in the heavenlies.”

And so you know, Paul wrote this Book of Ephesians. You know where he was when he wrote the Book of Ephesians? He was in prison. But when you open the Book of Ephesians, you don’t smell any prison air. You smell the breezes of Heaven. Paul, in prison, said, “Hey, I’m up in Glory. I am rich. I am rich in my person. I am accepted in the Beloved. I am rich in my position. I’m seated with Christ.”

C. We Share the Riches of His Power

“I am rich in power.” What did the Apostle Paul say when he wrote another prison epistle? In Philippians chapter 4 and verse 13, he said, *“I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me”* (Philippians 4:13). He says, in this Book of Ephesians, in chapter 3 and verse 16, that we’re *“strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man”* (Ephesians 3:16). What riches we have! What power we have in the Lord Jesus Christ! Isaiah tells us, “Even the youths shall utterly faint; but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength” (Isaiah 40:30–31).

D. We Share the Riches of His Possessions

And we're rich in our possessions—not only in our person, in our position, in our power, but rich in our possessions. Jesus became poor, that I might become rich. Let me give you one of the great, great verses in the Bible. You know, one of these days we're going to read this book and believe it, and the rest of us are going to be ashamed of ourselves—I mean, somebody's going to read it and believe it, and the rest of us will be ashamed of ourselves! Romans 8, verse 17: *“And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ”* (Romans 8:17).

A man was sitting on a street corner crying, and somebody said, “Why are you crying?” He said, “Didn't you read the newspaper? Rockefeller has died.” He said, “Well, you're no relative of his.” He said, “That's why I'm crying.”

Friend, listen. We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, *“If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him”* (Romans 8:17). Now the Bible says we're heirs and joint-heirs. You know what? Our lawyers here will tell you what a joint-heir is. That means, *share and share alike*. Can you think of everything that belongs to Jesus? It belongs to you. You are an heir of God. You are rich—you are rich.

I was with a preacher, one time, in Florida. And I was going to preach a revival for him. And he took me out to show me some homes in the community. And we were just driving along, around, and he said, “You see that?” And he showed me a beautiful house over there. I said, “Well, that's nice, but you ought to see my brother's place.” And so he showed me another place, and I said, “Well, that's nice, but you ought to see my brother's place.” Every place he showed me—no matter how big the mansion was—I said, “Yeah, well, that's nice, but you ought to see my brother's place.” After a while, he said, “Who is your brother?” I said, “Jesus”—“Jesus.” Oh, you ought to see my brother's place.

Listen, friend. We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what Christmas is all about. “You see the grace of our Lord Jesus, that, though He was rich, yet He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). That's what it is all about.

Conclusion

Now let me just conclude by saying this: This Christmas, I want you just to revel in the grace of God. When you see that baby depicted in a manger, you think of this word: g-r-a-c-e. Second Corinthians 8:9: *“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Now listen to this. Grace *cost you* nothing; *grace* cost *Jesus* everything. *However, if you miss God's grace, you will lose everything.* That's the bottom line. Grace cost you

nothing; it cost Jesus everything. But if you miss God's grace, you will lose everything.

Would you bow your heads in prayer? Heads are bowed. I wonder how many tonight would say, "Pastor Rogers, I have received the grace of God; I have repented of my sin; I've trusted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior; I am saved; I know I'm saved; I know, beyond the shadow of any doubt, according to God's Word and the witness of the Spirit, if I died tonight, I would go straight to Heaven"? If you know that, if you know you're certain that you're saved and can give me that testimony, would you just lift your hand and hold it up? Thank you very much. Now take it down. Heads are bowed now, and eyes are closed.

I wonder how many here tonight would say, "Pastor Rogers, I could not say that I know I'm saved; I wish I could say it, but I couldn't say it; but, I need to say it; I want to say it. Pastor Rogers, in the prayer that you're about to pray, would you just pray for me, that I might know Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior?" And precious friend, I'm not going to embarrass you or point you out in any way whatever. This is between you, and me, and the Lord Jesus. Every head is bowed; every eye is closed. But if you would say, "Pastor, I need to be saved; I'm not certain that I'm saved; I want that assurance; and, if a person can know that they're saved, I want to know it; I wish you'd just pray for me," while heads are bowed and eyes are closed, if you feel that way, would you just slip up your hand? Hold it up where I may see it. God bless you. Are there others? Just hold it up high, and then take it down. Anyone else? Just lift it up where I may see it. "Pray for me, Pastor. I need to be saved. I want to be saved." I'm not going to embarrass you or point you out at all. I just—I'm going to pray for you. Someone else? Hold it up high. In the back, I'm looking back there. Yes, God bless you. Someone else? "Just pray for me. I need Jesus."

Now Father, You know every heart. You've seen every hand. And Father, I pray in the name of Jesus for these, that they might receive tonight the riches that only You can give, when they put their faith in You. Open their hearts, Lord, and draw people to Jesus. In His wonderful name. Amen.

'Tis the Season to Be Wealthy

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 2, 1990

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 8:9

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Introduction

Turn with me to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. Tonight, I'm going to tell you how to be wealthy. How many of you have ever wanted to be wealthy? Let me see your hands. All right. "'Tis the Season to Be Wealthy"—that's the title of my message tonight.

Now there are several ways that you can get wealth.

One way—I was mailed, the other day, some very exciting news from American Family Publishers. Boy, this is exciting! It says to me, "If you return the winning number in time..." This is the new million-dollar winners list. And guess whose name is right at the top? "Adrian Rogers, Memphis, Tennessee—Ten million-dollar-winner!" That's what it says. And then, it says, "Everyone named on this list is the guaranteed winner of one million dollars to ten million dollars." I'm on that list. That's what it says, right there, Brother Bob, in big red print: ten million bucks! Me—I've got it! Well, of course, there's some more print here—it's a little smaller; it says, "If you return the winning number in time, then everyone on this list is the guaranteed winner of from one million dollars to ten million dollars."

When I found this in the mail, I ran in, and I showed it to Joyce. I said, "Look, we're rich!" She wasn't impressed. In fact, she remonstrated with me, because I said, "Honey, when you go to the store, I want you to buy the toothpaste that's in the little pump, where you push the thing down." She said, "Do you realize how much more you pay for

that little pump? If you'd just squeeze it the old-fashioned way, you could save money." I said, "Look, we've got 10 million dollars!" But she wasn't impressed, so I don't guess I should be. Well, that's one way to get wealthy. But I wouldn't count on that one.

And I was reading a newspaper the other day, and here are sunken treasures—fortunes around the world. And it tells how these salvagers are going down, and they're going to the bottom of the ocean. Why, if you were to find the San José, that sank—a Spanish Galleon. It sank on June the 8th, 1708, and, it had one billion dollars in gold and silver bars. Or, the Florencia—68 million. The Atocha was recently found—estimated 300 million. Mel Fisher spent 16 years searching for the vessel that sunk in a hurricane off Key West, Florida, in 1622. But the effort was worth it, and he found the Spanish galleon with gold, silver, and emeralds—300 million dollars on the floor of the ocean. The Maravilla was found; they found there an estimated one billion dollars. It sank off the Bahamas banks in 1656, and they found it. It's down there, and they're bringing up that wealth.

Well, that's another way to get wealthy. Just go find you a sunken treasure ship. Or, maybe you could get the Midas touch. Remember ole' King Midas? Everything he touched turned to gold. I heard about a man who prayed for the Midas touch; and, he got it, and everything he touched turned to a muffler. People are trying to get wealthy. Baptists are right there in the middle. But the wonderful thing is this, friend: You're already rich.

I want to share with you a verse of Scripture. You say, "I know there's a catch somewhere. It's like that ten million dollars with the family sweepstakes." No, there's no catch here. This is ironclad; it is guaranteed. Second Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 9—here is the Christmas story: "*For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor,*"—now listen to the next part—"*that ye through his poverty might be rich*" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

All right now, folks, we're talking to you tonight about your riches. And it's all because of Jesus, who said, "*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly*" (John 10:10). You see, it's true riches. The life that the Lord Jesus gives—it is abundance—not just existence, but abundance. Did you know that if you take *live* and spell it backwards—do you know what it is? Do you know what it spells? Think about it. *Live*—spell it backward: *evil*. If you take *lived* and spell it backwards, do you know what that is? *Devil*. You see, if you do it the wrong way, it just turns out wrong. I mean, so many people are living backward, rather than forward. Jesus said, "I've come that you might have life, and have it abundantly" (John 10:10). And that's what Christmas is all about.

Oh, we're looking forward to this Singing Tree and to celebrating the birthday of Jesus. How we ought to—how we ought to—celebrate His birthday! You think about it,

folks—just think about it: Had Jesus Christ not come, had He not been born, do you know what every one of your birthdays would mean—in spite of all of the cakes, and all of the candles, and all of the ice cream, and all of the gifts? Had He not had a birthday, do you know what your birthday would mean? Every birthday that you have means that you're one year closer to death—closer to the grave, and closer to judgment. Had He not been born, that's what every one of your birthdays would have meant. But since His birthday, now every birthday that you have means, "I'm one year closer to Heaven; I'm one year closer to Glory; I'm one year closer to my redeemed body." Every birthday that you have takes on new significance because of the birthday of our dear Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And the Bible says, "You see the grace of the Lord Jesus, that, though He were rich, He became poor, that, through His poverty, you might be rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

I. The Lord's Glorious Possession

Now that verse tells us three things. First of all, it tells of the glorious possessions that our Lord had before He came to this earth. The Bible says He was rich.

A. The Riches of His Person

Now if you want further information on just how rich He was, turn to Isaiah chapter 9 with me, and begin in verse 6. Isaiah chapter 9 and verse 6 tells the Christmas story, and Isaiah chapter 9 tells us just how rich the Lord Jesus was before He came that Christmas morning: "*For unto us a child is born,*"—now, that speaks of the baby Jesus and His humanity—"*unto us a son is given:*"—that speaks of the eternal God who gave His Son in Glory before the child was born. "*A child is born*"—that's His humanity; "*a son is given*"—that's His deity—"*and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this*" (Isaiah 9:6–7). Oh, that's a thrilling statement! God is going to see that the Lord Jesus reigns.

Now all of this speaks of the richness of our Lord. It speaks, first of all, of who He is. He's called, in this passage, "*the everlasting Father*"—"the everlasting Father." Who was the baby that was born? The baby that was born is the eternal God; the Son that was given, the child that was born, is called *the everlasting Father*. As ole' Dr. Lee used to say, "When He was born, He was as old as His Father, and older than His mother." There never was a time when the Lord Jesus was not. He is the everlasting Father. So He was rich in His person. Who is He? He is God of very God. You can't be richer than

that.

B. The Riches of His Position

But not only is He rich in His person; He's rich in His position. Before He left Heaven, why, we see Him, dear friend, as the One with the government upon His shoulder. I mean, the entire universe rests upon the shoulders of the Lord Jesus, the exalted King of kings and Lord of Lords. No one—no one—can be higher.

C. The Riches of His Power

And then, you think not only of the riches of His person—not only who He is; the riches of His position—or what He is; but, think of the riches of His power—what He can do. This same verse calls Him *“the mighty God”* (Isaiah 9:6). Incidentally, let me tell you something right here—and this is worth it, if you'll just make a note right now: The Jehovah's Witnesses will, sooner or later, knock at your door. And the Bible says that, “If any come to your house and bring not the doctrine of Christ, receive him not unto your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 John 1:10).

Now the doctrine of Christ is that Jesus is very God of very God, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. When you tell them this, they'll say, “Well, give me a verse that shows that.” Of course, there are many verses; but, if you knew the Bible, you might choose Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given. He is the everlasting Father. The government shall be upon His shoulder. And He is the mighty God” (Isaiah 9:6). That's what it says right there: “He is the mighty God.” And do you know what they'll say to you? They'll say to you, as one said just this past week to me, “Well, He is... He is the mighty God, but He is not Almighty God—just the mighty God.” So they don't want to equate this One that's spoken of here, in Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, with Jehovah. They say that, “Jehovah is the Almighty God, but Jesus is only the mighty God.”

Well, if they ever pull that on you, you just turn to Jeremiah chapter 32 and verse 17. And by the way, I want you to put it down on a slip of paper and put it by the door, so you won't forget it, perhaps—Jeremiah 32 and verse 17. I want you to look at it. I'm just talking about how rich this Lord Jesus is. Jeremiah is speaking of the Lord. Well, let's go to verse 17—here's what Jeremiah says: *“Ah Lord GOD!”*—or, “Jehovah God,” literally—*“behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee”* (Jeremiah 32:17). Boy, that's a good verse right there, isn't it? That's one worth putting on your refrigerator with a little magnet. Right there—that one.

But now, notice verse 18: *“Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them:”*—now, watch this—*“the Great, the Mighty God,”*—exactly the same term that's used for

Jesus is used right here—“*the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts*”—which, it means, “the Jehovah of hosts” (Jeremiah 32:18). The Mighty God and Jehovah are one in the same. There is to be no mistaking of this. Who was this babe that was born at Bethlehem? He is great in person—He’s the everlasting Father; He’s the Mighty God. He is great in position—the government is on His shoulders. He is great in power—He is mighty; He is Almighty.

D. The Riches of His Possessions

He is great in possessions. The Bible says, in this verse, “*Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end*” (Isaiah 9:7). Rich, incredibly rich—everything is His. That’s the reason they worshipped Him. In Revelation chapter 4, verse 11, they say to the Lord Jesus, “*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created*” (Revelation 4:11). He’s the owner of everything—not only from sea to shining sea, but from galaxy to galaxy. All things belong to Him. Incredibly rich—rich because of who He is; rich because of what He has; rich because of what He can do. This is the Lord Jesus Christ.

II. The Lord’s Great Poverty

Now the second thing our text tells us—not only was He rich, but our text tells us, “*he became poor*” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Now I want you to go to another scripture here. Turn with me, this time, to Philippians. You’re in 2 Corinthians; just fast-forward to Philippians chapter 2. And I want you to see how the Lord Jesus, who was rich, voluntarily laid aside these riches for our sake. And Jesus became poor. Philippians chapter 2—and I begin reading in verse 5—the Bible says, “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God...*”—when the Lord Jesus said, “I am equal with God”... I wouldn’t say that; you wouldn’t say that; we would be robbing God of His glory, if we said that; or attempting to do so. But Jesus “*thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*”—here He is, co-equal and co-eternal with God the Father. But notice this—“*but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2:5–8).

Now you see the Lord Jesus, this time, dear friend, becoming poor. I want you to see what happened.

A. He Became Poor in Person

He became poor in His person. Here He is, mighty God of mighty God, the

everlasting Father; and yet, the Bible says, He *“made himself of no reputation”* (Philippians 2:7). Now I can see dust wanting to be deity. But here is deity becoming dust. Jesus, who was God, became man. Does that mean He was any less God? No, He’s no less God. But when He became man, He took upon him a certain poverty—a certain limitation. He made Himself of no reputation. He became poor in person.

B. He Became Poor in Position

He became poor in position: *“And being found in fashion as a as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient”* (Philippians 2:8).

My Jehovah’s Witness friend asked me... I said, “Yes, I believe that Jesus is God.” And this person said to me, “Well, if Jesus is God, to whom would He pray? If Jesus is God, how could He pray to the Father? Who prays to Himself? He would be praying to Himself. If Jesus is God, how could Jesus say, ‘My Father is greater than I’?” I said, “Very easy—very simple: because, not only was He God, He was also man.” *He was as much man, as if He were not God at all—as much God, as if He were not man at all.* And He *“thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation.”* And then, the Bible says, when He did this—when the Lord Jesus made Himself of no reputation—then, the Bible says He *“took upon him the form of a servant,”*—he took that servanthood—*“and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself”* (Philippians 2:6–8). He became poor in person. He became poor in position.

C. He Became Poor in Power

He became poor in power. Did you know that the Lord Jesus, when He became a man, laid aside the power that was inheritably His? Did you know that Jesus, when He came to Earth, did not work miracles by His own power? Jesus depended upon the Holy Spirit. Jesus did not work miracles by the power that was inheritably His. John chapter 5 and verse 19—the Bible says, *“The Son”*—that’s Jesus—*“can do nothing of himself”* (John 5:19). Jesus was so weak in His flesh that He had to say, “Father, I need You.” And the life that He lived He lived by the power of the Spirit. And the Bible says, “Jesus, filled with the Holy Ghost and power, went about doing good” (Acts 10:38). He did not do any miracle inherently—because of the power that He had, inherently His.

What I’m trying to say—He became poor: poor in position—from the heights of Glory, He came down to this earth; in possessions—He left the ivory palaces to come into this world of woe; He became poor in power—He just became a pauper. And you see the life of the Lord Jesus. Where was He born? Born in a stable, laid in a manger. When He wanted to preach, He had to borrow a boat and use it for a pulpit. When He wanted to pay His taxes, He had to get a coin from a fish’s mouth. When He wanted a place to rest, He had to stay with someone like Mary, Martha, and Lazarus—sometimes

sleep on the mountainside. He said, “The birds have nests, and the foxes have holes; but the Son of Man doesn’t have anywhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20; Luke 9:58). When the Lord Jesus wanted to come into Jerusalem, He had to get a borrowed donkey to ride on. And when He was buried, He was buried in a borrowed tomb. I mean, the One wounded for all was incredibly poverty-stricken. And He died the death of a felon; He died a criminal. The only thing He had left was a seamless robe, and they cast lots for that. Now listen. Jesus was incredibly rich, and became poor.

III. The Lord’s Gracious Provision

Now I want you to think, thirdly, not only of His riches before He came to this earth; and I want you to think, not only of the poverty that He had when He came here; but I want you to think of why He did that. The Bible says that, “through His poverty, you might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Look at it again, in verse 9: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...”—2 Corinthians chapter 8 and verse 9—“You know the grace of our Lord Jesus, that, though He was rich...”—that’s His glorious possession—“...he became poor,”—that’s His great poverty—“that through His poverty you might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9)—that’s His gracious provision.

Now why did Jesus leave Heaven? Why did Jesus come to Earth? To make us rich. “Well,” you say, “how come I’m not rich, then?” Well, you are rich. You say, “Well then, why do I have difficulty paying my bills?” Because you don’t understand what riches are. If you ask a question like that—“Why don’t I have more money?”—it shows me that you don’t know the kind of riches that I’m talking about tonight. You see, anybody without the Lord Jesus is poor. I don’t care how many furs, and finery, and automobiles they have—they are poor. Put this verse down in the margin: Revelation chapter 3, verse 17. The Lord Jesus is speaking to the church at Laodicea, and He says, “*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked*” (Revelation 3:17). They were ignorant of their poverty.

Dear friend, anybody without Jesus is poor. Anybody with Jesus is rich. I am rich—I am rich. You’re rich. *You want to see how rich you are? You add up everything that you have that money can’t buy and death can’t take away, and then you’ll know just how rich you are.* You have to pity those who have plenty in the bank but they don’t have Jesus. Their money cannot buy the things that really count. Their money cannot buy peace of heart. Their money cannot buy forgiveness. Their money cannot buy a home in Heaven. Their money cannot heal the wounds of a wasted life or quiet the cries of a guilty conscience. Money just can’t do that. Thank God—thank God—for the true riches you have this Christmas.

Now my friend, let me tell you something: There’s nothing wrong with material

riches. And if you're a millionaire, I'm happy for you. If you make a big salary, that's wonderful. You probably work hard, and you earn it—that's fine. But I'm going to say this to you: *You will never truly enjoy the things that money can buy, until, first of all, you possess the things that money can't buy.* I don't care how much you have. We say that money can't make you happy. And we say, "Yeah, but it's a great way to be miserable." It's really not—it is really not.

Now let me tell you something else: You want to be rich—I mean, spiritually rich? God can never make you rich until you admit that you're poor. Let me tell you, do you know what God's specialty is? Do you know what God specializes in? Well, many things; but, one of His chief specialties is this: He makes something out of nothing. He's the only One who can do that. And He can't make anything out of you until you admit that you're nothing. And when you admit that you're nothing—when you say that, "All of my so-called riches are just trash"—until you do that, He can't make anything out of you. That's why He said, in Matthew chapter 5 and verse 3: *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:3). When a man says, "God, I am bankrupt in Your sight," then, for the first time—when he's poor in spirit—God can make something out of Him.

Now what kind of riches is it? You say, "Pastor, this is a cop-out; it's not true riches." Oh, it is—it is. Listen. What does He do? I said, first of all, that Jesus was rich in His person. Well, what do you become, when you get saved? You are rich in your person. Who are you not? Well, you share His nature. I mean, He is very God of very God, and He lives in you. You are a part of the Beloved. The Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 6, that, *"he hath made us accepted in the beloved"* (Ephesians 1:6). Who is the Beloved? Jesus. You are in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are a member of His Body. You have come into a living union with Jesus Christ. You are rich in position. You are seated with the Lord Jesus in the heavens. You are rich in power. The Apostle Paul said, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Philippians 4:13). Ephesians 3, verse 16: *"To be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man"* (Ephesians 3:16).

And "But," you say, "but I want the stuff. I want the material goods." Do you? Well, it's going to surprise some of you, but you'll have that too—you'll have that too. The Bible says we're heirs with God, *"and joint-heirs with Christ"* (Romans 8:17). The Bible says, *"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth"* (Matthew 5:5). God made this world. And when God made it, He said, "It is good." And the time is coming, dear friend, when we will rule and reign with Jesus, and the meek shall inherit the earth. He made us incredibly rich. So therefore, if you want to spell *Christmas*, just spell it this way: g-r-a-c-e. "For ye see, brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that, through His poverty, you might

be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Conclusion

Now I’m finished; but I want to say this to you: Grace costs you nothing; it costs Jesus everything. Okay? You got that? But listen. If you refuse this grace, it will cost you everything.

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Our Father and our God, I thank You, tonight, that You sent Jesus, who came out of the ivory palaces into this world of woe, who was rich, took our poverty, took our sin, that we, through His poverty, might be rich. And I pray, dear God, tonight, that many in this building will lay hold of their true riches and be saved.

Grace Giving

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 9, 2003

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 8; 9

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Introduction

Amen. Would you be seated, please? And would you like to thank those who have done such a wonderful job with this vignette, this morning? Thank you. I told Brother Mark—I said, “Mark, that is just super.” My heart is deeply moved with profound thanks for those who have gone before us, and I thank God for this year’s Love Offering, “The Frontier of Faith.” We are not ready to stop. It’s too soon to quit. God has a great future for this church, and I’m grateful that you are in the middle of it.

Now take your Bibles, and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 8. And when you’ve found it, look up here. I want to ask you a question. Are you ready for the question? Here’s the question: Had you rather me, this morning, preach on grace, or giving? Now don’t answer the question out loud. Had you rather me speak on grace, or had you rather me speak on giving? Well, I want to tell you what I’m going to do: I’m going to do both at the same time.

What I want to talk to you about today is “The Grace of Giving.” Look, if you will here, in 2 Corinthians chapter 8; and, let’s look, if we will, in the first two verses of this wonderful chapter: *“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit”—that is, “to make known to you”—“of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality”* (2 Corinthians 8:1–2). You’re going to find out that this chapter here is about giving, and it is about grace at the same time.

Now folks, my heart is so heavy for today’s society. We live in a day that celebrates depravity—did you hear me?—that celebrates depravity and that mocks traditional values. Look around at the tragedy of broken homes. They are all around us. Look around at the problem of unwed mothers, who will bring little babies into a home that will not have a traditional father and mother. Think of the sexual plagues that are upon America. Think of the normalization of sexual perversion that our children are growing up with. Think of little babies that are systematically put to death in their mother’s womb by highly paid doctors in sterile clinics. Think how the crime rate has soared and soaked the soil of America with blood. Think of the problems that we have, nationally and internationally.

And when I think of all of that, I’m grateful for Bellevue Baptist Church. I’m grateful that this church exists. I’m grateful that God has people like you that have a vision. We have a purpose statement. What is the purpose statement of Bellevue Baptist Church? “Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of”—and I hope you’ve memorized this—“magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word, moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry, and making Jesus known to our neighbors and the nations.” That’s why we exist. That’s the reason for these buildings. That’s the reason for this pageantry. That’s the reason for the Love Offering—no other reason than to give God the glory, to serve our great God, and to tell others about what a wonderful Savior we have.

The Love Offering, “Frontiers of Faith,” that we’re going to enjoy next Sunday, is a part of this vision. Now the plan began as you saw, some years ago, in the heart of Dr. Lee, in a time of great depression. And they gave to meet a need, and they met a need. And we’re here today as the recipients of that giving. And that was a great plan. When we moved out here, there was a great plan. But that plan continues, and it needs your continuing support.

But now—listen to me—there is a greater reason for giving than to meet a need. I believe in giving to meet needs. But there is a greater reason for giving, and that reason is the grace of God. We’re going to be talking today, and thinking today, about giving and about grace—“The grace of giving.” You know, when it comes to giving, some people will stop at nothing. What needs to motivate those people? Well, it is the grace of

God. Now let me give you three major points and some sub-points.

I. The Motivation of Grace Giving

Well, first of all, I want you to think of the motivation of grace giving—the motivation of grace giving. What is the motivation? Well, let me tell you some things about it, as we talk about motivation.

A. Grace Giving Is Not Eliminated by Poverty

Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty. Even if you're poor, you should give. Listen again to verses 1 and 2: *“Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality”* (2 Corinthians 8:1–2).

Now Paul is using the Macedonians as an example. They were in a depression. They were in deep poverty, and yet they gave. The word poverty here, in the Bible, actually means, “deep, rock-bottom poverty and destitution.” These people who gave that love offering so long ago, in the Bible, were living lives of destitution. Their standard of living had changed. Then, listen. Their standard of giving had not changed, nor had their standard of life. They had joy in the middle of all of it. You want joy? Learn to give. Here is an amazing formula, and I want to give it to you out of the Word of God. Take great affliction. Mingle great affliction with deep poverty. Mix in the grace of God, and the result is abundant joy and abounding liberality. A miserly man is a miserable man.

I got a letter this past week I want to read to you. The person who wrote it didn't know I was going to share it, so I won't use the name. But...

“Dear Brother Rogers, I listen to *Love Worth Finding* each morning on the way to work, and I really appreciate how you preach and expound the Word of God. Yesterday, I arrived at work earlier than usual, and sat in the truck, and listened until you had finished. I had been planning to send an offering, and I said I'd better send it tomorrow to meet the matching grant for this month.

I prayed about how much I should send. My wife and I both work but don't make a very large salary. The Lord seemed to say, ‘Send 1,000 dollars.’ But I thought, if I send 500 dollars, that will amount to 1,000 dollars with a matching amount. I got up this morning and, without hesitation, wrote the check for 1,000 dollars, put it in the envelope, sealed it, and put it in the mail. I knew I had done what He wanted me to do.”

Now here's—listen to this now—“My wife and I go in opposite directions to work. I drive a 23-year-old pickup. And she has a somewhat better small car. I was wheeling down Sam Cooper Expressway listening to your message and believing every word of it, for it was straight from the Word of God, when the old truck suddenly died. I coasted

to a stop off the road and thanked the Lord there was no accident. No amount of coaxing would make it start again, so I gave up and started walking back home.

It was a beautiful morning with a cool breeze and scattered clouds overhead. And I looked up toward the sky and thanked Him for His wonderful work and His mercy to me. But above all, I thanked Him that I had already mailed that offering. Had this happened earlier, I might have been tempted to spend a lot less, to send a lot less, because the truck will have to be towed—and a big repair bill. He knows what He’s doing, and I’m thankful, when I listen to Him.” And then the letter goes on.

But now, you expected me to say somebody came up and gave him a brand new truck, didn’t you? No, you missed the point of this whole thing. Here he is walking, praising God, because he had given—not because he had all of this money, not because he didn’t have a need. But in the midst of a need, he gave, and he was glad he did.

Now you listen to me. One of these days, you’re going to turn up your toes and die, and all you hold in your hand is what you’ve given to Jesus—that’s it. And so grace giving is not eliminated by poverty.

B. Grace Giving Is Not Energized by Pressure

Number two: Grace giving is not energized by pressure. Look again, if you will now, in verses 3 through 6: *“For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God”* (2 Corinthians 8:3–5).

Now I wanted to stop there. You know, so many times people think that giving is motivated by some kind of high-pressure methods. Friend, we don’t believe in high-pressure methods here at this church. If you find somebody pressuring you to give, you come tell me, and I’ll tell Jesus on them. We don’t believe in that. We don’t believe in arm-twisting.

Let me tell you what this church did here—these people: “They,” Paul said, “they ran us down. They begged us. They said, ‘Please take this offering.’” And these were people in poverty, and they were not pressurized. I don’t believe that people need to be shamed, or threatened, or scolded, in order to give. If they do that, something is wrong with these people. And sometimes, even when preachers try to get people to give by that method, it backfires on them.

I read about Mark Twain, the humorist of yesteryear. Mark Twain said, “I’d come to church intending to give a large amount. But the preacher kept talking so much, when the offering plate came around, I took a dollar out.”

Friend, what motivates you to give? Not pressure. Listen. If you love Jesus, that's enough. You know what the Bible says? *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Matthew 6:21). Where is your treasure? Do you know why some folks are in such a hurry to get out of church? They want to get back to where their treasure is. That's where their treasure is. Their heart is not here, because their treasure is not here. *"Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"* (Matthew 6:21). All right, grace giving is not motivated by pressure.

C. Grace Giving Is Not Excused by Performance

Number three: Grace giving is not excused by performance. You say, "Well, I don't give, but I'll tell you what I do." Well now, listen to 2 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 7: *"Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also"* (2 Corinthians 8:7). Now what Paul is saying to the Corinthians—say, "Look, I want to praise you. You do well in faith. You're doing great in your speech. You're doing good in knowledge. You're doing good in diligence. You're doing good in love. But that is not enough. Abound in this grace also, because giving a grace." And he says, "There's nothing else you can do that can take this place of giving an offering."

Now you give by grace. What is grace? Grace is both the desire and the ability to do the will of God. God will put the offering in your heart, and God will enable you to fulfill that offering. There is no service that you can perform that will excuse you, therefore, from giving what God lays on your heart.

D. Grace Is Not Enforced by Power

Number four: Grace is not enforced by power—grace giving is not enforced by power. Look again in 2 Corinthians 8, verses 8 and 9: *"I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love"* (2 Corinthians 8:8). Paul was not a dictator. Paul couldn't make them give. Sometimes people say to me, "You know, these pastors of these big churches—they're dictators." I laugh when I hear that. Man, if I were a dictator, you'd all tithe; you'd all be in prayer meeting. I can't—I just serve at your pleasure.

Paul said, *"I speak not by commandment"* (2 Corinthians 8:8). This is not a matter of legalism. True giving is motivated by love. He says, in verse 8: *"to prove the sincerity of your love"* (2 Corinthians 8:8). And then, he uses that as an illustration that Christ died for us. Look in verse 9: *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich"* (2 Corinthians 8:9). A person who wants to give is just simply a person who has been captured by the cross, a person who has seen what Jesus Christ has done for him. A person who knows the grace of God knows the grace of giving.

Now if you don't know the grace of God, you probably are not—you get all nervous when I talk about giving. And you call the preacher a beggar. I'm not a beggar. I'm not begging you to do anything. I'm just asking you to look at the cross and do what God lays on your heart. Why do we give? The reason for giving is not to keep Bellevue afloat. The reason that we give is not because of our reputation—certainly not to give some sort of tax deduction or something for that—not because of appearance. The reason we give is Calvary's love. Does that make sense to you? Does that resonate with you?

II. The Method of Grace Giving

Now that's the motive for giving. Now let's talk about the method of grace giving. Let me tell you how we give—why we have the love offering.

A. It's Marked by Performance

Number one: It's marked by performance. I love that. Look in verse 11: *“Now therefore perform the doing of it;”—*just underscore the word *perform*—*“that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have”* (2 Corinthians 8:11). What Paul is saying is, “Get with it. It's time to do it. Step up and give. It's going to be marked by performance.” I hear people say all the time, “Well, I aim to give—I aim to give.” I say, “Well, pull the trigger.” Hah—aim to give. Some of you are going to leave your money, when you die, for your kids to squabble over. Or, even if you leave it to the work of God, that's wonderful—and I hope you'll do that. But now listen. A wise man said, “Do your givin' while you're livin', then you're knowin' where it's goin'.” You get the joy of doing it. Paul says, “It's going to be marked by performance.”

B. It's Measured by Providence

Number two: It's going to be measured by providence. “How much should I give?” Well, look, if you will, in verse 12: *“For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: But by an equality...”* (2 Corinthians 8:12–14). Now let me just stop and stay right there.

What is God asking you to do? God is not asking you to do what you can't do—only what you can do. God said, “I'm not asking for what you don't have—what you do have.” And He said, “I'm not asking you to give more than somebody else, or less than somebody else, so far as sacrifice.” I want there to be an equal sacrifice, not an equal amount, in the Love Offering.

Listen. For some people to give 20 dollars would be a bigger sacrifice than for some people to give 1,000 dollars. You see, God doesn't measure the gift by the amount on the check but by the amount on the stub. What's the balance on the stub? Think of that

little widow there in the church—she went out and gave her whole living. Jesus said, when He looked at that little widow who put her offering in the offering plate—the widow’s mite—Jesus said, “She gave more than they all.” There were many rich men there that day. Now He didn’t say she gave more than any other of them. Jesus said she gave more than all of them put together. Isn’t that interesting? Think of the millions—yes, billions—of dollars that have been brought into the work of Christ by the testimony of that little widow. Friend, it is measured by providence.

Whatever God has put in your hand, just give that and say, “Lord, what do You want me to give?” Listen to this—1 Corinthians 16:2: *“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.”* If God has prospered you, be generous. Don’t think God prospered you just so you could live it up and live it all for yourself. If you have little, pray over it, and give correspondingly. It’s not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice. “To whomsoever much is given, of the same much shall be required” (Luke 12:48).

Now I don’t want anybody to feel intimidated because they have a lot. If you have a lot, I’m happy for you. If God has blessed you, I’m happy for you. The Bible says, “It’s the Lord your God that gives you power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18). And the Bible says, “God takes pleasure in the prosperity of His servant” (Psalm 35:27). And if you were to study the Bible, you’d find some of the most godly men were the richest men.

Abraham—listen to Genesis 13:2: *“And Abraham was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold.”* He’s the father of the faithful. David, Israel’s greatest king—1 Chronicles 29:28: *“And he died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour.”* Joseph of Arimathea, in whose tomb Jesus rested for three days and nights—Matthew 27, verse 57: *“When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus’ disciple”* (Matthew 27:57). You read, in the Bible, about Mary, and Martha, and Lazarus. These were wealthy people, but they loved the Lord Jesus. I’m grateful for people who are successful and wealthy, but they realize to whomsoever much is given of the same shall much be required (Luke 12:48).

The Bible does not denigrate having money. What the Bible denigrates—what the Bible shames—is selfishness, and hoarding, and not being willing to share. A bell is not a bell until you ring it. A song is not a song until you sing it. Joy is not joy until you share it. Love is not love until you give it away. And wealth is not wealth when it is not in circulation. It needs to be used for the Lord, or it needs to be invested. An unused well will become stagnant; and an unused tool will rest; and an unused sponge will harden and stagnate. No, we need to—we need to—have a giving that is marked by providence—whatever God has blessed us with.

C. It's Managed by Prudence

And then, I'll tell you what else it is: It's managed by prudence. One thing you can be grateful for is that, when you give through the Bellevue Love Offering, it will be carefully managed. Look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians 8—let's look in verse 16: *"But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you"* (2 Corinthians 8:16). What does that tell me? Titus was a man of compassion. Titus was the one who was looking over the Love Offering. We're talking about the prudence of these people. Titus had a burden for souls, and Paul said, "Titus, because you have a burden for souls, I want you to be in charge of the Love Offering. I'm putting you on the Love Offering Committee."

1. It's Managed by Men of Compassion

I want to tell any of you preacher boys out here listening to me—let me give you a hint: Don't put a man on the finance committee who doesn't have a soul winner's heart—don't put anybody on the finance committee who does not have a soul winner's heart, who does not love the lost. Managed by men of compassion.

2. It's Managed by Men of Consecration

Managed by men of consecration. Look, if you will, in 2 Corinthians 8, verse 19: *"And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace"* (2 Corinthians 8:19). That is, these were people elected by the church to manage this responsibility—men of compassion, men of consecration.

3. It's Managed by Men of Character

Men of character. Second Corinthians chapter 8, verse 21—I'm going fast now: *"Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men"* (2 Corinthians 8:21). The money here at Bellevue has to be handled with impeccable honesty and full accountability.

4. It's Managed by Men of Competency

Managed by men of competency. Look, if you will now, in verse 22: *"And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent"* (2 Corinthians 8:22). When you give here at Bellevue Baptist Church, you can be certain that your money will be received, counted, stored, and expended with the utmost care. Our church has audits; our church has reports to the finance committee, oversight by the finance committee. Our deacons are very careful and aware of what happens here at Bellevue Baptist Church. And that's the reason that God has blessed us through the years with the offering. Now that's the method of our giving.

III. The Manifestation of Grace Giving

Let me go, finally now, and talk with you just about the manifestation of grace giving.

What will grace giving do?

A. It Will Encourage the Saints

First of all, it will encourage the saints. Go now to chapter 9, and look, if you will, in verses 1 through 5. And I won't read the entire part of that Scripture. But now, notice the first part—chapter 9, verse 1: *“For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: for I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many”* (2 Corinthians 9:1–2). When you give, you encourage others to give.

I can remember one time when we were getting ready to move out here, and we needed a big, big Love Offering. I remember sitting around a table with some men in the conference room at Bellevue. And a businessman, who had a small business, said, “Brethren, I’m not saying this to boast, but I want to tell you what God has laid on my heart to give.” And he mentioned an amount. He wasn’t boasting, but he was sharing. And my heart turned over, because I realized what a sacrifice that was for that man. And I knew that he was hard-pressed in his business financially to do that. But when that man said that and did that, it moved my heart and made me want to give more. It moved me. Giving encourages the saints.

Now after the service, you may get around a group of people who are saying, “You know, I don’t think the pastor—I don’t like the way he talks about money.” Move away from that crowd. Move to the crowd that says, “Isn’t it great—isn’t it great—what we can do? Isn’t it great how God has blessed us here at Bellevue Baptist Church?” What is the manifestation of grace giving? It encourages the saints. Paul says, in verse 2: “your zeal has provoked very many” (2 Corinthians 9:2).

B. It Will Enrich the Sower

Number two: Not only will it encourage the saints, but, number two, it will enrich the sower. Giving is like sowing seeds. 2 Corinthians 9, verse 6: *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.”* Now here’s our word grace again. *“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work”* (2 Corinthians 9:6–8).

Giving is like sowing seeds. Brothers and sisters, you will not out-give God. What farmer weeps when he puts his seed in the soil? If you sow bountifully, you’re going to reap bountifully. This is the law of the harvest. It is the principle of multiplication. It’s one of the greatest things that God ever did.

I am impressed with seeds. Every time we have fresh fruit at our house, I’ll give

Joyce a little sermon about seeds. You think of a seed. Put a watermelon seed in the ground, and that little brown, hard thing will go out into the ground and suck a watermelon vine out of the ground. And it will suck watermelons out of the ground, out of the earth. How does it do that? That's the law of the harvest. A wise man said, "Any fool can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the apples in a seed."

When we are giving, we are sowing seed. And there's a double blessing in every gift that we give. We get the blessing when we give it, and you'll be blessed next Sunday. Now some of you will stay away, because you'll say, "It's a giving Sunday. I'm going to stay away." Well, you'll brighten up the place, when you do. I'm telling the truth, because you don't understand what we're talking about—you don't understand what we're talking about. There is a double blessing. There's the blessing when you give; and then, there's the blessing to those who receive—a double blessing. The time your gift gets to the recipient—it's already second handed. It has already been used. There is a blessing in it. You encourage the saints. You enrich the sower.

I want everybody to do something. I want you to take your fist, right now, and hold it. Some of you say, "This is silly. I'm not going to do it." Well, okay, you don't have to. But the rest of us who don't mind being silly, take your fist and clench it as tight as you can—right hand, if you're right handed; left hand, if you're left handed. Hold it. Now don't let go. Clench it. Keep on clenching. Keep on; don't let go. Hold it. Tighter. Squeeze. Some more. Tighter. Squeeze. All right now, let it go. Doesn't that feel better? Don't go through life like *this*. I'm telling you that God has a plan. God wants to bless you. God doesn't need anything. "*The earth is the LORD's*" (Psalm 24:1). You can't put my God on the level of a beggar.

When we do this, it will encourage the saints; it will enrich the sower. You don't give grudgingly. You don't give because you're sad or mad. You give because you're glad.

C. It Will Exalt the Savior

And then, the third thing it will do: It will exalt the Savior—exalt the Savior. Look down here, if you will, in 2 Corinthians 9, verses 12–13: "*For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints,*"—that is, "it strengthens the saints"—"*but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God*" (2 Corinthians 9:12–13). And that's what we're here for.

You know what I want this Sunday—this coming Sunday? When we have Love Offering, I want us to be able to sing, "To God be the glory, great things He hath done." If there were no need—if there were no need—just to glorify God. In the Old Testament, sometimes they would take the most incredible sacrifices and burn them up. They would just go up in smoke. No pragmatic, no utilitarian purpose at all, except for the glory of God.

Now don't get me wrong. There is a need—a very real need. We're moving into the frontiers of faith, and we have some needs that are very real and very practical to communicate the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We have these magnificent buildings; we have the truth; we have the workers. But now, we need to use every means to get the word out. And therefore, by all of the things that you read in the Love Offering brochure, these are there to help us to get out the Word of God.

But folks, listen to me. *We make a living by what we get out of life And we make a life by what we give back to God.* I want you to understand something of the grace of giving. And this coming Sunday, when we come to our church, I want us to come to give God the glory. I want us to come with a heart brimming with love and praise to Jesus, to lay our best gift on the altar for Him.

Conclusion

You say, "Pastor Rogers, what should I give?" Listen to me. I cannot tell you what to give. Some people will give an amount equal to a year's salary. Some will give beyond that. Some will give an amount equal to a month's salary. Some can't begin to do that. Some will give an amount equal to a week's salary. Some will give an amount equal to their full tithe for the year, and they'll double it. Some say, "I couldn't begin to do that." Some say, "It would be difficult for me to give five dollars." Some may not even have five dollars. Listen. I'm not asking you to give what you don't have. I'm just asking you to ask God what He wants you to do.

Now I've given you this formula every year, and I hope you'll never forget it. See if you can argue with me. If I'm wrong, somebody stand up and tell me where I'm wrong in what I'm about to say. I mean, I really mean it—you stand up, right now; just tell me if I'm wrong. God knows what the need is. I'm right about that, right? Huh? God is able to communicate that need to you, if you ask Him. What God tells you to give—what God tells you to give—you'll be able to give. Am I still on track? I mean, is my logic faulty? God knows the need. God knows what part of that need He wants to meet through me. And God is able to communicate that to me, if I'll ask Him. Am I on track? What God tells me to give I'm able to give. But if God tells me to give, I'm going to have to depend on Him to do it, right? Would God ask me to do anything I could do without Him? No. Am I right so far? Am I tracking? All right. I have to depend on Him to do it. Next, if God knows the need, God tells me what part He wants me to meet. I listen to God. I give what God lays on my heart, depending upon God. Who gets the glory? God! Who gets the joy? Adrian.

Sunday will be a success for you, no matter what anybody else gives, if you do what God tells you to do. You have a guaranteed victory this coming Sunday, whether you give little or much. Just do what God tells you to do. And all God's people said?—Amen.

Now I asked you, “You want me to preach on grace or giving?” What did I do? Both, all right? The grace of God. And if anybody ever comes out of here and says, “You know, all they talk about there at Bellevue Baptist Church is give, give, give,” they don’t know what they’re talking about. As a matter of fact, if I have a fault, I don’t preach enough on giving. That’s true. But our people give because we love the Lord Jesus Christ. Our focus is not money; our focus is Jesus Christ. And for year after year after year after year, this blessed church has been blessed because people come on Love Offering Sunday with a heart brimming with love, ready to give to the Lord Jesus Christ—not even to meet a need, but just to give God the glory. And next Sunday is going to be wonderful.

Now this passage over there, in 2 Corinthians 9, ends up, and says this: *“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift”* (2 Corinthians 9:15). That’s Jesus. Have you received Him? Do you know Him? Are you saved?

Bow your heads in prayer. Heads are bowed, and eyes are closed. And I want to lead you in a prayer. And if you have never received the gift of God, let me tell you, God is not wanting you to give Him anything except yourself, because He wants to give Himself to you. And I want to ask you to pray, right now, and ask Christ into your heart. And if, today, right now, you will pray and receive Jesus Christ into your heart and life, I want to promise this from the Word of God: He will forgive every sin, every stain, every blot, every blur. Every blemish will be washed whiter than snow—every one. Things that you may be ashamed of, things you hope no one else finds out about you—whiter than snow. Secondly, with His precious Holy Spirit, He will come to live in you to give you peace and power, purpose and joy, to help you to be more like Jesus. And thirdly, when Jesus comes, or when you die, He’ll take you home to Heaven. Now this salvation is a gift. *“Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift”* (2 Corinthians 9:15). You just receive it with a hand of faith.

Would you pray this kind of prayer? “Dear God, I need You. I want You. I want to be saved. I want to be a part of Your family. I want to be Your child. Jesus, You died to save me, and You promised to save me, if I would trust You. I do trust You, right now. Come into my heart. Forgive my sin. Save me, Jesus.” Friend, pray that from your heart—“Save me, Lord Jesus. Save me.”

Did you ask Him? Then, by a bold act of faith, pray this way: “Thank You for doing it. I’m not looking for a feeling or a sign. I’m standing on Your Word. Thank You for saving me. Now give me the courage to make it public. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

Now folks, it’s making it public that helps settle it and seal it, for Jesus said, “If you confess Me before men, I’ll confess you before My Father” (Matthew 10:32).

The Grace of Giving

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: November 8, 1998

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 8; 9

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Introduction

If you would open your Bibles, please, to 2 Corinthians chapter 8, and then look up here, I want to ask you a question. I can preach on grace or I can preach on giving, this morning—which would you rather me preach on? Now don't answer the question out loud because I already know the answer: Grace or giving? Well, the truth of the matter is, I'm going to preach on both at the same time, all right? Because, you're going to learn something wonderful and very exciting—that all giving is wrapped up in grace. We're going to talk about, "The Grace of Giving."

Look, if you will, here in chapter 8 and verse 1: *"Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;"*—now, that's, roughly speaking, what we call Greece today—*"how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality"* (2 Corinthians 8:1–2). God poured out grace upon them, and, when God

poured out grace upon them, even though they were in dire poverty, they became very, very liberal in their giving. And now Paul goes on, and he speaks to the church there at Corinth about giving.

Now go down to verse 7: *“Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us,”*—aren’t these wonderful things? He says also—*“see that ye abound in this grace also”* (2 Corinthians 8:7). So don’t get the idea that, on the one hand, there is grace, and, on the other hand, there is giving. These things go together.

Now let me tell you what Bellevue Baptist Church is all about. I want to put up on our screen, if we can, our purpose statement here in this church, and I want to show you why our church exists: “Bellevue Baptist Church exists for the purpose of magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word.” That’s what we’re doing here today: magnifying Jesus through worship and the Word.

And then, number two: “We exist for the purpose of moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry.” That is, we are here to help you to grow up to be mature, so you can minister to other people. God’s plan is not just for you to come on Sunday morning, to sit, soak, and sour; but to serve—“moving believers in Jesus towards maturity and ministry.” Have you grown up? Remember what we preached a Sunday or two ago? You can be young once, but you can be immature for a long, long time.

All right now, here’s the third reason we exist: “Making Jesus known to our neighbors and to the nations.” That’s the third reason that we exist: to go to the man across the street, or to the people across the ocean, and tell them of the saving love of Jesus Christ.

If you want to know why there’s carpet under your feet this morning, why you’re sitting upon a seat, why you’re here, why this choir’s here, why he’s sitting there, why I’m up here, why we’re together, that’s what it’s all about: magnifying Jesus through worship and the word; moving believers in Jesus toward maturity and ministry; and, making Jesus known to our neighbors and to the nations. That’s it. That’s what we’re all about. You could just put that in other words. You could just call it the Great Commission. That’s exactly what it is. We have taken the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and just simply rephrased it for our use in this day and this age. And I want to tell you, my dear friend, that, if we are not obedient to the Great Commission of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we are guilty of high treason against heaven’s King.

Now we’re living in a desperate age. I am telling you, we live in a world today that celebrates depravity. I don’t mean that they’re just depraved. They celebrate it. And we’re a generation that mocks traditional values. The result of broken homes—unwed mothers, sexual plagues, sexual perversion—it abounds. But in the midst of all of this,

God has given us a vision; and, Love Offering is a part of this vision. Again, somebody will ask the question: What is more important—to strengthen the whole church, or to reach the whole world? You can't answer that, because it is strong churches that will reach the world. Friend, our entire move out here to these facilities that we call *Canaan* has had the smile of God upon the move. We believe the vision was a God-given, God-graced vision, and what we have done thus far has been a part of Love Offerings, and it will continue to be.

Now we're talking about grace, and I want you to listen carefully, because, when it comes to giving, some people will stop at nothing. So I want you to listen. We're talking here about the grace—the grace of giving. Now I'm going to have a lot of little sub-points today. Don't lose the thing in the sub-points. The sub-points are necessary, but there are three major points.

I. The Obligation of Grace Giving

Number one, the obligation of grace giving. Now listen to me carefully. You may be here thinking, "You know, Pastor, I'm not one of the big guys, one of the big gals; I don't have much to give." Now look, if you will, in chapter 8, verses 1 and 2: "*Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality*" (2 Corinthians 8:1–2).

A. Grace Giving Is Not Eliminated by Poverty

Put this down: Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty. Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty. The people in Macedonia were in rock bottom destitution. On top of that, they had been persecuted. Their living and their goods had been taken from them; and, while their standard of living had changed, their standard of life had not changed. Your standard of living can change; just don't let it get to your standard of life, because Jesus said, "A man's life consisteth not of the abundance of the things that he possesses" (Luke 12:15). And you know, we may have another recession; we may have another depression. *We can change our standard of living but that cannot change our standard of life*, amen? Not if you have life in the Lord Jesus.

And when your standard of living changes, it cannot even change your standard of giving. These people continued to give. They had joy in the midst of all of this. Here's the formula: Great affliction, deep poverty, plus grace equals abounding joy, and abounding liberality.

Now you want joy? A miserly man is a miserable man. If you want joy, learn to give. These people gave out of a time of economic distress, not because they had plenty, but because they had little. Do you know how the Love Offering began at Bellevue Baptist

Church? The Love Offering began at Bellevue Baptist Church in the depth of the Great Depression, and there were people who came and they just emptied their pockets, and they said, “Lord, in the midst of all this, we’re just going to praise You with an offering.” They gave astounding offerings, and God blessed. “Well,” you say, “I don’t have much.” Well, come up here, and I want to ask you a question: If God cannot trust you with little, do you think he can trust you with much? You think about it. You know, the Bible says, “*Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required*” (Luke 12:48).

Now if I were to ask you a question—If you have a million dollars, what would you do with it? “Well,” you say, “man, I’d make a big offering.” Do you know the test of what you would do with a million dollars is what you do with what you have? Jesus said, “He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in that which is much” (Luke 16:10). As a matter of fact, if you’re not faithful with that which is least, you would even have more difficulty being faithful with that which is much, because it would seem like you were giving much more. Of course you wouldn’t, proportionately. But listen, folks—here’s the point—I want you to get it down in your heart and in your mind: Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty. Everyone can give something.

B. Grace Giving Is Not Energized by Pressure

Here’s the second thing I want you to understand: Grace giving is not energized by pressure. Look, if you will, in verses 3 and 4—Paul speaks of them, and he says: “*For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power*”—that means beyond their ability—“*they were willing of themselves; praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift*” (2 Corinthians 2:3–4). Did you hear that? Ha ha, these folks in poverty said, “Paul, please take this gift.” They didn’t have to be pressured to give.

That’s one thing I’ve learned here in this church, friend: We don’t pressure folks to give. And you come up here again, and get real close, and I want to tell you something: We will never twist your arm and tell you what you ought to give. We are never going to give some psychological manipulation. We’re not going to come and try to maneuver you, and tell you, “Now you ought to do this, and you ought to do that.” No. I’ve said it before; I want to say it again: Grace giving means that you give out of your heart, because you want to. And the preacher is not reduced to some sort of a beggar using gimmicks, and tricks, and pressures, and all of these things; people having to be scolded, and shamed, and manipulated—threatened to give.

These people begged Paul to take the gift. You find anybody putting pressure on you around here—you let me know, and I’ll tell Jesus on them. I’ll let Jesus put all the pressure, however, He wants upon you. Do you know why people get upset, when you talk about giving—almost have a spasm? I’ll tell you why: Jesus makes it very plain—He says, “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Matthew 6:21). That’s

the reason some folks don't like it in church. They want to get out of the church building—out where the treasure is. But friend, if your treasure is here, your heart's going to be here—just all depends upon where your treasure is.

C. Grace Giving Is Not Excused by Performance

Listen to me. Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty. Grace giving is not energized by pressure. Number three: Grace giving is not excused by performance. Look, if you will, in verse 7—Paul says: *“Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that you abound in this grace also”* (2 Corinthians 8:7). He's talking about giving. Now he's saying, “Look, I'm excused from giving, because of my faith—I'll just trust God so other people can give.” Or, “I'm excused because of my speech—I preach, and I teach, and I sing.” Or, “my knowledge—I'm one of the people who pour knowledge into this church. Or, “my diligence,” or “my love.” Paul says, “That's fine—all of these things are graces; that's wonderful—thank God that you have them. But,” he says, “now, there's another grace—it is the grace of giving. And there's nothing you can do, there's no performance that you can perform, that will excuse you from grace giving.” Grace giving is not excused by performance. There is no service, whether it be faith, speech, knowledge, diligence, or love, that is a substitute for grace giving. Say *amen*.

D. Grace Giving Is Not Enforced by Power

All right now, listen. Grace giving is not eliminated by poverty. Grace giving is not energized by pressure. Grace giving is not excused by performance. And grace giving is not enforced by power. Look, if you will, in verses 8 and 9—Paul says: *“I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for his sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich”* (2 Corinthians 8:8–9).

Now notice how that begins there. Paul says, *“I speak not by commandment.”* Paul is saying, “I'm not commanding you to give.” Ha ha, every now and then, people say, “You know, the pastors of these big churches, they're just dictators.” I always laugh, when I hear that. Man, if I were a dictator, you'd all come to prayer meeting. I am a leader. I am a pastor. I'm not a dictator. I can't make you do anything. As a matter of fact, you could fire me, if you wanted to. Please don't. I serve at your pleasure. I'm not a dictator. I can't command you to give. I would not command you to give. Paul said to those Corinthians, *“I speak not by commandment.”*

Grace giving, my dear friend—listen to me—grace giving is not enforced by power. Somebody said, “Well, you're going to check up on me, and see what I give.” I don't know what you give. I don't know what anybody gives. I don't know what he gives—he

gives. I don't know what he gives. I don't know what they give. I don't know what the deacons give. I don't know what anybody gives. Matter of fact, I'm not sure what I give, because Joyce writes the checks. I'm sincere about that. I don't know. My job is to get you to love the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not commanding you to do anything; I'm just simply telling you what the Bible says.

Now friend, listen. Do you know why we want to give? We're motivated by love. Look, if you will, in verse 8 of this same chapter. Look at the verse—he says: *To prove the sincerity of your love*" (2 Corinthians 8:8). And do you know where that love comes from? Look in verse 9: *"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might [become] rich."* (2 Corinthians 8:9).

In the light of Calvary, it's nothing to ask. The person who gives is the person who's been captured by Calvary. You talk to some people about giving, they have a nervous breakdown; the preacher's called a beggar. Why do we give? Not to build a building; not to keep the church afloat; not, God forbid, for a tax deduction—though you ought to take those, so you can give more; not for appearances, but because of Calvary's love—because of Calvary's love. That's what Paul says. "Look," he says, "look, just prove your love; for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus—though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor."

All right, so what I'm trying to say here: I'm talking about the obligation of grace giving. Have you got that point? That's the obligation. And what we're saying is there's no excuse—there's no excuse—if you've known the grace of God.

II. The Operation of Grace Giving

Now here's the second point: We're going to talk about the operation of grace giving. That's the second point: the operation of it—how is it to operate?

A. Grace Giving Is Marked by Performance

Well, look, if you will, in verse 11, now. Number one is, to be marked by performance. It is not excused by performance—what you have done; but, it is to be marked by performance—what you will do. *"Now therefore perform the doing of it"* (2 Corinthians 8:11)—do it. It's easy to talk about giving; it's easy to preach about giving; but, grace giving is marked by performance. We sing, "Oh to grace how great a debtor, daily I'm constrained to be." Well, that needs to get translated into your life. I hear people always talking about what they aim to give—they're aiming. I say, "Pull the trigger."

And let me say this: that there are some of you who have a legacy, you probably don't even realize you have as much legacy as you do. There's going to be an enormous transfer of wealth in the next decade, and you're doubting about making that

money work for the Lord Jesus Christ. Let me borrow a phrase from the tennis shoe people—just do it. Just do it, and do it so you can have the joy of giving it. Don't let somebody else disburse it. Don't miss the joy. And as the wise man said, "Do your giving while you're living, then you're knowing where it's going." Why should you die and let somebody else divide up your estate, and spend that money for stuff you wouldn't spend it on? Why should you leave too much to spoil and ruin your kids? Now a wise man leaves an inheritance for his children (Proverbs 13:22); but, if he's a wise man, he's going to leave a wise inheritance.

B. Grace Giving Is Measured by Providence

What is the operation of grace giving? It is marked by performance. It is measured by providence. Look, if you will now, in verses 12 through 15: "*For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted*"—listen to this; this is a key verse—"*according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*" The great question is not what would you do with it if you had it; the great question is, What are you going to do with what you've got? Now watch it: "*For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that they may be equality. As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack*" (2 Corinthians 8:12–15). Now what does he mean by that? He's just simply saying, "Let's just give according to God's blessing, according to what you have. It is to be marked by performance. It is to be measured by providence.

Now some of you have providentially been blessed more than other people. Do you think you have more because you work more than other people, or because you're smarter than other people, or because you're more godly than other people, or you're more honest than other people? No. Listen, I'm going to tell you. Some of you have money just by sheer providence. There are other people who have got just as much as you, just as smart as you; they work just as much as you do. And yet, God has been so good to you. Now you give!

You know, the Bible says, in 1 Corinthians chapter 16, verse 2: "*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.*" Has God prospered you? Well then, be grateful for that. This is not communism. He's not saying that everything should be put into one pot. No, that's not what he's saying. But he's saying this: It's not equal gifts, but equal sacrifice.

Look again in verse 13 of this same chapter: "*For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye be burdened.*" He's not trying to say, "If you've got a lot, then you have to carry the burden of those who don't have much." He's not saying that at all. He's just simply saying, "Let there be equal sacrifice."

They may not be equal gifts. Sometimes there are people who have less who give more. Jesus, one day, was watching the offering being taken in the temple. Now I said I don't know how much you give. I don't, but I'll tell you one who does—that's Jesus, ha ha. He was watching the offering, and he saw a little widow, and there were many wealthy people there—and thank God for them—and they came and they put in much; and then, this little widow put in a couple of pennies. It was her whole living; it was everything that she had—a couple of pennies. And Jesus said she gave more than all of them. He didn't say she gave more than any of them. Ha ha, she gave more than all of them—all of them put together—a few pennies.

You see, how does our Lord measure your gift? Not by what you don't have, but by what you do have. Now "Unto whomsoever much is given, of the same shall much be required." Is the Bible against being rich? No! The Bible says it's the Lord thy God that giveth thee power to get wealth (Deuteronomy 8:18). The Bible says that Abraham was very rich in silver and gold, in Genesis 13, verse 2 (Genesis 13:2). King David, a man after God's own heart, "*died in a good old age, full of days, riches, and honour*" (1 Chronicles 29:28). Joseph of Arimathea, in whose tomb Jesus was buried, was called a rich man, Matthew 27, verse 57 (Matthew 27:57). Barnabas was a rich man. And Mary and Martha were rich. Lazarus, whom he raised from the dead, lived in a home that had a guest room, and so forth.

The Bible's not opposed to any of that. But I'll tell you what the Bible is opposed to, my friend: ruthless greed and hoarding. You see, the Bible speaks of those who *treasure up* to themselves riches (Luke 12:21), and the word *treasure* is the word we get our word *thesaurus* from. It means, "a collection." Some people just collect things. I mean, they don't need them; they're just sitting there, and they're just collecting it; they're hoarding these things up.

Now God wants you to enjoy the fruit of your labor; but, my dear friend, if you have quit making money and started keeping score, if you just have a collection of good things so that you can just look upon them, and there are people out there, and there's a need, and there's something that can be done for the Lord Jesus Christ, then for Jesus' sake, get it in circulation, so you can be blessed. A bell is not a bell, until you ring it. A song is not a song, until you sing it. Joy is not joy, until you share it. Love is not love, till you give it away. Wealth is not wealth, unless it's in circulation. If it's sitting there in a bank, and it never does anything, or in a vault, it might as well be cardboard.

C. Grace Giving Is to Be Managed by Prudence

Now listen. Grace giving is marked by performance; it is measured by providence according to God's blessings upon you; and, it is to be managed by prudence. I want to say this: When you give your money through this church—I can't speak about other

churches; there are many other wonderful churches, and many other wonderful organizations—but you know what the mission statement of our church is, and you know that our money is going to be handled with the utmost wisdom and integrity.

Look, if you will now, beginning in verse 16 of this same chapter: *“But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.”* Now who was Titus? Well, Titus was a church executive, a leader; he was Paul’s chosen ambassador. *“For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. And we have sent with him the brother,”*—so, Titus came to get the offering with a brother, because “from the mouth of two or more witnesses a thing shall be established” (Deuteronomy 19:15)—*“whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches”* (2 Corinthians 8:16–18).

1. By Men of Compassion

Now what kind of people ought to be handling the offerings? Number one, men of compassion, whose praise is in the gospel. God forbid—God forbid. If any pastor is listening to me right now, any of you *embryonic theologues* in seminary, listening to me right now—don’t you get on your finance committee any man, any woman who is not concerned with the saving of souls. Get men, women of compassion. Paul said, “Titus, and that brother—their heart, their praise is in the gospel.

2. By Men of Consecration

Men of compassion, and men of consecration. I’m just saying what happens to your money when you give it—men of compassion handle it, and men of consecration. Look, if you will, in verse 19: *“And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel of us with this grace, which is administered by us...”*—“this grace”—he’s talking about the giving—*“which is administered by us to the glory of the same Lord”* (2 Corinthians 8:19). Now don’t you get on your finance committee any man who is not interested not only in the gospel, but in the glory of God. That’s what we’re all about, friend: to be men who handle everything to the glory of God. You know one of the things that happens, sometimes, in churches? People get the idea that the church is divided into the sacred and the secular, and that the pastor is to take care of the sacred, and the finance committee is to take care of the secular. There’s a Greek word for that—*baloney*.

3. By Men of Character

I am telling you, my dear friend, that everything we do is to be for the glory of God—for the glory of God. You give to the glory of God, and, therefore, the money is to be managed by men of compassion, men of consecration, and men of character. Look, if you will, in verse 21—and I’m going fast now: *“Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men”* (2 Corinthians 8:21)—*“providing for*

honest things.” Those who handle the funds must have absolute, impeccable integrity, and honesty, and full accountability—in the sight of God, he says, and also in the sight of men. We would not for a moment allow what you give to be handled without honesty and accountability.

4. By Men of Competency

And then, not only men of compassion, and men of consecration, and men of character; but men of competency. Look, if you will also, in verse 22—and it says: “*And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things*” (2 Corinthians 8:22)—diligent. You know what happens when you give? That your money is carefully counted, and nobody ever counts the money by themselves. Did you know it’s specially guarded, that not a penny can be spent without the authorization of the church? When the church adopts its budget, did you know that we have reports that we give to the finance committee, and through the finance committee to the deacons? Did you know that we have an annual audit here? Do you know that? I don’t know whether that makes you feel good or not; but, folks it ought to make you just feel good. Because, you see, we’re talking not only about the obligation of our giving, but we’re talking about the operation of our giving—how it is done here at Bellevue Baptist Church.

And so what is the operation? It is to be marked by performance; it is to be measured by providence; and, it is to be managed by prudence. That’s it.

III. The Opportunity of Grace Giving

Now here’s the third and final thing. I want you to listen in a hurry; we’re running out of time. We have talked about the obligation of grace giving. We’ve talked about the operation of grace giving—and, by the way, all of this is just coming right out of the Bible. Now here’s the third thing I want you to see very quickly. I want you to see the opportunity of grace giving. What an incredible opportunity there is when we give by grace!

A. An Opportunity to Encourage the Saints

Number one—and we’re going to move right on to chapter 9 now. The chapter divisions are only there to keep preachers from preaching too long. They’re not in the original. So we’re going to move into chapter 9 here. What do we do when we give by grace? Number one: We encourage the saints. Look, if you will, in the last part of verse 2: “*Your zeal hath provoked very many*” (2 Corinthians 9:2). You know what that means? When you’re on fire for Jesus, you just set other people on fire.

I got a letter this past week from a little couple in our church, I mean, they were down; they, they didn’t have anything; they, financially—their job had gone from them.

We had a Love Offering, Brother Bob. They had in their bank account 500 dollars, and that was it—I mean, 500 dollars. You know what they did? They gave all 500. You say, “They’re crazy!” Ha ha. Well, they were nuts, but they’re fastened to a good bolt. Let me tell you something. They said, “Pastor, I just want to share this testimony with you...” In the days following that, God wonderfully and providentially placed in their hands 10 times, 10 times what they gave.

Now I’m not promising that to you, but I’m just simply saying this, folks. When I read that, you know what that did to me? It made me want to give. You see, when somebody gives like that, what has it done—what does it do? It encourages saints.

I can remember one time when we were getting ready to come out here. One of our businessmen, I knew what had happened to him; I knew that he’d had a great reversal in his business. We were sitting around a table, and he said, “Now gentlemen, I don’t want to say this in the wrong spirit, but I just want to tell you what God moved me to give.” And when he said that, I said, “He can’t do that. That’s an impossibility.” But he did it. And friend, I’ve seen God’s hand upon that man’s life, and God’s hand upon that ministry.

B. An Opportunity to Enrich the Sower

You see, what is the opportunity? Number one, it is an opportunity to encourage saints. Number two, it is an opportunity to enrich the sower. And he calls giving “sowing.” Look, if you will, in verses 6 through 11 now—chapter 9, verse 6: *“But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”* (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Have you ever seen a farmer go out here and just weep and weep and weep because he’s putting seed in the ground? No! He is sowing because he knows that God gives both bread to the eater and seed to the sower. That’s what he goes on to say. God wants you to eat; He knows you’ve got to eat. But what fools we are, if we don’t put seed in the ground. What somebody places in God’s hand is never lost. It is not a gift; it is an investment. Whether you believe that or not, you don’t change the truth where Jesus said, “Give, and it will be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, shall men give unto your bosom” (Luke 6:38).

C. An Opportunity to Exalt the Savior

What is the opportunity? It is the opportunity to encourage the saints. It is an opportunity to enrich the sower. And finally, it is an opportunity to exalt the Savior—to exalt the Savior. Look, if you will here, and we’re coming right to the end—verses 12 through 13 of chapter 9—look at it right now: *“For the administration of this service not*

only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; whiles by the experiment of this administration they glorify God” (2 Corinthians 9:12–13).

Whew! That’s what we do in the Love Offering. You know, people come here and they say, “These folks are crazy. Look at them! They’re all delirious; they’re happy; they’re giving money to God.” But I’ll tell you one thing: They say, “They have something more than Sunday morning religion: They glorify God.” It is an opportunity to encourage the saints; to enrich the sower; to exalt the Savior.

Conclusion

You know how he ends this thing? In verse 15, here’s what he says right at the end. He just closes it out, and here’s the way he closes it out. He says, “[*And*] *thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift*” (2 Corinthians 9:15)—“*his unspeakable gift.*” That’s Jesus! That’s the whole argument. He said over there in chapter 8, “For ye see the grace of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, though he were rich yet for your sakes he became poor that through his poverty he might be rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Is he talking about a bank full of money? No, no, no, no. “*For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved*” (Romans 10:12–13).

Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed and eyes are closed. That’s it—“*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.*” Now let me just switch a little bit now, and stop talking about giving, and let’s talk about receiving. God has given you a gift. It is a gift that Adrian cannot describe; neither could Paul. He just said, “It’s unspeakable.” That’s the gift of grace. That’s the gift of salvation. That’s the gift where you say, “Lord Jesus, come into my poor old heart; forgive my sin; cleanse me; save me, Jesus.” Would you just, with your heads bowed and your eyes closed, kind of reach up by faith—the hand of faith—and take the gift of grace right now, and ask Jesus to save you? When He saves you, He will forgive every sin. When He saves you, He will cleanse every sin. When He saves you, He will put His Holy Spirit in your heart. That’s not an emotional feeling. I can’t describe it. But He’ll be there. He’ll put His Spirit in your life to give you power. And when you die, He’ll take you to Heaven.

Would you pray a prayer like this? “Lord Jesus, my sin deserves judgment, but I want mercy. Thank you, Jesus, that You gave Your life for me. Thank You for that unspeakable gift. Come into my heart. Come into my heart; forgive my sin; save me, Lord Jesus.” Pray that prayer from your heart. “Save me, Lord Jesus.” Pray it. Mean it. “Save me, Lord Jesus.” Did you ask Him? Then just pray by faith this way: “Thank You for doing it. I receive it by faith. I don’t look for a sign. I don’t ask for a feeling. I just stand on Your Word. And Lord Jesus, because You died for me, I will live for You. My

life is no longer my own. All that I am and have and ever hope to be, I now place in Your hand. Begin now to make me the person You want me to be. Jesus, by Your grace, I'll never be ashamed of You; and, by your grace, I'll follow You wherever You lead me. Not in order to be saved, but because You have saved me, I'll do this, Lord Jesus. I love You, Jesus. In Your name I pray. Amen.

The Weapons of Our Warfare

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: June 27, 1993

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 10:1–15

Outline

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Conclusion

Introduction

Take God's Word, and be finding, please, 1 Corinthians chapter 10. And in a moment, I'm going to read verses 3 through 5. Now all of us—all of us—are fighting a battle of some kind. Some of our battles are serious, and some of our battles are silly.

Some are fighting what we call *the battle of the bulge*. You know that one. One man was on a diet. He drove past a donut shop that was an exceptionally good donut shop. He was thinking how good a donut and a cup of coffee would taste. But he was thinking, "You know, I really ought not to stop, but maybe I'm supposed to stop." He said, "If there's a parking place right at the front door, I'll know it was meant for me to stop." And he said, "Sure enough, after I drove past seven times, there it was—right at the front door."

We fight those kinds of battles sometimes. And we lose, or we win. But there's a much more sinister battle, much more serious battle, that is going on. And it's not a battle between nations; it's not a battle between neighbors; it's not even a battle between men or women. It's a battle for the hearts, the souls, and minds of men and women; it's a battle between God and Satan.

The scripture that I have today tells about that battle, and I want you to listen to it—2 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 3: "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.*"—just underscore the word *war*, because there's a war going on. Then, he

says—“(for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal,”—the word *carnal* means, “fleshly”—“but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;”) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5). This is the war that we’re talking about today. It is a deadly serious war. That’s the reason the Apostle Paul told young Timothy to fight a good fight (1 Timothy 6:12). And he told Timothy to endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:3).

Now there three basic things I want you to learn today. And you dare not be ignorant of the war, because, if you’re ignorant, you don’t just simply stay out of the war—you are ignominiously defeated.

I. The Wiles of Our Foe

The first thing I want you to see is what I’m going to call the *wiles of our foe*—the *wiles of our foe*. Who is our enemy? In a war, there has to be an adversary. Who is your foe? Who is your adversary? Well, you know, in the corresponding passage—in Ephesians chapter 6, verse 11—the Apostle Paul said, “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11)—“the wiles of the devil.”

Now that word *wiles* is a Greek word—*methodeia*. It’s the word we get our word *methods* from. You have an enemy who is organized, systematized, and mobilized. “Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Ephesians 6:11–12). That tells us that there is a hierarchy of invisible but diabolically organized enemies. They are under the command of the prince of darkness, the father of lies; and, he has a plan. He has already made plans to sabotage your life—to ruin you, to hurt you, to harm you, to deceive you. He is methodically—methodically—going about to destroy your life.

The wiles of our foe—there is war going on, and you dare not be ignorant. This battle is not between flesh and blood. Look at what Paul says here, in verse 3: “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:3). We’re not fighting other human beings.

What is the war over? Where is the battleground? You may be surprised to learn what the battleground is, because the battleground is your mind. Look again, in verse 4: “(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;”) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,”—underscore *imaginations*; underscore *knowledge*—“and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2

Corinthians 10:4–5).

Do you see it? Imaginations. Do you see it? Knowledge. Do you see it? Thoughts. The battle is for your minds. Fast-forward over to chapter 11, and look, if you will, in verse 3—Paul says, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11:3). The battleground is in the realm of imagination, the realm of knowledge, and the realm of thought life. And what the devil wants to do is to corrupt your mind.

Now he begins this, if you’re an unsaved person, by blinding you. Second Corinthians 4—and look, if you will, in verse 3: *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost”* (2 Corinthians 4:3). Now the devil will do everything he can do to keep you from hearing the gospel that I preach to you today. The devil will try to distract you, to get you to write notes, to think about what you’re going to have for lunch, what your recreation will be this afternoon, what sort of business you’re going to do next week, to think about what flowers you’re going to plant in the front yard—anything he can do to hide the gospel from you, this morning.

And how does he do it? Verse 4: *“In whom the god of this world...”*—the god of this world is the devil—*“In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them”* (2 Corinthians 4:4). Now what Satan does is to blind the mind of the unsaved and corrupt the mind of the saved, if he can. There is a battle going on, and your mind is the battleground.

Now why does Satan want your mind? What does Satan want to do with your mind? He wants to make a citadel out of your mind; he wants to make a stronghold out of your mind. And once he’s built the citadel, he’s going to build a wall around it—walls of ignorance, and walls of pride, and walls of lust, and walls of hatred, and walls of bitterness. He’ll put those walls around, block by block. And then, once he builds this citadel, this stronghold, then, in the middle of it, he’s going to erect a high tower; and, from that high tower he’s going to war at Almighty God.

Go back, if you will, to chapter 10, and look at it. Paul says we, first of all, must pull down strongholds (2 Corinthians 10:4). Do you see it, in verse 4? That’s the wall—that’s the fortress—that he’s built. And then, we must cast down *“imagination, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God”* (2 Corinthians 10:5).

These are the high-sounding philosophies Satan builds in your mind. And he takes your thought life captive. Now he wants your mind to be a stronghold—a fortress, a citadel; and, as he corrupts your mind, he is going to use you to war against God. And you have become a pawn in this war. You have become a tool of Satan. You have become a weapon of Satan to war against God. And the devil uses your thought life

against Almighty God.

Now the devil's not that interested in you. His war is with God. You're just simply a tool and a pawn in his strategy. He's methodically using your thought life to war against God. Now God also wants your mind, because when God wants to change you, God changes you by changing your mind. Repentance—*metanoia*—means, “a change of mind.” And once you change your mind, the Bible says we now have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

And so the Bible says, in Ephesians chapter 4, verse 23: We're to “*be renewed in the spirit of [our] mind*” (Ephesians 4:23). The Bible says, in Romans chapter 12 and verse 2: We're “*transformed by the renewing of [our] mind*” (Romans 12:2). When God works through us, God does not work primarily through our emotions. And that's where so many people make a mistake. They think that their relationship with God is on the emotional plane. It is not primarily on the emotional plane. The emotions are just the by-product. You see, salvation is the deepest work of God. The emotions are the shallowest part of your life. God does not do His deepest work in the shallowest part, does He? No, but, on the contrary, the mind is what you have that reflects the person of Jesus. We have a transformed mind. The Bible says, “*We have the mind of Christ*” (1 Corinthians 2:16). And that's the reason the Bible says, “*To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*” (Romans 8:6).

And so first of all, I want you to see what I'm going to call the wiles of our foe—Satan wants to either blind your mind, if you're lost, or corrupt your mind, if your saved. Got it? Move on to the second point.

II. The Weakness of Our Flesh

Not only do I want you to see the wiles of our foe, but I want you to see the weakness of our flesh—the weakness of our flesh. Look, in verse 3: “*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh*” (2 Corinthians 10:3).

Now folks, we may as well admit it: We do walk in the flesh—that is, in skin, and bones, and bodies. All of us, in ourselves, are weak. The Bible says, “*The flesh is weak*” (Matthew 26:41; Mark 14:38). We might as well admit it: All of us live in a very mundane world. We live in a world that is real. It has problems. It has disappointments. It has sicknesses. It has perplexities. It has all these mundane things. And whether you're saved or lost, you're still in the flesh. Right? Right.

I was in the grocery store some time back. And a lady came up to me, and she said, “Oh, Brother Rogers, I didn't know you had to buy groceries like the rest of us.” Yeah, and I'll tell you something else: I have to carry out the garbage in the rain, too. Saved or lost, minister or lay person—we live in a very real world. Some people get the idea that, somehow, we can escape the flesh. We can't do that—not the fact that we live in flesh,

and bone, and body. Sometimes people go off to a monastery to try to do this. They think there might be some holiness in a hole. So they get off in a monastery, thinking they can get away from the flesh.

I heard about a man who wanted to see if he could be more spiritual, so he went to a monastery. It was a monastery where they took a vow of silence. They had two words every year. He stayed there the first year, reported to his superior. His superior said, “You have two words. What do you want to say?” He said, “Bed hard.” He said, “Thank you. Go back.” After another year, he came back, and said, “You have two more words. What would you like to say now?” He said, “Food bad.” “Thank you. Go back.” He came back the third year, and he said, “You have two more words. What would you like to say?” He said, “I quit.” He said, “Well, you might as well quit. All you’ve done is complain for three years.” You can’t get away from this world, no matter where you go. We are in the flesh. And sometimes the food is bad and the bed is hard.

And what the Apostle Paul is saying—“We walk in the flesh, but we do not war in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:3). Our enemy is not flesh and blood. And therefore, our weapons cannot be the weapons of flesh and blood. And the battle may be within man, but it’s not between men. We need to understand this. And a part of our problem is we’ve been trying to defeat a spiritual enemy with carnal weapons.

What are the big three carnal weapons that people inside and outside are beginning to depend upon? Three big carnal weapons: education, legislation, and environment. Everybody thinks those are the answers. I will guarantee you that everybody in Washington and everybody in the Pentagon that doesn’t know Jesus thinks those are the answers.

A. Education Is Not the Answer

Education—they think that, if we can just educate people, then we are just going to solve the problem. Nazi Germany was educated. *You take a man and give him an education without letting him know the Lord Jesus Christ, and what do you do? You make a clever devil.* He just has more ability to be wicked and to be cruel. Somebody has well said, “Take an ignorant man—he may steal a watermelon from a boxcar. Give him an education—he’ll steal the whole railroad.” He just has more ability to be evil with. I’m not against education, but education is not the answer.

B. Legislation Is Not the Answer

And then, somebody says, “Well then, it’s legislation. We need to make more laws, have better government.” Government cannot make you better, not that much better—not that much better. All government can do is restrain evil. But government cannot change hearts. You cannot be made better by a government. But we think, somehow, by legislation, that we can change the hearts and minds of people.

You remember the story of the mother who told her son to sit down. He wouldn't sit down. She said, "Son, sit down." The little boy wouldn't sit down. Finally, she sat him down in the chair, and said, "Now young man, stay there." He said to her, "I may be sitting down on the outside, but I'm standing up on the inside."

And that is the way many people who are incarcerated, and in prisons, and so forth, are. All of those prisons become swamps of discontent, where the mosquitoes of hate and crime breed. And you do not change people by putting them in jail. They must be put in jail, sometimes. But I want to say again that legislation is not the answer.

C. **Environment Is Not the Answer**

Nor is environment the answer. Everybody says, "Well, if everybody had better jobs, if we could get people out of the slums and so forth, then we could change mankind." I want to remind you that, if environment is the answer... Think about this: Where did man get in trouble to begin with? In the Garden of Eden—in the Garden of Eden. You never had a better environment than the Garden of Eden. And I—again—I am for better housing, I'm for better environment—safer, cleaner streets, the ecology, and all that. That's all fine. But none of these deal with the heart of the matter. The Bible says, "As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

I've heard a story about how they found out whether they were going to release people from the asylum. They would turn on the spigots until the sink would overflow, give the individual a mop, and say, "Clean this mess up." Well, if he began to wipe the water up without turning off the spigot, they knew he was not ready. But if he would turn off the spigot and then begin to mop, they'd say, "Well, maybe he's ready." Of course, that's only a story, because many people who are in the asylums are not stupid; they're just sick. But it illustrates the point, and it illustrates the point well. We have the mop of legislation. We have the mop of education. We have the mop of environment, but we never ever deal with the problem.

III. **The Weapons of Our Fight**

Satan wants the minds of men and women to blind the minds of the unsaved, to corrupt the mind of the saved. And so you see, first of all, the wiles of our foe. And then, you see the weakness of our flesh. "*Though we walk in the flesh,*" Paul says, "*we do not war after the flesh*" (2 Corinthians 10:3). Now that brings me to the most important thing I want to share with you today, and that is the weapons of our fight—the weapons of our fight. He says this: "*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal...—that is, "fleshly."* The Latin word *carnis* means "flesh." A *carnivorous* animal is a "flesh-eating" animal—"*the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;*")" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Now think about our war. The word for *warfare* there is a word that literally means “campaign.” That is, that, just as the devil is methodical, Paul was methodical. It speaks of siege warfare. Paul said, “I’m going to war.” And he said, “I’ll tell you the first thing I’m going to do.” He says, “I’m going to pull down strongholds—strongholds of doubt, strongholds of ignorance, strongholds of apostasy, strongholds of lusts.” He said, “I’m going to pull them down, because the devil has built these strongholds in people’s minds. And inside are imps and the demons of Hell.” Paul says, “First of all, I’m going to make a breach in the wall. I’m going to pull down the wall. And then,” he says, “when I go in, I’m going to knock down that tower—every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. There, where Satan has been hurling out his artillery over the walls—there, where Satan has been hurling out his artillery over the walls,” Paul said, “I’m going to demolish that thing—these thoughts, these philosophies, these lies.” He said, “I’m going to tear that down. And then,” he says, “I’m going to carry out captives. I’m going to take every thought and make it obedient to the Lord Jesus Christ—people’s habits, people’s fears, people’s doubts, people’s heartaches, people’s bitterness—minds that have been corrupted and blinded.” And Paul says, “I am going to set them free. I am going to war—I am going to war.”

Now had you been looking there, you’d have said, “Paul, you can’t win.” I mean, think what he was up against. You know, Paul wasn’t much to look at. When you think of the Apostle Paul, what do you think of? Do you think of somebody who was handsome? When you, if you were to hear Paul preach, do you think you would hear someone who was suave and eloquent? No. Skip down to verse 10—here was the problem in Corinth: “*For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful;*”—you know, Paul wrote some pretty powerful epistles—“*but, his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible*” (2 Corinthians 10:10).

I mean, if you were on a pulpit committee, you probably wouldn’t want Paul. Paul—he’d been beaten, and scarred, and, you know, pickled in the Mediterranean. He had the lictor’s lash on his back. He’d been stoned and left for dead. And they said he had bad eyesight, and he probably was a little ole’ humpback—little ole’ scholar, you know. He’s walking in there—bandy-leg little fellow, been all over the world. And when he would speak, he was not like Apollos. And he didn’t look like Adonis. He was just, you know, he was not much of a fellow.

And so we’re gong to have a fight. And in this corner, a little runt, Paul; and, in this corner, we have the entrenched, systematized, evil of intellectual Corinth. And behind Corinth, we have the Roman empire, 700-years-old; and we have the iron legends of Rome; and we have the natives of Rome; and we have the laws of Rome; and we have the Senate of Rome; and we have the Caesar of Rome; and we have the ways of Rome; we have the culture of Rome; we have the language of Rome. And here they

are: There's Paul—and here is the heavyweight. Who's going to win? Paul—Paul. How is he going to win? Not with flesh. Paul has a secret weapon. And the Roman Empire went down for the count of ten and hasn't gotten up yet.

Why—why? The Apostle Paul says, “I am going to war, but,” he says, “the weapon of my warfare is not carnal” (2 Corinthians 10:4). You say, “You don't look like much, Paul.” He says, “That's right.” “Paul, you're not good speaker.” “But,” he said, “I'm not depending on that. I am going to war, and I am going to use mighty weapons in my warfare.”

Now the same weapons that were available to the Apostle Paul are the weapons that are available to you, today. And so what are they? We find them right here, in this 10th chapter. There are four weapons—four mighty weapons, not carnal weapons. But they are weapons that are available to every mother's child in this building today for the fight that we all must fight.

A. Faith in Christ

Weapon number one: faith in Christ. You say, “Well, that doesn't sound like much of a weapon.” Look, if you will, in verse 7—Paul says, “*Do ye look on things after the outward appearance?*”—“Hey, don't sum me up by what I look like”—“*if any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's*” (2 Corinthians 10:7). That is, “I belong to Jesus—I belong to Jesus.”

Well, why is that a weapon? Well, you see, the things that are true about Christ are true about me. I am in Him, and He is in me. When He died, I died. When He was buried, I was buried. When He arose, I arose. When He ascended, I ascended. When He is seated in the heavenlies, I am seated in the heavenlies with Him. You say, “Pastor, that sounds like a lot of *hocus pocus*. I don't understand that.” Understand it or not, you'll never have victory until, first of all, you can say, “I am His, and He is mine. I am in the Lord Jesus Christ.”

In 1945, there was a conference at Potsdam. The rulers of the West were there—United States of America, Great Britain, the former Soviet Union. And they wrote out an ultimatum and sent it to Japan. And they said to the Japanese, “You must surrender totally and unconditionally; and, if you do not surrender, the devastation will come. It will be prompt; it will be thorough. We will destroy your armies. We will destroy your navies. We will destroy your Air Force. We will destroy your factories. We will destroy your cities. And we will not spare, if you do not surrender.” The Japanese said, “We will not surrender. We'll fight on.” And then, the Americans dropped the bomb, our weapon—our secret weapon—they dropped the bomb. And Japan surrendered, totally and unconditionally.

My friend, at Calvary, God dropped an A-bomb on Satan. That was the weapon: at

Calvary, when Jesus died. Jesus said, “Now is the prince of this world cast out” (John 12:31). Satan’s kingdom was ruined. Satan’s back was broken. Satan’s system collapsed, when Jesus died, and paid the debt of sin, and He ruined Satan. And “through death, He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).

Now that victory is not your victory until you can say, “I am His, and He is mine.” The Apostle Paul said, “When you come against me, you’re coming against the Jesus that’s in me. I am in Him, and He is in me.”

B. Our Authority from Christ

Weapon number one: our faith in Christ. Weapon number two: our authority from Christ. Look, in verse 8—he says, in verse 8, “*For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us*” (2 Corinthians 10:8). You see, everybody who has faith in Christ has received authority from Christ.

What is authority? Authority is the legally given right to act on behalf of another person. And every child of God has that authority. Jesus has given it to us. He says, in Luke 10, verses 19 and 20: “*Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you*” (Luke 10:19). The word *power* there is translated—it literally means, “authority.” “Behold, I give you *exousia*”—authority—“over all the power of the enemy.”

Jesus Christ commanded us to go and make disciples, and then, He said, “Lo, I am with you. All authority is given unto Me. And lo, I am with you” (Matthew 28:19–20). “If you ask anything in My name, I’ll give it to you; I’ll do it for you—with My authority” (John 14:14). You see, any boss knows, any employer knows, that, if you give an employee a responsibility, a job to do, you must also give him the authority to do it. You cannot, in fairness, require somebody to do a job and not give them the authority to get it done. What manager would delegate responsibility without delegating authority? And our Lord has given authority.

Now the devil hopes that you don’t understand this authority. And the only way that the devil can overcome you and mess with your mind is for you to fail to understand the authority that has already been given you in the Lord Jesus Christ.

When I was a little boy, before I went to junior high school, we had, at our elementary school, a thing called *the Patrol*. And to be on the Patrol was an honor. You got a belt. It had a white belt that came across here, and there was a badge on that belt. And you could stand out there and help the other boys and girls come across the street. You were called a *patrol boy* or *patrol girl*. I wanted to be one. And one day, they elected me to be a patrol boy. I was so happy. I got my little white belt and put it on, and I put that that white thing that came across this way. There was a shiny badge—looked

almost like a sheriff's badge. That was wonderful. I was going to be out there. I was going to be able to literally stand on the street and make cars stop. I looked forward to that.

I can remember getting out there in the street the first time. There was a child standing on the curb. "I'm going to let that child come across." Here comes a car. I held up my hand, and the person in the car just waved back and went on. That was the most anticlimactic thing. He thought I was waving at him. I felt so defeated when he simply waved back at me like I was saying, "How are you today?" I had to learn to use my badge. And friend, you're going to have to learn to use your badge.

The devil does not want you to understand the authority that you have. He does not want you to understand the strength of your weapons. I was in Moscow, some time ago. I was in a briefing with a former Soviet general. Somebody asked that general this question: "General..."—and, by the way, the general had become a Christian—"General, tell us, what effect did SDI, the Strategic Defense Initiative, have? What effect did that have on the implosion of the Soviet Empire, the evil empire?" That Soviet general, sitting in Moscow, said to us sitting there in that room, "It ruined us—it ruined us." He said, "We were already putting such a mega amount of our gross national product into defense, and," he said, "we told the Americans, 'You don't need SDI, because all of our weapons are defensive weapons. You don't need a weapon to defend against us.'" But then, here's what this general said—he said, "Of course, we were lying. Of course," he said, "we were telling a lie." That's what he said—a general in Moscow. "Of course," he said, "we were lying." And the devil is a liar, and the devil does not want you to use your weapon, because he knows it will ruin his kingdom; he knows it'll bring his kingdom down.

Our Lord has given us authority. We can pray with authority. We can preach with authority. We can rebuke the devil with authority. The devil gets on your case—with authority, you can resist him. The Bible says, "Resist the devil, and he'll flee from you" (James 4:7). The devil begins to put thoughts, and fears, and lusts, in your mind—you can take authority with the blood of Christ and God's A-bomb, and you can come to him and say, "Satan, you have no right in my life. You have no right in my mind. I belong to Jesus Christ. My sin is under the blood. I am inhabited by the Holy Spirit. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I belong to Jesus Christ, and you are trespassing on my Father's property. And in the name of Jesus, be gone!"

You say, "Can you do that? Isn't that like praying to the devil?" Well, you're not praying to a cat when you say, "Scat." You can rebuke the devil, and he will flee from you. Indeed, he will. You have authority. So many of us are saying, "O God, please help me, Lord! O God, I'm in such a difficulty! O God, my mind is so messed up! O God, I'm so confused! Lord, please do something!" I think I can hear Heaven saying, "I'm not

going to do anything, because I've already done it. You're asking Me to do what I've already done and to give you what I've already given you." You have authority. Use it. The devil hopes you never learn that. Paul said, "I have authority."

C. Our Boldness Through Christ

What is my mighty weapon? How do I pull down these things? Number one: my faith in Christ; number two: my authority from Christ; number three: my boldness through Christ. Look, if you will, in verse 10 of the same chapter—he says, *"For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible"* (2 Corinthians 10:10). Let me read you what how Goodspeed translates verse 11: "Such people had better understand that, when I arrive and take action, I will do just as I say I will do in my letters when I'm far away" (2 Corinthians 10:11). Chapter 10, verse 1: *"am bold"* (2 Corinthians 10:1). Verse 2: *"be bold"* (2 Corinthians 10:2). It's boldness in Christ.

You see, *the devil is the* sinister minister *of* fear. The devil does not want you to understand the authority you have in Christ. But these things follow: Paul said, "I have faith in Christ. I have authority from Christ. And therefore, I have boldness through Christ." We are to be bold in the Lord. The Bible says, of those early apostles, "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, they marveled and took knowledge of them, that they had been with Christ" (Acts 4:13).

Paul told Timothy, "God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of love, and power, and of a sound mind" (2 Timothy 1:7). Zig Ziglar says, "Fear is **False Evidence Appearing Real**." The devil will try to make you afraid, but your weapon—your weapon—is courage. As God told Joshua, *"Be strong and of good courage"* (Joshua 1:6). Don't be intimidated by the devil—don't do it. One of the great weapons is boldness.

D. Humility Before Christ

And then, the last weapon, and I'm glad he mentions this—first of all, faith in Christ; secondly, authority from Christ; thirdly, boldness through Christ—and, last of all, humility before Christ. Look, if you will, in verses 12 and following: *"We dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."* Look in verse 13: *"But we will not boast"* (2 Corinthians 10:12–13). Look, in verse 15: *"Not boasting..."* (2 Corinthians 10:15).

Friend, nothing will put you more in the devil's grace than pride, and nothing is a greater weapon against the devil than true humility. I cannot emphasize that enough. True humility—what a mighty weapon! The Bible says, of a young preacher, that he must not be *"a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the*

devil" (1 Timothy 3:6). Nothing puts a man more out of the reach of Satan than genuine, pure humility before God.

Conclusion

Listen to your pastor today. There's a war going on. There are the wiles of our foe, and the weakness of our flesh. But there are the weapons of our warfare; and, it is faith in Christ, authority from Christ, boldness through Christ, and humility before Christ. You get those things down in your heart and in your life, and you put them into practice, and you're going to live victoriously, because you were born again, you were born to win. And it is God's plan; it is God's will; it is God's way, that God's people be triumphant. And the Bible says, "The people who know their God shall do exploits" (Daniel 11:32).

I think it's time that we started standing up, rather than folding up. I think it's time that we got our minds that have been messed up taken back, and we begin to march out in the name of Jesus—first within and then without—to pull down strongholds; and to knock down towers; and to take our thoughts captive; and to make them obedient to Jesus Christ. Don't you think so? Then, let's do it.

Bow your heads in prayer. Father God, in the name of Jesus, burn the message into our hearts. We love You and praise You. Hallelujah. Amen.

The Battle for Your Mind

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: April 11, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 10:3–11

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Conclusion

Introduction

Would you take God's precious Word and be finding, please, 2 Corinthians chapter 10. We're going to be talking about your mind—"The Battle for Your Mind." Even in the song that Steve sang, he talked about a battle that we are all fighting.

Some of our battles are maybe just a little silly. I heard of a man who was on a diet, trying to lose weight, but on his way to work he passed a donut shop. He got to thinking just how good a donut and a cup of coffee would be. And he said to himself, "I will only stop if there is a parking place right in the front." And sure enough, after seven times around the block, there was a parking place right there in the front.

Now all of us fight the *battle of the bulge*, and those kinds of battles. They're with us always. But there is a battle more deadly, more sinister. It is a battle for the mind—a deadly war that is between God and Satan. And the battleground is, believe it or not, your mind and your soul. And those of us who are Christians are caught up in this battle. Second Corinthians 10, verses 3–5: "*For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.*"—so, right away, we know we're talking about a war; we're talking about a battle—"*(for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God*

to the pulling down of strong holds;) casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought...”—underscore that—“*bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5).

Now there’s a war. And this message is a warning, and it is a call to arms. But I pray God it will be an encouragement, because *when you were* born again, *you were born to* win. God did not save you for a defeated life. The Bible says, “Thanks be unto God, who causes us always, always, always to triumph in Christ Jesus” (2 Corinthians 2:14). I hope you believe that. God’s plan for you, precious friend, is victory. And He has a plan for you for victory in your thought life.

I. The Warfare of Our Foe

Three things I want to lay on your heart this morning—the very first thing is the warfare of our foe. Look, if you will again, in verse 4: “*(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)*” (2 Corinthians 10:4). There is a war.

A. The Devil Wants Your Mind

And who are the participants in this war? Who has declared war against your thought life, against the citadel of your soul? Well, I want to say that your enemy is not clothed in flesh. Put in your margin, Ephesians 6, verse 12—there, the Apostle Paul told the Ephesian Christians, “*For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers*”—listen to this phrase—“*of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Ephesians 6:12). That is, the devil has ensconced himself in high places to war against you. You are at war, and there is a war against you. There is a deadly array—a deadly array—according to this verse, of demonic hosts. They are invisible, and they are dedicated to the destruction of your thought life. And they are under the authority of the prince of darkness, the god of wickedness, the devil.

Now what is the prize in this warfare? What is the battleground? Look, if you will, in verse 5: “*Casting down imaginations,*”—underscore the word *imaginations*—“*and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God,*”—underscore the word *knowledge*—“*and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ*” (2 Corinthians 10:5). There you have it: imaginations, knowledge, thought. It’s obvious that there is a war. Satan is behind it, and your mind is the battleground. Satan’s desire is to conquer and to control your thought life, and then to make your thought life a citadel from which he can war against God, because, look, if you will, here—it says here, “*Casting down...every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God*” (2

Corinthians 10:5). Satan wants your mind.

Now there is a difference between your mind and your brain. Now the behavioral psychologist doesn't recognize that difference, but the Bible makes that difference very clear, very plain. Your mind does the thinking; your brain is what you think with. The relationship of the mind and the brain is very much like the relationship of a piano and a pianist. The pianist uses the piano to express that music. So there's a difference between your mind and your gray matter. There's a difference between the two; your mind and your brain are separate. Now I will admit that some people have a better piano than others. Some of us have a spinet, and some have a grand piano. But you see, still there is a decided difference between your mind and your brain.

Now when you get saved, you have the mind of Christ. That doesn't mean you have a higher IQ, but you have the mind of Christ. You have a different capacity for thinking, to use that brain that you have. Now again, the devil wants your mind. And the fact that you do have the mind of Christ, the fact that you have been saved, does not mean—listen to me—it does not mean, therefore, because you've been born again that the war is over for you.

Paul is writing here to the Christians; he's writing to the Corinthian Christians. You're in chapter 10; go over and look in chapter 11 and verse 3. It'll make it even plainer. Look, if you will, in chapter 11 and verse 3—Paul says here, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty,”*—that is, he's a snake in the grass; he's a wily old devil—*“so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11:3). Now when he says, *“the simplicity that is in Christ,”* he doesn't mean that you're saying your ABC's spiritually. No—no. The word *simplicity* actually means, “purity; sincerity.” Now what he's saying is, here, that the devil wants... It means, “single-minded devotion.” So “I fear,” he says, “as though the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds—your minds—should be corrupted from the pure single-minded devotion that is in Christ.” Now the devil, therefore, is working against your mind. He wants to somehow corrupt your mind.

Paul, here, is talking to the Corinthian Christians as though they were his children, and he says that he has espoused them to Christ. He's like a father looking over his daughter and trying to keep her pure. Notice he says, in verse 2, *“For I am jealous over you...”*—this is chapter 11, verse 2—*“For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11:2). Now what does he mean by “godly jealousy”?

Now jealousy can be bad, or it can be good. There's an insane jealousy that's not good, but there's a godly jealousy that wants to protect those that we love. And so husbands have a right to be jealous that they have the pure devotion of their wives. Wives have a right to be jealous that they have the pure devotion of their children.

Parents have a right to be jealous over their children, that they might be protected. A loving father wants to present his daughter—bring his daughter—to the marriage altar a virgin—a loving father wants to bring his daughter to the marriage altar a virgin. And the problem today is that we have so many dropout dads that don't understand that their job is to raise up a godly girl and to present her in marriage a virgin girl to a virgin boy. That's the purpose of a godly father.

Now Paul is using that analogy to say that those people at Corinth were his spiritual children; they are the bride of Christ. And he is saying, "I don't want you to be corrupted; I don't want you to be sullied. When I present you to Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb, I want you to be a pure, chaste virgin for the Lord Jesus Christ." You know, we don't have enough purity in the church today. The bride has forgotten how to blush, I believe. What we need today is a pure church.

Sometimes teenagers sell out so cheaply. I was reading, recently, an incredible story about... Years ago, in London, there was a man named Mr. Betts—B-e-t-t-s—who had a music store. And a shabbily dressed man came in there carrying a dusty old violin, and he said, "I need food. Would you buy my violin?" Mr. Betts said, "I have plenty of violins." The man said, "I am in desperate need. Please buy my violin." Mr. Betts bought the old man's violin for the equivalency of five dollars—only, you wouldn't call it *five dollars* in London—but the equivalency of five dollars. And the old man went out, crammed the money in his pocket, his shabby old clothes, and went out.

Betts, being a musician, tucked the violin under his chin, and he began to play. And he heard rich resonant tones coming from that violin. He got a candle and lighted it—lighted the candle—and held it up, looked inside that violin, and he saw those immortal words, "Antonio Stradivarius." He realized he had a treasure. The old man had sold him a Stradivarius violin for five dollars! Betts was an honest man, a good man. He went out to try to find the old man, to say, "Hey, you made a mistake"—but he was gone. He never found him again. Mr. Betts sold the violin for \$5,000 many, many years ago. Today, it's worth a king's ransom. Think of the old man selling a violin like that for five dollars. I tell you, some of you young people are selling out more cheaply than that, when you make your bodies a dirty plaything of somebody, rather than saving yourself for the one that you're going to marry.

Now what Paul is saying is this: "As a father wants to protect his daughter and present her a pure virgin to Jesus Christ," Paul said, "I want to protect the Church. I want you to have that pure, simple-minded, sincere love—single-mindedness—for Jesus Christ." And he said, "There's a battle for your mind. The devil wants to get your mind, because the devil knows, if he can get your mind, he can corrupt you; he can pull you away from the Lord Jesus Christ."

We live in a world, friend, that has gone wild concerning the thought life. I remind

you, if you'll read Genesis chapter 6, that God destroyed an entire civilization because of their thought life. God saw that the wickedness of imaginations of men's heart was only evil continually (Genesis 6:5), and God destroyed them, the Bible says, because of the things that they imagined in their minds.

I have an article of *U.S. News and World Report*—an alarming story. On the front of *U.S. News and World Report* is the picture of a teenager. He's in his jeans. He has his pullover shirt on. He has earphones. He has a tape player in his hand. And the caption says this: "Do you know what your children are listening to?" It's a picture of the average teenager; you'd see him anywhere. And then, the article inside—deeply disturbing. Let me just quote a little from it:

"Day and night, America's youth are enticed by electronic visions of a world so violent, sensual, and narcotic, that childhood itself appears to be under siege. The pleasures produced to the young today through records, television, video, and films are so provocative that parents are in an uproar. Psychologists are warning of dire consequences. Entertainment producers are fearful of threats to free speech. And politicians are pondering solutions that question First Amendment rights." The article goes on to say—and I'm skipping, "Violence, the occult, sadomasochism, rebellion, drug abuse, promiscuity, and homosexuality are constant themes." And then, I want you to listen to what this article says—and this is not a Baptist preacher; this is *U.S. News and World Report*: "Studies estimate that teenagers listen to 10,500 hours of rock music between the 7th and 12th grades alone"—10,500 hours.

Well, how much is that? All right, that's between the 7th and 12th grades. Now listen to this. This is just 500 hours less than the total time they spend in school over 12 years—only 500 hours less. Can you imagine 10,500 hours of rock music coming into the heads of these young people, and it is filled with garbage? And The National Education Association estimates that many of the 5,000 teenage suicides a year—many of them—are rooted to the depression that comes through this fatalistic music that these kids are listening to. Well, the Bible teaches that—Romans 8, verse 6—the Bible says, "*To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace*" (Romans 8:6). The Bible says, in Proverbs chapter 23, verse 7: "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*" (Proverbs 23:7). That means that we need to guard our minds.

And incidentally, let me say to some of you who are into transcendental meditation: That's dangerous—that's dangerous. Do you know what transcendental meditation does? It opens you up to demonic spirits. People say, "Well, put yourself into some sort of a meditative mood, you may make contact." Yes, you may. That would be like going to bed at night and unlocking all the doors, pulling open all the windows, and then going to sleep at night to see what might come in. You know, you just go to sleep and say, "Well, tonight I might make contact." Yes, you might—you might. Oh, no. Your mind is to

be fastened on the Lord Jesus Christ. *“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee”* (Isaiah 26:3).

Now folks, I’m telling you that there is a battle here for your mind. The devil wants your mind. The devil wants to corrupt your mind from the simplicity—the single-minded devotion—that is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. **God Wants Your Mind**

And not only does the devil want your mind; God wants your mind, because it is through your mind that God reaches you. Now I’m going to give you some scriptures, and I don’t want you to turn to them, because we don’t have time. I want you to listen in fast speed this morning. But I want you to jot these scriptures down and use them later on.

1. **God Communicates Through Your Mind**

First of all, I want to remind you that, when God communicates to you, God communicates through your mind. Ephesians 4,17 and 18: *“This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk,”*—now, he’s talking to Christians. He says, “Stop looking like pagans”—*“in the vanity of their mind,”*—he means, “the emptiness, the vapidness of their mind”—*“having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart”* (Ephesians 4:17–18). And the word *heart* here also refers to the mind.

Now God, when He communicates, He communicates to you through the mind. We have people today who want to go to services that put the emphasis on emotionalism. God does not communicate to you through your emotions. *Your emotions are the shallowest part of your nature.* Salvation *is the* deepest *work of God.* People get in services—and the rhythmic music and everything—and they get goose bumps, and liver shivers, and all that. They think they’ve had an experience with God; all they’ve had is an emotional hiccup. I’m telling the truth.

God communicates through your mind. Now when I say, “your mind,” I’m not talking about rationalism and intellectualism, either. I’m talking about God revealing Himself to your mind. God communicates through your mind.

2. **God Changes You Through Your Mind**

And God changes you by changing your mind. Ephesians 4, verse 23: *“And be renewed in the spirit of your mind”* (Ephesians 4:23). How does God renew you? In the spirit of your mind. You can change the way you live by changing the way you think. I hope that comes in. You can change the way you live by changing the way that you think. What do you think Romans 12, verse 2 says? Listen to it: *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind”* (Romans 12:2)—

“transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

3. God Controls You Through Your Mind

God communicates to you through the mind. God changes you through the mind. God controls you through the mind. Remember the scripture I gave you before? Romans 8, verse 6: *“To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace”* (Romans 8:6).

I clipped this; this is something that Charles Swindoll—Chuck Swindoll—wrote. It’s one of the finest things he wrote, in my estimation. He says this: “The longer I live, the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts; it is more important than the past, than education.” Now he’s not saying that attitude is more important than truth. He’s not talking about truth, as we know it. He’s talking about facts. Two and two is four. He says, “Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than the past—more than education; than money; than circumstances; than failure; than successes; than what other people think, or say, or do. It is more important than appearance, giftedness, or skill. It will make or break a company, a church, a home. The remarkable thing is that we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing that we can do is play on the one thing we have, and that is our attitude. I am convinced that life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is with you.”

We are in charge of our attitudes. Well, who’s in charge of you? I hope the Holy Spirit is, because, friend, God communicates through the mind. God changes us by changing the mind. God controls us by controlling the mind. God wants your mind. The devil wants your mind. And so there is a battle for your mind.

II. The Weakness of Our Flesh

Now that’s the first point here. What we’ve talked about here is this: the warfare of our foe. Now here’s the second point: the weakness of our flesh. You must understand this: If you think I’m just telling you to buck up and think better thoughts, no—that would be futile. Notice that, in your own flesh, you are weak.

Now go back to our text, 2 Corinthians 10—look, if you will, in verse 3: *“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh”* (2 Corinthians 10:3). Your flesh, your natural state, does not have what it takes to have the right thought process. Now we live in the flesh, folks. We might as well admit it—all of us have problems; all of us have disappointments; all of us have sicknesses; all of us have perplexities; all of us have the mundane things of life. Don’t get the idea that, when you get saved, you move into another planet somewhere. I was in the store, a while back, buying groceries, and a

lady said to me, “Oh, Brother Rogers, I didn’t know you had to buy groceries.” Yeah, we do. And also, I have to take the garbage out in the rain. I do that just like everybody else does. We all live in the flesh. I mean, that’s a part of life; that’s just where we are. And there’s no place that you can take your flesh, and get it somewhere, and just get out of this rat race that we’re in. You just can’t do that. The battle is not—the warfare is not—after the flesh.

Sometimes people go to a monastery, thinking that, if they can get off in a monastery, somehow, that then they can be holy. I heard about a man—went to a monastery. And this monastery had the regimen, the discipline, of silence. They could only say two words a year. And this man went to a monastery. And finally, he came to his superior after a whole year there in the monastery, and he said, “All right, you have two words. What do you want to say?” He said, “Bed hard.” Thank you. Go back. He came back the second year. He said, “Well, you get two more words. What do you want to say?” He said, “Food bad.” Said, “Go on back.” Came back the third year—said, “You’ve got two words. What do you want to say?” He said, “I quit.” And he said, “Well, you might as well quit. All you’ve done is complain for three years.”

There’s no way that the flesh can overcome this. “Though we live in the flesh, we don’t war in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 10:3). He’s talking here about the weakness of our flesh. Listen. We do not fight with flesh and blood, because we don’t fight against flesh and blood. You have to understand that. Remember Ephesians chapter 6, verses 10–13: “*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities...[and] powers*” (Ephesians 6:10–12). That’s the reason he says here, in verse 3: “*Though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh*” (2 Corinthians 10:3). When are we going to learn that our battle is not with the Democrats, not with the Republicans, not with Communism, not with Hollywood, not with the IRS, and not with the mother-in-law? That’s not where our battle is. Our battle for the mind is against the devil himself, and you cannot outwit or out-war the devil. He mocks at our schemes; he ridicules our organization.

A. Education Is Not the Answer

Do you know what most people think the battle of the mind’s going to be won with? It’s education. I’m not against education. But *if you take a man who does not know the Lord Jesus Christ and educate him, what have you done? You’ve just made him more dangerous—he becomes a clever devil*

I had a friend before I met Christ—he was an alcoholic, and he went to these various courses for alcohol abuse. And he told me, after he’d met the Lord Jesus Christ—he said, “Let me tell you what those courses did for me without Jesus.” He said, “I went to

those courses a dumb drunk.” He said, “I came out an educated alcoholic.” That’s education. No—education is not the answer.

B. Legislation Is Not the Answer

And I’m going to tell you something else: Legislation is not the answer for the mind. “*The weapons of our warfare are not carnal*” (2 Corinthians 10:4). Do you think that by laws you’re going to control men’s thought processes? We’re trying to have laws, now, against what people think. Now we’re going to punish hate crimes. Oh, listen. Boy, if a man, who kills me, kills me, I sure hope he doesn’t hate me. I mean, you think about that—all crimes are hate crimes. But we think, somehow, that, by law, we can have laws and make people love one another, and laws that keep people from hating one another. Well, you can’t do that with legislation. Legislation can only restrain evil; it cannot make people good. Education, or legislation, is not the answer.

There’s an old story about a mother who told her four-year-old to sit down. He wouldn’t sit down. She said, “Son, I said, ‘Sit down.’” He wouldn’t sit down. She took him by the shoulders, and put him in the chair, and said, “I said, ‘Sit down.’” He sat there for a while, and he said, “I’m standing up on the inside.”

C. Environment Is Not the Answer

Legislation is not the answer. And I’m going to tell you something else: Environment is not the answer. How are you going to control your mind? You think you’re going to control your thought life by environment? Listen. Paul says, “*The weapons of our warfare are not carnal*” (2 Corinthians 10:4). Education, legislation, environment—all of those are carnal methods. Those are things that people can do without the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you think that, if you get in a better environment, it’s going to change your thought life? Well, I want to remind you of something—I want a good environment; I want an education, and I like good laws—but I remind you that Adam and Eve got in trouble in the Garden of Eden. You’re not going to have a better environment than that. And how did they get in trouble? They were deceived; the devil messed with their minds—the devil messed with their mind.

And so we see the warfare of our foe—the devil wants our minds. We see the weakness of flesh—that we do not have what it takes to overcome.

I don’t believe this is a true story, but it illustrates what I’m talking about: They say that, in a particular mental institution where they tried to ascertain if people were ready to be released, they put them in a room, turned the faucet on over a sink until the sink overflows, and then gave the people a mop, and said, “Clean up this room.” Now if they started mopping without turning off the water, they said they were not ready to leave. That’s what we’ve been doing in our society—we’ve been just mopping, without turning off the water. The problem, folks, is the mind. “As a man thinketh, so is he” (Proverbs

23:7). Out of the heart, out of the mind, are the issues of life (Proverbs 4:23).

III. The Weapons of Our Fight

Now let's move to the third and final thing. What I've talked about is the warfare of our foe—the devil tries to conquer our minds. What I've tried to talk about is the weakness of our flesh—we don't have what it takes to overcome, to win this battle, *“for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal”* (2 Corinthians 10:3). Do you know what the word *carnal* means? Did you ever order a *chili con carne*? It means, “with meat.” The Latin word for *flesh* is *carnis*, when he says, *“The weapons of our warfare are not [fleshly]”* (2 Corinthians 10:4). We live in the flesh, but we don't war after the flesh.

Now here's the third thing I want you to see, folks: the weapons of our fight—the weapons of our fight. He mentions them: *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”* (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Now in Paul's day, there was a battle. And in one corner, it had Paul; in the other corner, you had the Roman Empire. The Roman empire—been in existence for 700 years—had prestige, power, the iron legions of Rome for an army, the mighty vessels of Rome in the navy, the Roman Senate, the Roman law. And all of that evil had entrenched itself in Corinth in the hearts and minds of these people. And over there, in the other corner, was the Apostle Paul, a little squinty-eyed Jew with a heart full of Jesus. And Paul is declaring war. Paul said, “I'm coming against all that.”

Now who's going to win this fight? Well, Paul wins this fight. How did Paul win this fight? Not with carnal weapons. How did Paul put the entrenched evil in the Roman Empire and at Corinth down for the count of ten? Paul said, “I'm coming against this citadel—I'm coming against this.” Notice, if you will here, as he talks about what he's coming against. He speaks there, in verse 4, of strongholds. Do you see that? He says, *“mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds”* (2 Corinthians 10:4). What is a stronghold? It's a fortress. Walls of resistance are going to come down.

What kinds of resistance are in the hearts and minds of the Corinthians and the Memphians? Well, arrogance, ignorance, despair—these are the strongholds. Inside that stronghold are demonic thoughts—organized, mobilized—the demonized armies of Hell are inside that stronghold. Paul says, “That is coming down.”

And then, he mentions *high things*. Do you see that? Look, if you will, in verse 5: *“Casting down...every high thing”* (2 Corinthians 10:5). Now here's a citadel, and it's got these towers—all around, these towers. Paul says, “I'm going to pull down these walls. I'm going to get at those of you who are on the inside.” And Paul says, “I'm going to decimate your towers.” What's he talking about there? He's talking about not intelligence, but intellectualism—high-minded attitudes, sophistication. Paul said, “That's coming down.”

And then, he said, “Inside there are some captives.” He said, “I’m going to take those captives captive.” He said, “I’m going to bring into captivity every thought. Thoughts that are being held hostage are going to be set free from habits, and fears, and obsessions, and lusts.” Paul says, “I’m tearing down those walls. Those towers are coming down, and those thoughts—they’re coming out. I am going to war.” Not in his own flesh, because he says, *“The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ”* (2 Corinthians 10:4–5). What a war!

Now what were Paul’s weapons? Paul says, *“the weapons of our warfare”* (2 Corinthians 10:4).

A. The Sovereignty of His Commander

First of all, there’s the sovereignty of his commander. Look, if you will, in verse 7—it says, *“Do ye look on things after the outward appearance? if any man trust to himself that he is Christ’s, let him of himself think this again, that, as he is Christ’s, even so are we Christ’s”* (2 Corinthians 10:7). That is, “We belong to Christ. He is our commander-in-chief.”

Japan, at Potsdam, told Britain, and told the United States, “We’re not going to surrender.” The Allies said to Japan, “If you don’t surrender, we will decimate you; we will obliterate you; we will come with devastating force against you.” Japan said, “We’ll fight on.” And we dropped on Hiroshima, Nagasaki, the A-bomb; and, Japan surrendered—they surrendered. Friend, the devil has been trying to do all that he can do to win this war. But I’ll tell you, when Jesus Christ died at Calvary, he dropped an A-bomb on the devil—he dropped an A-bomb on the devil. Jesus said, “Now is the prince of this world cast down” (John 12:31). Satan’s kingdom came down. And Paul said we belong to Jesus. He is our sovereign commander in this battle.

B. The Authority of Our Commission

Not only do we have the sovereignty of our commander, but we have the authority of our commission. Look, if you will, in verse 8—look at it: *“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed”* (2 Corinthians 10:8). Notice *“our authority.”* What is authority? Authority is the legal right to act on behalf of another. Jesus, who’s won the war, has given us the power of attorney. David, with a slingshot and God, came against Goliath. And I’ll tell you, I’d rather have a slingshot and God than have the sword of Goliath. We have authority. Jesus has given us that authority.

Luke 10, verses 19 and 20—Jesus said, *“Behold, I give unto you power”*—and the word *power* is literally “authority”—*“to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the*

power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” Jesus said you’ve got this authority. But notice this: *“Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven”* (Luke 10:19–20). Jesus said, “You’ve got power—you’ve got authority—over all of these demonic hosts that are in this citadel. But don’t rejoice in that. Don’t be devil-minded; be Heaven-minded. Don’t rejoice that I’ve given you this authority. Rejoice that your name is written in Heaven.” Listen. It’s not the knowledge of the devil that sets you free; it is the knowledge of Jesus that sets you free. You have to understand—we’re not called to be evangelical ghost-busters. The Bible says we *“resist the devil,”* not, “chase him” (James 4:7).

C. The Certainty of Our Courage

What you have to do, what you have to understand, is this: that there is the sovereignty of our commander; there is the authority of our commission. I wish I had time for this, but our time is going: There is the certainty of our courage. Look, if you will, in verses 8–11 of this same chapter here, and I’m coming to the end: *“For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed: that I may not seem as if I would terrify you by letters. For his letters, say they, are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible.”* They said, “Paul, you’re always writing these tough letters. Wait till you get here, you little weakling.” Paul says, in verse 11: *“Let such an one think this, that, such as we are in word by letters when we are absent, such will we be also in deed when we are present”* (2 Corinthians 10:8–11). Paul says, “Listen. I belong to Jesus Christ. He’s won the battle for me. He has given me authority; and, because of that, I have this courage, and I am going to win this battle.”

Conclusion

Now my time is gone. Come back at 11—I’ll finish the sermon. My time is gone. But you listen to me today. As you think, that’s what you’re going to be. Chuck Swindoll is correct when he says that attitude is everything. Now once you take back the fortress of your mind, then what you need to do is to set a guard. The Bible says, “Guard your mind with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23).

You go to the airport; you get on the airplane; you go through a thing—what do they call it? A magnetometer, or something like that—you go through that deal—what do you do? You take out your pocket calculator; you take out your keys; you take out your glasses; you take off your tie clasp; you take off your earrings—not me, but others; and, you take off this stuff. You think you’re ready to go through, and that thing says, *Mmmm.*

“Would you step back, sir? Do you have anything in your pocket?” One more time—*Mmmm*. “Would you step back again, sir? Would you come over here, sir?” And they frisk you. Boy, I wish we could put some of those at the door of this sanctuary that would detect sin. After I preach, you try to get out—it would say, “You go back in there for a while.” Wouldn’t that be great? “You ain’t ready yet. You come on back in there. He’s not finished with you yet. You’ve got something else you need to put in the basket.” Amen? Well, friend, also, you need to keep one of those on your mind, and you don’t let those things get into the fortress. I mean, just don’t let those things in.

Listen. Read Philippians: “Whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8). God made you, where you can’t think two thoughts at one time. If you’re thinking what’s right, you can’t be thinking what’s wrong. And as you think, you will be. You guard your mind; center your mind upon the Lord Jesus. Don’t let the devil take away your pure-hearted devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Stay in love with the Lord Jesus Christ, and there won’t be any room for those filthy, dirty, wicked, lascivious, lustful, prideful thoughts that bombard us all.

Boy, I wish I had more time. Let’s bow our heads in prayer. Heads are bowed; eyes are closed. O precious friend, you must begin by giving your heart to Jesus Christ. You see, the Bible says, in 2 Corinthians 4: “*The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not*” (2 Corinthians 4:4). You see, your mind, without Christ, is really blind to spiritual things. Would you let God just remove that blindness today and give your heart to Christ?

Would you pray a prayer like this, if you’re not saved? “Lord Jesus, I need You, and I want You. I need You for this life, and I need You for life everlasting. 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.” Pray that. “O Lord Jesus, I trust You. Come into my heart, right now. Now take control of my life, right now, and make me the person You want me to be.” Pray that. “Lord Jesus, save me. And Jesus, help me never to be ashamed of You. In Your name I pray. Amen.”

You Can Change Your Life by Changing Your Thoughts

By Adrian Rogers

Sermon Date: December 7, 1986

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 11:1–4

Outline

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- I. Maximize Your Mind
- II. Dismiss Lies
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 - A. Master the Word of God
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 - D. Mobilize the Word of God
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Introduction

Take God's Word, and turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and we're going to read the first several verses of that chapter. Second Corinthians chapter 11, beginning with verse 1, reads: *"Would to God ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste"—the word means "pure"—"virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty,—the word literally means "craftiness"—so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him"* (2 Corinthians 11:1–4). That is, if you are not careful, you just may believe that.

I'm going to cease the reading right now, and let me tell you something wonderful and something glorious: You can change your life by changing your thoughts. Many Christians today need to have their lives changed. And if you don't want to have your lives changed for good, for God, for eternity, then I think that there is something radically and dramatically wrong in your heart and in your life. Now when God gets ready to change you, God is going to change you by changing your thoughts. When the devil gets ready to corrupt you, the devil is going to corrupt you, if he can, by corrupting

your thoughts.

Now let me give you the background for this passage of Scripture, because it may seem a little obtuse to you as you read it there, to begin with. But Paul, of course, had such a love for the Corinthian Christians. He thought of himself as their spiritual father. He thought of them as his spiritual children. And so he said, *“I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy”* (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Did you know that there is a godly jealousy? For example, a husband who wants his wife protected has a godly jealousy for his wife. Parents who want their children protected have a godly jealousy for their children. That word *jealousy* means a God-given responsibility to keep them, to guard them, to protect them, and to preserve them. And so the word *jealousy* is not used here in a bad sense. And Paul says, *“I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy”* (2 Corinthians 11:2). You see, Paul thought of himself as a father, he thought of that Corinthian church as a virgin daughter, and he thought of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Heavenly Bridegroom.

Now Paul basically said to this church, “I want to keep you; I want to protect you; I want to guard you; and, I want to present you to Jesus, when Jesus comes. And now you are engaged to Him—I have espoused you to Him, but, one of these days, you’re going to meet Him. One of these days, you are going to be married to the Lord Jesus Christ. You are going to be caught up to meet Him in the air. And when that time comes, I want you to be absolutely pure.”

And let me just say that the duty of every father is to bring his daughter up to the marriage altar as a virgin. And every man, when he comes to the marriage altar, should be a virgin. That’s God’s goal; that’s God’s desire. That is what the Bible teaches. The Bible says that we are to flee fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18), and people ought to come to the marriage altar absolutely pure.

I feel so sorry for our young people today. They have been given so much garbage. They don’t understand what the Bible teaches. They’ve sold out so cheaply. I read a story recently: Many years ago, in a little side street in London, a shabbily dressed man carrying a violin entered a shop—a little secondhand shop—and he told the proprietor, “I want to sell you this violin.” He said, “I don’t have any food to eat. Would you buy my violin?” The proprietor said, “I’ve got several violins. I don’t need another one.” The man with the violin said, “Please. I need money.” So the proprietor said, “All right, I’ll give you five dollars.” Now it wasn’t five dollars there, but the equivalency of five dollars. And that violin was sold for five dollars. The old man dressed in rags left. The proprietor, who himself was a musician, took the violin, dusted it off a little, tucked it under his chin, and pulled the bow across the strings. When he did, he heard resonant tones that he’d never heard before. He heard sweet music that was indescribably beautiful. He lighted a candle and looked inside that violin, and there he saw those letters that spelled out that

immortal name—Antonio Stradivarius. And he realized that it was a Stradivarius violin—one of a hundred—one that had been missing. He ran outside to try to find the old man in rags, but he was already gone. For five dollars he had sold that violin. Mr. Betts, the shopkeeper, later sold the violin himself for \$5,000. Later, it was sold for \$100,000. What it's worth today I couldn't begin to tell you, for it is so rare and so precious.

Some of you young people are selling something that is very valuable for very cheap. Did you know that? You don't know what you have. You don't understand how important it is that you keep yourself pure. Listen. God *is not trying to keep you from sex; He is trying to keep sex for you.* It is God's precious gift. You're not smarter than God. You kids, you eat your cake now, and you'll have a crummy tomorrow. I want to tell you that God knows what He is doing—and the idea is that a daughter is to be presented to her husband as a pure virgin.

Now let's take that and put it in the spiritual realm, because Paul was talking to them in the spiritual realm. We need to be true to Jesus Christ, spiritually, and when Christ comes again, we don't need to be corrupted along with this world. We don't need to be *two-timing* our Lord. We need to be absolutely pure and clean, when Jesus Christ comes.

Now Paul knew that Satan is the corrupter. It is Satan that would draw away our love from the Lord Jesus Christ and corrupt our lives. And the way he does it—I want you to notice—is by using the mind. Look again, if you will, in verse 3—Paul says, *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds...”*—underscore that—*“so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ”* (2 Corinthians 11:3). Now if the devil wants to seduce you—if the devil wants to draw you away, if the devil wants to corrupt you—then the way he will do it is with your mind. Your mind is the battleground. There is a strategic battle that is being waged for your thought life, because, dear friend, you can change your life for good or for bad by changing your thoughts.

And so there's a battle in the thought life that is being waged right now. Now notice, in verse 3, what Paul says to the Corinthians—he basically says, “I have a concern for you”—these were people who were already saved, and he said—that their *“minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* What does that word *simplicity* mean? The word *simplicity*, here, does not mean something that we would equate with *simplemindedness*. It is more *single-mindedness*. It means “full-hearted devotion”—that my mind is not corrupted with many things. I have a simple mind—a single mind. Now keep that in mind, and I want to give you three thoughts—three principles, three things—that I pray that God, the Holy Spirit, will emblazon and etch in letters upon your mind, and upon your consciousness today, that will keep you pure, and enable you to face the Lord Jesus, clean and pure as God wants you to face the Lord Jesus.

I. Maximize Your Mind

Number one: the first principle is don't minimize the mind. Or, I could put it positively—maximize your mind. Maximize your mind. Your mind is so very important.

Now a nutritionist will tell us that we are what we eat. You eat junk food—you get a junk body. The psychologist tells us that we are what we think. Now if you wouldn't eat garbage, then you ought not to think garbage; because, as you are what you eat, you are what you think.

Now the Bible tells us the same thing, in Proverbs chapter 23, and verse 7: “*For as [a man] thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Proverbs 23:7). That is, we tend to turn into what we think about. It's a wonder that I didn't turn into a girl when I was in high school, if we become what we think!

Why is the mind so important? Because, *the thought is the father of the deed Before you can do a thing, you must think it. You sow a thought—you reap a deed. You sow a deed—you reap a habit You sow a habit—you reap a character. You sow a character—you reap a destiny. It all begins in the thought life.* That's the reason why the battle is being waged for the mind.

There were some prominent college professors who studied in the field of human motivation and human control. They were given this challenge: Reduce, if you will, to the simplest paragraph, the way to motivate and change human behavior. They came up with four propositions, all very simple. Number one: what the mind attends to—that is, what it thinks about—it considers. It just follows, as night follows day, that if you just attend to something, then you've got to think about it. That's number one—what the mind attends to, it considers. Number two: what the mind does not attend to, it dismisses. It doesn't matter how important the thing was or is—if you don't think about it, then it is out of your mind, and you just dismiss it. Number three: what the mind attends to continually, it believes, whether it is right or wrong. You think about it long enough, and you will believe it. Number four: what the mind believes, it eventually does. What the mind attends to, it considers; what it does not attend to, it dismisses; what it attends to continually, it believes; and what it believes, it eventually does.

Now again, God's Word says: “*As he thinketh in his heart, so is he*” (Proverbs 23:7). You see, God wants your mind. When God wants to communicate to you, He is going to communicate to you in the mind. Now you're in 2 Corinthians, but just turn to the Book of Ephesians—just turn right there, for just a little bit, and look in Ephesians 4. It is the same thing—verse 17—Paul says: “*This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk*”—now, when he says “other Gentiles,” he means, “Stop acting like pagans.” Now remember, he is talking to Christians, and he is telling Christians to stop acting like pagans—“*in the vanity of their mind*” (Ephesians 4:17).

Now the word *vanity* means, “emptiness”; it means, “without having the right values.” We have a generation that has the wrong values. It’s the vanity of the mind: “*Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*” (Ephesians 4:18). The word *blindness* literally means, “hardness”—a heart harder than marble. You see, when you have a wrong sense of values, it has a hardening effect on your heart.

And then, look in verse 19: “*Who being past feeling...*”—when your heart gets hardened, your heart is past feeling; the right feelings and the right motives cannot come in—“*Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness,*”—*lasciviousness* means, “unbridled lust.” Now friend, if your heart gets hard, then you’ve got a wrong value system, then lust is going to come in “*to work all uncleanness with greediness*” (Ephesians 4:19). The word *greediness* means that you have unfulfilled desires—you have unsatisfied longings and cravings that are never satisfied.

Now what’s the answer to this? Look, if you will, in verse 20: “*But ye have not so learned Christ;*”—underscore the word *learned*—“*if so be that ye have heard him,*”—underscore “heard him”—“*and have been taught by him,*”—underscore the words “taught by him”—“*as the truth is in Jesus*”—underscore the word “truth” (Ephesians 4:20–21). Now think about it: learning, hearing, teaching, and truth—all of these things have to do with the mind. And then, look in verse 23: “*And be renewed in the spirit of your mind*” (Ephesians 4:23). When God wants to communicate to you, what has He got? The mind. When God wants to change you, how does He change you? He renews you in the spirit of your mind. When God wants to calm you, how does God calm you? God calms you by the mind.

I’ve never seen so many nervous Christians today. Everybody is all upset. They got the willy-nillies and the heebie-jeebies. They remind me of a man who swallowed an egg: He was afraid to sit still, because he thought that it would hatch; afraid to move—thought it would break. The Bible says: “*Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee*” (Isaiah 26:3). God will communicate through the mind; God will change through the mind; God will calm through the mind. God will conquer through the mind. So you can understand why Satan wants your mind. And I’m going to tell you that you must not minimize the mind. Maximize the mind.

II. Dismiss Lies

The second thing: Not only must you not minimize your mind—you must also not listen to lies. You must not listen to lies. Now look again in verse 4. Go back, if you will, to 2 Corinthians chapter 11, and look in verse 4—Paul says: “*For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit,*

which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted..." (2 Corinthians 11:4). "Another Jesus," "another spirit," and "another gospel"—lies, deception, and distortions by the enemy. Now how does he get these things into our mind? We don't have to guess. Paul has already told us how he got it in—verse 3 tells us how he does it: "*As the serpent beguiled Eve*" (2 Corinthians 11:3). Now he's going to beguile you the same way that he beguiled Eve. As the serpent deceived Eve, he is going to deceive you.

Well, how did he deceive Eve? You remember. First of all, doubt. When the devil came to Eve in the Garden of Eden, what did he say? He said, in a question, "*Yea, hath God said...?*" (Genesis 3:1). He put a question mark after the Word of God. Listen to your pastor. *Anybody who puts a question mark after the Word of God is doing the work of the devil.* He is doing the work of the devil. I don't care where he goes to school—I don't care how many degrees he has—if he puts a question mark after the Word of God, then he's doing the work of our ancient foe. "*Hath God said...?*"

First of all, there is doubt. Now he doesn't come with a frontal attack—he slips in. First comes the doubt and then the denial. "*Hath God said, Ye shall not eat...?*" Then, he says: "*Ye shall not surely die*" (Genesis 3:4). That's a denial of God's Word, for God's Word says that "*in the day ye eat thereof [you'll die]*" (Genesis 3:5). But Satan says, "You won't die. You won't die." Now first of all, there is a doubt—then a denial.

But he's not finished yet. Then comes a deception. You see, he has to take the word out before he puts the false thing in, and so now forms the deception. He says, "*Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*" (Genesis 3:5). Now notice how deadly this is. You see, the best lie sounds the most like the truth. And Jesus says that the devil is a liar, and is the father of lies, in John 8, verse 44. Jesus said that he is the master liar. All lies come from the devil, and he knows how to do it.

Here's what the devil does, now: He says, "Well, God knows that you'll be as God—you'll be like Him." Notice: the temptation was not to be ungodly—it was to be godly. It wasn't to fall down—it was to fall up. It was to be like God, but to be like God via the devil's way. Do you see how subtle he is? Do you see how subtle he is? He doesn't say, "Don't believe in Jesus." He says, "Believe in another Jesus than the Jesus of the Bible." Another Jesus—do you see that in verse 4? He doesn't say not to believe in the Holy Spirit—he just gives you another spirit.

Friend, listen. It will be a great day in America when Americans learn that not everything that is spiritual is godly. The Bible says, "*Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God*" (1 John 4:1). There is a demon spirit that would mock the Lord Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, those who have cast out demons have told us that there are some demons that actually use the name *Jesus* for their name. "I am Jesus." *Jesus*. "Another Jesus"; "another spirit"; "another gospel." But it is not the gospel

that Paul preached. A man might come and say, “I’m a gospel preacher.” Well, how do you know that he’s a gospel preacher? Well, he says that he preaches the gospel, but is it the gospel that Paul preached? You see, Paul said, in Galatian, *“If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed”* (Galatians 1:9). *Accursed* literally means, “let him be damned.” He is not using profanity when he said that, friend—the false preacher is going to Hell. There is but one gospel.

But the devil comes—first with the doubts, then the denial, and then he comes with deception. Deception. Now when you look for the devil, never fail to look in the pulpit, all right? Look here, in 2 Corinthians chapter 11, verses 13 through 15: *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works”* (2 Corinthians 11:13–15). Do you see that? The devil is not against religion. He’s into religion up to his ears. *Most of the people in America don’t need to get religion—they need to turn from religion to Jesus Christ.* They do not know the Christ of this Book, and the devil has deceived them—seduced them, corrupted them—and the way he’s done it is through a lie.

First, doubt—then, denial—then, deception—and then, destruction. Now Paul basically says, “Look, as Satan deceived Eve, every one of you who are saved are still in the same danger—not that you could lose your soul, but you could lose your testimony, you could lose your influence, or you could lose your power, because you do not understand how the devil works.”

Number one: don’t minimize your mind. Number two: don’t listen to lies. Well, you say, “How am I going to know? How am I going to know whether it’s the real Jesus or a false Jesus? How am I going to know whether it’s the Holy Spirit or an unholy spirit? How am I going to know whether it’s the true gospel or a false gospel?” That’s a good question. I’m glad you asked it.

III. Learn to Welcome the Word

Now let me give you the third point: Learn to welcome the Word. Learn to welcome the Word. It’s very obvious. Paul says, *“If he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached,”*—do you see it?—*“or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted...”* (2 Corinthians 11:4). You see, they had already heard the truth about Jesus. They had already heard the truth about the Spirit. They had already heard the truth about the gospel.

So how can you know whether something is counterfeit? Compare it to the real. They tell us that bankers and people who have to examine money don’t study counterfeit bills—they study the real bill. And when the counterfeit comes along, they

know it, because it doesn't match the real. That's the way, dear friend, you need to welcome the Word of God into your heart, because, when God wants to renew your mind, God is going to renew your mind by using the Word of God. You need to receive the Word of God. You need to welcome the Word of God.

Now I want to lay something on your heart at this threshold of the new year: I want you to determine what your life is going to be this new year. I want there to be five things in your life that you'll do with the Word of God in the new year, and I'll tell you, if you will do these things and get that Word of God in your heart and in your mind, then it will change you. It will change you. It will change you for good, for God, and for eternity.

A. Master the Word of God

Number one: I want you to master the Word of God. Master the Word of God. Now I don't mean that you are going to master it all. I've been studying the Bible seriously for 35 years, and I'm afraid that, someday, somebody is going to find out how little I know about the Word of God. There's so much there. But on the other hand, we ought to have, as Dr. Sidlow Baxter says, a strategic grasp on the Word of God. The average Christian is saturated with ignorance regarding the Word of God. Christians don't even know the names of the books of the Bible. My little four-and-a-half year-old granddaughter knows the names of the books of the Bible. Don't tell me that you can't learn them. Christians don't even know the basic facts of the Bible. They think Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife, like the epistles and the apostles. They don't know. Why don't you know? You ought to know. Master the Word of God.

B. Memorize the Word of God

Not only should you master the Word of God, dear friend, but you also need to memorize the Word of God—I mean memorize it. Suppose that somebody comes and takes away all of Bibles: Could we, with what we have in our minds, here in this auditorium, put the Bible back together again just out of our memories? "Say, I know this passage." "Well, I know that one, and let's write us out a new Bible, because we've hidden God's Word in our hearts." Suppose that you get marooned? Suppose that you get put in prison? Suppose that you are stripped from a Bible? How much of God's Word have you hidden in your heart? How much of God's Word have you memorized?

You say, "Well, I can't memorize things, Pastor." Let me ask you a question: If you got \$1,000 per verse, do you think you could memorize some? It's a matter of motivation, isn't it? It's a matter of motivation. Memorize the Word of God. Bring into your coming year some program of Scripture memorization. Why don't you make that as a New Year's resolution?

C. Meditate upon the Word of God

Number three: once you have mastered and memorized, then I want you to begin to meditate upon the Word of God. People are saying, “I want you to have a happy and a prosperous new year.” Let me tell you how to have a happy and a prosperous new year—Joshua chapter 1, verse 8: *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success”* (Joshua 1:8). That’s the way to have a prosperous new year: *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt mediate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”*

What does it mean to meditate on the Word of God? Not meditate like *transcendental meditation* and all that—that’s a corruption; that’s a falsehood. That kind of meditation looks inward. Bible meditation looks upward. That kind of meditation is not under control. Bible meditation is controlled by the Word of God: *“In his law doth he meditate day and night”* (Psalm 1:2). *Transcendental meditation* will get you into all kinds of trouble—it is kind of like going to bed at night and leaving all the doors and windows open to see what might come in. No—you meditate on the Word of God.

The idea is this: that the Bible ought to be like a tune that you can’t get out of your mind. Ever have a tune like that? Just keep humming it all day long? That’s the Word of God. It is there. It is in your mind. It is in your heart. And incidentally, that’s one of the reasons for learning to sing the Scripture—so that the music and the words get in there and they stay there, and so you meditate day and night in the Word of God.

Have any of you ever driven a car with a stick shift? Some of you kids don’t, but when you get your first car, you have to think: This is first, second, and so forth, and you go through those gears. But if you’ve driven it long enough, then you get to where you never even think about it. You push in the clutch and so forth. That’s second nature, isn’t it? Because, it is so much a part of you that you just do those things by second nature. When you are learning how to drive, you think about everything, but after awhile, you just turn the turn signal and this thing and that thing—it’s all second nature.

Friend, you get the Word of God in you that way and you begin to live a second-nature life. What I mean by that is that God’s Word is just in your life, and you do those things almost automatically, without even thinking about them, because the Word of God has so permeated your life that you live on that principle.

D. Mobilize the Word of God

You master the Word; you memorize the Word; you meditate upon the Word; and

then, you mobilize the Word. Listen to me—We are at war. Maybe you don't recognize what is happening in this world today. Maybe you don't see what has happened to a generation of young people whose minds are destroyed by drugs, whose bodies are rotted with sexual disease, and whose thoughts are corrupted with philosophy—a world under the brink of a mushroom cloud and the enemy is marching, marching, marching, marching. So many of us don't even know what to do. I'll tell you one thing that you ought to do is to take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God. Mobilize the Word.

The enemy came against Jesus three times. Three times Jesus said, "It is written. It is written. It is written." Jesus ran him through with the Word of God. It's a battle. You read about it, in Ephesians chapter 6. God gives you one weapon of offense, which is the Word of God, and Satan hopes you'll not mobilize that Word.

E. Minister the Word of God

The fifth and final thing that I want you to do this year is to minister the Word of God. Minister the Word of God. Oh, there are people who are hungry. They are starving. These last days there is a famine for the Word of God. Do we have any word for them? What are people going to believe? Can you imagine the things, folks, that are coming to us? We're in an information explosion. Three thousand pages a second are being printed in the United States—3,000 new pages of material every second—most of it false.

Who is going to get out the Word of God? Who is going to give them the truth? Who is going to minister the Word of God? Who is going to hold up a standard? Who is going to say, "This is the truth. This is the way—walk in it?" I tell you, folks, if we, in this auditorium, don't become the salt of Memphis, then we're going to have to face God one day to give an account. We need to minister the Word of God. I'm telling you, dear friend, that you can change—you can change your life by changing the way that you think.

Conclusion

Byron Richardson is a friend of mine, and a preacher. He said that, on one occasion, they were driving through the Smokies, down the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the gas gauge was getting low, and his wife said, "Byron, we'd better stop and get gas." He said, "No, we've got plenty of gas." You know how men are, don't you? He said, "We've got plenty of gas," so he just kept on driving and intended to get gas when he came to a service station, but the sun had set and he had not found a service station on that long road. He looked at the gas gauge and it was down to empty. He hoped his wife hadn't seen it. He thought there would be a service station after awhile, and he kept driving.

And he got below empty. He began to pray, and he said, “Oh boy, will she tear me up if I run out of gas here!” And he turned the corner, and there was one of those little old country service stations—you know, those old-fashioned kinds—and a store. He said, “Praise the Lord.” And he pulled up there, and the old man came out and was putting the gas in and filling up the tank. Byron was feeling so good—he had just gotten a big whiff of that mountain air. Boy, he had succeeded. He had gotten that gasoline, and he said to this old guy—this mountaineer, “Man, isn’t it great to be alive?” The old man never lifted his head. He said, “I don’t know. I ain’t never been no other way.”

Friend, I want to tell you something: I’ve been another way. Once, I was dead in trespasses and in sin, and now, I know life—it’s great! It is great to be alive—to have the life that Jesus gives. He said: *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10). Do you have it? I don’t mean: “Do you know about it?” Do you have it—the life of Christ? It’s great to be alive. Let’s bow our heads in prayer.

The Battle for Your Mind

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: December 2, 1990

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 11:1–6

“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

2 CORINTHIANS 11:3

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Introduction

Take God’s holy, inspired, inerrant, infallible, impeccable, beautiful Word, the Bible, and would you open it, please, to 2 Corinthians 11? And, in just a moment, we’re going to begin our reading in verse 1—2 Corinthians 11. I want to talk to you about a mind—your mind. I want to give you a checkup from the neck up. We’re going to be thinking about your mind. I hear often on television a statement like this: “A mind is a terrible thing to waste,” and that is true. But, my dear friend, did you know that you could waste your mind even on education if you don’t give that mind to Jesus? Now, I’m not against education; I’m for it, and get all you can. But, I want to tell you, I had rather be in heaven saying my ABCs than to be in hell spouting philosophy. What about your mind? Is your mind fulfilling the purpose for which God created that mind? Indeed, a mind is a terrible,

terrible thing to waste.

Second Corinthians 11:1—the Apostle Paul is having to authenticate his apostleship, and he says, *“Would to God [that] ye could bear with me a little in my folly: and indeed bear with me”*—now, what Paul is saying is, “I hate to be talking about myself, but I must do it because some of you have not accepted me as the apostle that I am.” And then, he talks to the Corinthian church, and he says—*“I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste”*—that means “a pure”—*“virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your”*—and here’s our word—*“so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him. For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things.”* (2 Corinthians 11:1–6)

Now, at first blush, that may seem a little difficult to understand. But, if you will stay with me today and listen, you’re going to find out something very wonderful—not because I’m saying it, but because God has already said it. I want you to think today about the battle for your mind, and there are three basic thoughts that I want to give you and they deal with Satan, who wants to take your mind and destroy your mind. Actually, he wants to take your mind and use your mind as a battleground, a citadel, from which to war on God.

I. Satan’s Singular Determination

So, look with me, first of all, at what I’m going to call “Satan’s singular determination”—“Satan’s singular determination.” Satan is very single-minded in what he is doing. He is determined to do something. Now, here’s what he’s determined to do. Here is Satan’s singular determination. Here is Satan’s chiefest strategy: it is to corrupt your mind. The key verse is verse 3: *“[For] I fear, lest by any means, as [though] the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 11:3)

Now, in order to get the figure of speech that Paul is using, Paul thinks of himself as a godly father; he thinks of the Corinthian Christians as his spiritual children. And, he is saying that “you are engaged to be married to the Lord Jesus Christ. I am your father, and I want to present you, my daughter, as a pure virgin to Jesus.” There’s coming a wedding in the sky. When the Lord Jesus comes for His bride, the Church is going to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and there’s going to be a wedding in the sky. And, the Apostle Paul says, “I want, at that time when you meet Jesus, I want you to be

absolutely pure.” Look, if you will, in verse 2: *“For I am jealous over you with [a] godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I [might] present you as a [pure]”—*that is, “as a chaste”—*“virgin to Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 11:2) Now, there’s nothing wrong with jealousy if it is godly jealousy, and Paul was jealous for these people, that they might be pure and true to the Lord Jesus Christ. He said, “I want you, when you meet Jesus, to be a virgin church.”

And, you know, we ought to have some dads like that in the material realm also who see it as their privilege and their responsibility to keep their daughters pure. We ought to have some fathers who see it as their duty and responsibility to keep their sons pure. Now today, young people are being told that it’s all right to practice premarital sex—not from the Word of God it’s not, not from the Word of God. My dear friend, the Bible teaches premarital chastity and post-marital fidelity. Never, never forget it. You eat your cake today; you’ll have a crummy tomorrow. Friend, let me tell you something: God has a plan, and it is premarital chastity, post-marital fidelity. And so, the Apostle Paul says to the Church, “I want to present you as a pure virgin to the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 11:2)

Now, you say, “Well, is the Bible against sex?” No, the Bible is very much for sex. When God says, *“Thou shalt not commit adultery”* (Exodus 20:14)—when God says, *“Flee fornication”* (1 Corinthians 6:18)—God is not trying to keep you from sex; God is trying to keep sex for you. It is God’s wonderful, glorious, and pure gift, and so many are selling out so cheaply.

One of the most interesting stories I have read in a long time took place many years ago in London when a shabbily dressed man carrying an old violin shuffled into a shop and there offered the violin for sale to the seller of violins. And, the man who had the shop had so many violins. He said, “I don’t need another violin.” But, he said, “Please, I need money. Take my violin. Buy my violin.” So, Mr. Betts gave the beggar five dollars—the equivalency of five dollars in English money—for that old violin, and the ragged man stumbled out in the darkness. Then, the shop owner, Mr. Betts, who himself was a musician, thought he’d try the old violin, and he tucked it under his chin and pulled the bow across the strings. When he did, he heard such rich and resonant tones he knew this was not an ordinary violin. He lit a candle and looked inside and saw the magic name, Antonio Stradivari, and the date, 1704, and he realized this was a violin that had been missing for one hundred years. He realized it was of great worth. He took the violin and ran out and tried to find the old beggar. He couldn’t find him. Later on, he sold the violin for five thousand dollars. And now, dear friend, there’s no way to put a price on that old violin. I think of young people today who are taking something so priceless and they’re selling so cheap, so cheap—something that is so intrinsically valuable.

But, that's only a sideline to what I really want to say. I really want to talk to you not merely about physical purity, but I want to talk to you about spiritual purity. Do you know what Satan's singular determination is? Satan's singular determination is to draw away your devotion from the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan doesn't care how much you come to church. He doesn't care how beautifully you sing, how eloquently you may teach, how circumspectly you may walk, how liberally you may give, if you don't love Jesus Christ. Satan is just simply trying to pull away your devotion from Jesus.

Now, look again in verse 3: Paul says, "I have an apprehension. I have a fear that Satan, with his subtlety, might corrupt your mind." (2 Corinthians 11:3) If you have the King James, it says, "*from the simplicity that is in Christ.*" (2 Corinthians 11:3) You see the word *simplicity*? It doesn't mean "simplemindedness." The word *simplicity* means "pure devotion," "deep devotion," "single-hearted devotion." Everything that Satan is doing—his singular determination, his greatest aim—is to make you untrue to Jesus Christ. That's what Satan wants to do—to pull away your affection from Jesus Christ. You're to have a deep, loving, sacrificial, exciting, emotional, blazing, passionate, all-consuming love for Jesus Christ. That's the way you're to live. And, Satan's singular determination is to "*[corrupt your mind] from the simplicity that is in Christ,*" (2 Corinthians 11:3) from the pure devotion of loving the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what he's up to. He wants to keep you from loving the Lord Jesus with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your mind. You are, my dear friend, engaged to Jesus Christ. And, the marriage is coming, and God wants you to stay pure.

II. Satan's Subtle Device

Secondly, not only do I want you to see Satan's singular determination, but I want you to see Satan's subtle device. How does he do this? How does he draw away our attention from the Lord Jesus Christ? How does he get us to compromise with the world, the flesh, and the devil? Well, we don't have to guess. The Bible says right here in verse 3: "*[For] I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so*"—"in the same way"—"*your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity*"—that is, "the pure devotion"—"*that is in Jesus Christ.*" (2 Corinthians 11:3) Now, we already have a case history. How is Satan working on your mind today? Well, dear friend, "*[there's nothing new] under the sun.*" (Ecclesiastes 1:9) "As he deceived Eve..." (2 Corinthians 11:3) We already have a case history. We already know how he beguiled Eve, and what he did with Eve is what he wants to do with you.

Now, it's very clear that Satan is after your mind. Why is this? Well, the nutritionist tells us we are what we eat. The psychologist tells us we are what we think. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 23:7: "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.*" (Proverbs 23:7) The thought is the father of the deed. Before you can do anything, you must first think it. You

sow a thought; you reap a deed. You sow a deed; you reap a habit. Sow a habit; you reap a character. Sow a character; you reap a destiny. It all begins with the thought—the thought. If Satan has your mind, he has you.

So, what did Satan do in the Garden of Eden? How did Satan deceive Eve? Now, verse 3 says that the same way that Satan worked on Eve is the way he's going to work on you. (2 Corinthians 11:3) So, you have a head start on Mother Eve. She didn't have the Scriptures. She didn't have the history that you have. So, you have it right here.

A. **Doubt**

Now, you might want to turn to Genesis 3:1–6 and see exactly what Satan did to Eve, or you may just want to keep your finger here in the scripture that we have before you. I don't know which would be more helpful to you because I'm going to be going back and forth between the two because it says here, *“As the serpent beguiled Eve...so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 11:3) Now, in Genesis 3, beginning in verse 1, we find out how the serpent beguiled Eve, the old devil, when he first crawled his slimy, corroding path onto the pages of history. The Bible says, *“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field”*—now, go back again to chapter 11 and verse 3: *“But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty...”* (2 Corinthians 11:3) Do you see the connection? It's the same thing—*“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?”* (Genesis 3:1) Step number one: write down the word *doubt—doubt*. *“Hath God said...?”* (Genesis 3:1) Now, he did not say that God had not said; he didn't say that right away. The very first thing he did was to insinuate a doubt. And, may I tell every one of you that anybody who puts a question mark after the Word of God is doing the work of the devil? Anybody who causes you to doubt this book is an agent of Satan. The very first thing is doubt. All right. *“Hath God said...?”* (Genesis 3:1)

B. **Denial**

Now, and the Scripture goes on to say, *“And the woman said unto the serpent”*—that is, to old Satan—*“We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die.”* (Genesis 3:2–4) Now, he's ready for the second step. First one: doubt. Second: denial. After he has gotten you to doubt the Word of God, then he will try to get you to deny the Word of God. *“Ye shall not surely die.”* (Genesis 3:4) Now, Satan is very subtle. He just simply says, “Surely not, surely not” with such an air of certainty. It's to make the Word of God sound absurd.

C. Deception

Then, the third step: *“For God doth know that in the day [that] ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. 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.”* (Genesis 3:5–6) Third step is deception. You see, Satan doesn’t simply want you to deny the Word of God; he wants you to believe his lie. Now, the best lies sound the most like the truth—the best lies sound the most like the truth.

I almost missed an airplane the other day because my watch was five minutes wrong. I set it wrong. I didn’t know that I’d set it wrong, but evidently, carelessly, I set my watch wrong. When I got to the airport and thought I had ample time, the man behind the desk said, “Mister, you almost missed this plane,” and I said, “Well, I’ve still got time.” He said, “The plane is buttoning up.” I looked at my watch, and I looked at theirs. And, there was a difference of five minutes. Now, my dear friend, a clock five minutes wrong is more dangerous than a clock five hours wrong. You look at a clock five hours wrong, and you say, “Hey, that’s wrong. Somebody tell me the truth. Somebody tell me what time it is.” But, you look at a clock five minutes wrong, and it’s very hard to tell the difference.

Satan is the master liar, and his lies are so much like the truth. You see, first of all, there’s doubt. Then, there’s denial. And then, there comes deception. Now, what is this deception? Satan is not against religion; Satan is very much in favor of religion. Satan is in religion up to his ears. But, what he is into is false religion, substitute religion. It is a deceptive kind of religion. Satan says to Eve, “You will be like God.” (Genesis 3:5) Well, that’s a very religious message. It’s the same message that all of the New Agers have today. It wasn’t a temptation to fall down and be ungodly; it was a temptation to step up and be godly—but only do it Satan’s way. It is deception.

Now, go back to 2 Corinthians 11 and look in verse 4, and see this deception: *“For if he that cometh”—he’s talking now about a false apostle—“For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached”—*there were some people on our doorstep this past Friday, I believe it was, or Saturday. They were talking about Jesus, going from door to door. But, the Jesus that they were talking about was not the Jesus of this Bible. Now, a lot of people would not know the difference because these people said, “We believe in Jesus.” I said, “Let’s talk about what Jesus you believe in.” Now, look at it here—*“if he...preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received”—*don’t get the idea that everything that is spiritual is of God. My dear friend, the Bible speaks of *“spiritual wickedness in high places,”* (Ephesians 6:12) and the Bible says, *“Believe not every spirit, but [test] the spirits whether they [be] of God”* (1 John 4:1)—*“or another gospel,*

which ye have not accepted.” (2 Corinthians 11:4) There are a lot of people who say that they’re preaching the gospel of Jesus, but they are not preaching the true gospel; they’re preaching the devil’s gospel. You see how subtle the devil is. The devil doesn’t say, “Don’t believe in Jesus.” The devil doesn’t say, “Have nothing to do with the Holy Spirit.” The devil doesn’t say, “I’m against the gospel.” All he does is just give you another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel. Pretty good, huh? Do you see what he’s doing? Do you understand his subtlety? You see, dear friend, he is a crafty liar.

So, when you look for the devil, don’t forget to look in the pulpit. Second Corinthians 11:13: *“For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works.”* (2 Corinthians 11:13–15) You see, dear friend, Satan is occupying the pulpits of America. And, many a man who is an agent of the devil himself has some sort of a Doctor of Divinity degree or something after his name, and he’s called “reverend.” The great danger today is not the denial of the gospel of Christ; it is the corruption of the gospel of Christ. Paul said, *“I fear, lest...your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity [that’s] in Christ.”* (2 Corinthians 11:3) And, how’s it done? By subtlety.

D. Destruction

Now, you see what Satan does. First of all, there’s doubt. Then, there’s denial. Then, there is deception. And finally, there is destruction, and that destruction is to get your eyes off the Lord Jesus Christ. And, God said, *“In the day that [ye eat] thereof [ye shall] surely die,”* (Genesis 2:17) and Adam and Eve did die. Now, what kind of death is it? My dear friend, Satan is the sinister minister of death. Jesus said, concerning the devil, in John 8:44: *“He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth.”* (John 8:44) His motive is murder. His method is the lie. He wants to bring death to beauty, death to health, death to happiness, death to love. He wants to bring emotional death, and spiritual death, and physical death, and eternal death. He is a murderer, and he’s so subtle. He is so subtle.

III. Satan’s Sure Defeat

Now, let me move to the third and final thing. I have talked to you about Satan’s singular determination. He doesn’t care how much you attend church. His singular determination is to draw away your devotion from Jesus, from the simplicity that’s in Christ. That is his singular determination. Now, his subtle device—he’s going to do it the same way that he deceived Eve. You have a case history. I mean, why be deceived when it is so plain? It is right out there in the Word of God. But now, let me give you a third thing: I want to talk with you about Satan’s sure defeat. God has not left us helpless and hopeless. There is

a way.

Now, first of all, you're going to have to develop what I'm going to call "an intolerant mind." Now, most of us who are Bible believers—we are lampooned today, we're caricatured today, we're ridiculed today as Bible thumpers, rednecks, fundamentalists—"too much fun, too much damn, and not enough mental." They enjoy that. They enjoy ridiculing us. And, do you know the main thing they tell us? "You're intolerant"—"you're intolerant." Now, when the banker says, "Two and two is four," they don't call him intolerant. The surgeon works with precision; they don't call him intolerant. And, when the pilot of the aircraft flies according to the rules of aviation, they don't call him intolerant. But, somehow we're supposed to put our arms around everybody in America and say, "Your religion is just as good as mine." And, if we don't do it, we are called intolerant, bigots, anti-Americans, know-it-alls, and all of the rest of it.

Now, what Paul is saying here in verse 4 is that you, as a Christian, need to learn to be intolerant of certain things. Look again, if you will, in verse 4: he says, "*For if he that cometh*"—some hotshot preacher comes to town. Now listen—"*if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted*"—now, here's the phrase I want you to see—"*ye might well bear with him.*" (2 Corinthians 11:4) Now, what does that mean? Paul is scolding them there. Paul is saying, "When these fellows come to town, do you know your problem? You let them do it. You bear with them. You welcome them in. You hear them." Now, I checked this in a number of translations this morning, early. One of them says, "You put up with it." Another translation said, "You are marvelously tolerant." And, what he is doing is he's scolding them; he's saying, "They come along with another Jesus. They come along with another spirit. They come along with another gospel, and you're just so broadminded. You just bear with it." No, my dear friend, you can't bear with it. Let them call you bigoted if they will. Let them call you narrow-minded if they will. Let them accuse you of being a Bible-thumping fundamentalist if they will. But, my dear friend, Satan is so subtle. There is but one Jesus. There is but one Holy Spirit. There is but one gospel.

Conclusion

Now, how are you going to keep your spiritual fire burning? How are you going to have this pure devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, three things, and I'll be finished. I want you to look right here in the Word of God.

A. **There Must Be a Devotion to the True Son of God**

First of all, there must be a devotion to the true Son of God—a devotion to the true Son of God. If there is another Jesus, there is the true Jesus. You are to love Him. Love Him. Love Him passionately. When I want to check your spiritual health, I'm not

necessarily going to see how often you've been in Sunday School, though that's good, or how much money you give. And, I don't check anybody in that way. I don't know what you give. I'm not going to check to see what you drink or don't drink, although there are certain things you ought not to drink. And, may I say, 'tis the season to be sober. But, my dear friend, if I want to check your spiritual health, I'm going to ask this one question: Do you love Jesus? I mean, do you love Jesus with a pure devotion? And remember, Jesus said, *"If a man [loves] me, he will keep my [word]."* (John 14:23) That's the test. The true test of being saved is a burning, blazing, passionate, emotional, pure love for the Son of God.

B. There Must Be Discernment by the Spirit of God

All right, number one: devotion to the Son of God. Number two: discernment by the Spirit of God. You see, not only is there the true Jesus; there's the true Spirit, and the true Spirit is there to help you to know the true Jesus. Now, verse 4 speaks of another spirit. There is a spirit in the world that the Bible calls the *"spirit of antichrist"* (1 John 4:3) that draws away your love from the Lord Jesus. How can you know whether the spirit that's in you is a demon spirit or the Holy Spirit? First John 4:1–2: *"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits"*—that means "test the spirits"—*"whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God."* (1 John 4:1–2) What is the ministry of the Holy Spirit? To make Jesus real to you. Jesus said in John 16:14: *"He shall glorify me."* (John 16:14) My dear friend, if the person in you, the Holy Spirit in you, is saying, "Jesus is wonderful. Love Jesus. Follow Jesus. Be committed to the Christ of the Bible," you can be certain that's the Holy Spirit—you can be certain that's the Holy Spirit. Remember, there is another Jesus and another spirit. There is the false Jesus and the false spirit. Believe not every Jesus. Believe the Jesus of the Bible. *"Believe not every spirit."* (1 John 4:1) Let it be the Spirit of the Bible. Test the spirits. *"Try the spirits."* (1 John 4:1)

C. There Must Be Dependence on the Word of God

Well, you say, "But, that's still all subjective. Don't we have something objective?" Yes, we do. Now remember, there are three things. First of all, there must be a devotion to the Son of God. Number two: discernment by the Spirit of God. And, number three: dependence on the Word of God. Now, in verse 4, Paul also spoke of another gospel. The gospel, of course, is the revealed Word of God. This is so very necessary that you have this book written by the Apostle Paul and other apostles and prophets of our Lord that you can test, that you can stand on.

There are actually five things I want you just to jot them down, and say, "When I'm making my New Year's resolution, and even before I get to New Years, here's what I'm

going to do.”

1. Master the Word of God

“By God’s grace, number one, I’m going to master the Word of God—I am going to master the Word of God.” That doesn’t mean “know it all.” None of us know it all. I have been preaching now for almost forty years, and I’m afraid somebody’s going to find out how little I know about this book. My dear friend, when I say, “Master the Word of God,” I mean what Paul told Timothy: *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that [needs] not to be ashamed.”* (2 Timothy 2:15) You ought to have a strategic grasp of the Word of God. Some people have no idea what’s in the Bible. Some who have been Christians for many years—you’ve never even read the Bible through. You don’t even know the books of the Bible. Some, if I were to say, “Turn to the book of Hezekiah” this morning, you’d start looking. Some would try to find Philippians 66. I mean, if I just said, “Turn to this or that,” you would just begin to look. You don’t even know it’s there or it’s not there. My dear friend, listen, your bulwark against Satan is the Word of God. Listen, master the Word of God. *“Study to shew [yourself] approved unto God.”* (2 Timothy 2:15)

2. Memorize the Word of God

Number two: Memorize the Word of God—memorize the Word of God. Psalms 119:11: *“Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.”* (Psalms 119:11)

3. Meditate on the Word of God

Number three: Meditate on the Word of God. Joshua 1:8: *“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.”* (Joshua 1:8)

4. Mobilize the Word of God

All right, number four: Not only master the Word, memorize the Word, meditate on the Word, but mobilize the Word of God. What I mean by that is, this is a sword. It is your artillery; it is your battleax. Ephesians 6:17 says, *“Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”* (Ephesians 6:17) We’re in a war. Mobilize the Word of God. Jesus used the Bible to run Satan through when his temptation came. And, Satan said to Jesus, “Do this, and do this, and do this,” and Jesus said, “It is written... It is written... It is written...” Three times, with that sword of the Word, Jesus ran Satan through. He mobilized the Word of God.

5. Minister the Word of God

Last of all, minister the Word of God. Oh, I’m telling you, my dear friend, there are people all around us that are so hungry this Christmas season. Their minds are so

messed up. And, Satan is so subtle. *“We have a...more sure word of prophecy.”* (2 Peter 1:19) We have the Word of God.

Now, let me tell you how Satan is going down: devotion to the Son of God, discernment by the Spirit of God, and dependence on the Word of God. Have you got that? Just take the things that Satan is trying to do in verse 4 and just turn them around. When Satan brings another Jesus, you just say, “I’m going to love the true Jesus.” When Satan brings another spirit, you just say, “I’m going to depend on the Holy Spirit.” When Stan brings another gospel, you take the true gospel.

How do you spot a counterfeit? How do you spot a counterfeit? Well, they tell me that people who handle a lot of money, bankers and others, they don’t study counterfeits, primarily; what they study is the real thing so they can spot a counterfeit any time. Dear friend, fall in love with the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a battle for your mind. Satan’s singular aim is to draw away your devotion to Jesus. His subtle device—the same thing he did with Eve. His sure defeat—the Son of God, the Spirit of God, the Word of God.

How to Pray When You're Hurting

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 20, 1998

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 11:24–12:10

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

2 CORINTHIANS 12:10

Outline

Introduction

- I. You Can Prayerfully Resist Suffering
- II. You Can Proudly Resign to Suffering
- III. You Can Patiently Receive Suffering as a Gift
 - A. Receive God's Gift
 - B. Rely on God's Grace
 - C. Reflect God's Glory

Conclusion

Introduction

And be finding Second Corinthians chapter 12, if you will. And we're going to have a Bible study. I think it will be fruitful to all of us because I know that if you're a human being, you're hurting now, or sooner or later you will hurt. And so the message is very applicable to all of us. I said Second Corinthians chapter 12, but let me just back up to chapter 11 for a moment. And what you're going to find out is that Paul has been describing some of the things that he has gone through as a disciple, an apostle, and a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Beginning in verse 24. If you think you have troubles, if you think that you have problems, or if you think that perhaps you've suffered for the Lord Jesus, I believe the Scriptures here, reading on through the end of chapter 11, will keep us from having a pity party for ourselves.

Here's what the apostle Paul says of himself, beginning in verse 24: “Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one.” That is, the law said you could not whip a man forty times. That would probably kill him, so they had said you can only lay thirty-nine lashes upon his back. That is, he was nearly beaten to death, within an inch of his life, five times.

And then, on top of that, he says, “Twice I was beaten with rods...” A rod is just a

club. He was clubbed to death. The stripes—that was the cat-o-nine tails that would tear off the flesh. But now twice, they took clubs and battered him with clubs.

And then he says, “...once I was stoned...” As a matter of fact, they thought they’d killed him when they stoned him. He was stoned and left for dead, but he didn’t die.

“...thrice (or three times) I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep.” That is, for twenty-four hours he was pickled in the Mediterranean just floating around out there like a, a piece of flotsam, surviving perhaps to some piece of wreckage out in the Mediterranean.

“In journeyings often, in perils of waters...” He’s talking now about sailing the high seas.

“...and perils of robbers...” He’s talking about being in dangerous places.

“...in perils of mine own countrymen...” That is, his native people, the Jews, hated him for preaching the gospel.

“...in perils by the heathen...” If he turned from the Jews to the Gentiles, they hated him.

“...in perils in the city...” If he thought, *Well, I’ll get out of the wild places and go into the city.* No, he found danger there.

“...in perils in the wilderness...” Get out of the city and go out into the country.

“...in perils in the sea, and perils among false brethren.” Even in the church there were false brothers in the church who claimed to be Christians.

“In weariness and painfulness...” He knew what it was to get tired. He knew what it was to hurt and not to have some balm, some medicine, to alleviate his pain.

“...in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. And besides all those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all of the churches.”

Paul said, “All these other things happened to me just outside the church. And then, when I got in among the brothers and sisters, I had all of the administrative and devotional and prayer and preaching and leadership things that come to me as a pastor and as an apostle.” And then he says, “Who is weak, and I am not weak?” That is, when somebody else suffers, I suffer.

“...who is offended, and I burn not?” When somebody else is misused, it hurts me deeply. It causes my own sensitivities to burn.

And then Paul goes on to say, “And if I must needs glory, I will glory in the things which concern mine infirmities.” Paul said, “I’m not complaining about these things.” He said, “I glory in my weakness.” “The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed forevermore, knoweth that I lie not.” So lest you think that Paul is exaggerating, he says, “God knows I’m telling the truth.”

And then he says, “In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of

the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me.” So the governor said, “We’ve got this guy in the city. Put guards at all the gates. And so, when he goes out, we will pounce him.” And, by the way, they not only wanted to arrest him; they wanted to do him in. They wanted to kill him.

And so, he says, “And through a window in a basket I was let down by the wall, and escaped his hands.”

Now can you imagine a man who has, a high-bred man, the equivalency of a triple PhD, a man who was a Jewish blueblood, one of the Sanhedrin, can you imagine the humiliation of being let down in a basket? Just use your imagination. Think of this man being lowered through a window in a basket, crouched down, in order to escape with his life because of the Lord Jesus Christ. I, I don’t know whether that moves your heart, but it moves mine to know what this little Jew. I picture Paul kind as a bald-patted, hump-back, spindly-leg little old guy. I don’t know why, but that’s the way I picture him. You know, he said of himself, “I know I’m not an impressive guy to look at.” And he wasn’t much of an orator, either. But he, in my estimation, he was the world’s greatest Christian. And there he is being let down over the wall in a basket.

Now the reason I’m telling you all of that, it’s the background for the chapter that we’re really going to look at. Because you’re going to find out that when men let him down, God took him up. Now he’s let down in a basket, but he’s caught up in this chapter that we’re going to look at, caught up into heaven. So it’s a wonderful thing to know that *God knows how to pick us up when others let us down* .

And so Paul had a sacred secret. Something happened to him after that episode, after all these things: after he’d been beaten and misused and stoned and unappreciated and lied on, and all of these things happened to him, how he has to escape with his life. God gave him a glorious, wonderful, wonderful revelation. He’s caught up into heaven. And Paul doesn’t know whether, at the time he told this he didn’t know whether he was caught up in his physical body or whether he went there in a vision in his spirit, which is interesting to me to know that he knew that you could go to heaven in a physical body; that heaven is a place that real. And, you know that Elijah’s there in a physical body right now. And Jesus is there in a physical body right now. And heaven is a place where you can be in a physical body. And we will be there one day in our resurrected bodies. Heaven is not some willy-nilly, gaseous, smoke and mirrors type of place. It is a real place. It is a real place. And you will be there one day in a resurrected body.

Well, keep that in mind and let’s begin to read, then, in chapter 12, verse 1. And he says, “It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord.” He said, “Now I’m going to tell you not only about the negatives; I’m going to tell you about some of the positive.” “I knew a man in Christ (and he’s talking about

himself when he says that, in the third person), I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such a one caught up into the third heaven.” Now you’ve often heard it said that the first heaven is the heaven of the atmosphere. The Bible speaks of the fowls of the heaven, the birds that fly in the air. That’s the first heaven. The second heaven is the stellar heaven. That’s where the Bible says the sun, moon, and the stars are. The heavens declare the glory of God. The firmament showeth His handiwork. The third heaven is the abode of God. So there are three heavens—the atmosphere, the stars, and the solar system, and then beyond that where that, that place where God is. And someone has beautifully said, “The first heaven we see by day, the second heaven we see by night, and the third heaven we see by faith.” And so Paul said, “I was caught up into the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which is, it is not lawful for a man to utter.” He had such a revelation. God said, “Paul, you’ve got to keep it a secret. It’s a sacred secret. You can’t tell anybody what you heard.” But I’ll tell you one thing. If you’ll study the life of the apostle Paul, before this time he was probably willing to go, but wanting to stay. But after this time he was only willing to stay and wanting to go. He had a vision of heaven that was so great, he just said, “I have a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, which is far, far, very much better (the, the Greek language piles one superlative upon another).” He said, “I just want to stop this crazy world and let me off. I am ready to go.” But God said, “Now, Paul, you can’t tell anybody about how wonderful heaven is. Just keep it a secret.” I think the reason that God told Paul to keep it a secret was that if you and I knew how wonderful heaven is, we’d probably get careless when we, when we cross the street. And so, he said, “Just.” He said, “I saw things not lawful for a man to utter.” “Of such a one will I glory: yet not of myself I, but, yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities.” Paul said, “I’m not going to glory in my visions. I’m only going to glory in my weakness.” “For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but *now* I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me *to be*, or *that* he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh...” Now the word for thorn here is not the word for a thorn, like a thorn on a rose bush. It’s literally a stake, something that he was impaled upon, something exceedingly painful that hurt him. “...the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice (that means three times), that it might depart from me. “It doesn’t mean he said, “Lord, take it away, take it away, take it away. It means that he had three extended sessions of prayer, three times where perhaps he got alone, fasted, and prayed, and bombarded heaven about this thing and asked God

that it, that it would be taken away. And verse 9 says, “And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.” And then Paul’s conclusion: “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”

Now Paul had a danger, and the danger was that God had given him such an abundant revelation, such a remarkable vision, that there was a danger that he might glory in that. There was a danger that he might be lifted up with pride. And so, for the great blessing that God had given him, God counter-balanced the blessing with a burden so that Paul would stay balanced and that he might not lean and get over-balanced and fall. Now he had blessings that defied description. God would not let him tell it. But there was the danger of pride. And for a unique blessing, there came also a unique temptation. And that unique temptation was that he might be exalted above measure. He says it himself. And I think there’s a principle: The higher we rise, the further we may fall.

I guess the classic example of all of this is Satan himself, who had the grand, exalted position of being the prime minister of heaven. And he came to the place where he said, “I’m too great, I’m too noble, I’m too wonderful, I’m too beautiful, I’m too wise, I’m too powerful to be anything less than God.” And he tried to exalt himself above the stars of God. And so, Satan, the highest of the high, will be brought down to the lowest of the low. The Bible tells us that we’re going to look upon him and he’s going to seem as a worm.

Now that’s a principle that all of us can apply. Maybe we’ll never be caught up into the third heaven, but you’re going to find out that any time you have a great spiritual blessing there is a danger that you’re going to be tempted and God just may humble you to keep that from happening. Jesus, after His baptism, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him like a dove, what happened immediately after that? If you’ll read the Bible, He was led of the Spirit in the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And after the dove, the devil. After the transfiguration of the Lord Jesus. Jesus was on the mountaintop transfigured. His raiment shone. His face shone like the noonday sun. And he had visitors from the other world, Moses and Elijah there and a voice from heaven. But right after that, Jesus went down into the valley where there was a demon-possessed boy and a demon fuming with fury.

Elijah, when he had a great encounter with the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, then he comes down from that mountaintop experience and sits under a juniper tree and Jezebel had sworn that she’s going to make him a foot shorter at the top. She’s going to cut off his head. And he wants to die.

I have found out that sometimes in my greatest spiritual experiences, maybe sometime I'll come out of a great revival meeting or Bible conference, and if I'm not careful, Joyce and I can get into a ta-to-ta that's, that not beautiful. Because sometimes you take your eyes off the Lord. And when you're lifted up, you're exalted and you're strong in the Lord. You begin to coast in the Lord. And there's a danger there.

So Paul was in this danger. And so, he says, "There was given to me a thorn in the flesh" in verse 7. God put a blessing in his hand, and God put a burden on his back. God did that. Now there was given to him. It was a gift. You say, "Well, boy, some gift. I hope God doesn't give me one." Well, why was it given? Again, "lest he be exalted above measure."

What would you have done; I mean, really, if you had, had a trip to heaven? Well, I'll tell you, most of us would write a book about it and sell it to the highest bidder and then we'd go on a tour telling everybody about, you know, what happened when we went up to heaven and tell everybody what heaven is like. There's just that temptation.

And so God put a blessing in his hand, and God put a burden on his back. There was given to him, given to him a thorn in the flesh. Now the devil was happy to drive that stake into Paul, but God allowed it, and Satan only became God's messenger boy.

Now we don't know what the thorn in the flesh was. Some people think that it was Paul had some sort of an eye problem. There is some indication that Paul had severe eye trouble because he used others sometimes as an amanuensis to write his letters or a stenographer to write his letters for him. And one time he signed the letter, and he said, "You know it's Paul because you see which, the large letters that I'm writing with," and so forth. And he talked about the Galatians, and he said, "If it were possible, they would have plucked out their eyes and given them to me." So maybe it was an eye problem. But we don't know. And I'm glad we don't know. And I'll tell you why I'm glad we don't know. If it were an eye problem, then everybody who had an eye problem could take comfort in this, but nobody else would. So, whatever your thorn in the flesh is, whatever the thing that Satan wants to impale you with that God allows, you're going to receive comfort from this passage of Scripture.

And I'm just closing in now on how to pray when you're hurting. And, by the way, let me say again that everybody hurts. I hurt. You hurt. We all have hurts. Sometimes some of us keep our hurts more to ourselves. But I want to say again. If you're not hurting now, just hang on. You will hurt. You will hurt. That's part of being a Christian and as part of being a non-Christian.

I have a preacher friend who went into a restaurant in an airport. And the waitress said something to him, and he said, "Yes, ma'am." And she said, "Do you want so-and-so?" He said, "Yes, ma'am." And something else? And he said, "Yes, ma'am." It was a northern airport. You know, up there they don't say, "Yes, ma'am." They talk funny up

there. And so she was very surly to him, very curt. She said, “Yes, ma’am, yes, ma’am, yes, ma’am. Is that all you know how to say is yes, ma’am?” He said, “Yes, ma’am.” And so she was just really, you don’t work that way really for a tip. And he ordered something, and she came and just slapped it down in front of him and walked off. And he left her an enormous tip. I mean, for breakfast he left her something like \$20.00. And just left it on the table for her. She said, “Hey, you. You left some money on the table.” He said, “Don’t they tip here?” She said, “Is that for me?” He said, “Yes, ma’am.” And she said, “You are giving me a \$20.00 tip for serving you breakfast the way I treated you?” She said, “Why are you doing that?” Well, he said, “You know, I was watching you, and I saw how you were treating me, and I figured you must be hurting. I figured you must have a problem, that something must be bothering you very much. I just thought maybe \$20.00 would help you some.” She began to cry. She said, “Mister, you don’t know how I’m hurting.”

She told about a husband who walked off, talked about a sick child she had to leave at home that morning, talked about how her old car wouldn’t start and she was late to work and got chewed out by the boss, and all of that. And after she finished crying, he led her to Christ. She got saved.

You know what love is? And, by the way, this just parenthesis. Love is not giving people what they deserve. Love is giving people what they need, isn’t it? (amen). I mean, that woman didn’t deserve a tip, but she needed a \$20.00 tip. That’s what love is. People are hurting. And you will hurt sooner or later. You will hurt. I mean, that is part of being a human being. “Man that is born of woman is a few days and full of trouble.” And if you got here any other way, you’re excused. But if you’re born of a woman, you’ve got a momma, you’re going to hurt. All right. And anybody here doesn’t have a momma? All right.

We suffer for a number of reasons. Sometimes we just suffer because of sin, don’t we? The Bible says, “The way of the transgressor is hard.” Sometimes we suffer because God is just toughing, making us tough. God is, is hardening us. How many of you guys ever played football? Let me see your hand. You’re a football player. Let me see your hand. All right. Now let me tell you, football practice hurts. It hurts. I mean, you actually hurt. Your lungs are like they’re on fire. Your muscles ache. And you’re doing those wind sprints. And you’re out there battering your body all around. Why is that? Well, the coach is discipling you. He is toughening you. And I believe that God lets us hurt sometimes just to toughen us. But then, there’s a third reason that we sometimes may suffer. Not because we have sinned, but God wants to keep us from sin. And that’s what Paul suffered about. Paul had not sinned. God was trying to keep Paul from sinning. And so God allowed Paul to suffer, to have a thorn in the flesh.

And let me just say another word before we get into this thing about how, how to

pray when you, when you hurt.

Did you know that only human beings can suffer? Animals can't suffer. Now animals can hurt. Animals feel pain. And nobody should ever willingly, gratuitously cause an animal to suffer. If you think that I believe in cruelty to animals, I don't. But, you see, human beings suffer. You know the difference between pain and, and suffering? Suffering is when it doesn't make sense. Animals don't try to figure it out. They don't philosophize. They don't ask themselves why. Not human beings, besides the pain, they have the anguish when things don't seem to make sense. All right.

Now how can you pray when you hurt? How do you pray when you hurt?

I. You Can Prayerfully Resist Suffering

Number one: You can prayerfully resist the suffering. That's what Paul did. Look in verse 8 if you will in verse 8. He says, "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me." Paul said, "I don't want it. I resist it. Please, God, take it away. In the name of Jesus, take this away." And I believe he did it for three extended prayer sessions.

What's the first thing you do when you feel pain? I think it's probably the first thing that I do when I feel pain. I pray. I mean, if I feel a pain somewhere, I'll put my hand on it, just like I'm trying to heal myself. And I mean, through prayer I say, "Lord, heal this. Lord, heal that," whatever it is, and I believe many times He does. I believe God heals. I, I believe He heals supernaturally. I believe He's healed me supernaturally.

Paul believed that God could take away the thorn in the flesh, else why would he have prayed? And so, we resist pain. We resist suffering. And we ought to. If you want to hurt, you're sick. I mean, mentally sick. You've got a problem. If you want to hurt, if everybody wanted to hurt, the drugstores would go out of business.

Now there's nothing wrong with resisting suffering. Paul prayed three times. As a matter of fact, he was in very good company because that's exactly how Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." And so, it, the Bible teaches us to pray for healing. And God does heal. He says, "I'm the Lord, thy God, who healeth all thy diseases." And He does. Now He heals through miracle. He heals through medicine. And don't forget this: He heals by nature. There are no laws of nature. There are God's laws that nature obeys. Don't get the idea that it's Mother Nature who healed you. It's Father God who healed you. I mean, all of us, you cut your hand, or you bruised yourself. And after a while, you look down and it's no longer there. Now, friend, if you weren't so used to it, you'd be shouting all over about that miracle, wouldn't you? I mean, you had a gash in your hand, and then after a few days it's gone, just like it was before. Well, you say, "Oh well, that's natural." Well, who made you that way? Who created you where your body would do that? All of us have

been sick and gotten well, so we've all been healed many times, right? Sure. And so when you hurt, you're in good company, number one, if you prayerfully resist suffering. But healing may not always come. And if you don't get better, you shouldn't get bitter.

II. You Can Proudly Resign to Suffering

Now not only can you, can you prayerfully resist suffering, but if healing doesn't come, you might proudly resign to suffering. Just proudly resolve that you'll bear it. You can say, "Well, I'm not healed, but I'm bloodied, but unbowed." That's kind of dangerous, but some people do that. They get stoic about their suffering. If you've ever seen a person endured suffering for a long time, they may be very proud, not broken, somewhat bitter, but they tough it up, tough it out, you know. Kipling wrote, "If you can keep your head when all those about you are losing theirs." And, you know, the last line of that poem is, "If you can do that, my son, then you're a man." And a preacher was using this poem in a rescue mission, and an old drunk, half drunk, lifted his hand and said, "Yeah, but what if you can't do that?" And a lot of people can't do that. People who can just grin and bear it, they may get proud. They look down upon others because they can't do it. Pride was Paul's problem to begin with. And so, if Paul had been willing just simply to resolve to bear it, I don't think God would have gotten any glory from that. So you may prayerfully ask God to remove it.

III. You Can Patiently Receive Suffering as a Gift

If God doesn't remove it, you can proudly resolve to endure it. But let me suggest the third thing, and, and that is, you may patiently receive it as a gift. Look in verses 9 and following of this same verse. "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. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities..." Now Paul did not say, "What can't be cured must be endured." What he said is this: "What will not be cured will be enjoyed. 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."

Now you can escape, you can endure, or you can enlist. Now Paul could not escape. He refused just simply to endure in himself. So what he said he would do is just enlist this suffering. You see, if, if you only escape suffering, then suffering is an enemy. If you endure suffering, suffering is your master. But if you enlist suffering, then suffering becomes your servant. It begins to work for you. Now Paul says he will glory in his infirmity. Now I, I just want to pause here to say he's not bragging about his sickness.

Have you ever known folks who brag about their sickness? Brag about their suffering? I mean, you don't dare ask some people how they feel cause they'll tell you

(laughter). I mean, you'll get an organ recital. They'll tell you about the heart, the lungs, the liver, and all of it. Now I'm not trying to be hard-hearted. We ought to be sympathetic who really hurt. I'm talking about people who enjoy poor health. You know, there are some people who just simply enjoy poor health. They've always got something wrong with them, whether it is or not. Like the old lady who died at 98 and had put on her tombstone, "See, I told you I was sick!" We're not talking about that.

Paul said, "I glory in my infirmity." Yet he says that weakness can become strength because it teaches us not to rest in our selves in our own strength, but to rest in God.

One time I preached in Northern England. And I said to Joyce, I said, "We're not far from Scotland. I want to drive to Scotland to see Edinburgh Castle." So we got in the car and went up M1 to, to Scotland. And the main thing I wanted to see in Edinburgh was Edinburgh Castle because I had read that the castle was built to be almost impregnable where it could not be conquered except on the one side there's a steep cliff. And they didn't put any ramparts or any battlements there because they figured nobody could attack the castle from that side because it's just impregnable from that side. But Edinburgh Castle fell not on its weak sides where defenses were put up, but on its strong side where there was no defense.

And if you'll study in the Bible, most of the men who fell into sin didn't fall at the point of weakness. They fell at their point of strength. What was David's point of strength? His integrity. Where did he fall? The matter of integrity. Committed adultery. What was Peter's point of strength? It was his courage. He was the one, the first one jumped out of the boat to come see Jesus. He wanted to walk on water. He was the guy that took a sword to cut off Malchus' ear, the servant of the high priest. And yet, he was the one who failed and denied Jesus three times. Where? Not at his point of weakness, but at his point of strength.

So Paul said, he realized that his, his strength could be a weakness and his weakness could be a strength if God made him weak, so as to make him perpetually weak, that he might be perpetually dependent, that he might be perpetually powerfully. And so, what he, what he says is, "I'm going to receive this as a gift. I'm going to trade my insufficient self-sufficiency for God's wonderful all-sufficiency.

Well, let me just wrap this up. What do you do when you have prayed and, and you resist the pain, but it's still there? Don't just simply resolve to endure it. Three things.

A. **Receive God's Gift**

Number one: Receive, receive it as a gift. Receive it as a gift. Receive it as a gift. Look in verse 7: "...there was given unto me a thorn in the flesh..." You may not understand it, but just receive it as a gift. I want to say again that doesn't mean that you shouldn't use medicine. I don't think the Bible is opposed to medicine at all. Isaiah got sick. And Hezekiah got sick and had to receive a poultice of fig leaves. Paul told Timothy to drink

no longer water, but a little wine for his stomach's sake, his oft infirmities. Jesus said, "They that are whole need not a doctor, but they that are sick." He's talking in spiritual terms, but He used a physical truth to illustrate a spiritual truth. Paul had a doctor who traveled with him. Dr. Luke traveled with Paul and I'm sure ministered to Paul. But if you're hurting and there doesn't seem to be anything that you can do about it—you've asked God to take it away and God doesn't take it away, and you have to admit that He may not. He doesn't always heal, whether you understand that or not. Even Paul three times asked God for healing and didn't get it. Just receive it as a gift. Receive God's gift.

Now when you receive it as a gift, then you've stopped fighting God. That's very, very important. You've stopped fighting God. You then glory in your infirmity. It makes all the difference in the world. Job said, when he was suffering and when he lost his, his, his friends and his family and his fortune and his health, Job said, "The Lord gave." Well, anybody can say that. And he said, "The Lord hath taken away." Anybody can say that. But he said, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Now, friend, that's where the victory comes, when you just say, "Lord, I receive this as a gift. Blessed is the name of the Lord." Receive God's gift.

B. Rely on God's Grace

Rely on God's grace. Look in verse 9: "And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee..." When you hurt, just rely on God's grace. Spurgeon said this, and he was a preacher of yesteryear. "The promises of God never shine so brightly as they do in the furnace of affliction." Now, God will be more near to you when you're suffering than at any other time.

C. Reflect God's Glory

And, last of all, receive God's gift. Rest in God's grace. And reflect God's glory. Here's, here's the key to the whole thing. He says in verse 9, "I do this for Christ's sake." Job in the Old Testament; Paul in the New Testament, shut the devil's mouth. In the Old Testament, Satan afflicted Job and said, "Oh Job, you've just bought him off. You've just hedged him around. God, he doesn't love You. He just loves what You've given him. You take all this stuff away from him, You'll loose Your servant. You bought him off. You bribed him." God said, "You don't know My servant Job. You don't know My servant Job. He loves Me for who I am, not for what I've done for him." The same thing was true with the apostle Paul. Satan said, "Let me drive this stake in him. He'll curse You." And Paul says, "Listen, I glorify in my infirmity, that the power of God might rest upon me. I do it for Christ's sake." Look, if you will, in verse 10: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then I am strong." When you suffer as a Christian, that suffering becomes a platform and a pulpit from which to glorify God.

Conclusion

Now you say, “Well, maybe I ought not to be a Christian if I’m going to suffer as a Christian.” All right, then suffer as a lost man. You’re going to suffer anyway. Suffer as a heathen. But only the child of God can take pain and transform it into something beautiful. Only the child of God can receive it as a gift, rest in God’s grace, and reflect God’s glory.

I talked to a preacher today on the phone. Bob, the guy I was telling you about. He’s going through all kinds of problems, a number of them he’d earned. But I said to this boy, he’s a boy preacher. I call him a boy preacher. He’s 32 years of age. I said, “Son, let me tell you something. Men throw broken things away. God never really ever uses anything until He first breaks it.” And I said, “God may hurt you, but He’ll never harm you.” God may hurt you, but He’ll never harm you. Let’s pray together.

Father, thank you for your Word. And I just pray, Lord, that you will teach us, teach me. Lord, I confess before these people I don’t like pain, I don’t like suffering, I don’t like anguish. And, Lord, I, like Paul and like Jesus, I will resist it. But, Lord, if You have a higher plan, then, Lord, I want to receive Your gift, to rest in Your grace, and to reflect Your glory in the name of Jesus, amen.

How to Pray When You're Sick

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: May 19, 1999

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 12:1–7

Sponsored by: Sponsor

“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.”

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7

Outline

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Introduction

Tonight, I want to talk to you about divine healing or, at least, let me change the subject and say I want to talk to you about how to pray when you are sick. Now part of that we'll deal here with divine healing, but how to pray when you're sick. Now, if you're not sick yet, just wait. Just, just give it a little time. Sooner or later, you are going to have a date with a disease. You're going to turn a corner and meet a hurt somewhere, somehow. And sometimes God's people, when they get sick, they just seem to collapse spiritually. They think that, somehow, because they're saved, they're not supposed to hurt. They're not supposed to have any problems. And so, you can be finding 2 Corinthians chapter 12. We'll get to that eventually. But I'm going to have a very long introduction and a short message. Big front porch, little house.

A. **Why Do We Get Sick?**

But I want to talk to you about how to pray when you're hurting, how to pray when you're sick.

Now, first thing, let's talk about why are people sick. Why do people get sick?

1. We May Be Sick Because We Live in a World That Is Under the Curse of Sin

Well, the very first reason that we get sick is that we live in a world that has the curse of sin upon it. Just it's a part of the environment that we live in, whether we are saved or whether we're lost. Romans chapter 5 and verse 12 says, "For, wherefore, as by one man (that's old Adam), by one man sin entered into the world and death by sin. So death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

You're going to die. I'm going to die. The only exception to that – we're all under the sentence of death – the only exception to that is Jesus may come before we die. But, in the natural state, we are all under sin. And whether we're saved or lost, that's not going to take away the curse of sin upon nature.

Again, write down just, all of this is just by way of introduction, so just put these notes in your margin. Romans 8, verses 22 and 23. The apostle Paul, talking about how there's a curse on nature, said, "And we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." That is, all of nature, all of nature has the curse of sin upon it. Moan and groan and tooth and fang and claw, desert, cyclone, drought, flood, fire – it's all in nature, and all, the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And verse 23: "And not only they (that is, the creatures), but ourselves also which have the first fruits of the Spirit" (those of us who have the Holy Spirit in our hearts). "...even we ourselves groan within ourselves waiting for the adoption to wit the redemption of our body." Your body is not yet redeemed. Your spirit is redeemed, but you are waiting for the redemption of your body. So, when Adam sinned, he just dragged all creation down with him, and we're a part of it.

An elderly woman, very elderly, was in the hospital, and she asked her pastor, said, "Pastor, I have a problem." He said, "What is it, sister?" She said, "Can you tell me why I am in this hospital bed, why I'm sick?" He said, "I certainly can. You're getting old." That's it, folks. We just wear out. We run down. So that's one reason.

2. We May Be Sick Because of the Judgment of God on Our Sin

Another reason we may be sick is that sickness may be a judgment upon our sin and come from the hand of God. For example, 1 John chapter 5, verse 16: "If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death." That is, sometimes people have not crossed the deadline. But he goes on to say there's a sin unto death. You can die because of your sin. I could give biblical illustrations of those who have died because of their sin.

Moses died prematurely because of his sin. And then, over in 1st Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 30, Paul was talking about the way some of the Corinthians were misusing and abusing the Lord's Table. They were coming irreverently to celebrate communion and they were getting drunk and making gluttons of themselves. And Paul said in 1st Corinthians chapter 11 and verse 30, "For this cause (that is, because of your sin), many are weak and sickly among you, and some sleep." The inference is that it was the judgment of God, because he goes on to say, "If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged that we should be condemned with the world."

3. We May Be Sick Because We Have Violated God's Natural Laws

So, one reason we're sick is because we're part of a fallen human nature. Another reason that we may be sick is, it is the judgment of God upon our sin. Now here's a third reason that you may be sick. You're just violating God's natural laws. For example, if you're given to alcohol, you can expect to get sick. Alcohol is a poison. So you know what they call being drunk? Intoxicated. Do you know what intoxic, a toxin is? It's a poison. You've taken poison into your body. Intoxicated literally means poisoned.

Why do you think people throw up when they get drunk? They've got more sense in their stomach than they have in their heads, that's why. It is a poison, and the stomach wants to get rid of it. And so, they end up with a white liver, red eyes, dark brown breath, a yellow streak, and a blue outlook all because they have taken something into their body. They've just violated the law of nature.

Again, smoke tobacco and you get lung cancer. You say, "Well, didn't God make tobacco?" Yes, He made it to kill insects, not men. "Pastor, can I smoke tobacco and go to heaven." You may go there a whole lot sooner. It just happens.

Overeating. A wise man said, "We live off of half of what we eat; the doctor lives off the other half". People are digging their graves with their teeth.

Dwight L. Moody was the Billy Graham of his day. Somebody asked Dwight L. Moody to pray for a fellow preacher. And you would think that Moody would have said, "Oh yes, I'll pray for the dear brother." Do you know what Moody said? Moody said, "I'll not do it." He said, "You won't pray for him?" He said, "No, I won't pray for him. Why should I?" He said, "He eats everything in sight and does the work of ten men." That is, he was, what he was doing to himself was he was causing himself to be ill, and Moody said, "What he needs to do is simply repent."

Worry. We have many of us who just worry ourselves sick. The Bible says, "A merry heart does good like a medicine." So if you fail to take your medicine, you're going to sick. Worry will do the same thing to you that sand will do to machinery. It's stress. That's the modern word for it. It's stress. And we're just stressed out.

So why are people sick? We're sick in a general sense because we live in a world that has a curse on it. Number two: Sometimes we may so directly sin against God that

God judges us with sickness. You can read in the Bible where God gave some people leprosy because of their sin. So it may be a direct result of sin. Third reason: We just are abusing our bodies, failing to eat right, failing to rest right, failing to exercise right, taking things into our bodies that are noxious. And every kick has a kick-back.

4. We May Be Sick Because of an Attack of Satan

Now another reason that we may be sick. And sickness is a very complicated thing. Another reason we may be sick is that it is an attack of Satan. Can Satan make people sick? You better believe it. You better believe it. A classic example: Job chapter 2, verse 7: “So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown” (that is, his head). Can you imagine a man with oozing, putrefying boils all over his body? And the devil did that to Job.

The Bible says when Jesus came, those that He healed, many of those that He healed were those who had been oppressed by the devil. Put this margin: Acts chapter 10, verse 38. And Luke says, “How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power, who went about doing good (now watch this) and healing all who were oppressed of the devil.” Healing those who were oppressed of the devil. The devil can oppress you. He can make you sick. And, by the way, if you pray, and God gives you a revelation that that sickness is of the devil, then you can rebuke it in Jesus name and command it to leave. You can't command all sickness to leave. But you don't have to take that from Satan. You can rebuke it in the name of Jesus. And a lot of what we call “submitting to the will of God” is just giving in to the devil.

5. We May Be Sick Because of the Discipline of God

Now here's another reason that people may be sick. Sickness may come as a discipline of God, a discipline of God – not because you have committed a particular sin. Sickness may come not because you have sinned, but to keep you from sinning.

Now that's all by way of introduction. Now we come to our passage today. All right. Now look if you will, in 2nd Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 1. Paul says, “It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such an one caught up to the third heaven.”

Many things are taught here. There is a heaven called the third heaven. First heaven we see by day. The second heaven, the stars, we see by night. Third heaven, we see by faith. Paul says, “I was caught up into the third heaven.” He said, “I didn't know whether I was in my body or out of my body.” What's the truth there? You can go to heaven in your body. You can go to heaven out of your body. When a saint dies, to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. But one of these days our bodies

are going to be caught up into heaven. Heaven is a real place, folks. It's not some will-of-the-wisp, now-you-see-it, now-you-don't, hocus-pocus, smoke and mirrors place. Jesus is there in a resurrected body. Paul said, "I'm not sure whether I was there in a body or not." But I believe in a real heaven, don't you? I mean, I believe in a solid heaven. There is a heaven, and people go there in bodies. Paul said, "Whether I was there in my body, I don't know," because he said, "I just cannot tell you whether I was there in my body or whether I was not." And notice in verse 4 how he was caught up into paradise.

Another truth we learn right there, that paradise and the third heaven are synonymous. And he heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for a man to utter. That is, he saw things, heard things there, sacred secrets. God said, "Paul, you can't tell anybody what you heard when you were there."

And then he says, "Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities." Paul said, "I'm not going to glory. I glory in what happened up there, but," he said, "in and of myself I'm not going to glory except in my sickness." Now that's a strange thing for a man to say I'm going to glory in my infirmity. And infirmity is just another for sickness. An infirmary is where you put sick people. And he says, "For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool..." Now just underscore that. "For though I should desire to glory..."

Now Paul, in the prior chapter, in chapter 11, you remember is, was persecuted? He was let down over a wall in a basket. Can you just imagine this great man of God being lowered? How humiliating it is. He's having to escape, and they're letting him down over a wall in a basket to keep him from being killed. And right after that – that's the 11th chapter. In the 12th chapter he's taken up into heaven. I love that. When men let him down, God took him up. Brother, I tell you, what a contrast between these two chapters.

And when he is there, he saw things, sacred secrets, and he said, "It was so glorious. I have to watch. I have to watch that I don't, that I'm not exalted above measure."

Now God had given him such a blessing. God had to take the blessing on this side and balance it with a burden on this side. If God had not balanced the blessing with a burden, here's what would have happened. Paul would have been overbalanced, and he would have fallen because he would have been overbalanced. Now he saw things, heard things that defied description or, at least, if they could be described, God would not let him tell it.

Now the point is this: God wants to bless us. But the higher we rise, the further we may fall. What was Lucifer? He was the highest of the high. I mean, he, Lucifer was a perfect ten. Ezekiel says, "You seal up the sun." You know what that means – you seal up the sun? Nothing left. "You seal up the sun!" Perfect in beauty. Can you imagine

anything being perfect in beauty? He was. But he was lifted up with pride. And now he is going to be brought down to the pit through pride. The highest of the high has become, will become, ultimately—he's not there yet—the lowest of the low.

Pride is a very dangerous thing. The Bible says of the pastor, don't ordain a young preacher unless he has experience and maturity because he may be lifted up with pride and fall into the condemnation of the devil. And one great preacher said, "There's nothing that puts a man of God further out of the devil's reach than genuine humility." And God wanted in the heart of this pastor, preacher, evangelist, missionary, Paul, God said, "I want to bless him. I'm going to give him this, this, this revelation. But I'm going to balance this revelation over here with a burden. The reason that God did that, was a discipline.

Notice here. It's not because he had sinned. But look in verse 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." It's very plain, very plain. Just to hold him down. Just to keep him from being exalted above measure. And so what do I call this? Just a discipline. It's just a discipline, that's all it was.

Now sometimes we suffer because we sin. Sometimes we may suffer to keep us from sinning. God may be humbling us. He may be disciplining us. I said I'm, I'm getting to the main point. I haven't yet. Still introduction .

All right. Why do people get sick? Well, I've given you five reasons, and I'm sure there are many others, and I'm sure there may be combinations of these.

B. Does God Heal?

All right. Number two: Does God heal? Often people say, "Does God heal today?" Of course He does. Absolutely!

1. God Heals by Nature

Number one: God heals by nature. And, by the way, there are no laws of nature. They're God's laws that nature obeys. Let me ask you a question. How many of you have ever been sick, didn't go to the doctor, and you got well, let me see your hand? All right, you have been divinely healed. You have been divinely healed. Who made you? Who created you? I'll tell you what to do. The next time your car, you have a fender-bender, just part it in the garage and wait for it to heal itself. See He'll do it. He won't do it. I'll guarantee it won't do it. You listen. It is a miracle. You can, you can cut your finger, put a band aid on it, come back in a week later, and it's like new. You think about that! Who did that? Friend, I want to tell you that God did that. That in itself is divine healing. Yes, God heals by natural means.

2. God Heals by Medicine

Then, secondly, listen. God heals by medicine. Is the Bible opposed to medicine? No, it is not. The Bible speaks of heaven as a place where trees whose, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

Isaiah. Put in your margin Isaiah chapter 20 and verse 7. Isaiah ministered to King Hezekiah, and Isaiah said, “Take a lump of figs. And they laid it on the boil and he recovered.” Do you know what a lump of figs is? That’s a poultice to draw out poison. That’s all it was. He just put a poultice on him to draw out poison.

Young Timothy had a queasy stomach. He was often sick. And Paul said to Timothy in 1st Timothy chapter 5, verse 23, “Drink no longer water, but a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine oft infirmities” (or sickness). Now, Timothy was a man of God and he loved God, and yet he was often sick. And Paul, who did the work of an apostle and was able to heal, wasn’t able to heal Timothy.

Do you believe in doctors? I certainly do. I have a doctor, my own personal physician, I love with all my heart. And Luke was called the beloved physician in the New Testament. And Jesus said—listen to what Jesus said—“They that are whole need not a doctor, but they that are sick.” That’s what Jesus said. He said, “Well people don’t need a physician; sick people need a physician.” You say, “Well, he was talking about spiritual truth.” Of course he was, but he used a literal truth to teach a spiritual truth. Would he have used something untrue to teach something true? No! Jesus said, “Sick people need a doctor.” So God expects us to use means. You’re not more spiritual if you refuse to go to a doctor. The Bible teaches prudence. What is the harm? The harm is not going to a doctor. The harm is not taking medicine. The harm is putting your faith in the doctor and the medicine rather than in God. God uses means. He did in the Bible. Again, I’m just giving you some illustrations of this.

3. God Heals by Prayer

So does God heal? Yes! God heals by natural means. Does God heal? Yes! God heals by medicine and physicians. Does God heal? Yes! God heals by prayer. If God didn’t heal by prayer, why do we pray for the sick? Why do we pray for the sick? Because the Bible teaches us that God heals by prayer. Let me give you some Scripture here. Again, James 5. Big introduction, I told you so. James 5, verses 13 through 16: “Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

God heals by prayer. There’s so much in that one passage that we could just pull

over there and park for a long time. But I want to say that I believe in praying for the sick. I believe I've seen God miraculously heal the sick. I believe I've seen God heal my own body through prayer.

Now, if you want healing for your body in answer to prayer, you're got to receive healing for your soul. And so he's talking here about the confession of sin and getting your heart right with God in order to pray that your body might be healed. Jesus is the Great Physician. Can you imagine calling a doctor to your house when you're sick and then refusing to let him to come in your house? I mean, can you imagine somebody calling on Jesus to heal them and refusing to let Jesus come into their heart, into the temple? If you want Him to make a house call, you've got to open the door and let Him in. And why should He heal you if you're not submitted to Him? I mean, after all, either you're serving Christ or the devil. There's no in between, right? So, if you're not serving Christ, and you ask Him to heal you, why should He give you more strength to serve the devil? It doesn't make sense, does it? No!

4. God Heals in Eternity

So God heals, we said, by natural means, obviously. We get well without going to a doctor. God heals through physicians and medicine. Jesus said that sick people need doctors. We find examples where people used means and medicine in the Bible. God heals through prayer. And—listen to this—God always heals the child of God in eternity. Now that's not a copout. That's not a copout. You remember when I read you over there in Romans 8 that we're waiting for the redemption of the body? The body will be redeemed. Friend, I'm not going to be hauled into heaven with a wrecking crew. I am going in a redeemed body like unto Jesus' glorious body. And you put down Isaiah chapter 53 and verse 5. The Bible says, "He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. And the chastisement of our peace was upon Him. And (listen to this), and with His stripes we are what? healed." We're healed with His stripes. Now that doesn't mean that we're healed now in this day and this age. We may be. God may be gracious. But if He does not heal us, if He has a different plan, a higher plan, we know that we know that we know that God heals by miracle, God heals by medicine, God heals instantaneously, God heals in time, God heals by nature, but He always heals in eternity. We are waiting the redemption of the body. That is coming, and you can bank on it. And you can tell any brother or sister on a cancer bed or anyplace else, "Friend, you're going to be healed. You are going to be healed, no ifs, ands, and buts about it." We have the victory in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now that's all introduction. Going to have a little, tiny sermon right now. All right. How, then, should we pray when we're sick?

I. Pray to Escape It

Well, the first thing we ought to do is pray to escape it. Listen. Look, if you will, in 2nd Corinthians chapter 12 and verse 8. Paul says, “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from me.” Now, friend, I’m going to tell you, if I get sick, I’m going to ask God to heal me. Aren’t you?. I mean, if you get sick, you’ll pray and ask Him to heal you. Well, you can pray for me too if you want to. I wish you would. We need to pray for one another. We can pray, “Lord, take this sickness away.” Paul did the normal, natural thing and said, “God, I ask you to heal me in the name of Jesus.” And he says, “I asked God three times to do it.” Thrice means three times. “I besought the Lord thrice...” I don’t mean he said, “Lord, heal me. Lord, heal me. Lord, heal me.” I believe he had three extended times of prayer where he’s asking God for healing and the healing did not come. Paul just bowed his head. And I don’t know exactly how he prayed, but I can just hear him praying, “Lord Jesus, take this sickness from me. Take it away from me, dear God.” Now, it didn’t come. It didn’t happen. Paul was in good company.

There was somebody else who was afflicted in the Garden of Gethsemane, under such duress that He almost died prematurely. He sweat drops of blood. Three times He said to the Father, “Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me.” And it did not. Now neither Paul nor Jesus was out of the will of God praying for relief. The Bible teaches us to pray for healing. There’s nothing wrong with that. But we have to admit this fact: We have to admit this fact: That the healing does not always come. And that doesn’t mean that Paul was out of the will of God. As a matter of fact, he was very much in the will of God. So the first thing you can do, you can pray to escape it. And I think many times, many, many times God has healed us through prayer. I think most of us have been sick, we’ve prayed, and we got well. Now we pray and then, when we get well, we give the doctors and the medicine the glory. No, we need to give God the glory and thank the doctors.

II. Pray to Endure It

All right. Now second thing. How do you pray when you’re sick? You can pray not only to escape it. But if you don’t escape it, you pray to endure it. Look, if you will, in verse 9 now of this same chapter. He says, “And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, that I’m going to give you grace to endure.” And I’m, I’m telling you that God will never, never, never, never put more on you than His grace is sufficient to help you to endure. Now you may have to call upon Him. You will have to call upon Him. God will give you strength. And, and as your days are, so shall your strength be. And God will never abandon you. He will give you grace. Sometimes, you may think He has forsaken you, but call upon Him. The Lord is nigh unto those who are of a broken heart.

III. Pray to Enlist It

Now, how can you pray? You can pray to escape it. That's the first thing to do. That's what Paul did. That's certainly what I do. Number two: If you don't escape it, if God says no, then you pray, "God, give me Your grace to endure it, Your strength." But here's the highest thing that you do: Not only pray to escape it, or pray to endure it, but pray to enlist it. Look, if you will, in verses 9 and 10 here now. "And He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for My strength is made perfect in weakness (now watch this); most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities." Folks, I don't know whether I'm there or not. I'll have to wait till I get to where Paul was to find out whether I can do that or not. But I hope that happens to me or you when we get sick, that we, we don't just simply, try to escape it, and if we can't escape it, just simply endure it, but that we somehow enlist it. You see, if we, if we, if we just simply escape it, then we see sickness as an enemy, and it may be. But if we endure it, we see it sort as a master, that something's over us. But if we enlist it, we make it a servant. We take it and, and, ha, it becomes something that we can use. And Paul said, "Look, I glory in my infirmity."

I cannot help but think about David Ring, David Ring preaching here. I meet people all over as I go in and out tell me what an incredible blessing David Ring was. God could heal David Ring. He didn't. And here's a young man who actually has taken an affliction, what the world would call an affliction and make it an incredible blessing to other people.

And Paul said, "I glory in my infirmity." Now, when Paul said, "I glory in my infirmity," he's not bragging about his sickness. Oh, you have to be careful to ask some people how they fell 'cause they'll tell you. I mean, you get an organ recital. Nay. Paul, Paul's not bragging about his sickness. What, what he is saying is, he said, "I glory in the fact that God has done something for me. I glory in my infirmity 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 sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

Now you say, "Well, I thought Paul had the power to heal people." Well, just continue to read. "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me. For I ought to have been commended of you, for in nothing am I behind and the very chiefest apostle as though I be nothing." Paul is saying, "Look, I haven't done anything takes away my credentials because I'm sick. Truly, the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, in wonders, and mighty deeds." Paul, the apostle, Paul, the apostle, who had power to, to heal people didn't heal everybody. He didn't heal Timothy, his son in the faith. He said, "Timotheus have I left at Miletus sick." He himself had a thorn in the flesh, which literally means not a thorn like a thorn in a rose. It means a stake that had impaled him.

How do you pray when you're sick? Well, number one, pray to escape it. God just

may heal you. And I've seen Him heal supernaturally, wonderfully, and miraculously. If He doesn't, pray to endure it. Say, "God, I know You're going to give me the grace." But if He, if He gives that grace, then take it and pray to enlist it and use it as a platform for the glory of God, but give God glory. You say, "Well, I don't want to suffer." Well, I don't either. But, folks, if you're human, you're going to suffer. "Man that is born of woman is full of trouble," isn't that right?

Conclusion

Now let me tell you something about the child of God and the child of the devil, the difference in their suffering. The child of the devil suffers for nothing. I mean, he just suffers. The child of God can take suffering and enlist it for the glory of God.

So that's how to pray when you're sick. It's easier said than done, but God knows how to teach us. Let's bow our heads in prayer.

While heads are bowed and eyes are closed, I know that there are some in this building today who have sicknesses, illnesses. You have loved ones that are sick, people that you're burdened about. And I believe that God can wonderfully and miraculously heal you or heal your loved one. And we're going to have prayer for the sick tonight. And if you would just like to come forward and kneel here at this altar, anywhere across the front, kneel for yourself or kneel for somebody else, we're going to pray for you tonight that God will heal you. God can heal you by miracle or medicine. God can use the doctors, whatever He wants. But if you say, "Pastor, I need a touch from God. I want to escape this sickness. If not, I want to endure it. If not, I want to enlist it. I mean, if I endure it, I want to do more than that. I want to enlist it for God. I just want God's hand upon it." Let's just have some piano music, and let's stand together. Heads bowed. And you just come and just sort of kneel here for a moment, and we're going to pray for you if you're sick tonight or you have a loved one that's sick. We're going to pray for the sick tonight. If you can't kneel, that's all right. Just stand. Some have illness that won't allow them to kneel. And just stand here. Get on the knees of your heart. Maybe you have somebody, a loved one. This sickness can be an emotional sickness, too, if you have somebody you want to pray for. God, do you remember that Jesus healed all who were oppressed of the devil? Sometimes there are people just oppressed and they need healing. The Great Physician now is near, the sympathizing Jesus. And I want to tell you, there's no, there's no disease that He cannot heal. He said, "I am the Lord thy God who healeth all thy diseases." He didn't mean, "I heal every disease," but "...all diseases." There's nothing beyond our God. What a mighty God we serve.

All right. These are going to stay on their knees. And those of you who are standing now, I just want you to stand to give these others a chance to come forward. Would you

just sit and bow your head over on the pew in front of you and just sit down, folks out there. Others here on their knees. Just remain on your knees here for a moment. Now I'm not a healer. I know the healer. His name is Jesus. I don't have the gift of healing, but I know the healer. His name is Jesus. And I know these people here on their knees are very precious. And I want you to pray with me as we pray for them. Some of them are praying here tonight for personal needs that they have in their own heart and life. Others of them have, have come forward for a father, mother, brother, sister, son or daughter, friend, or neighbor to say, "Lord, I want Your hand of healing. Almighty God, Almighty God, in the name of Jesus, how we bless You for Your mercies. Thank You, Lord, that we know that we know with Your stripes we are healed. Lord, I thank You that, that there is that divine underpinning. Lord, underneath are the everlasting arms. And, Father, we know in the name of Jesus that You carried the curse of Adam to the cross, and in Adam all die, but thank You in Jesus all are made alive. And, Lord, we wait the redemption of our bodies. But now, Lord God, You've told us that the prayer of faith will save the sick. And so, Father, I want to pray in the name of Jesus for these. Oh God, increase their own faith because, Lord, I know that You don't deal with people wholesale, but as individuals. Lord, if there are any unclean practices, any bad habits that these have done and are doing that, Lord, I know that You're not going to just, just bypass willfulness. So, Lord, if anybody here needs to repent, there's any kind of sin, any habit, any attitude, Oh Lord, we don't come to judge people tonight, but, Lord, You've said that if we regard iniquity in our heart You'll not hear us. Lord, You said, "Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another that you may be healed." You've said, Lord, that the "effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." So, Father, I pray in the name of Jesus if there's anything that would hinder healing, Lord, that You'd help us to see it one by one because we cannot confess another's sin. And, Father, I thank you for doctors. I thank you for my doctor, Mark Castellaw. I pray, Lord, for the physicians in this church, many godly men. I thank You, Lord, for the nurses and those who are in the health sciences. Lord, for the minds and the heart that you've given these. Bless them, dear Lord, I pray. And, Father, I pray that you would help as they prescribe medicine, that they might have Your hand upon them. And now, dear Lord, as pastor and people, we bless these Your children who stand here before us. Lord, that if it can be in Your will that they will escape this sickness, Lord, that you would just take it from them. And, Father, if you have a higher or a different plan, we don't want to just give up and not believe you. But, Lord, if You do have a different plan, Lord, I pray for an extra measure of grace upon each person here, those who are out in the congregation who have the same need but didn't come forward. And, dear God, dear God, I pray that your strength will be made perfect in weakness, that we might lean more and more upon you. Thank you, Lord, that you are Yahweh Rapha, the God who

heals, and we pray in the name of the Great Physician, Jesus. Amen, amen.

Let's sing, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" as these go back to their seats. Let's stand one more time and sing it. "What a Friend We Have in Jesus."

How to Pray When You're Hurting

By Adrian Rogers

Date Preached: January 2, 1983

Main Scripture Text: 2 Corinthians 12:1–10

“Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:10

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Introduction

Now would you take your Bibles, please, tonight? And I would like for you to turn to 2 Corinthians chapter 12—a familiar passage to those who are students of the Bible that deals with the problem of pain, and how to deal with suffering, and sorrow, heartache, and sickness.

I want us to read together 2 Corinthians chapter 12, verses 1 through 10. Paul says here, *“It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body,*

I cannot tell: God knoweth;) how that he was caught up to paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in mine infirmities. For though I would desire to glory, I shall not be a fool; for I will say the truth: but now I forbear, lest any man should think of me above that which he seeth me to be, or that he heareth of me. And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of 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, 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 am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:1–10).

All of us, as I have said, hurt from time to time. The great Apostle Paul hurt. And here, we have a glimpse into his prayer life, and into the workings of his heart, and how he endured something that he'd had for a long, long time. Paul knew what it was to suffer. And I know that I've already read one long passage of Scripture, but I feel that it would be well for us just to back up to set the background just a little better for the passage that I've just read. If you would go back to chapter 11, and still, with your Bibles open, I want us to look again, and read a longer passage of Scripture, beginning in verse 24, and reading through verse 33—again, speaking of the sufferings of this man named Paul.

Paul says, *"Of the Jews five times have received I forty stripes save one."* And a beating like this, dear friend, would often kill a person. Five times Paul had known the beater's lash; five times he had been stretched out and beaten, within an inch of his life: *"Thrice was I beaten with rods,"*—that was another kind of beating—*"once I was stoned,"*—now, when they stoned him, they left him for dead; they thought he was dead, but he wasn't dead—*"thrice I suffered shipwreck,"*—that is, he'd been in the terrible, horrible storms—*"a night and a day I have been in the deep;"*—that is, his body had floated around in the Mediterranean, and been pickled by that salt water—*"in journeyings often, in perils of waters,"*—that is, many times, he almost drowned—*"in perils of robbers,"*—he was bushwhacked by men—wayside men—who would pounce upon him—*"in perils by mine own countrymen,"*—so many times, his Jewish people thought of him as a turncoat and as a traitor—*"in perils by the heathen,"*—he would go to preach the gospel, and they would arrest him, and put him in jail—*"in perils in the city,"*—he wasn't safe in the city. If he would go out into the wilderness, he would be—*"in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren;"*—I suppose this was the cruelest cut of all: those who pretended to be brothers in Christ

that would turn against him—*“in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”* The great burden that he had of the ministry and the great sympathetic heart that he had—not only did he suffer for himself; he suffered for others. He says: *“Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me: and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands”* (2 Corinthians 11:24–33).

Now I cannot imagine—and yet, I know it is true, and I’ve tried to think about it: Here’s the great Apostle Paul—a ruler, a leader, a philosopher, a scholar, a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest religious and civil group in Israel. Here’s this man, let down over the wall in a basket. Can you think of anything any more humiliating? Just in order to get out of the city of Damascus, they have to spirit him out; they have to let him down. But it’s an interesting thing to me that this 11th chapter ends with Paul being let down, and the 12th chapter begins with Paul being caught up. And his being let down in the basket was very humiliating, I am sure, to the flesh; but, his being caught up was very exhilarating to the spirit. And so we find him, in the 11th chapter, being let down; but then, in the 12th chapter, we find him being caught up into the third heaven.

Now Paul is talking about burdens. He’s talking about problems. He’s talking about suffering. He’s talking about hurting. And after he’s mentioned all of these other hurts that he’s had, and all of these other things, then he mentions the secret hurt that he’s had that nobody else has known about, until he tells us about it right now. It’s sort of an inward thing, and it’s been a problem that he’s carried for 14 years. It’s a thorn in the flesh. I don’t mean to say that the problem was a secret; that was obvious. But the background of the problem was a secret, and nobody knew the background of the problem. He kept that in his heart, and that was a vision that he’d had 14 years ago; and, he carried that in his heart, and had not told anybody about it for 14 years.

Now I’m sure, if it had happened to me, I would have told someone about it tomorrow; but he didn’t tell anyone about it. As a matter of fact, if it had happened to me, I would probably have gone and told; if it had happened to any of us, we’d probably have written a book about it and gotten it to what we thought was the best publisher. But Paul just kept it in his heart and in his mind for 14 years. God had given him a vision; God had taken him and lifted him up to the third heaven. He saw such visions, and marvels, and mysteries that they were actually unlawful for him to tell anyone about them. God had lifted him so high that he was in danger. And the danger was that he

might be exalted above measure; the danger was that he might become proud about it.

Now I don't believe he did become proud, because God stopped it before it got started. But God ministered to him by giving him a thorn in the flesh. Look again, in 2 Corinthians 12:7, and he says, "*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 Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure*" (2 Corinthians 12:7). Now God had blessed him, and God knew that the blessing had to be balanced with a burden. And if the blessing were not balanced with a burden, Paul would become overbalanced; and then, he would fall. And the higher we rise the further we may fall. Anyone who has been blessed materially, or anyone who has been blessed physically, or anyone who has been blessed spiritually, may understand, and should understand, the loving God may counterbalance that blessing with a burden for your good and for His benefit.

Now Paul had a burden, and it was severe. He says, "*There was given to me a thorn in the flesh*" (2 Corinthians 12:7). But don't get the idea of a thorn, like a thorn on a rose. No, actually the word for *thorn* here is a *stake*—something that he was impaled upon, something that is vicious and huge; it was something that had run him through. Now he's using that as a figure of speech; actually, there was not something impaling his body, but he's using this figure of speech as, "something that is severe." It's not only something that is severe, but something that was steadfast. It wasn't some pain that he'd known for a day, or a week, or a month, or a year. For 14 years, he had been impaled upon this stake; for 14 years, he had known this terrible, horrible suffering. And the Bible says that it was a gift from God.

We don't know what it was that caused Paul's suffering, and I think that it is in the providence of God that we do not know. Some believe that it was his eyesight—that he had bad eyesight, and that was his thorn in the flesh. It could be, but the Bible doesn't say. And I'm glad that the Bible doesn't say, because, if it simply mentioned Paul's eyesight, then perhaps those who had bad eyesight would get comfort from this; but then, perhaps somebody who had another ailment could not. We don't know what it was, but all we know is that Paul hurt, and he hurt bad.

I. Several Reasons Why We May Hurt

Now we may hurt for several reasons.

A. Because of Sin

Number one: because of sin. We know that sin causes suffering. And there are a lot of people in this auditorium and in our world who are suffering—perhaps because of their own sin. And the bitter fruit that they are eating is the fruit of their own ways from trees

that they've planted. And the bitter water that they drink is from wells that they themselves have dug. Suffering follows sin like night follows day. And that might be the reason that some are suffering; but, that's not the only reason for suffering.

B. Because God Is Disciplining and Strengthening Us

Some also suffer as God's means of disciplining and strengthening us, and it's just a discipline.

Now football players suffer. If you've ever been to a football practice, you know it hurts. You get out there—and you're sweating; and the equipment doesn't seem to fit just right; and the coach seems to have absolutely no mercy; and you're doing wind sprints; and your ribcage is hurting; and your head is pounding; and your knees are trembling; and your mouth feels like it's all cotton inside; and you hurt. But you have a purpose in mind—you're being disciplined and you're being strengthened, so that you might perform.

Many times, God allows His people to hurt, in order to discipline them. It has nothing to do with sin; but it's just that they're being disciplined, and they're being strengthened.

C. In Order to Keep Us from Not Sinning

Another reason that we may suffer is not because of sin, and not because of discipline, but in order to keep us from sinning. And that was Paul's case here. Paul was hurting, in order to keep him from sinning, lest he should be exalted above measure, lest he should be overcome with pride (2 Corinthians 12:7).

II. How Do You Pray When You're Hurt?

Now that you've gotten the background, how do you pray when you hurt? We're going to learn from the Apostle Paul and from his prayer life. May I say that there are three possible responses, three possible ways that you might pray when you're hurting.

A. We May Pray to Escape Suffering

Number one, you might pray to escape that hurt; you might pray to escape that pain; you might pray to be rid of that thing. And there's nothing wrong with that. I mean, the very first thought that comes to us when we hurt is to get rid of it—amen? There's nothing wrong with that. I mean, when I hurt, my first thought is, "Let's do something about this, and the sooner the better." That is normal; that is natural. That's how drugstores stay in business—that, when we hurt, we want to do something about it, and the sooner the better. And that's a God-given instinct of self-preservation. And so we may pray, "Lord, take it away. Do it by medicine; do it by miracle—but God, get rid of it, and the sooner the better."

Paul, being human, asked the Lord to do this. He had a thorn in the flesh. He'd had it

for 14 years. He came to the Lord, and he said, “Lord, please take it away.” Look in verse 8 of this chapter—and he says, “*For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me*” (2 Corinthians 12:8). “Lord, I don’t want it; take it, please.” One time he prayed—it was not removed; again, he prayed—still no answer; the third time he prayed—God gave him the reason, but not the answer he sought. This is a good illustration of the scripture that says, “*We know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered*” (Romans 8:26). And this tells us also that that we ought to pray until God does show us what His will and what His plan is in a particular area. And there was nothing wrong with Paul when he asked God to take it away.

As a matter of fact, he’s in good company. Three times Paul prayed, and asked that his problem be taken away. You go to the Garden of Gethsemane, and you’ll find Jesus praying three times that He might not have to endure that bitter cup: “Father, if it be possible, take this cup from Me” (Matthew 26:39). One time, two times, three times, our Lord prayed that same kind of prayer. So what I’m saying, ladies and gentlemen, is, there’s nothing wrong with praying, and saying, “Lord, I want to escape this suffering.” But the Lord had a better plan, and a higher plan.

So the first thing we ought to do, when we hurt, is say, “Lord, take it away, please.” And if He doesn’t take it away, ask Him again and continue to ask Him until He tells us that He has a better plan or a higher plan.

B. We May Pray to Endure Suffering

Now let me tell you something else: Not only may we pray to escape suffering; we also may pray to endure suffering. As a Jew, Paul may have prayed to escape suffering, because God had given certain physical promises to His Old Testament people, the Jews. He said, “I will heal all thy diseases, and I’ll put none of these diseases upon you that are upon the Egyptians,” and so forth (Exodus 15:26). The Jews were physical, earthly people, and God had certain promises to them for that particular age, for that particular time that He calls their infancy, where He dealt with them on a little different basis.

As a Jew, he may have prayed to escape this suffering. But then, he was also a Roman citizen; and, as a Roman citizen, he may have prayed to endure suffering. The Romans were tough, and the Romans were known for their bravery and for their endurance. And there’s nothing really wrong with enduring suffering. After all, if we can’t escape it, we do have to endure it. But you see, sometimes we become proud—even in the enduring of our suffering, if that’s all we do. I think it was Kipling who wrote those words, “If you can keep your head when all of those ’round about you are losing theirs”—and so forth; and, he goes on in this long poem, and then says, “If you can do

that, my son, then you are a man.”

Those are very noble thoughts, but some of us preachers make some awful mistakes when we preach in rescue missions to those men. I cut my teeth preaching in rescue missions. But a young preacher was preaching, and he quoted Kipling to those fellows; and, he quoted this: “If you can keep your head,” and so forth, “and if you can do this, then, my son, you are a man.” And a man half-drunk in the audience, out there, said, “Yeah, but what if you can’t?” And there are a lot of people who can’t—that just don’t have what it takes to endure suffering.

C. We May Pray to Enlist Suffering

So you might pray to escape it; you might pray to endure it—and, indeed, we’re going to have to endure it, if we can’t escape it—but there’s a higher thing to pray about: not to escape it, and not to endure it, but to enlist it, and to bring our pain, to bring our problems, to bring all of these things, and make them servants. As a Jew, he might have prayed to escape it; as a Roman, he may have prayed to endure it. But as a Christian, he was able to pray to enlist it, and to make it his servant, and to use this suffering for the glory of God. You see, if I pray to escape it, then I see my suffering as an enemy. If I pray to endure it, I see my suffering as a master. But if I pray to enlist it, I can see my suffering as a servant.

Actually, we may make a servant of our suffering, or we may make a messenger of our pain and of our problems. Paul says that he’s going to glory in his infirmity. Notice that he says here, in God’s Word, in verse 9—God said to him, “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.*” Paul says, “*Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities*” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

That doesn’t mean that Paul was bragging about his sickness—there’s a big difference. I don’t know whether you’ve ever met anybody that brags about their sickness—you don’t dare ask how they feel, or they’ll give you an organ recital. I mean, they will tell you exactly how they feel, if you have the time to listen. And I’m not saying here that we ought not to be sympathetic to people like that; but I’m saying that Paul is not saying that he will glory in his infirmities—that he’s bragging about his sickness. It wasn’t that Paul enjoyed poor health—that wasn’t what we’re talking about, at all. But Paul learned that his weakness could become a strength.

Now how do you enlist suffering? How do you pray about your pain, your problem, where God has a higher plan, a better plan, and it is not God’s plan that you escape it, and not even God’s plan that you merely endure it, but rather that you, in a sense, enlist it, and even enjoy it—take pleasure in your infirmity?

1. Receive It as a Gift from God

Number one: Receive it as a gift from God—receive it as a gift. See it as a gift. Look, if

you will, in verse 7—Paul says, “*And lest thou should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh*” (2 Corinthians 12:7). Paul did not see it as an affliction; Paul saw it as a gift, and Paul saw it as a gift from God. God allowed the devil to inflict it. But where Satan rules, or where man rules, God overrules. And Paul saw that nothing could come to him except somehow God allowed it, and it came through the omnipotence of the Almighty God. So just receive it as a gift. You may say, “Some gift!” Yes, but all things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28). And He doesn’t make any mistakes.

*All the way my Savior leads me’
What have I to ask beside?
Can I doubt His tender mercy,
Who through life has been my Guide?
Heav’nly peace, divinest comfort,
Here by faith in Him to dwell!
For I know, whate’er befall me,
Jesus doeth all things well (Fanny Crosby).*

Just simply receive it as a gift—not merely endure it, but receive it.

You remember the things that Job endured. Job said, “*The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away*” (Job 1:21). Anybody could say that; but Job went on, and said something else that made him stand head and shoulders above the rest of the people of this world that I know anything about: “The Lord giveth; the Lord taketh away.” And then, he said, “*Blessed be the name of the LORD*” (Job 1:21). When you say that, dear friend, you’re beginning to triumph. You see, when you receive it, you have stopped fighting God. You just simply say, “Lord, I receive it.”

If you’ve got a problem, and you’ve been praying about that problem, and you prayed it through, and it seems like God has a higher plan, and God is not giving you the faith to pray that you might escape it, don’t merely endure it, but enlist it. Receive it from the Lord. “Lord, thank You. It has been given to me.” That’s what Paul says: “*There was given to me a thorn in the flesh*” (2 Corinthians 12:7).

2. Rely on God’s Grace

So number one: Receive God’s gift. Number two: Rely on God’s grace, because with the gift comes the grace. Look, if you will, in verse 9 of this same chapter: “*And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

We talked this morning about the manifold problems that the children of God had, and we talked about heaviness through manifold trials. And do you remember that word *manifold*—what it means literally? It’s variegated, many-colored. Did you know that the

Bible speaks of the manifold grace of God? It's so wonderful to know for the manifold trials of God there is the manifold grace of God.

a. Suffering Grace

There's suffering grace. Paul had it right here.

b. Singing Grace

There is singing grace, for the Bible says, "*Singing with grace in your hearts*" (Colossians 3:16). When Paul and Silas were in prison, God gave them singing grace.

c. Speaking Grace

There's also speaking grace. The Bible says, "*Let your speech be always with grace*" (Colossians 4:6). God will give you the ability to talk about your troubles, even with grace.

d. Sacrificing Grace

Then, dear friend, there is sacrificing grace. And the Bible speaks of those Christians in Macedonia who, in their deep affliction and poverty, were given grace to sacrifice. And it says, "The grace of God was bestowed upon the churches of Macedonia—out of their affliction, and out of their poverty, they gave" (2 Corinthians 8:1–2).

e. Strengthening Grace

And not only is there suffering grace, and singing grace, and speaking grace, and sacrificing grace; there is strengthening grace. Paul told Timothy, "Be strong in the grace of Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:1). And Timothy was often sick, and he had many infirmities; but there was the grace of God to strengthen. In all of these mentions of grace, the grace was not there to take away the problems; the grace was there—the variegated grace, the manifold grace of God was there—to sustain in and through the problem.

You spend time with the Word of God and draw from the grace of God. Charles Haddon Spurgeon said this: "The promises of God never shine so brightly as when they do in the furnace of affliction." You're going to find out that, when your problem comes, if you'll get into the Word of God, this book will burst aflame in your hand, for God is especially near to those who are in trouble. Receive it as a gift; and, after you have received the gift of God, rely upon the grace of God—and God's going to be near to you in a very special way.

3. Reflect the Glory of God

Finally, reflect the glory of God. Receive the gift of God; rely upon the grace of God; and, reflect the glory of God. That's what Paul did. Notice what he said, in verse 10: "*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

12:10). And in my estimation, there is not a greater Christian that ever lived than was the Apostle Paul; and, there's not a man who more greatly, and more aptly, and more beautifully, displayed the glory of God. God knew just what it took to make this man the servant of God that he ought to be. Paul's great motive was to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. And for Paul, Paul's pain became a platform and a pulpit from which to glorify God. And how well he used it!

Conclusion

Everybody suffers—everybody suffers—whether you're saved or lost. But isn't it wonderful that the Christian has the option and the privilege to use his suffering to glorify the Father? The unsaved suffer for nothing; but we can make a servant of our suffering. You may say, "Brother Rogers, it hurts." Yes, it may. And God may make you, or God may allow you to hurt, but He will never harm you.

How do you pray about pain? You may pray to escape it; you may pray to endure it; or you may pray to enlist it by receiving it as a gift. Receive the gift of God; rely upon the grace of God; and then, reflect the glory of God.